

Work-From-Home Insights: Analyzing Employee Performance And Professional Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Does work from home create better avenue for employers to work effectively and produce greater results? What are the potentials and pitfalls as far as employee's relationship with organizations concerned? In recent research, there have been rising debates about exploring work from home as a strategy of boosting the efficiency of employees in public and private organizations. As a result of this, a body of literature created on this issue through examining various issues and embark scholars to debate on this issue. While some studies suggest work from home as an effective strategy, some others discard this on the ground of various challenges that the employees encountered because of this. However, the present research paper uses the phenomenology approach to seek the opinions from both the employees working from home and HR managers those who are associated with this system and seeks answers of these questions. The paper suggests that there is mixed experience among the employees and HR Managers about this system. It argues that though the leadership is observed technically oriented and micromanaging, employees are found satisfied over structured communication of team leaders. Further, there is a need to take up quantitative study to learn and establish the relationship between the involvement of the employees and effective leadership practices

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, work from home has emerged as a key strategy for various organizations/institutions and has undergone continuous transformation over the years. In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, this strategy has widely applied by organizations and institutions with an aim of creating a safe work environment for the employees. In today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business climate/working environment, the performance of an organization relies mainly on its ability to acclimatize to the turbulent business/working environment, make strategies to deal with the changes, and determine how to implement the changes (Rimita et al., 2020). This scenario (VUCA) has enhanced further with the rise of various natural and man-made incidents such as pandemic, wars and various other incidents. Considering these issues, in recent years, there have been substantial attention paid to examine various aspects of work from home vis-à-vis performance of employees as well as benefits of organizations.

In India, work from home in the recent years emerged as an alternative to the crisis faced by organization in the context of Covid-19 pandemic led shut down and lock down. The mode of working from any space other than the office has been available in organizations for the past few decades albeit not practiced to a large extent. This mode is often referred to in the literature as work from home, telework, work in third spaces, or smart work hubs (Malik, 2018; Malik et al., 2016a, 2016b). In the recent time smart works hubs have been emerged as alternative workplace locations or a third place that provide workers as an alternative place of their office and flexibility in work.

It is argued that working from home saves a lot of time, as the commuting time adds to the actual time of staying in office for doing job (Bhattacharjee, 2020) (Hu & He, 2016). It not only saves energy, money but also reduce unnecessary stress that arise out of catching a bus, preparing an outfit or lunch box (Fisher, Cooper, & Audrey, 2018) (Faizan Haidar, 2020). The concept of Work-from-home (WFH) could become reality with the advancement in technology of high speed internet, laptops with

wireless technology that allows people to connect with work anywhere and anytime (Davis, Ghent, & Gregory, 2021) (Bailyn, 1988) . So employers are focusing on the results rather than where the work is carried out. The survey conducted to know the best companies to work for concluded that the companies that allow their workforce to WFH at least 20% of the time were ranked in the top list. The employer's also found that those working from home are actually more productive (Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2020) than their colleagues.

The effectiveness as well as pitfalls of work from home has been contributed towards increasing participation of employees in organizations/institutions, to reduce stress of employees and achieve efficiency in organizational governance and management system. This also support to improve performance of the employees and ensuring quality in organizational system in various ways. The impact of work from home on level of motivation of employees through the system of flexible work environment has also received much attention because of increasing attention focus on this issue. For this purpose, work from home may be effective than any other kind of arrangements. In the case of Indian system of organizational structure, governance and management, work from home has been increasingly implemented. As a result, despite the initial hiccups, work from home cases have been increased over the years based on the organizational policies and programmes. This trend motivated many scholars to examine various dimensions of work from home and how this has impacted on the level of motivation of employees.

This paper presents the case of work from home and response of the employees on this issue through a research study conducted in India. Analyzing with a brief overview of the rise of the work from home strategy in India and effective implementation of this strategy during Covid-19 pandemic, this paper sequentially analyses the case of work from home vis-à-vis performance level of the employees in few selected organizations. Based on the primary research data through the process of interview method, it presents pattern and trends of employees' level of motivation with regard to work from home. This paper examines few important issues such as (i) how does work from

home creates better opportunities for employees? (ii) What are the key dimensions and trends work from home vis-à-vis relationship of employers with employees (iii) how effectiveness in work from home can improve organizational effectiveness? This article seeks to answer these questions and make empirical contributions to these questions drawing on the data gathered from 50 employees of various sectors in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of 'work from home' has gained significant scholarly attention in the recent years and these have been explored and documented through various conceptual, theoretical and empirical research studies. It is noted by many scholars that the rise of work from home has been an important strategy adopted by many organizations and implementation of this strategy has re-invigorated the employee-employer relationships in organizations. As a result of this, there have been a rise of studies on this issue and 'examining employee-employer relationship' has been a focal point of discussion in these studies. Drawing on surveys carried out in various parts of the world, some scholars have documented the case of work from home in a multi-organizations perspective (examining the scenario in more than one organizations) while some scholars have presented the case of a single organization through conducting a global case study. The results of these studies have been highlighted some important issues associated with the nature, extent and potential benefits of work from home. In particular, the cases of work conditions, facilities provided by the employers to the employees, challenges encountered by the employees in work from home condition have been discussed. However, few important issues such as how work from home has influenced the level of motivation and how motivation supported employees to work effectively for organizational effectiveness frequently overlooked while examining the case of work from home strategy.

Work from home is known to create various positive and negative impacts on employees. On the positive side, employees enjoy flexibility with regard to time and space. Employees save time spent on commuting to and from the office and have the flexibility to work at their preferred time

(Varma et al., 2022). Employee's level of autonomy is increased due to lack of supervision; hence, the employee can enjoy more flexibility in the choice of working hours and work patterns (Shamir & Solomon, 1985). They can also attend to their personal needs and demands and work as per their convenience, thereby, managing their personal and professional lives. On the flip side, the literature on WFH is replete with its negative impact on social relations such as feelings of isolation, reduced amount of feedback from the supervisor and co-workers, impaired socialization, and lack of belongingness (Golden et al., 2008; Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011; Shamir & Solomon, 1985). Further, Varma et al. (2022) highlight how the level of leader-member exchange (LMX) determines the quality of the employee-leader relationship and trust between them while working from home. Employees who had a high-quality LMX relationship enjoyed more discretion and made fewer adjustments to their personal commitments for work reasons. However, they had a greater sense of obligation and were under constant pressure to reciprocate managerial trust.

Airplane manufacturing company Boeing, IBM & AT&T reported the increase in the productivity was between 15 to 30%. The overall output not only in terms of increased productivity (Patanjali & N.M.K.Bhatta, 2022) but also in terms of reduced expenditure on infrastructure like electricity and office space (Freedman, Max, 2022). WFH helps recruitment and employee retention at all levels because the reduction in expenditure on commuting (Newsdesk, 2022). Individuals have to spend on petrol as the rising cost of house rents and property in central areas so they buy houses at far away localities of office place. WFH is an option to become socially responsible by saving the energy consumption working for global warming.

The COVID pandemic had hit everyone that mandated many companies work remotely. Work-from-home is also an option to include the disabled people in main stream by providing them employment opportunity (Hoque & Bacon, 2021). The option of employing disabled will help company to achieve the equality that government mandates us. Women working from home find more time to take care of other activities at home much easily and fulfil the demands of family thus

WFH helps reduce stress of the women and not the role conflict (Subramaniam, JayalakshmyRamachandran, Putit, & Shariff, 2021).

In many situations at workplace it is hard to find the time to sit quiet and concentrate on given job because of various distractions like phone, coworkers, un-planned meetings and clients queries (Langemeier & Tito, 2022). Such distractions might be lesser at home, thus saving more time to focus on job and complete the decided job in lesser time. Though WFH have distractions in its own way but they could be easily managed so WFH improves the productivity of an employee (Lisanne Bergefurt, Maris, Arentze, Weijs-Perrée, & Kort, 2022). Work stress is one of the major challenges of women employees along with work stress, Indian women also have to suffer from family and social burden of pressure. As it is very difficult for them manage all the demands with restricted time availability and the women get exhausted due to travelling for work.

There are increased health issues like blood pressure, heart disease, stress induced diabetes along with mental diseases like anxiety and depression (Cynthia & Rajarajeshwari, 2022). Working from Home also helps to manage overall expenditures at home front. The money spent of travelling, buying the petrol could be used for buying household items, children's education, medical facility, dependents care, moreover if saved could be invested in buying home or infrastructure. It is quite depressing to travel in the busy and rush hours by roads in the urban, semi urban cities but WFH saves lot of time wasted in travelling to and fro for workplace. On an average a person might spend 1.5 hour daily, if saved everyday would count for ($22 \times 1.5 = 33$ hours) approx. 33 to 35 hours a month and 396 to 420 hours an year (Praga, Prasetyo, Nadlifatin, Persada, & Chuenyindee, 2022).

The flipside of WFH has its own challenges as it requires an individual's change in perspective of work. There will not be complete separation of work and home, in fact there will be integration of work-life. At some point of time you are engaged in routine activity of home like cooking, feeding babies etc. there would be a call required to be attended on urgent basis (Cynthia &

Rajarajeshwari, 2022).

When surveyed it was found that $\frac{3}{4}$ employees of total considered themselves to be as productive as working from the office though they worked from home. The employers were also of similar views or some of them were slightly less positive about the productivity. There are some perceived costs including reduced opportunities for collaboration, networking, reduced face to face interaction with superiors and also resulting consequences for long term career prospects. Nonetheless, employees were found to highly appreciate and give importance the ability to work from home and also were willing to change jobs or accept lower rate of salaries in order to continue working from home (Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2020).

A leader establishes communication and could inculcate collaboration within team members so that the common goal is achieved (Dana Brownlee, 2021) in traditional workplace it is easy to have informal or casual chat but in virtual setting leader has to be more formal and structured. In this leader should make team feel comfortable and focus the conversation for desired results (Elena Pastore, 2020). Leadership style influence the team's performance thus one should avoid the micromanaging as micromanagement declines the faith, productivity and relationship. If one has the commanding and controlling approach employees would not feel involved and only become dependent on leader for each and everything. This approach will hinder the speed of the business and decrease the effectiveness of the work (Elena Pastore, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

The present research examines the case of work from home from organizational perspective. The specific objectives of the study were to examine *inter alia* the challenges faced by the employees working from home and to understand their perspectives and experiences toward the organizational leadership and HR manager's perspectives on employees working from home. It is particularly design to inquire about the communication pattern, leadership style and technical vs. humanistic orientation followed by superiors.

In order to answer the research questions framed in this paper, it draws data from multiple sources, in particular the interviews with selected employees. This paper uses qualitative design and phenomenological approach of research that allows researcher to analyze the respondent's personal experiences (Dela Fuente, 2021). The decided approach could discover the benefits and experiences of employees working from home to get insights in difference between the forecasted use of work from home arrangement and actual experiences.

Experiences of the employees which were conducted through interviews have used as an important source of understanding the perceptions, observations and suggestions of the employees with regard to work from home. Further, the data as presented in various government reports and papers published by scholars, the scope of this paper covers the case of work from home in India.

The data collection for the present study was done during the initial weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown in India. To address our research question, we interviewed 50 experienced executives in large private sector organizations in India. The respondents were mainly working in IT /ITES sectors having 5-10 years of experience of the age group 30 to 40 and were working at first 3 levels of hierarchy considering 7 levels of hierarchy of an organization. There were equal number of men and women including interns, trainees, individual engineers working as software developers and backend support staff. Along with Working from Home employees' researcher had a detailed interview with HR managers working with MNCs to understand their perspectives on Working-from-Home employees and the outcome. Below is the table showing details of the respondents/participants:

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Total	%
Male	21	42
Female	29	58
All	50	100

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents (in %)

Sl.No	Age	Percentage
1	21-30	20
2	31-40	18
3	41-50	22
4	51-60	40

Ethical Consideration:

The researcher duly explained the purpose of the study to the research participants and asked their permission to include their opinions in the research findings. To respect their privacy they are denoted as P1, P2...and so on. The HR Managers working with MNCs were also interviewed and are named as H1, H2.

Data Collection Instrument:

The data was collected by face-to-face in-depth interview with the respondents to understand the working challenges and perspectives of working from home. The following questions were included in the interview.

1. What benefits you have of working from home?
2. What kind of hurdles occur while working from home?
3. Are you satisfied with the overall job?
4. Can you explain your boss's leadership in terms of & your preference to the following:
 - a. technical orientation vs. humanistic orientation
 - b. structured vs. unstructured communication
 - c. autocratic vs. democratic style of decision making
 - d. good behavior vs. bad behavior
5. What motivates you more monetary rewards or appreciation given?

While interviewing HR managers the following question was asked:

1. What are your observations, employees on working from home? Please cover following things:
 - Productivity
 - Collaboration
 - Job satisfaction
 - Involvement

The discussion with the respondents was held at their convenient time by inquiring their

availability. The interview started with informal note to make respondents feel comfortable and their opinions were noted down with the specific intention to understand their perspectives and lived experiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The opinions given by the respondents were interpreted and summary was made to come up to the themes of the opinion for noting the benefits, hurdles, satisfaction towards the job, leadership and extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation being worked from home. The summary of document was shared to the HR experts working in MNCs having 7-10 years of experience for confirmation of their opinion on the situation and collected their outlook for the employees working from home.

4.1. Policies of Work from Home:

Table 3. Awareness Level of Respondents about WFH Policy

Respondents	%	Awareness of Respondents about Policies of WFH (%)	
		Aware	Not Aware
Male	42	62	38
Female	58	69	31
All	100	66	33

When considering all respondents, 66% are aware of WFH policies, whereas 33% are unaware. This implies that while the vast majority of respondents are aware of WFH policies, a sizable proportion (one-third) are unaware.

4.2. Communication Mechanism and Flow of Communications:

Table 4. Satisfaction Level of Respondents about Communication Mechanism and Flow of Communication

Respondents	%	Satisfaction Level of Respondents about Communication Mechanism and Flow of Communication (%)	
		Satisfied	Unsatisfied
Male	42	90	10
Female	58	95	5
All	100	92.5	7.5

Overall, 92.5% of respondents are satisfied with the communication mechanism and flow, whereas 7.5% are dissatisfied. This means that respondents

are very satisfied with communication. The employees working from home opined that team leaders were effectively communicating and had the open and structured communication.

4.3. Benefits of Work from Home

Table 5. What Benefits You have Received through Work from Home Facilities? (in %)

Question	Summary of opinions	Theme and iteration of opinion among the respondents	Response (in %)
What benefits you have of working from home?	The main benefit of working from home is flexibility of attending to work and home responsibilities. In addition to flexibility time saving, cost incurred in traveling, dependent /child care, and clothing. It can be useful for the people who are physically handicapped. When having medical conditions and health issues it is mostly useful.	Flexibility	22
		Time saving	24
		Cost saving	24
		Dependent/Child care	18
		Option for Physically handicapped	4
		Medically unfit to go office	12

According to the survey, respondents' top benefits of working from home include flexibility (22%),

time savings (24%), and cost savings (24%). Other advantages include improved dependent/child care (18%), assistance for physically disabled people (4%), and the ability to work while medically unable to go to work. Overall, respondents appreciate the practical and personal benefits that WFH offers.

The employees working from home were enjoying the flexibility, satisfaction over the work, productivity, able to take care of family demands, children and dependents care but having worried about internet speed, were not able to separate work and home which means could not switch off the work on a specific time, unable to catch with the competition, feeling lone and also were demotivated not being able to communicate and collaborate virtually i.e. missing on human touch. Employees working from home were also lacking the clarity of succession planning, career progression, induction orientation, performance appraisal linked with increment in the salary.

4.4. Challenges of Work from Home:

Table 6. Challenges Faced by Employees from Work from Home Facility

Issue	Response	Counts (in %)	Implication
What kind of hurdles occur while working from home?	Inability to Concentration	45	Inability to collaborate and communicate virtually
	Distraction of Children	15	Inability to manage time and organize work
	No separation of work and home	20	Feels lonely and inability to take vacation
	Lack of Internet Speed	10	-
	No Response	20	-

According to the survey, the most common barriers

to working from home are difficulty to concentrate (45%) and a lack of separation between work and home (20%), which leads to difficulties in virtual collaboration and preserving work-life balance. Distraction from youngsters (15%) and a lack of internet speed (10%) are also major concerns. Furthermore, 20% of respondents did not respond, indicating additional worries or a lack of clarity on the subject.

4.5. Perceptions of Work from Home:

Table 7. Perception of Employees about Work from Home

Issue	Response	Counts (in %)	Summary
Provide your experience about working from home and worries about career, productivity, support of HR managers?	Work satisfaction	20	Lack of motivation
	Productivity Enhancement	24	No clarity of career and succession planning
	Performance Appraisals Linked with Compensation	18	Induction orientation unsatisfactory
	Feels Lagging in Competition	18	-
	No sharing of knowledge	12	-
	No Response	8	-

According to the survey, people have a variety of experiences with working from home: 20% are satisfied with their jobs but lack drive, while 24% see productivity gains but lack career clarity and succession planning. Performance appraisals linked to compensation (18%) and emotions of being behind in competition (18%) raise worries about fair evaluations and competitiveness. Furthermore, 12% believe there is no sharing of knowledge, indicating the need for improved knowledge management processes. An 8% non-response rate indicates that some respondents may be apathetic or unsure about their experiences.

4.6. Leadership in Organisation and Work from Home:

Table 8. Employees and Team Leaders in the Work from Home Scenario

Gender	%	Trusted by Team Leader	
		Yes	No
Male	42	71.43	28.57
Female	58	68.97	31.03
All	100	70.0	30.0

The survey shows that 71.43% of male respondents and 68.97% of female respondents feel trusted by their team leader, with an overall trust level of 70%.

It was reported that, the leader is largely technically oriented and communicates in a systematic manner. Instructions are routinely provided in detail, describing both what and how activities should be accomplished, and questions are immediately answered. The leader frequently collects document reports. While maintaining a paternalistic autocratic attitude, the leader occasionally assumes a democratic manner, allowing for free debate on problems. The staff has a general anticipation of a more humanistic attitude, notwithstanding high levels of satisfaction with communication clarity. However, the leader frequently intervenes in small job elements and talks about personal triumphs. Furthermore, the leader does not properly appreciate the team, instead seizing credit for the group's efforts.

The leader is primarily technical, the leader uses structured communication to ensure clarity yet frequently micromanages smaller job details. The leadership style is primarily paternalistic and dictatorial, while concerns are occasionally discussed democratically. While communication clarity is highly rated in survey, the leader's tendency to claim credit for the group's efforts and brag about personal accomplishments detracts from overall satisfaction. Respondents strongly prefer a more humane leadership style

Table 9. Motivation of Employees-Financial Benefits and Appreciation

Issues	Discussion	Perceptions	Count(in %)
What motivates you more monetary rewards or appreciation given?	Incentives that I receive mostly motivates and I also expect appreciation of my job, initiation, collaborative efforts. My job itself motivates me as it gives me work from home option.	Financial Motivation	24
		Appreciation	20
		Performance of job	6

The employees working from home were found to get motivated mostly for incentive plans followed by appreciation, the job performance of their own and collaboration that they could do with others in team.

Table 10. Organizational Effectiveness – Productivity, Satisfaction & Employee involvement

Question	Opinion Summary	Theme & Frequency	Sub-theme
What are your observations, employees on working from home? Please cover following things: • Productivity • Collaboration • Job satisfaction • Involvement	There is little improvement in productivity as employees tend to take up flexibility of work. They could collaborate online but enthusiasm is not seen. Job satisfaction is little doubtful	Flexibility (2) Career competition (2) Calculative and compliance involvement (2) Improvement in productivity (2) Less job satisfaction (1)	Collaboration (2) Career opportunities (1)

Question	Opinion Summary	Theme & Frequency	Sub-theme
	as employees are seen anxious about the career competition is increasing. These days involvement is only towards completion of work and towards the benefits that is accrued.		

While discussing the virtual teams' behavior and overall observation on the employees working from home, HR managers opined that since employees are working from home they are able to enjoy flexibility of work, though found to be collaborating on job but enthusiasm is missing. However the job satisfaction among the employees specifically young generation is doubtful as they are found to be anxious of their career. While the anxiousness do not match the productivity and are found have compliant and calculative involvement (Lunenburg, 2012) (Etzioni, 1997).

Table 11. Attrition in Work from Home vis a vis gender of respondents

Gender	%	Awareness about Policies of WFH (%)		Influence Level of Attrition	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	42	62	38	38.10	61.90
Female	58	69	31	62.07	37.93
All	100	66.0	33.0	52.0	48.0

38.10% of male respondents feel that WFH rules influence attrition, while 61.90% disagree. 62.07% of female respondents believe that WFH regulations influence attrition, while 37.93% disagree. Female respondents regard WFH policies

as having a greater influence on attrition than male respondents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

I To conclude the above finding, Working from home offers numerous benefits, including increased flexibility that allows employees to tailor their work hours to their personal schedules, enhancing work satisfaction and productivity. It provides the opportunity for better dependent care, enabling parents and caregivers to balance professional and personal responsibilities effectively. For individuals with physical challenges, remote work offers a more inclusive option by removing commuting barriers and creating a more comfortable work environment. Additionally, working from home allows employees to manage minor illnesses without needing to take a full day off, ensuring continuous productivity while maintaining their health.

Though, working from home has several drawbacks, such as the lack of a clear separation between work and home life, which can lead to burnout and stress. Many employees may not have a conducive environment at home, affecting their productivity and focus. The absence of a competitive office atmosphere can diminish motivation and drive. Additionally, there can be a lack of clarity regarding succession planning and career progression, making it harder for employees to envision their future growth. Performance-linked pay might become ambiguous without direct supervision, and the lack of human touch can result in feelings of isolation and reduced team cohesion.

Virtual teams often experience less collaboration due to the physical distance and reliance on digital communication tools. This can lead to compliant behavior, where team members do only what is required without going the extra mile. The lack of face-to-face interaction can result in doubtful and anxious behavior, as employees may feel uncertain about expectations and feedback. This often leads to calculative involvement, where individuals contribute minimally, affecting overall productivity and job satisfaction.

Management should prioritize structured and open communication to ensure transparency and trust

within the team. Emphasizing technical orientation helps leaders understand the challenges their teams face and provide relevant support. Adopting a paternalistic autocracy approach allows leaders to guide with authority while considering the well-being of their employees. Avoiding micromanagement fosters autonomy and innovation, while regularly giving appreciation boosts morale and encourages high performance.

The team leaders should be able to predict the

trends of social behavior, ethical issues, and customer's expectations and implement them by conducting effective meetings by encouraging employee participation in the work design and completion. There can be synthesis approach to management as developed by Samsung using the best of Korean and European approaches. Thus, it is proposed to make a mix and match of leadership approaches for effective work-from-home team management.

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