Work From Home And Its Effects On Employee Well-Being And Job Satisfaction

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Abstract:

COVID 19 pandemic has not only brought new virus and health issues, but also spurred news forms of work culture. Before pandemic, work from home was an option available only for selected industries, but during and after pandemic, due to social distancing, government laid protocols, work from home became new normal across industries. Work from Home seems beneficial in multiple ways but it does have huge effect on the physical and mental well-being among the employees. This research paper intends to examine the effect of specified attributes of Work from Home on employee well-being like ability to work, physical stress, psychological stress symptoms and job satisfaction among Bangalore employees. A panel survey of 385 employees of various companies belonging to IT industry were considered for study. Through multiple regression, it was found that employees who had office equipments and flexibility in work timings had positive effect on health of employees and job satisfaction. However, employees felt work from home always lead to extended work hours which resulted in stress related symptoms. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed in this study.

Keywords: Work from Home (WFH), Covid 19, Mental Well Being, Digitization, Remote Work

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1. Introduction:

Post pandemic, as the economic activities revived, almost every company in India have resumed their operations at offices/ workplace after 2 years of remote working. According to NASSCOM and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) (June 9,2022) more than 70% of the employees working in IT firms prefer to adapt hybrid work model compared to other industry segments. Only 6% of employees have shown willingness to resume full time to office. The survey also reveals that if given a choice more than 70% of employees in digital industries prefer a combination of work from home and on-site work models, 25% prefer only to work from home.

Government of India released standard operating procedures which was mandated at every companies. Some of the protocols include social distancing, avoiding people gathering, wearing masks and sanitizing work area. The government strongly encouraged companies to minimize the physical presence of employees at workplace. For few industries partial workforce was permitted on rotational basis with protocols being followed (https://www.mohfw.gov.in/). Meanwhile for most of the industries and employees teleworking was completely new (say education industry), Internet was a medium to provide add on and value addition, it was never the main source to execute the core job.

Work From Home (WFH) is also called as Remote work, telecommuting, remote job, mobile work and distance work is a work set up made by the employer, in which there is no necessity for employees to travel to a central location of work, such as an office etc. As an alternative work can be executed in home or at any place of convenience for the employees.

Employees priorities have altered post COVID 19, Work life balance, flexible work timings and mental wellbeing are prioritized on top.52% of employees prefer work life balance post

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pandemic (McKinsey & Company, Feb 2022). Most of the employees in India prefer more hybrid models that provide remote working opportunities.

From the perspective of employee well-being, it is vital to assess the probable health effects of remote working. The following section discusses practical outcomes on probable health effects of remote working.

1.1. Employee well-being and Work from Home:

During and post pandemic COVID 19, remote working is preferred due to its convenience with aid of new emerging technologies that has transformed the work pattern significantly (Charalampous, et.al). Though there are noted benefits of remote working like time saving for transport, flexible work timings, staying with family, reduced distractions, there are negative consequences too. Namely burn out feel due to extended working hours, limited socializing with colleagues (Lu, Y et.al (2021)). These have adverse effects on mental well-being of the employees which resulted in anxiety of managing home and routine if they returning to office (Deloitte, 2022). Employees also expressed worries about managing kids, leaving them in day care and safety as well. There are people who have settled in their hometown during pandemic, presently with firms' insistence on returning to workplace people who have relocated back to their hometown during Covid, need to find accommodation to return to work location. Most of the employees find work from home economical (Ebener et.al (2021,2019)).

Overall, the discussion of whether WFH has favorable or unfavorable impact on health is complex. To better understand the health issues related to remote work, the following research questions are framed to assess individual characteristics of WFH. They are: 1. Does work from home affect employee working ability, create physical stress and psychological stress symptoms that has positive or negative impact on health? 2. Which attributes of remote work positively or negatively influence job satisfaction?

Prior research, Bouziri et al. states that health issues due to work from home during COVID 19 pandemic is uncertain. But health risks associated with remote work during pandemic may be analyzed because work from home option was implemented as a result of government mandate and companies had to adopt swiftly. In this regard not all employees have complete office set up at their residence and reduction in physical activity sums up to psychological stress and working ability.

So we postulate that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The number of working hours set for work from home negatively influence the working ability and create psychological and physical stress symptoms.

1.2 Employees' Job Satisfaction and Work from Home:

Studies have shown that employees who are highly contended with their job perform better and enjoy better overall health. It leads to increased productivity and happiness.

In due course, Work from Home during COVID 19 have resulted increased workload, work life imbalance and also negative impact on physical wellbeing due to lack of physical exercise (Hakanen, J.J et.al(2018)). Drastic change in work culture has led to imbalance in emotional wellbeing which is due to lack of all forms of interactions with team has led to sense of loneliness and disconnect from the real world (Borle, P et.al (2022), Hawkley, L.C et.al (2010). Remote work environment, increased screen time, necessity to be available online results in increase anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO) and insecurity (Killgore, et.al(2020)). All the factors of work from home have negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of the employees. Though this was experienced by most in the employee segment, they did not change job during remote work period (Buli´nska-Stangrecka, et.al (2020)). Hence, we postulate that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The time spent for work at the home office positively influence the job satisfaction.

1.3 Facility at home and work from home:

Ergonomics is considered to be the most important factor contributing to safety and health issues. Remote working requires certain arrangements at home like a high-speed stable internet connection, a computer, and a phone to work from home.

Indian government is considering to legislate work from home for employees. Most of the companies are functioning hybrid mode due to pandemic the structuring of the framework would regulate and define the liability of the

employers towards its employees (India.com, February 2022). Some of the options in consideration include fixing the working hours and reimbursement of basic expenses like internet bills and electricity that are incurred due to remote working. So facility to work from home like office definitely has an influence on the health related issues, productivity and job satisfaction of the employee. Hence, we postulate that:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). The facility available in the home office has a significant positive impact on work ability, physical and psychological stress symptoms, and job satisfaction.

1.4 Employer's initiatives to promote mental wellbeing of employees and job satisfaction:

Employee fatigue is considered as one of the biggest hindrances for productivity and well-being at the workplace (Wright, T.A et al, (2007)). ADP survey, reveals that Indian labour force are the most overburdened in the past year. In a survey of 1,909 workers in India, 72 percent of them said they were experiencing stress at least once during the workweek. Microsoft India, InMobi, Zest have devised a new strategy of availing sick leave for employees, they can utilise this leave anytime during the year. Sick leaves are given new term named Sick and Mental health leave, it provided for employees to take a break from work and rejuvenate themselves (Times now, June 2022). Asia Service Centres at Sun Life have taken measures to improvise and re energise in-person team interaction. Thus, they encourage family & fun campaigns, virtual coffee meets, and virtual get-togethers resonate with employees. Microsoft India has recently collaborated with Happify to provide opportunity for employees to involve in activities that acts as a stress buster and provides relief (Business Insider, December 2022).

Many Indian corporates have taken measures to address the mental well-being of their employees. Corporates are taking measures to Provide COVID-19 support, frame Policies around COVID-19 vaccines, Recognition and rewards for wellness, Train leaders and managers to offer support.

Based on these reports, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The Employers initiatives to boost mental well-being for WFH employees has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

1.5 Perceived Job Autonomy:

Job autonomy can be described a s the degree to which one can control the work environment, having flexibility while performing task. Work from home during pandemic has made employers provide more autonomy to employees to determine the schedule for a day. Like number of breaks, log in and log off timings, etc. Wang et al. states that "remote work characteristics" have positively influence on the performance and well-being of employees through the experienced challenges, The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of Bakker and Demerouti (2007), discusses work autonomy can be considered as a job resource that acts as a catalyst to reduce work stress and lead to increased job satisfaction.

Hence We hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Increased autonomy during work from home has a notable positive influence on work ability, psychological and physical stress symptoms, and job satisfaction.

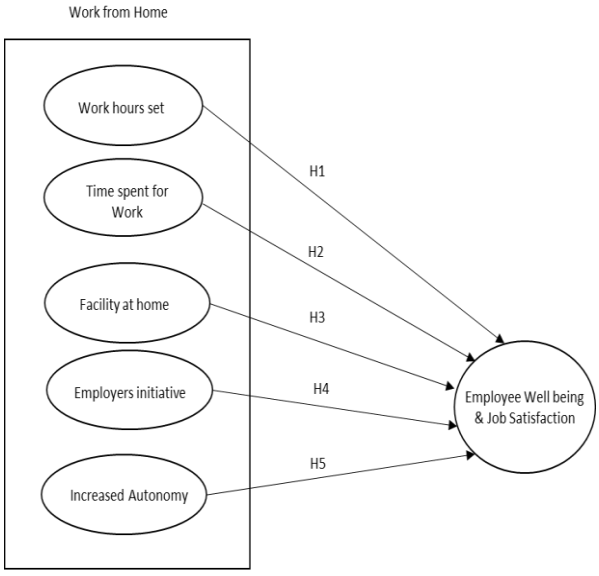

Fig 1. Proposed research model

2. Research methodology:

2.1 Statistical Analysis:

A structured non disguised questionnaire was administered online for this study. Responses were collected from 385 employees who work online for IT companies. SPSS 26.0 was used to analyse the data. Cronbach's alpha is used to

measure the reliability of each construct. If the alpha value of a construct is greater than 0.7, then it is considered reliable (Pallant, 2001). The Cronbach's α coefficient (α) of each construct is greater than 0.7, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, all the constructs of the research model are considered reliable.

Table1: Reliability and Validity Test Measures

Constructs	Cronbach Alpha (α)
Work hours set	0.8022
Time spent for work	0.8037
Physical well being	0.8137
Psychological well being	0.8101
Job satisfaction	0.834
Facility at home	0.8488
Employers initiative	0.7934
Increased Autonomy	0.8751

The above table depicts the Cronbach's alpha value for each of the variable considered in this study. Increased autonomy has the highest Cronbach's alpha value of 0.8751 and Employer's initiative has the minimal Cronbach's alpha value 0.7934. According to Hair et al. (2006) the variables are stable and reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is at least 0.7. All listed variables have values greater than 0.7.

2.2 Multiple Regression Model:

Hypothesis were analysed using Multiple regression analysis. Factors influencing work from home like Number of working hours spent for work from home, time spent for work at the home office, Facility available in the home office, employer's initiatives to boost mental well-being and perceived Job Autonomy were the independent variables and the Employee well-being (physical and psychological stress symptoms) and job satisfaction were the dependent variable. The result of multiple regression analysis is summarized in the below Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	B	Std Error	Beta	t	p Value
Work hours set	0.604	0.052	0.572	11.774	0.067
Time spent for Work	0.357	0.051	0.36	4.772	0.000
Physical well being	0.021	0.037	0.227	0.231	0.000
Psychological well being	0.612	0.051	0.563	2.056	0.000
Job satisfaction	0.726	0.057	0.541	5.862	0.000
Facility at home	0.051	0.043	0.464	5.331	0.000
Employers initiative	0.421	0.033	0.437	3.213	0.000
Increased Autonomy	0.221	0.023	0.358	0.231	0.000

Work ability, Physical well-being, psychological well-being, Job satisfaction, Facility at home, Employers initiative, Increased Autonomy were found to be statistically significant with standardized regression coefficients (p-value= 0.000), Therefore, study depicts that longer hours spent fro work at home is found to be stressful and impact employee well-being and job satisfaction, So Hypothesis H1, H3, H4, H5 are accepted while H2 is rejected.

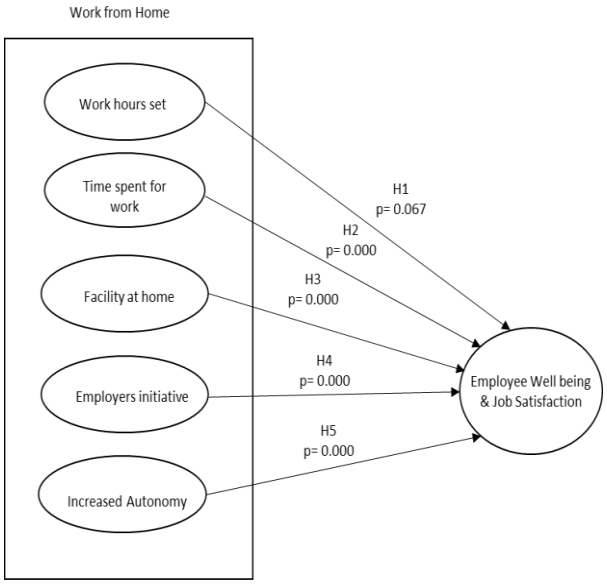

Fig 2. Revised model after Hypothesis Results

3. Discussion:

COVID 19 has revamped work culture and organization structure for many corporates around the globe through digitization. This study was intended to add more understanding about work from home and its effects on employee well-being and job satisfaction. Employee well-being is considered more crucial nowadays, as the nation-wide lockdown and social distancing protocols has made human stressful without any physical interaction with fellowmen. Through this study work from home has made employee to burn out faster as they extend more hours than the office hours, which creates psychological stress, tiredness and boredom. Hence H1 is proven true in this study. Consistent with findings of Golden and Vega (2005), job satisfaction is greatly impacted by amount of time spent in work, but remote working for longer hours causes physical and mental strain which reduces productivity, hence job satisfaction decreases. Hence H2 is rejected. IT giants namely Google, TCS, Infosys, Wipro

have provided office equipment for their employees to make them feel comfortable and to reduce physical and mental strain, they reimburse the power and internet bills for their employees (The New Indian Express, February 2022). So, facility available at home to execute office job greatly influence working ability of the employee, creates psychological stress symptoms if proper ergonomics is unavailable at home and even hampers the job satisfaction. Hence H3 is accepted in this study.

Physical and mental well-being of employees are crucial while work from home. Healthy employees can stay focused and contribute well for the organization. Healthy mindset can help employees to face uncertainties. Companies conduct lot of morale boosting events online to engage employees. Through this study employees appreciate the measures taken by their company to boost morale and break monotony. Employees feel these measures taken by their employer's shows concern on employees and instil sense of belonging. Hence hypothesis H4 is accepted in this study.

In line with the findings of Meyer et.al, autonomy during remote work helps the employees to cope up with personal and professional commitments. The additional demands of personal obligations make it difficult to maintain sufficient boundaries between work and family. Autonomy for employees gives them positive empowerment to schedule their work time and this enables them to balance family and work. So in this study, the results shows that increased autonomy has significant positive influence on job satisfaction, helps in reducing physical and mental stress and aids in work efficiency. Hence H5 is accepted

4. Conclusion:

This research study discusses the association between work from home, employee well-being and job satisfaction. The findings of this study were able to provide results for the research gap by statistically proving associations with constructs considered. This study contributes to theoretical knowledge on employee well-being and job satisfaction, a model is proposed which includes work from and its impact on factors namely work ability, employee well-being and job satisfaction. According to survey by Economic times, (July 2022), 73% companies in India consider adapting hybrid work model. Employee well-being is the prime factor considered by companies to adopt this model. Supportive work culture, peer interaction should be considered. Understanding of these factors facilitate companies to take better decisions that results in win - win situation for employees and organization.

5. Limitations and future research:

This study provides a snapshot of relationship between work from home, employee well-being and job satisfaction. It is longitudinal in nature, only IT employees are considered. To get more insights cross sectional study may be conducted. This study can also be extended to other industries like ITes, Medicare, education etc. More factors can be considered for study are variable in nature and it is time bound. As India Inc is moving towards hybrid work model, Co working space is on the rise. It would be an interesting facet to explore, future research could be done based on co working space and its impact on job satisfaction and productivity. Further this research can be extended for employers. This study is limited to India and it can be conducted across different countries to get far more interesting insights on various HR policies adapted by companies of different industries and government relations for work from home if any.

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