

WORK FROM HOME AND ITS EFFECT ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE, DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(A CASE STUDY ON EMPLOYEES OF IT SECTOR IN BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA)

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly made all companies inevitably to run its operational activities in a way of work from home (WFH). This sudden change in the operational activity system had an impact on the work-life balance of employees. This study is an effort to know the work-life balance of the employees during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of work from home. The research method used is a survey method with descriptive research type. The data used are primary data obtained from distributing the questionnaires to 240 executives (male&female) from various IT sector companies of Bhubaneswar City of Odisha. The study focused on three major factors i.e. time balance, work involvement and job satisfaction. The results showed that work from home respectively has a positive and significant effect on the work-life balance on the employees. There are parameters which are effective or disruptive for work life balances during pandemic and the results of this study are expected to be used by the company to minimize and anticipate the occurrence of negative effects on work-life balance in terms of the aspects of work from home.

Keywords: Work from home (WFH), Work-life balance (WLB)

INTRODUCTION

Immediately after entering the New Year 2020, the world was shocked by the emergence of a new virus that has spread throughout the world including in India, called as COVID-19 or commonly known as the Corona virus. The World health organization declared it as Pandemic and this took the whole world economy, social life, all to a standstill. This pandemic had a major impact on various sectors of industries affecting Indian Economy as well. Almost all companies from different sectors have to do their operations from home except some essential services like health sectors, banks etc. Hence all businesses started running by making the employees work from closed peripheries of their home for the safety of the employees and to prevent further transmission. This new and safe method of work from home though helped in running the companies at their usual pace but this new work culture of working from home (WFH) has a major impact on work life balance of employees both male and females.

Work-life balance is a broad concept that involves setting proper priorities between work (career and ambition) on the one hand and life (happiness, leisure, family, and spiritual development) on the other. So, a company that sets a work-life balance in its employee work system is a company that can help employees achieve a level of balance between work and personal life outside of work, in an effort for employees to achieve self-motivation and welfare that allows them to perform various roles effectively and efficiently.

Work-life balance can be achieved by working time duration for approximately 6 hours a day. The intended schedule allows for 6 hours of work followed by 1 hour of break. 10 hours are dedicated to non-work activities and 8 hours designated for sleep. Likewise, every entrepreneur is obliged to implement the stipulation of working hours, namely 40 hours a week. A person with a working duration of more than 48 hours in a week will experience an imbalance in his work-life balance. There are 3 aspects acting as dimensions that can measure work-life balance, namely:

1. Time balance,
2. Work involvement.
3. Job Satisfaction

Work from home is a generic term for a wide variety of working practices that involve information communication technologies (ICTs) and a work location other than a main office. Work from home can have a positive or negative impact on work-life balance for every employee. This can have different results because work-life balance has a unique benchmark, namely a return to one's life values and priorities; for example, for some people work from home can improve the quality of their relationships with their families. However, work from home can increase the blurring of boundaries between work and family, making the effort to separate time for work and time for family more difficult. Apart from these examples and many other positive and negative impacts that can be felt by every employee. There are 4 aspects that act as dimensions in measuring work from home, namely: work location, information and communication technology (ICT), time, relationships with co-workers. The research is done on 240 executives (male & female) from various IT sector companies of Bhubaneswar City of Odisha. This study intends

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

In context with the above 3 factors, this study is an effort;

To find out the effect of work from home on work-life balance of employees. To analyse the effect of work life balance due to work from home on both male and female employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Malik Muhammad Imran, Gomez Solomon Fernando, Ahmad Mehboob, and Saif Muhammad Iqbal, (2010), have contributed a paper on "Examining the Relationship of Work Life Balance, Job Satisfaction and Turnover in Pakistan" on OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development.

This research delves into the impact of achieving work life balance and experiencing job satisfaction on the turn over intentions of medical professionals with a focus on doctors. The study encompasses a random sample of 204 medical professionals from various hospitals across Pakistan, reflecting a 40.8% response rate. Utilizing a convenient sampling method, responses were collected and subsequently analyzed. The reliability of the measures employed was validated through Cronbach's alpha scores. The findings of this cross sectional study reveal a significant correlation between doctor effectively managing both work and life activities, heightened job satisfaction and reduced intentions to leave their positions. The data underwent thorough analysis using t-tests, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis employing SPSS for comprehensive interpretation.

The research findings conclude that there are no significant differences among male and female doctors in leaving the current job if they are provided with the better opportunity. The organizations which want to retain their valued employees are suggested to think more over the issues relating to work life balance and satisfaction of employees. The negative relationship of work life balance, job satisfaction and turnover intentions provides a guideline for the organizations that the more organizations provide better facilities to maintain the balance between the work and the non work activities the more employees will tend to remain with the same organization.

- Anbalagan Dr. K. and Priya A. Gowry, (2011), have published a research article on "Work-Life Balance of Employees in Banking Sector in Kanyakumari District" on the the Asia Pacific Journal of Research in Business Management (APJRBM), Volume 2, Issue 12 (December, 2011). The study has been carried out in Kanyakumari district. For the present study primary data were collected from the respondents. A well framed questionnaire was used to collect more meaningful and maximum information. Initially a pilot study has been conducted to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Employees working in both public and private sector banks are selected for this study. Employees working in different categories viz. low, middle and top level executives are selected on simple random sampling method. 75 samples have been selected for the study for an empirical research work to draw the inferences. Equal importance has given in the selection of sample respondents in both public and private sector and levels of management. The paper has studied the effects of family life on women's job performance and work attitudes.
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The study shows a noteworthy contrast in occupational commitment between women with and without children. Contrary to expectations, women with younger children exhibited higher levels of commitment compared to those with older children. This unexpected finding underscores the nuanced relationship between motherhood and professional dedication. The intricate interplay of family dynamics, age of children, educational empowerment and economic considerations highlights the multifaceted nature of women's choices regarding their professional commitments. These findings shed light on the evolving landscape of gender roles and work dynamics, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping women's occupational decisions.

- Chawla Deepak & Sondhi Neena, (2011), in their article, "Assessing Work-Life Balance among Indian Women Professionals", being published in Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, have studied the subject with not only pressures of being women and being a part of the family in contemporary India, but also with the pressure on organizations to attract and retain women in the work force. The changing socio-cultural balances in India and the increase in the number of working women, make the issue more relevant for the study. An experiential survey of 75 school teachers and 75 BPO women professionals was carried out. Both the sectors were evaluated on six variables like job autonomy, fairness of rewards, organizational commitment, work exhaustion, perceived work overload, and work-family conflict.
- A composite and sector wise regression analysis demonstrated that organizational commitment, job autonomy and perceived work overload are strong contributors to a sense of balance for an employee. Indian professional is looking for supportive work places that help them manage their multiple roles. This has a spillover effect on the commitment and low attrition rate and at the same time enhance an individual's work-life balance. However, in the present paper, they have examined the nuances of the construct from the perspective of the women professional. It has been suggested that in examining the relationship between work and personal lives, gender is a significant moderating variable.
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- The authors have noticed from the research findings suggest that level of work-life balance significantly influences various individual, family and organization relevant outcomes such as employee health, employee commitment, job satisfaction and family satisfaction. In the case of Indian workforce’s work-life balance issue needs to be studied differently, as the Indians have some unique traits as compared to the western people. Despite the continuous and growing impact of so-called urbanization, secularization, and Westernization, the traditional joint household, both in ideal and in practice, remains the primary social force in the lives of most Indians.
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The entire work is based on secondary data study based on available literature along with some real life study on IBM, one of Australia’s largest IT companies, is one of the country’s most female-friendly workplaces. They have incorporated the summary of IBM Australia’s Female-Friendly Workplace Strategies and argued by saying that work-life

balance is key driver of employees' satisfaction. The study shows strong links between work-life balance policies and reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and job satisfaction. Other benefits include improved recruitment and retention rates with associated cost savings, reduced sick leave usage, a reduction in worker stress and improvements in employee satisfaction and loyalty, greater flexibility for business operating hours, an improved corporate image.

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- K.ThriveniKumari & Dr.V.RamaDevi, in 2015 has done a study on “Work Life balance of Women employees in selected service sectors, published in Pacific Business Review International ,Volume 7, Issue 10, April 2015.The study examined work-life balance of women employees and analyse various factors affecting work-life balance. The women employees in Bangalore city were taken for the study. The researcher has drawn 360 women employees working in various sectors like banking, insurance, IT, BPO, health care and education constituting 60 employees from each sector for the purpose of the study. Data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire and data was analyzed using statistical tools like ANOVA and Mean score. The study revealed that the levels of work-life balance of women employees in select service sectors of the study are significantly different. The results show that there is considerable variation within the levels of work-life balance of women working across different select service-sectors of the study. Women workforce is increasing and their contribution to the organizations is also considered to be valuable. It is very necessary for the organizations to acknowledge women employees by providing more appropriate work-life balance measures for them. Striking a healthy work-life balance is imperative for all the employees irrespective of the industry to which they belong. It is the joint responsibility of the employer and the employees to ensure strong work-life balance that can bring in fruitful results to organization as well as employees also.
- Mrs.R.Banurekha, Thangaraj.S, Santhosh.P, Srihari.V in 2018, did a study on “Work Life Balance on Women Employees in Banking Sector” in Krishna district of TamilNadu. The

work is published in International Journal of Research in Engineering and Management, Vol. 4, 2020, pp.319 – 334 The study focussed on the objectives of knowing the work life balance of women employees in banking sector, along with analyzing the factors of the study with the working environment. e.g. separate from family, childcare, self-management, personal life expectation, financial assistance, work expectation, work life balance policies. The data was collected from the women employees of privatized and public sector banks i.e ICICI bank and SBI bank of Krishna district, Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted through interview technique of selecting the respondents with convenience sampling method. The study was conducted through qualitative and quantitative method. The statistical tools used for the study using spss 17.0 version with the tools of mean and standard deviation. The collected data is analysed in two parts i.e. on demographic profile of the respondents and making the analysis of variable factors of service quality in Retail Banking in India. The study concluded that- respondents are satisfied with working environment. For the second parameter of separate from family the respondents are not interested to separate from family. For the self-management, the respondents are satisfied and they are self-managed to do their work. In the personal life expectation the mean as per the mean value and standard deviation, their life expectation is fulfilled by their job achievements. The work expectation of the respondent in the office are satisfied. Through Work Life balance policies, the respondents are satisfied with facilities provided by the banking sector. Hence overall their work life balance is well maintained in both public sector and privatised banks

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used is a descriptive sampling and verification analysis. The data used are primary data obtained from distributing questionnaires to about 240 employees of different IT sector companies. The data is processed using the SPSS.15 application-tools

Factors like Work locations, Information and communication technologies used, work timings, and relationship with co-workers are taken as X. (work from home)

Factors like Time management, work involvement and job satisfaction are taken as Y (work life balance)

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Analysis

The data below is the ideal score in classifying the results of the questionnaire responses

Table-1. Criteria for the Percentage of Respondents'

N	Score(%)	Criteria
0		
1	20.00%-	Very Low(V

	36.00%	L)
2	36.01%- 52.00%	Low(L)
3	52.01%- 68.00%	Good Enough (GE)
4	68.01%- 84.00%	Good(G)
5	84.01%- 100%	Very Good(V G)

The following is the data obtained from the distribution of questionnaires:

Overall respondents' responses to the work from home variable have 1 piece of strongly disagree, 3 disagree, 55 not sure, agree 115 and strongly agree 66. The percentage of the total actual score of the work from home variable is 80% so it is included in the good category.

No	Statement	Distribution of Respondents' Answers					Actual Score	Ideal Score	Actual Score (%)	Criteria
		S D	D	N S	G	VG				
1	Working time does not take up my time in carrying out my personal or family life.	-	1	6	17	6	118	150	78%	Good
2	I work from home according to the time set by the company.	-	1	4	15	10	124	150	82%	Good
3	I still have time to do hobbies and other activities outside of work activities.	-	-	8	18	4	116	150	77%	Good
4	I can carry out my role well both in work and in family.	-	-	6	18	6	120	150	80%	Good
5	My involvement in family activities and work activities is done in a balanced way.	-	-	6	21	3	117	150	78%	Good
6	I do not feel depressed either in doing work or when doing activities outside of work.	-	-	8	19	3	116	150	76%	Good
7	I feel happy and comfortable with my work and family life	-	-	4	17	9	125	150	83%	Good
8	I feel satisfied with a balanced life between work activities and activities outside of work	-	-	6	20	4	118	150	78%	Good
Total		0	2	48	145	45	947	1200	79%	Good

Overall respondents' responses to the work-life balance variable have 2 disagree answers,

48 not sure, 145 agree and 45 strongly agree. The percentage of the actual score of all work-life balance variables is 79%. Hence it is included in the good category.

VERIFICATION ANALYSIS

The following are the results of a simple linear regression test using SPSS.15 application, which examines the effect of work from home on work-life balance

Table4. The Results of the Simple Linear Regression Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	13.361	4.094		3.264	.003
WFH	.573	.127	.650	4.523	.000

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Based on table4, the resulting linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y=13,361 +0,573X_1$$

The regression equation shows that the constant value is 13.361, the work from home(X) coefficient value is 0.573 with a positive sign, meaning that work from home has a direct relationship with work-life balance. So from this equation it can be concluded that every time you do work from home, the work-life balance variable will increase by 0.573.

The *t* count value of the work from home(X) variable is greater than the table value. By calculating the *t* table using significance limit of 0.05 and an error level of 5%. the results obtained are as follows:

$$t \text{ table} = (\alpha/2; n-k-1)$$

$$t \text{ table} = (0.05 /2; 30-2-1)$$

$$t \text{ table} = (0.025;$$

27) Information:

k=number of independent variables

n=number of samples

df=(27) value generated based on these calculations is then seen in the *t* - distribution table. Thus, the *t*-table value is 2.043.

Thus *t* count is greater than *t*-table (4.523>2.043) and a significance level of 0.003<0.05.

So it can be concluded that work from home has a significant effect on work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that work from home had a positive and significant effect on work-life balance with *t* count > *t* table (4.523> 2.043) and a significance level of 0.003 <0.05. So, the higher the application of work from home, the higher the work-life balance of the employee. However, work from home can also have a negative impact on an employee's work-life balance if it is not done in planned way. In this case, we need to pay attention to the lowest results obtained from questionnaires and making it an evaluation in carrying out work from home in the future in order to minimize the negative impact of implementing work from home on work-life balance.

The lowest result in the work from home questionnaire is the statement "I can easily communicate about work with my co-workers", which in this case can be used as an evaluation that in the future in doing work from home, the means of communicating between colleagues can be paid more attention so that communication can happen more easily. Meanwhile, in the work-life balance questionnaire, the lowest gain is in the statement "I don't feel depressed either in doing work or when doing activities outside of work". Considering this statement, in the future the IT sector organization must pay more attention to the duration and working hours of employees so that they remain within the standard work-life balance so that the work time and personal life of employees are well shared and enable the employees to carry out work and

life activities in a happy state. The employees should not feel depressed or unhappy while or after working hours. A happy employee is a productive employee- this should be well understood by the IT sector organizations and accordingly create good work culture keeping in mind factors like time balance, work involvement which will lead to job satisfaction of the employees. This will always enhance in maintaining proper balance between work and home even if employees are “working from home”

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