

Study on the Impact of Working from Home on Employee Productivity during COVID-19

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Abstract

The ongoing crisis of COVID-19 has drastically altered our lives, necessitating a variety of changes for both organisations and individuals to cope in this trying period. In this dynamic world during the COVID-19 pandemic, working professionals have a hard time to create a balance between work and personal life. Work policies are sometimes so rigid that it creates an insecurity to the job, and thereby impacts the performance of the workforce. The purpose of the study was aimed at employees working from home and the aim is to assess the impact that working from home has on productivity or performance levels of employees working in Bangalore. More public and private organisations are allowing workers to work from home as a flexible option. When opposed to office jobs, working from home (WFH) has both benefits and drawbacks for employees. Working from home has an effect on employee efficiency, according to the findings of the report but not significantly. The problems are flexibility of working environment, work noise distraction, supervisor's interpersonal relationship with subordinates, presence of job aid, the use of performance feedback and improve of work incentives in the organization so that to motivate employees to perform their job. While some of the variables are positive or negative, the effect of some of the factors is dependent on the employees' characteristics and attitudes.

Keywords: COVID-19, Productivity, Employees efficiency.

Introduction

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has disrupted the way organisations operate, as well as life in general. As the number of infections grew, governments across the world closed their borders and shut down physical work sites in an effort to stop the virus from spreading. Organizations have adjusted their work environments to reflect these new realities, including a rapid change in knowledge staff working from home. COVID-19 has inflicted massive economic and social havoc, so this sudden stop is understandable.

The global policy response to COVID-19 is a once-in-a-lifetime natural experiment in which many organisations around the world find themselves with a completely physically distributed workforce for the first time. Furthermore, workers had to rapidly transition to relying on digital communication technology to keep up with the competition.

Despite all of the tales and theories about employees working from home during the pandemic, there is very no systemic information about how these sudden shocks have affected employees' day-to-day work activities. In particular, how have workers' work habits changed? Have the frequency and breadth of meetings and email activity changed as staff and organisations adjust to a new working environment?

The notion of a workplace is evolving from one of a physical location to one of a mental state. Because of this, the physical position of a workplace is increasingly losing its significance to the advancement of information technology Modern working life has adapted the work-from-home scheme.

Because of decent internet access, affordable prices, and more user-friendly devices, laptops, and other similar gadgets, it has become far easier to complete tasks outside of the office.

Working from home is the only flexible work system in the twenty-first century. These structures have both positive and negative consequences.

Employees who work from home have more time to concentrate on their jobs. When working away from the office, daily face-to-face interaction with co-workers is significantly reduced. In the absence of physical surveillance.

Employees have more freedom in how, where, and under what conditions they complete assigned tasks. This also improves employee flexibility in terms of job efficiency. Working from home allows for greater work autonomy is likely to be linked to increased productivity.

Factors influencing employee's performance

Some workers prefer to work from home rather than in an office, and there are many reasons for this choice, which are mentioned below:

Flexible scheduling is one of the strongest arguments for working from home. Employees with flexible schedules have more autonomy in managing their everyday lives, which includes both employee and family tasks, such as getting their children to school or going to the doctor, being able to sleep in and work late, beginning and stopping early, working forty hours in four days instead of five or six days a week, arranging personal appointments (e.g. surgeon, dentist, hairdresser) during office hours and finishing work later in the evening without taking vacation days.

Another advantage of working from home for workers is that they save time driving to work and escape rush-hour traffic. For several workers, the ability to avoid the hassle of commuting in rush hour traffic may be the most significant benefit.

Employees who work from home will also benefit financially in a variety of ways.

They will save money by doing away with the commute to work. Employees will also save money by avoiding the prices of workplace attire and lunches.

Working from home has a lot of advantages, particularly for "new mothers or physically handicapped people who find travel difficult or impossible but need or want to remain in the workforce. Furthermore, working from home allows people who live in remote areas to find jobs.

Drawbacks of WFH

There are also several drawbacks of working from home for employees. Technical issues that cannot be resolved remotely, wage disparities between office and teleworkers; employee isolation, limitations on daily contact with co-workers, and difficulties in forming union. Another important drawback for the employees is the hindrance of career advancement.

Co-workers who stay in the workplace have a better chance of being noticed and being promoted faster, since management is unaware of the interpersonal communication skills and relationships of the employees. This condition has an effect on his or her potential job opportunities, as his or her current boss or bosses do not have a good view of the employee working from home and are unable to make suggestions.

The final disadvantage of operating from home for employees is the lack of space for informal contact networks with co-workers. Employees who do not have such experiences may feel disconnected from their co-workers and the company's objectives and values.

Review of literature

1. (P.CHRISTABELLA, 2014): made a study of “The Impact of working environment of employees performance the case of institute of finance management in Dar Es Salaam”. The general objective of this study is to assess the impact of working environment on employees’ performance at the Institute of Finance Management in Dar es Salaam. The study explored only impact of working environment on employees’ performance at Institute of Finance Management. Therefore, other researchers should conduct study in other companies or institutions including those located up country. Also, further study should aim to explore advantages which the organizations reap on improving working environment
2. (Rupietta & Beckmann, 2016): studied “Working from Home-What is the Effect on Employees’ Effort?” This study investigates how working from home influences

employees' work effort. Additionally, consider the working from home frequency in our empirical analysis.

3. (Thorstensson, 2020): made a study on “The Influence of Working from Home on Employees' Productivity.” The purpose of this study is to have a broader understanding of the connection between working from home practice and productivity of the employees and to discover whether there has been a change in the productivity factors for the last 20 years. The target group is primarily both public and private organisations, which offer or consider offering their employees to work from home and employees who work from home or consider working from home.
4. (Ward, 2017) studies “The Impact that working from home has on the overall motivation and performance levels of employees working within a banking organisation”. To gather an understanding of working from home in terms of motivation and performance levels of employees. Evaluated data collected to discover whether working from home raises motivation and performance levels and whether this has any impact on work life balance”
5. (Mazumdar, Kumar, & Das, 2020) revealed on their study “Work from home strategies and its impact on work life balance and organisation commitment” The first objective of this study is to identify the significant dimensions of QWL of academic and the second objective is to determine the relationship between the QWL and OC among these academic and non-academic staff members. This study adopted survey technique through personal distribution and the respondents were selected based on convenience sampling method. The results indicate that job characteristics, supervision and role conflict represent the quality of work life dimensions of the academic.
6. (Messenger & Liave, 2017) opined in their study “Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work” The objectives of the EWCS are: (a) to measure working conditions across European countries on a harmonised basis; (b) to analyse relationships between different aspects of working conditions; (c) to identify groups at risks and issues of concern, as well as areas of progress. Findings of this report suggest that this form of T/ICTM is far more likely to be problematic because it appears to supplement, rather than substitute, work in the office.
7. (DeFilippis, Impink, & Singell, 2020) Described in their study “Collaborating during coronavirus: The impact of COVID 19 on the nature of work” data establish that employees changed their pattern of email and meeting activity in response to lockdowns, findings are not without limitations. First, they not have access to meta-data concerning the content of meetings or emails. As such, it cannot corroborate whether the purpose of emails and meetings has changed in the post-lockdown period. Future research with more granular data could reveal how firms of different sizes, working in different industries, and with different capacities to shift to remote work, have adjusted to working from home. A second limitation is that the study is unable to identify specific firms or organizations from the dataset, so it cannot fully determine the extent to which the changes in communication patterns are driven by changes to the supply of work or to changes in the demand for products and services.

8. (Alexandra Beauregard, Beauregard, Basile, & Canonico, 2013) In the research of “Home is where the work is: A new study of homeworking in Acas-and beyond” was to understand what made for a successful homeworking arrangement at an individual level, to understand what made for effective management of homeworking from an organisational perspective, and to provide an updated review of existing Acas homeworking policy. Homeworking and partial homeworking employees are more likely to work in excess of their contracted hours than office workers. Mobile workers work significantly more hours in excess of their contracts than all other groups of workers.
9. (Canonico, 2016) made a study on “Putting the work-life interface into a temporal context: an empirical study of work-life balance by life stage and the consequences of homeworking” to understand whether work-life balance (which includes conflict and enrichment) differs by life stage and if so, what those differences are, and b) to determine the potential impact of different combinations of conflict and enrichment on employee's job-related attitudes and well-being. One of the main objectives of Paper II and III is to expand our knowledge regarding the consequences of a work-life initiative. findings suggest that differences in perceptions of the employee organisation relationship may produce adverse outcomes in terms of employees' attitudes and behaviour.
10. (P, 2020) “Work From Home During COVID 19: Employees Perception And Experiences” The study is purely based on the responses of 50 respondents working from home belonging to different sectors during COVID 19. Data is collected during April 2020, the time frame when all the employees are compelled to work from home. Majority of the respondents of this study are from teaching sector. All the respondents of this study are working from home since one month continuously. Can be concluded as, willingness of the respondents to work from home is dependent on having the comfortable space at home
11. (Chung, Seo, & Birkett) conducted a survey of UK employees with the aim of understanding how the COVID19 pandemic, the lockdown and widespread working from home has influenced a range of work-life issues. This data suggests that individual employees’ predominantly positive experiences of home working during this period have influenced their attitudes and preferences towards flexible working and the division of housework/care for the future
12. (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020) studied “The Impact of Pandemic COVID -19 in Workplace” This research paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. Data collection is based on primary data and secondary data. This research paper aims to present a deeper insight to analyze the impact of COVID -19 in work place during this period of adversity and what all measures are required by employers and HR personnel to be take into consideration for proper organizational functioning to get over the current situation of COVID -19 crisis or in any adversity. The current pandemic situation has demonstrated that WFH is an effective business process to ensure continuity of business and also to provide work life balance to employees. It has significant economic and productivity benefit as well to organizations, if managed effectively. However, WFH cannot be seen as

a panacea for all organization problems. It has to be used in a judicious manner to ensure employees are trained, motivated and harnessed to deliver the best towards business result.

13. (Dockery & Bawa, 2020) studied “Working from Home in the COVID-19 Lockdown” Effect for Employers-productivity and costs, Effects for workers themselves, The effect on families. So the positive news is that WFH can potentially support better family relationships, and particularly for parents of young children. Again, for workers’ own mental health and for family functioning, it is important to try to set boundaries, and clearly delineate both time and space for work and non-work activities. And fellas, while you’re there working at home, try to pitch in and do a bit more of the housework.
14. (Sahni, 2020) studied “Impact of COVID-19 on Employee Behavior: Stress and Coping Mechanism During WFH (Work From Home) Among Service Industry Employees”. Though the findings suggest that managerial support is valued the most, formal employee assistance programs were non-existing in almost all the organisations. In addition, it was also observed that the private organisations are doing better job in terms of support during this crisis as compared to the government entities. . The wellbeing of the employees could be significantly impaired if the organization does not have strategies to reduce the stressful conditions in their company.
15. (M. Kniffin, 2020) COVID-19 and the Workplace: Implications, Issues, and Insights for Future Research and Action, COVID-19 abruptly accelerated the speed of changes associated with working outside of co-located offices. Virtual work practices are likely to spread as organizations realize the cost-savings from structuring labour with fewer full-time employees and more contractors connected technologically. Indeed, the impacts of the pandemic will affect some groups of workers more strongly than others, for example, based on their age, race and ethnicity, gender, or personality.

Methodology

Scope of the study

The study is purely based on the responses of 50 respondents working from home belonging to different sectors during COVID 19. Data is collected during April 2021, the time frame when all the employees are compelled to work from home. Majority of the respondents of this study are from IT sector. All the respondents of this study are working from home since lockdown continuously.

Objective of the study

- To measure productivity of the employees working from home.
- To study the factors impacting or influencing employee’s productivity while working from home.

Research Question: Does working from home have any impact on the productivity of employees during COVID-19?

Type of research design: Descriptive research design

Type of data

- **Primary data:** Data will be collected to obtain the desired information through structured questionnaire.
- **Secondary data:** Data is collected through books, business journals, magazines, newspapers.

Sampling design

- **Sampling parameter:** Employees working from home of Bangalore City
- **Sample size:** A sample of 50 respondents can be taken in order to carry the study.
- **Sample technique:** Convenience Sampling.

Data collection and analysis

Convenience sampling was used in the research as mentioned in the methodology. Questionnaire method was used to collect information. Some questions were constructed based on likert scale to rank the collected data. During the data collection the majority of respondents was female that is 65% and the remaining 35% were male.

Table 1. Data on Employees productivity in WFH setup compared to being in the office on a scale of 0-5

Degrees	No. of respondents	Percentage
5	6	12%
4	23	46%
3	11	22%
2	7	14%
1	3	6%

Source: Primary Survey Data

Table-1 depicts the employee's productivity in WFH setup during COVID-19. We can see that 47% of the employees are found to be productive and satisfied by the work from home setup. It cites that the WFH is somehow affecting the employee's productivity based on the survey participants.

Table 2. Stress factor

Yes	22	44%
No	28	56%

Table-2 depicts the employees stress compared to working in office. We can see that 56% of the people are found to be less stressed working at home than working in office. This is due to frequent supervision at office which creates an environment of stress for some employees. Moreover, the fact that employees work in fear knowing that they can get affected by the Corona virus at any point of time working in public. Whereas, the freedom of working from home without a physical supervision gives them a sense of confidence which in turns releases their stress level.

Table 3. Degree of productivity

More Productive	11	22%
Equally Productive	26	52%
Less Productive	13	26%

Table-3: depicts whether the employees are equally productive, more productive or less productive while working from Home. 52% of the respondents are found to be equally productive when they work from home. It is understood that majority of the survey participants' productivity has not been adversely affected although there are certain factors which affect their overall work condition. However, those factors are not strong enough to negatively affect their productivity.

Table 4. Challenges faced by employees while working from home

Communicating with team	7	7%
Gaining access to essentials	17	17%
Keeping a schedule	33	33%
Too many distractions at home	43	43%

Table-4: depicts the challenges the employees face while working at home. 43% employees feels they have too many distractions at home. As it has already been mentioned 65% of the respondents are females, they are more exposed distractions such as household chores compared to males. 33% employees feel keeping a schedule is a challenge for them, whereas 17% employees feel gaining access to essentials is a factor which is difficult to cope up with. 7% employees face difficulty in communicating with their team. The researcher also found that 70% of the employees work schedule has been affected due to the challenges faced by them while working from home.

Findings and suggestions

There are enormous factors affecting the productivity of employees at work as well as at their respective homes. In this study, the discussion will focus on the correlation between the employee's productivity and the work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also try to compare the productivity of the employee while working from home and at the office.

- i. Working from home is not as simple as it appears. To perform properly, this necessitates complete dedication to work duties. The concept also necessitates a concentration on the work routine. While following the notion of working from home, it is necessary to draw boundaries between the domains of home and work.
- ii. There are undeniably numerous advantages to working from home. However, this places a person in a comfort zone, which leads to lethargy and numerous diversions. Another issue to resolve is time management. Employees who work from home may find it easier to balance their business obligations with their personal lives and family responsibilities (e.g., taking care of kids or old guardians). Work from home can be embraced by organisations for environmental concerns as well, as it can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution by reducing the number of automobiles on the road.
- iii. Employers and HR professionals must play a critical role in forging bonds with employees while they work from home and they must connect to the employees on a regular basis. During the COVID-19 period, the word has emerged to re-imagine HR as stakeholder management. As a result, HR must fulfil several tasks when it comes to human resources. The COVID era has prompted HR to rethink some questions about motivating, empowering, educating, and improving workers, as well as the implementation of a skilling method. People employed at the ground level and in lower-profile positions must be trained on how to complete their tasks and report on their progress to their superiors through mobile or any other platform. As a result, people will be knowledgeable and multi-skilled in a range of ways, and their skill sets will be enhanced.

Limitations

This study looked only at employees working in Bangalore Region regarding the impact of working environment and their job performance. However, the limitations could be considered as an opportunity for future research on the effect of work environment and performance of employees in different units. It may also include both public and private sector employees.

Conclusion

The working environment is critical in inspiring workers to complete their tasks. Since money alone is insufficient to encourage the high levels of workplace performance expected in today's competitive business climate. In today's dynamic organisational environments, the

ability to recruit, retain, and inspire high-performance employees is becoming increasingly relevant. Employee output would further increase if the issues found during the research are addressed properly, according to the report. It is discovered that the working atmosphere in which employees find themselves in while working from home doesn't have a significant impact on their productivity. However, there are various challenges which are threatening the employee's productivity. Employees are suggested to make suitable working arrangement while they are working at home as they are more likely to function comfortably and efficiently if they are in a pleasant working atmosphere.

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