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Impact of Work from Home (WFH) on the Work Performance of the Employees during the Coronavirus Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to study the effect of organizational impact of coronavirus in the workplace

Research Implication: This paper provides a preliminary understanding of the concept of working from home with the reference to coronavirus pandemic.

Findings: The change in living style after the disruption caused by coronavirus has become a new normal. Internet and the use of technology has become an integrated part of many in this crisis. Businesses and Organizations were forced to work from home but it had its own merits and demerits. Productivity of employees have been increased. Not travelling to workplace is time saving which can be invested on work or personal life. Cyberattacks has become rampant during the pandemic and employees must be educated to protect themselves.

Originality/Value: The paper brings clarity over the concept of work from home, it benefits and well as challenges related to it in a comprehensive way. It also brings light to some suggestion which can be used to overcome them.

Keywords: Work from home, WFH in Pandemic, Change in workplace during pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus is one of the most deadly virus ever known which has already taken the lives of many people across the countries. It has shaken up all types of business and had a wide reaching effect on the way organizational activities are performed. The effect of novel coronavirus was inevitable and had a significant impact on the day to day lives of people. It hampered the way how employees used to perform their tasks in a company. The governments across the world imposed strict lockdowns as a measure to prevent the crisis. Due to frequent lockdowns, social distancing and for the safety of own lives and in order to keep organization's operations going, businesses had to shift their way of working and were forced to work from home for the safety

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of their employees. This research paper attempts to examine the impact of coronavirus on the work performances of employees when they work from home.

(A) Research Objectives

- To understand the basic concept of work from home during the pandemic.
- To study the current scenario of work from home.
- To analyse the factors which affect employees when working from home.
- To examine the impact of coronavirus on the work performances of employees when working from home.

(B) Limitations of the Study

The researcher reviewed many research papers involving secondary method of study. As there is no actual field work involved due to paucity of time the conclusion derived is based on books, articles and other research paper and not on any actual research.

(C) Hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between work performances of employees and work from home
- **Alternate Hypothesis:** There is significant relationship between work performances of employees and work from home

II. CHANGES IN WORKPLACE DUE TO COVID:

1. Connecting with people

When the first lockdown declared, it pushed people into despair, not knowing when all this will be over people went back to their village. Organizations and Industries could not do anything with the absence of their employees. HRs had to face and overcome this obstacle, bring people back as soon as possible and then resuming the production process. For the organizations which allowed people to work from home had to make sure that their employees possess skills to manage the sophisticated system of managing everything online from their homes. Not everyone had quiet work space, high speed connection, good quality headset and video camera to ensure work and communication is done smoothly. The only option left was to train employees about the technology and help them in the process of learning and getting used to the technology. People had to cope with this adversity, and had to look after their family members, children and themselves. Employers can play a great role in helping them to overcome with positivity, resilience and psychology. (Pandey, 2020)

2. Establishing Normalcy

To establish normalcy in such crisis in not an easy task. It was important for the employers to lay the framework for their employees working from home. Taking some time for the family, completing the task before the due dates, regularly doing the assigned tasks with slow but steady improvement in work performance are some components which could act as a yardstick to measure normalcy. Employers had to make sure their employees are continuously learning and improve the way they are working from home. Proper communication was a crucial factor to keep the employees motivated and help them in staying on the right track.

3. Security

Employers had to ensure that their employees are working in a safe and secure environment. Many companies deal with information which are meant to be kept confidential and it is on risk when employees are working from their homes. Getting right antivirus, installing windows firewall, keeping the devices up to date with latest security installed are a few things to consider to keep the information safe. To ensure that security breach does not happen, employers needed to mandate security and encryption to be enabled on all the devices so that in case a device is lost or get stolen, important informations are still safe. Furthermore, employees must be taught the necessary steps which should be taken in case they notice cyber-attacks, attempts of phishing or a malware installed on their device. (Ahmad, 2020)

4. Emotional Wellbeing

Loneliness and isolation is the most overlooked aspects in this pandemic, people working continuously while being locked in their homes which has a negative impact on their mental health. To normalize working from home in future, companies are ought to find the ways to overcome this obstacle. With the help of technology it is not that difficult, employers can host meetings for their employees for celebrations for reaching a milestone, for birthday of employees or to congratulate employees on achieving something significant. Icebreaking sessions can be held between colleagues to catch up with each other. This friendly approach will help employees in feeling less isolated or lonely, and also helps in reducing stress and improving their overall wellbeing.

III. IMPLICATION OF WORK FROM HOME IN REAL LIFE

It is usually very difficult for a working women to maintain a perfect balance between work and their responsibilities of home. Work from home plays an imperative role for women, it helps them in managing the dual obligation of overseeing home and the work place. In the

event of frequent lockdowns and hesitancy to attend gatherings for the safety of everyone, most of the people and their family members had to stay and work from home. This resulted in increment of responsibilities of a working women. In the current situation it was a difficult task to get a space to work and manage time efficiently. However, with proper time management and maintaining the equilibrium of work life and personal life helped them in being more rational and dedicated. (Pandey, 2020)

Perhaps the greatest benefit of working from home is the time it saves, there is no need to travel to and from the office. Whether or not someone's office is nearby or somewhere far, they need to go out in order to work. Considering how arduous and time consuming it is to travel in busy traffic in India, it was a great relief for people working from their homes. The time saved can be used productively and can be invested to complete the due tasks or for themselves. This time saved can also be invested in exercising to keep oneself fit and healthy. A peaceful mind and healthy body helps in increasing productivity. (KIRSTEN, 2010)

On the account of coronavirus pandemic people had to stay in their home for various reasons. Schools and Colleges classes were shifted to online. Working people had to deal with available space at home and it was difficult to have a work space if more than one person were working. Maintaining the balance was a serious change when it comes from working from home. Not only people needed to keep up with their mental as well physical exhaustion but also balancing work and personal life. (Chinniah, Proches, & Taylor, 2020)

The advancement of technology did help in the process while working from home. Connecting with peer groups, superiors or their subordinates was not a barrier while working from home. The only issue was getting used to the technology. HR had to devise their own plans and strategies to get the most out of their employees in this unprecedented time.

It was an imperative task for the companies to rebuild, redefine and reskill the resources of the company. It was crucial for them to advance and change and way how things were getting done. Companies had to ensure that the employees are getting comfortable with the virtual system of working.

It was important for the companies to devise a plan in order to get the work efficiently done. The use of technology, implementing new policies and changing the process of how things will be getting done are steps in the right direction. The work from home concept comes with own benefits, even though there are a lot of challenges when employees work from home, lower overhead cost and saving the resources makes up for it.

According to a study working from home helps in increasing productive. Employees were

found to be 13% more productive when they were allowed to work from home. (Bloom, 2014) They enjoy flexibility and enjoy they freedom of choosing from where they work, when and how they complete a work. This results in improving the morale of employees which helps in improving efficiency. (Weakliem, L, & Frenkel, 2006)

Seeing the current trend and ever rising cases of coronavirus infected patients, the future looks bleak, no one can predict when this pandemic will end and what life will look after this crisis is over. One thing we know for sure that this is a great opportunity for the businesses to explore and experiment with employees who are geographically scattered, and a perfect time to gather insights on how can work be efficiently done while working from home.

Businesses and employees claimed that due to prolonged lockdowns and following the practice of working from home they are now comfortable with it, they have learned the lessons regarding the working practices and changes which are necessary and how they can be more productive.

Employees working from home believes that their health and fitness has improved and their mental health flourished. They reported that now they are able to exercise more and sleep better. Many individuals reported that during lockdowns they spent more time with their family members resulting in positive impact on family relationships. Many individuals expressed that benefits they received by working from home is significant and they look forward to working more in the future. Overall improvised health and better mental health will help businesses and organizations as healthy workers working being productive with greater efficiency. (Clayton, Clayton, & Potter, 2020)

IV. CHALLENGES

- One of the biggest issue that the employees are facing while working from home is that the isolation from the people and society is resulting in loneliness. Frequent and prolonged lockdowns resulted in reduced human interaction. Employees reported that they feel anxious about the future and are worried about their job and their financial status. Not knowing when all of this will be over, most people agreed that the social contact was a breath of fresh air for them and stressed the importance of it on their well-being.

- As almost everything was being done with the help of internet, it was crucial for the employers to ensure that necessary infrastructure should be there for the employees to work efficiently. Online platforms for communication, internet with decent speed and necessary tools, data and technology to carry out activities were required.

- Companies now require to redefine and implement changes in order to manage and control the workflow when employees are working from home. As it is difficult and not really possible for the employers to monitor employees in a same way like they used to do before. Now it is vital to find the balance and smart solutions to manage and have proper control over the activities.

- Keeping the employees enthusiastic and motivated is also a challenge for the businesses. Especially for the organizations where it is imperative to communicate face to face. Maintaining the same level of enthusiasm and connection might not be possible when employees are working from home.

- Communication is crucial for the smooth flow of organizational activities. The lack of proper communication may break effective coordination between different departments. Necessary steps should be taken immediately in order to have proper flow of communication in the organization. Employees must consider formulating clear and concise messages and organisations must find the right way to have efficient flow of communication

- Working from home results in detachment of employees from their organizations. Lack of competitive environment is not available at home. It affects the psychological association of employees with their organization. This affects the retention of employees when working on a task as well as results in lack of motivation to complete a work on time

V. Discussion and analysis

The concept of working from home may sound easy as a concept but it is not as easy as it sounds, there are lot of intricacies involved, and a lot of things should be kept in mind while following it. Maintaining the dedication and motivation to perform the activities is crucial. In addition to that, while working form home boundaries must be established between the personal and profession life, and work of home and work of the office. Indeed there are a lot of benefits while working from home but the comfort of it should not act as a barrier in completion of tasks. Employees may face a lot of distractions and laziness but they must overcome it, setting deadlines may help in this. A routine plan must be followed while working from the home during the coronavirus crisis. Distractions must be minimised otherwise it will be really difficult for the employees to keep themselves concentrated to their work. Health should be the number one priority for everyone, enough time should be given to stay fit and healthy, exercising and meditating is now crucial to maintain the sanity.

The role of HR in this adversity is to find ways to overcome issues related to motivating employees, giving them proper training and inculcating various skills. Employees need to keep

themselves up to date with technology, analytical as well as critical thinking and keep up with consistency in this pandemic.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

- Employers must ensure that required technology is available for the smooth experience of working from home. Personal computer, a good internet connection and a webcam for video conferences are some of the crucial requirements.

- Organizations and Businesses should reflect upon the strategies which are being followed and need to prepare for potential upcoming lockdowns as the daily cases in India have reached its peak recently.

- While working from home there is a need to have a separate working space without any disturbances to focus properly and have good concentration on the tasks which are being performed otherwise it will lead to poor performance.

- It is recommended to have a proper routine plan with everything scheduled in an effective manner. Not working timely may create a lot of backlogs which may lead to frustration and stress.

- It is also important to be organized and maintain healthy lifestyle. Exercising, meditation, eating healthy and giving some time to hobbies is crucial.

- Organizations have to be supportive in order to ease off the burden in this plight, having informal sessions for regular communication is important so that employees don't feel isolated or lonely and to keep them connected with the organization.

VII. CONCLUSION

The concept of working from home is here to stay and likely to become a permanent part of the corporate world. The coronavirus crisis resulted in people being locked in their homes unwillingly but it demonstrated that working from home is an effective part of business process with significant benefits to employees and the organizations. The increase in productive will help organizations to grow tremendously. Employees must be trained and motivated with proper communication and guidance to derive full benefits of working from home.

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