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An Empirical Study of Work from Home Productivity on Employees

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ABSTRACT: Working from Home [WFH] has been rising for years, as more occupations use computers and Telecommunications, more people have reliable home Internet connections, and more families have both parents working full time. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this process by forcing a large fraction of the Global workforce to switch to WFH at least temporarily. Compared to Working from the Office [WFO], WFH has the potential to reduce commute time, provide more flexible working hours, increase job Satisfaction, and improve work-life balance. More public and private organisations offer working from home as an alternative way of working for their employees. Working from home (WFH) has both benefits and drawbacks for the employees when it is compared to the office working. While some of the researchers, claims that working from home increases the productivity of the employees, other researchers claim the opposite. This study analyses the factors having an influence on the productivity of the employees who work from home, whether the influence of these factors have on the productivity is positive or negative. The study results indicate that working from home has an influence on productivity of the employees. While influences of some of the factors are either positive or negative, the Influence of some of the factors Depend on the characteristics and attitude of the employees and the circumstances. The Covid-19 crisis across the world has increased the proportion of e-working. The transition from cubicles to the home office raised many questions in connection with companies adopting the new working conditions. Our paper provides recent evidence on the extent of this move, its impact on workplace evolution, productivity and the future prevalence of the face-to-display workplace after the easing of the lockdown.

KEYWORDS: working from home, productivity, Covid-19 pandemic, Remote Working, technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Work from Home [WFH] has been on the rise for years, as more jobs use computers and telecommunications, more people have a reliable home internet connection, and more families have both parents working full-time. The Covid-19 epidemic accelerated this process by forcing a large part of the global workforce to switch to WFH at least temporarily. Compared to Office Work [WFO], WFH has the potential to reduce commuting hours, provide more flexible working hours, increase job satisfaction, and improve the working life balance. However, little is known about any of the most important effects of WFH, including its effects on production and what factors play a role in making WFH more or less productive than WFO.

In this paper we provide an analysis of the effects of WFH. The company suddenly changed all employees from WFO to WFH in March 2020, due to an unexpected epidemic shock.

Decreased overall physical and mental well-being after WFH were associated with physical exercise, food intake, communication with co-workers, children at home, distractions while working, adjusted work hours, workstation set-up and satisfaction with workspace indoor environmental factors. It impacts workers' physical and mental health well-being while WFH and provides a foundation for considering how to best support a positive WFH experience.

In addition to behavioural and social changes, WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted areas of need for the physical space in home office environments. Of note is that not all workers have access to dedicated workstations in their home, which can result in sharing of their workstations, such as with children who have to attend school remotely, setting up make shift desks, such as the dining table, or working in a variety of places throughout the day, such as kitchen counters, sofas, coffee tables and beds. Moreover, during the pandemic, workers can spend longer hours at their desks in the absence of commuting, limited business traveling, and increased use of computers to conduct meetings rather than holding face-to-face meetings at various different physical locations. Increase stress due to sharing of workspaces, poor body mechanics due to lack of proper physical workstation, and prolonged sedentary activity can all lead to increased discomfort and pain.



In total, the pandemic has created a new environment for considering both work and home life within the discussion of WFH. A detailed understanding of the factors in this new environment that relate to physical and mental well-being is instrumental to ensuring positive impacts for office workers who might WFH in near future.

Objectives of the study:

- Discuss the negative and positive aspects of work from home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The potential benefits for employees and employers.

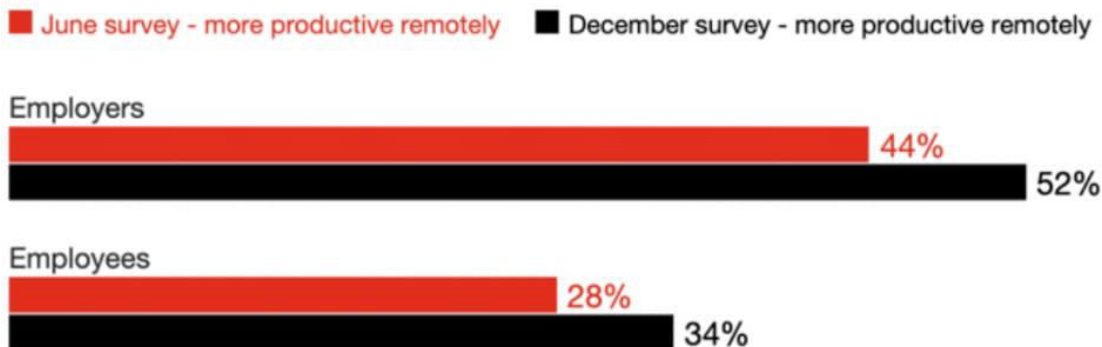
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

WFH has become increasingly common for organizations to offer their employees the option of working from home for a variety of reasons, such as reduced office rental costs, balancing employees' health, and saving commute time. Working from home has become increasingly important during solitary confinement during the Covid-19 violence as many countries use physical isolation strategy to avoid the epidemic. So, working from home is now the only option for some employees. As one of the most important business issues in organizations is the productivity of their employees, it is important to find out whether working at home has an impact on productivity, whether positive or negative influence.

Advantages and disadvantages of WFH:

Both organizations and their employees have few reasons to choose the practice of working from home. There are also practice barriers to both organizations and employees. These advantages and disadvantages are described in the following sections:

Productivity improved over prolonged work-from-home period



EMPLOYEE:

Benefits of WFH for Employees

- Savings in extra expense:

One of the advantages of remote working is the saving of extra expenses. In India, apart from rent, traveling is the second major expense for most employees.

Also, employees spend extra in the office cafeterias, on petrol price, toll fees, and other miscellaneous items. With work from home, all such extra expenses have been limited.

- Improved communication:

Effective communication at the workplace requires clarity in context, active listening, etc. During the normal office days, you could communicate face-to-face which used to keep miscommunication at bay. However, when working from home, you need to go the extra mile while communicating to keep the team updated about progress, hiccups, etc. so that the team can be on the same page in terms of work progress.

Depending majorly on telecommunication tools might seem like a disadvantage of remote working, but the regular use of communication tools helps in improving communication instead of relying on simply face-to-face communication.

- Better productivity:

One of the advantages of working from home is the absence of the usual office distractions. A quieter ambiance helps to get done with the work faster and more peacefully.

All it requires is good time management and a To-Do list to keep track of priority tasks.



- More flexibility:

Another work from home advantage is work flexibility. Without having to travel for work, employees can save up a lot of time and work as per their most productive hours.

Drawbacks of WFH for Employees:

The advantages and disadvantages of remote working are two sides of the same coin. Although there are variations in the disadvantages from one household to another, these are a few common disadvantages of working from home.

- Distractions within the household

It is true that when working from home there are no office distractions, but home comes with its own distractions.

The home comprises of family members and it is natural that there will be disturbances. You can inform your family members to hold off discussions for post-work hours, lock the door to your workspace or even use noise-cancelling earphones to keep noises at bay.

- Lack of human contact

One of the biggest disadvantages of working from home is the lack of face-to-face communication with friends and colleagues.

Communication with other people helps us feel involved, but without it, loneliness and a feeling of isolation take over. To avoid isolation, you can choose to have a video call or voice call with your colleagues and friends.

- Disruption in work-life balance

Another one of the disadvantages of remote working is the lack of work-life balance. Working from home can dissolve the demarcation between work hours and personal life for various reasons.

To maintain a healthy work-life balance, it is best to create a clear demarcation between work hours and personal time.

Try to start your work the same time you would when in the office and complete your tasks within those hours. Avoid work calls post-work hours unless absolutely urgent.

- Risk of feeling burnt out

With the reasons for applying for leaves diminishing, the risk of burnout becomes one of the biggest disadvantages of working from home.

It is best to take a day or two off when you find yourself anxious or if you feel extremely low and simply need to unwind. Take this time to do what you love to do, meditate, etc., but do keep your gadgets away as it will negate the resting process.

EMPLOYER

Benefits of WFH for Organizations

Not only employees, even employers have been party to the benefits of remote working. Here are some advantages of working from home for employers.

- Broader spectrum of recruitment

Many organizations prefer to hire candidates from the same city. However, with the current remote working situation, they can broaden their recruitment to different cities. This can naturally help companies to tap into sections they would otherwise overlook.

- Higher staff retention

One of the benefits of working from home is employee satisfaction. Different employees find satisfaction in different things, for example, employees who had to commute to work are happy not to have to do so.

Along with this, work flexibility and independence add to the work satisfaction of employees. Needless to say, employees prefer to stick to the company where they feel satisfied leading to higher staff retention.

- Reduced costs

During normal times, companies apart from paying their employees incurred several other expenses such as electricity, rent, maintenance costs of elevators and security systems, etc.

So, it can be stated that one of the major benefits of working from home that companies have enjoyed is the reduction in extra costs.

- Better employee productivity

With employees having to work from home with independence and flexibility, there is a rise in productivity amongst the workforce. This is one of the major benefits of remote working for companies.

- Reduction in leaves

Another advantage of remote working is that there is a reduction in employee leaves. With everyone back at home with their family, and no more traveling to work, employees are in a much more comfortable ambiance and less stressed and tired.

Also, with work flexibility being a major work from home advantage, employees can work as per a schedule best suited to you. This leads to them taking fewer leaves.

Drawbacks of WFH for Organizations:

Once more despite the benefits of remote working, there are certain disadvantages of working from home that employers are currently facing.

- Monitoring performances

Companies are also faced with the disadvantages of working from home. Topping the list is performance monitoring. For certain job profiles, it can be a real challenge for employers to monitor performance in remote working conditions.

- Onboarding new employees

When a new employee joins a team, the initial week or two is extremely crucial to getting settled in the team and understanding responsibilities.

But when in a remote work setup, this is one of the greatest disadvantages of working from home that employers face.

- Constant fear of security risks

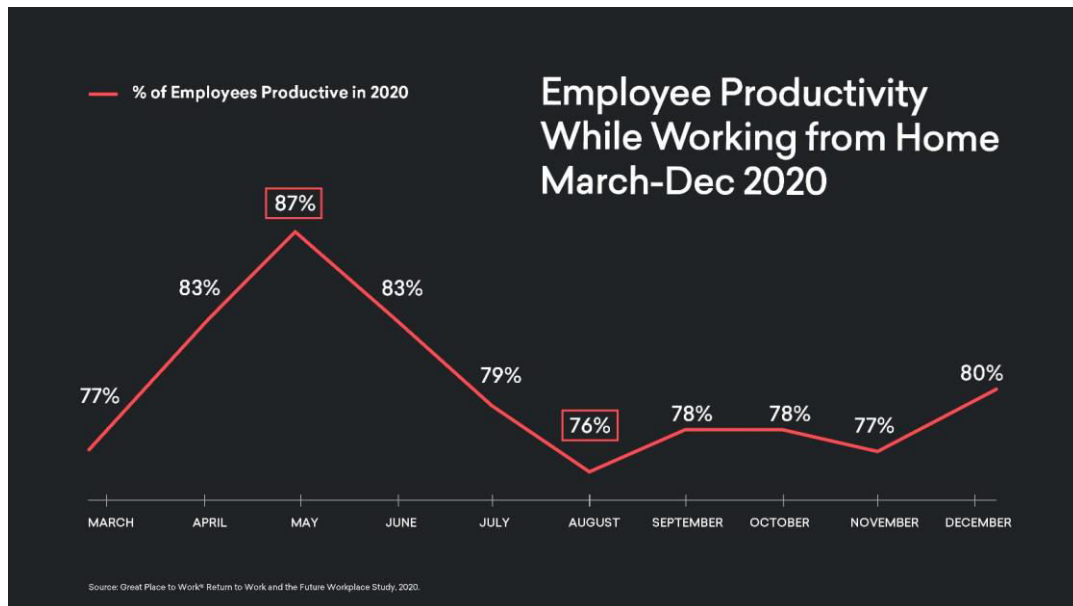
With the world sustaining on data, IT teams of every company are always on red alert to protect it.

However, with remote working being the norm since 2020, this is one of the major disadvantages of working from home. Companies have been working around the clock to protect the systems of their employees to keep company data secure.

So, it can be concluded that work from home advantages and disadvantages go hand-in-hand for the employees as well as the employers. But the past one and half years have shown that together the disadvantages can be minimized with proper care.

To do so, companies across the country have started covid related initiatives to help their employees get through these tough times by providing assistance in enhancing employee's mental health, arranging for vaccines and other medical assistance, lenient leave policies for the employee's tested positive, etc.

It can well be assumed that work from home is here to stay as more and more employees and employers start bridging the gaps.



Motives for WFH Preferential Organizations

With some countries filing for solitary confinement due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the only organizations in these countries are working from home. However, even though there was no epidemic, some of the organizations preferred to work for their employees from home. The motives for organizations that prefer to work from home are as follows:

The reduced expenses of organisations, such as rent, maintenance, computers, telephones, offices, utilities, equipment, etc. Further more office space costs and indicate that companies can avoid leasing additional offices through a telecommuting program and the reduced costs of parking space for the employees' cars. Another factor organisations have as a motivation is increased workforce productivity factor and suggest that the reason behind it, is long periods of uninterrupted time for concentration on their tasks and lack of interruptions, increased concentration, increased

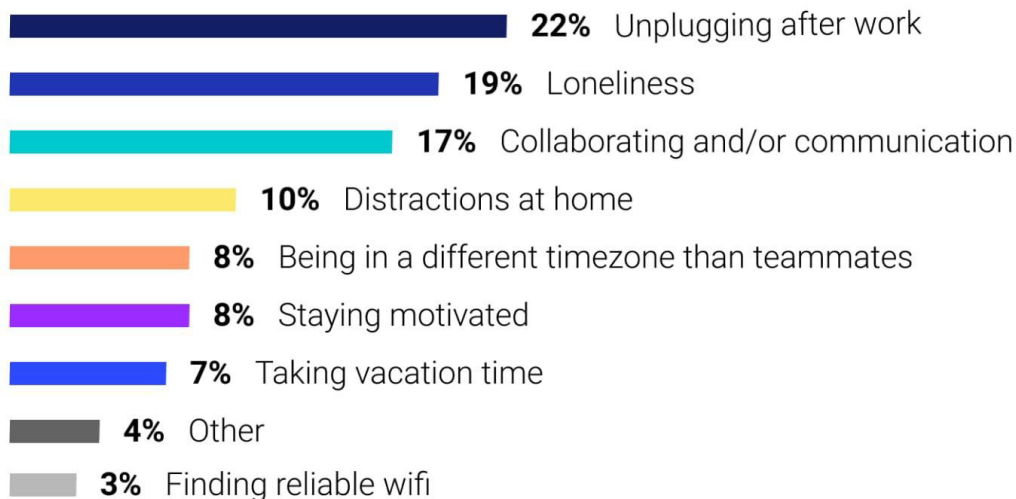


motivation, employee satisfaction, a better employee dedication, increased work energy by reducing time and disruptive elements. The possibility to employ people who may otherwise not be able to travel to the office, such as mothers, the handicapped, employees who live far away from the office and do not want to be relocated and reduces absenteeism. The factors reduce absenteeism: diseases, family events, adverse weather conditions, nervous breakdown. The factor of caring for sick children or elders easily without having to take time off from work into the list of factors reducing absenteeism. The organisations for preferring working from home practice is reducing the spreading of contagious diseases among employees, which causes interruptions in the working process and additional expenses and reducing stress of the employees. The stress may be manifested by reduced concentration levels, work-related mistakes, insubordination, creating dissatisfaction among the members of the team and developing diseases which are related to the occupation, such as stroke and heart attack.

III. FINDINGS

The findings of this research highlight the importance for employee of having a strong digital orientation in order to be able to cope with disruption in the workplace which one of them is the need for optimizing digital technology for some aspects of the work effectively accommodate WFH arrangements. The findings suggest that organisations if contemplating working technologically intermediated WFH home should ensure that their employees have a strong digital orientation as well as sufficient digital and capability. This can be done through an optimal recruitment and selection processes to get the right employees from the very beginning.

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?



The aspect of work-life balance is another example of factors, influences of which depend on the preferences of the employees and/or circumstances. As WFH gives more freedom to the employees about their work times, they can spend more time with their families, which reduces 19 work-life conflicts and increases job satisfaction levels, which in turn increases their productivity. On the other hand, the same factor can decrease their productivity, if it becomes stressful to balance work and domestic chores with the demands from the family members and presence of young children at home. The influences of working in a comfortable home environment depends on the employees, too. If they perceive home only as a place to rest and if they are tempted to spend time on non-work-related issues, such as doing household chores, watching movies, playing computer games, using their smartphones and spending time on social media, their productivity will be low.



IV. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that working from home has an influence on productivity of the employees. While some of the factors of working from home practice have positive influences on the productivity, some other factors have negative influences. Moreover, there are some other factors, the influences of which depend on the characteristics and attitude of the employees and the circumstances. The attitude and policy of the organisations towards WFH affect the productivity of their employees. The productivity increases if the employees feel that their organization trusts and cares about them and provides them with training, good project management and adequate resources to get their job done in time. It influences the productivity of the employees positively when the employees do not have to waste time, money and energy on transportation between home and office. Not all the factors have clearly positive or negative influences. Influences of some of the factors depend on the personality of the employees and/or circumstances. The aspect of flexibility is one of the examples. If there are no restrictions on the working hours and the employees have the freedom to determine the time and place of work and if they have control over their schedule, it will have a positive influence on the productivity, under the condition that the employees have self-discipline and self-efficacy, time management skills, ability, willingness, and inner motivation to work remotely. If the employees lack motivation and work discipline at home and if they need some external pressure to be structured and to establish a work rhythm, their productivity will decrease drastically.

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