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A STUDY ON EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME DURING COVID-19 IN KARNATAKA

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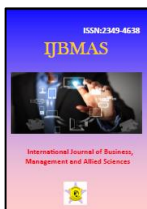
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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that has only recently been discovered. In December of this year, the outbreak was first recorded in Wuhan, China [3]. In Karnataka on March 2020 the first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was reported [4]. The novel coronavirus disrupted everything in a short time, nationwide lockdown was imposed, and social distancing became a rule. After the outbreak, workplaces worldwide had to close up and the staff was asked to work remotely. The objectives of the study are to identify the satisfaction level of employees, to identify Biggest Issues/challenges faced and also to study the work from home and other concerned factors for employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Study received 126 responses from employees who working from home. Information on work satisfaction, the biggest Issues/challenges faced, working from home and Other Concerned factors were collected. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean, standard deviation and frequency. The mean age was 31.28 years (SD±6.64 years). Majority of the male respondents were single (52%). Among the female respondents 77% were married. About 60% of them had a post-graduation. Most of the respondents (83%) were from urban areas. Regarding the employment status, 69% of them were in permanent position. 36% of the respondents were somewhat satisfied with the work from home arrangement. The issues faced by the employees while working from home: physical workspace (43%), distractions at home (43%), social isolation 40%, keeping a regular schedule (40%), general anxiety (40%), internet connectivity (33%) and communication with co-workers (33%) were the top challenges faced by employees during Work from home. Study concluded that in the

COVID-19 pandemic, remote work seems to have several negative effects on the employee and faced multiple challenges during COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Work from home, Issues, Challenges, Satisfaction, Factors

1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that has only recently been discovered. In December of this year, the outbreak was first recorded in Wuhan, China. Since 28 December 2020, at least 1,764,872 deaths and more than 80,788,307 cases of the COVID-19 disease outbreak have been reported [3]. Several nations placed a ban on transport and shutdown companies. The Government of India declared the first lockdown for 21 days on 24 March 2020.

In Karnataka on March 2020 the first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was reported [4]. On Sunday, 22 March, the second meeting of the Advisory Committee was created to tackle the issue of COVID-19. The Government declared more controls in the form of a lockout in nine districts until 31 March. Non-essential services in these areas were suspended. Bengaluru Rural, Bengaluru Urban, Chikkaballapura, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwad, Kalaburagi, Mysuru, Kodagu, and Belagavi were the first nine districts to register COVID-19 incidents.

The novel coronavirus disrupted everything in a short time, countrywide lockdown was imposed, and social distancing became a rule. The novel coronavirus has influenced our lives in many ways, including how we work. After the outbreak, workplaces worldwide had to close up and the staff was asked to work remotely. With the lockdown in effect, more than three billion people, except the key staff such as defence and health officials, have been forced to work from home. Companies started connecting to colleagues and line managers via video calls and began online video conferencing.

In recent years, work from home has been a growing practice in today's work climate, where workers can conveniently connect to the workplace from anywhere and start working. The term "work from home policy" refers to an arrangement between the employer and workers who choose to work from home. Expectations, duties, eligibility, and other work-from-home guidelines are all outlined in the regulation. In brief, all employees know employer's expectation out them and their roles and responsibility even though they are away from work place. Workers are the company's face and role models, carrying out the roles and obligations specified in their job descriptions, meeting performance expectations where appropriate, and engaging in educational and training programmes to gain knowledge and understanding of internal control standards. Taking all appropriate measures to protect assets from waste, loss, improper use, and misappropriation; preventing the use of their official role to obtain unwarranted benefits; and, when in doubt, asking the administrative supervisor to investigate the situation.

There is nothing abnormal about work from home. It is a new thing for such organizations that never had it as a part of their culture. But, the COVID-19 outbreak, the sudden shift in work culture has presented fresh challenges for organisation managers. The top priority for professionals is now crisis response and how to keep the employees engaged, provide the right communication channels and tools for remote work and look for overall employee health and wellbeing. There is nothing abnormal about work from home. It is a new thing for such organizations that never had it as a part of their culture. But, the COVID-19 outbreak, the sudden shift in work culture has presented fresh challenges for organisation managers. Professionals' top priorities are now crisis management and how to keep workers involved, as well as providing the appropriate communication platforms and resources for remote work and monitoring employee health and wellbeing. It is not a big chapter that stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems have always existed.

The unexpected COVID-19 outbreak has brought the mental health issues of the workers to the forefront. This has resulted in a slew of previously unknown issues. Managers are attempting to create smooth routes and plans in order to solve the obstacles it presents. Strategies are no longer formulated on a daily basis or in advance, but rather in real time. The emphasis on employee efficiency and engagement has moved to immediate responses and diagnosis; to provide workers with the right resources and to periodically collect real-time updates from them to untangle the data and provide help. Another big issue that is high on the priority list is communication. Communication is a crucial factor that must be considered regardless of whether the staff is operating remotely or not. It's impossible to handle a workforce without the right communication networks.

The COVID-19 crisis had Staff members on their toes, and they're on the search for remote working tools that suits their culture. One of the major reasons that teams are struggling is the lack of agility. Many teams are not designed for agility. and this affects the professional to a large extent. It is important to act quickly and move quickly in this crisis. Overall, the work-from-home policy has posed multiple challenges for the employees during COVID-19 pandemic while working remotely as mentioned above. In this regard, the study is based on the challenges faced by employees working from home in Karnataka during COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Objectives

2.1 To identify the satisfaction level of employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

2.2 To identify the biggest challenges of COVID-19 on employees working from home.

2.3 To study the employees, work from home and other concerned factors during COVID-19 pandemic

3. Material and Methodology

A study was conducted through an online survey amongst the employees working from home of Karnataka in different sectors. A structured close-ended questionnaire was used for collecting the data. These employees had to work from home from the beginning of the lockdown. This survey assesses the biggest challenges faced during COVID-19 and employee job satisfaction while working from home. Employees of all backgrounds were randomly chosen and administered the online survey. For this a 5-point scale (1-Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 2-Somewhat dissatisfied, 3-Somewhat satisfied, 4-Very dissatisfied, 5-Very satisfied) was used to identify the satisfaction level of employees working from home. Study received 126 responses from both female and male employees working from home.

The data was collected in April 2020. All data has been analysed and represented using STATA 12. The information captured under the demographic profile were Gender, Age, Locality, Marital Status, Educational Qualification and Employment Status. Further, information on satisfaction on work-from-home arrangement, a comparison between the current situation and the previous one, required equipment, arranging a dedicated workspace, setting a working schedule, savings for meeting basic necessities during lockdown, social and personal isolation, the biggest challenges faced and managing the family for the next few months of uncertainty were also collected. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean, standard deviation and frequency.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Variables

Demographic variables describe the basic information about the respondents. Table 1 shows the genders, mean age, locality, marital status, educational qualification, employment status of the surveyed employees. From the total respondents, about 69% are male and about 31% were female from different backgrounds. The mean age was 31.28 years (SD±6.64 years). Majority of the male respondents

were single 52% while 48% were married. Among the female respondents 77% were married. About 60% of the respondents had a post-graduation while 38% had a degree/diploma. Most of the respondents (83%) were from urban areas while 17% were from a rural background. Regarding the employment status, 69% of them were in permanent position and 14% were contract employees.

Table 1. Demographic factors of employees working from home during COVID-19 Pandemic

Demographic Factors	Female (n) %	Male (n) %	Total (n) %
Mean Age (SD)	31.28 years (SD \pm 6.64)		
Gender	(39) 30.95	(87) 69.05	(126) 100
Locality			
Rural	(3) 7.69	(18) 20.69	(21) 16.67
Urban	(36) 92.31	(69) 79.31	(105) 83.33
Marital Status			
Currently Married	(30) 76.92	(42) 48.28	(72) 57.14
Single	(9) 23.08	(45) 51.72	(54) 42.86
Educational Qualification			
Degree/Diploma	(9) 23.08	(39) 44.83	(48) 38.10
Post-graduation and above	(30) 76.92	(45) 51.72	(75) 59.52
SSLC	(0) 0.00	(3) 3.45	(3) 2.38
Employment Status			
Contractual	(9) 23.08	(9) 10.34	(18) 14.29
Permanent	(18) 46.15	(69) 79.31	(87) 69.05
Self-employed	(6) 15.38	(6) 6.90	(12) 9.52
Temporary/Part time	(6) 15.38	(3) 3.45	(9) 7.14

4.2 Employee Satisfaction

It was found in this study that 46% male and 17% female employees were very satisfied about the current work from home arrangement whereas 41% female and 23% male respondents were somewhat satisfied. Overall, 36% of the respondents were somewhat satisfied while 31% of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the arrangement (Figure 1).

4.3 Issues/Challenges

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the issues/challenges faced by employees working from home during COVID-19 lockdown. Figure 2 describes the issues faced by the employees while working from home: physical workspace (43%), too many distractions at home (43%), social isolation (40%), keeping a regular schedule (40%), general anxiety about the impact of corona virus on one's life (40%), internet connectivity (33%) and communication with co-workers is harder (33%) were the top challenges faced by employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic.

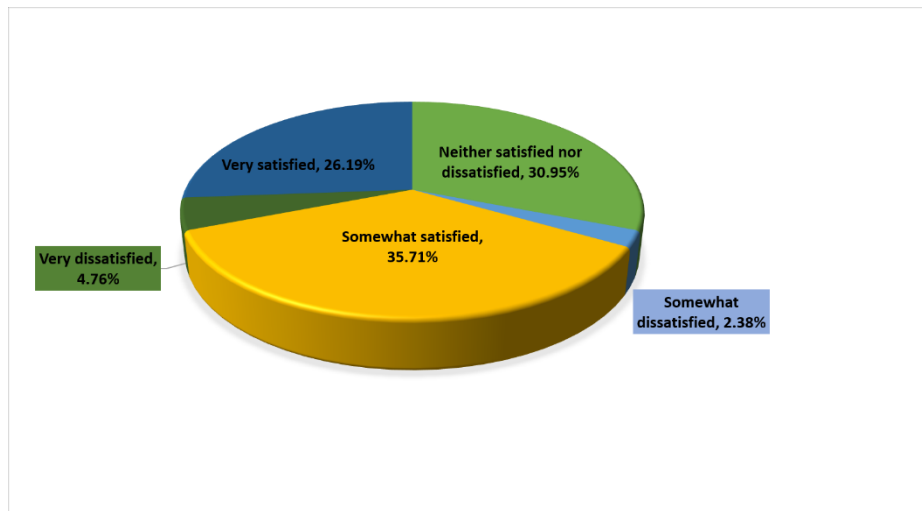


Figure 1. Satisfaction for current work from home arrangement

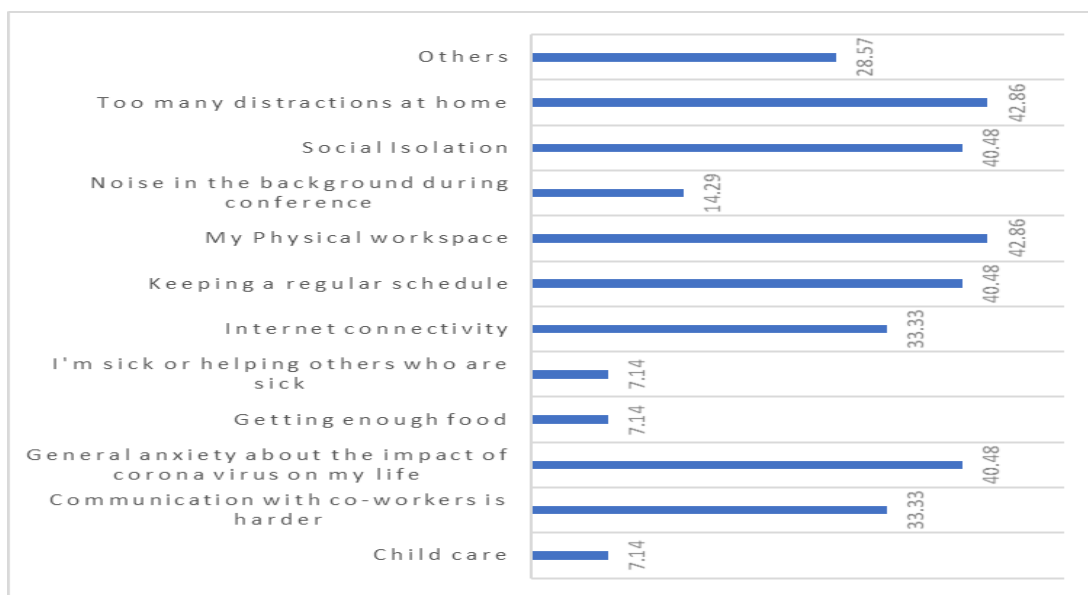


Figure 2. Biggest Issues/challenges facing employees during work from home

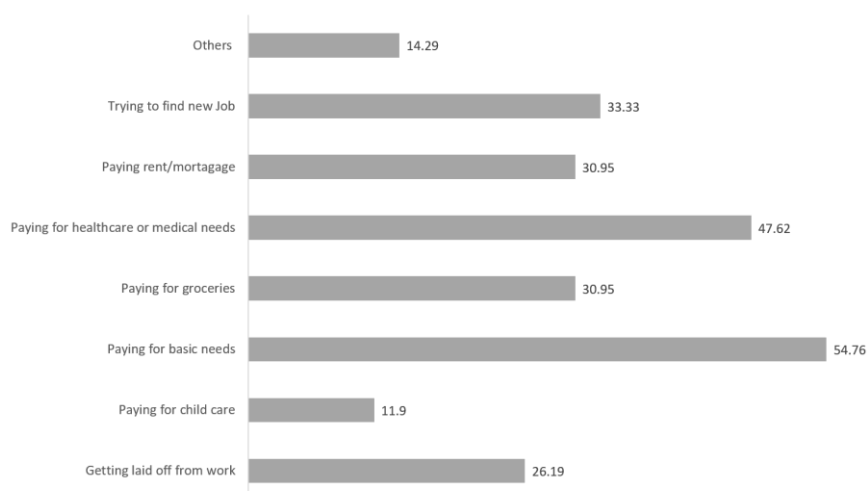


Figure 3. Concerned factors about being able to manage themselves or family

4.4 Other Concerned Factors

As shown in Figure 3, more than half of the respondents responded that they have concerns regarding basic needs (55%), healthcare or medical needs (48%), trying to find a new job (33%), rent/mortgage (31%) and groceries (31%) in being able to manage for themselves or for family in the next few months.

4.5 Employees Work from home factors

All had equipment needed to work from home and 73% had a dedicated workspace at home. About 60% of the respondents working from home kept a regular working schedule. About 43% of the respondents were somewhat worried about the impact of the current situation on personal finances. Many of the respondents (57%) were able to pay for their basic necessities for 1-3 months during the lockdown. Almost all of them (95%) are healthy. About 55% of them responded that they had feelings of being isolated, loneliness or disconnected from other people, socially and professionally (Table 2).

Table 2. Employees working from home (WFH) factors during COVID-19 Pandemic

Factors	Female (n) %	Male (n) %	Total (n) %
Feeling about WFH compared to last week			
About the same	(6) 15.38	(36) 41.38	(42) 33.33
Optimistic	(33) 84.62	(42) 48.28	(75) 59.52
Pessimistic	(0) 0.00	(9) 10.34	(9) 7.14
All equipment needed (Yes)	(33) 84.62	(66) 75.86	(99) 78.57
Dedicated workspace (Yes)	(33) 84.62	(60) 68.97	(93) 73.81
Keeping regular work scheduled			
About half the time	(3) 7.69	(12) 13.79	(15) 11.90
Every day	(18) 46.15	(57) 65.52	(75) 59.52
Most day	(12) 30.77	(6) 6.90	(18) 14.29
Never	(3) 7.69	(3) 3.45	(6) 4.76
Rarely	(3) 7.69	(9) 10.34	(12) 9.52
Impact of current situation on personal finance			
Extremely worried	(3) 7.69	(12) 13.79	(15) 11.90
Not at all worried	(0) 0.00	(3) 3.45	(3) 2.38
Not so worried	(15) 38.46	(18) 20.69	(33) 26.19
Somewhat worried	(9) 23.08	(45) 51.72	(54) 42.86
Very worried	(12) 30.77	(9) 10.34	(21) 16.67
How long will you be able to pay for basic necessities			
1-3 Months	(27) 69.23	(45) 51.72	(72) 57.14
4-6 Months	(3) 7.69	(0) 0.00	(3) 2.38
7-12 Months	(0) 0.00	(9) 10.34	(9) 7.14
Don't Know	(0) 0.00	(9) 10.34	(9) 7.14
Less than one month	(9) 23.08	(24) 27.59	(33) 26.19
Currently ill (No)	(36) 92.31	(84) 96.55	(120) 95.24
Feeling isolated, lonely, or disconnected from people, socially and professionally (Yes)	(18) 46.15	(51) 58.62	(69) 54.76

5. Discussion

COVID-19 presents the kind of situation where majority of employees have been forced to work from home. The study was conducted for employees working from home during the lockdown. To identify the challenges faced by and the satisfaction level of employees working from home in

Karnataka. Results from the study show that employees are facing many challenges and also reveal that employees working from home are somewhat satisfied with the current arrangement even though physical workspace, general anxiety about infection of corona virus to the family, keeping a regular work schedule, social isolation, communication with co-workers and internet connectivity are the biggest challenges they face while working from home. It was also observed that basic needs, healthcare or medical needs, trying to find a new job, groceries and rent/mortgage concerned them about being able to manage themselves or their family in the next few months if the lockdown continued for a long period.

The respondents said that compared to the last week they felt very optimistic while working from home during COVID-19 lockdown. When employees are optimistic, they generally are happy and have a high energy level, a hopeful approach to problem solving and daily tasks and a more positive mood and morale. As the results also show, the employees are healthy and safe at home. Almost all employees responded that they were feeling isolated, lonely or disconnected from other people – socially and professionally. This means that they feel sadness or distress about being by themselves or feel disconnected from the world or colleagues/friends, because earlier they used to work surrounded by people. Long periods of loneliness or social isolation can have a negative impact on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing. A recent study found that employees were willing to work from home except those with children who were not. Even if they were willing to work from home, they expressed that they did not like to work from home due to the uncomfortable situations obtaining at home. Work from home also need a high-speed internet connectivity, and concluded that willingness to work from home depends on a good internet connectivity at home (P, Shareena, 2020 et. al).

In the COVID-19 pandemic, work from home seems to have several negative effects on the employees. Despite this, work from home has reshaped the normal way of working into a conceivable future of work during the pandemic. As overall the employees working from home is facing multiple challenges during COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Limitations

The limitation of study is the sample size, the sample size is a study's limitation, which can lead to inconclusive findings. Since the findings are focused on Karnataka state employees in the Bengaluru region, they may not be applicable to other parts of the state. Finally, employee characteristics, satisfaction, and work-from-home difficulties all have a number of simultaneous factors have to be taken into account.

7. Conclusion

The COVID-19 outbreak and social isolation have drastically changed the workplace. The world and organisations in all sectors are introduced to the concept of work from home for almost all employees for the first time. The study reveals that employees working from home are somewhat satisfied with the current situation even when there are issue of many distractions, physical workspace, general anxiety about the impact of corona virus to the family, keeping regular work schedule, social isolation, communication with co-workers, internet connectivity for a regular work flow and how they are coping up with this new normal. The study observed employees working from home were concerned about being able to manage for themselves or for their family in the next few months if the lockdown continued. The results from this survey would be useful to improve the work from home environment. These are some of the issues which hampers employee's productivity.

Apart from above issues, study found that few employees were able to manage their family along with themselves with the continuation of lockdown for couple of more months in spite of deductions in their income/salary or even in job cuts. Better government guidelines and policies are required to properly control and make work from home possible. The results from this survey would be useful to

improve the work from home environment.

The results of the study provide a number of possible paths of future research such as factors associated with work from home or factors associated with employee satisfaction among work from home during COVID-19 pandemic.

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