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Work from Home: Benefits and Challenges

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Work from home is the new normal of the present day. The terms "telework," "tele-commuting," "remote working," "e-work," and "virtual work" can all be used interchangeably to describe working from home (Sullivan, 2003). It has been identified as a flexible work arrangement that enables employees to work from their residences or a remote location (Rahman & Zahir Uddin Arif, 2021). Before the emergence of the deadly COVID 19, this phrase was undoubtedly used in several industries, including IT, education, the digital world, and others, but we were unaware of how significant it would become in the future years.

1. Introduction

The world witnessed one of the worst fatal crises in early 2020. Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was an infectious disease with Acute Intense Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and the World Health Organization (WHO) has proclaimed Covid-19 as a pandemic (Kumar et al., 2020). Not only had this crisis disrupted the normalcy of the human race through record global mortality and illness rates, but had also created havoc in all aspects of life, including business.

On 24th March 2020, the Prime Minister of India announced a complete lockdown of 21 days amidst the Pandemic. According to medical experts, this unknown virus cannot be contained and social distancing is the only option left to break the chain. In no time everyone was made aware of things like a facial mask, social distancing, Quarantine rules, empty roads, corona warriors, vaccination, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed millions of workers to abruptly transfer their activities out of their workplaces and into their homes, according to (Teodorovicz et al., 2021) in their article.

Organizations had to make shift their policies for the sake of their employees' health. However, because of the shutdown, the businesses suffered greatly. Even though many employers were struggling to pay their employees, salary reductions were widespread, many people had to lose their jobs, and new businesses had to close, they were still doing their best to deal with the situation. On the other hand, while everyone experienced an abrupt change to remote work in early 2020, some did better than others — frequently because of their personality type. Many introverted professionals preferred working in a distraction-free atmosphere. Introverted people became more reliable towards their tasks as they thoroughly execute one during work from home.

1.1. Benefits from work from home

The pandemic had exceedingly adapted to new changes in the working culture worldwide. Companies are adapting and embracing the new changes in work culture and workplace. People too are mentally and physically adapting themselves to the new change. Some key elements that have a particularly favorable influence on working from home have been highlighted below.

- **Independence in Location** — One of the major benefits of working remotely is the freedom from location constraints. People can easily choose their working place such as being on a bed, a local cafe, a car seat, a beach location or a mountain, etc. It is easier to produce high-quality work in a comfortable setting.
- **Financial and Time saving** — WFH has saved everyone's pocket by minimizing commuting costs and time, spending on wardrobe, daycare cost for working parents, and socializing with colleagues. The time can be squeezed for some more productive work.
- **Increased productivity** — The rigid work schedules can be too tiring for someone to take a few seconds for themselves. It can be difficult to

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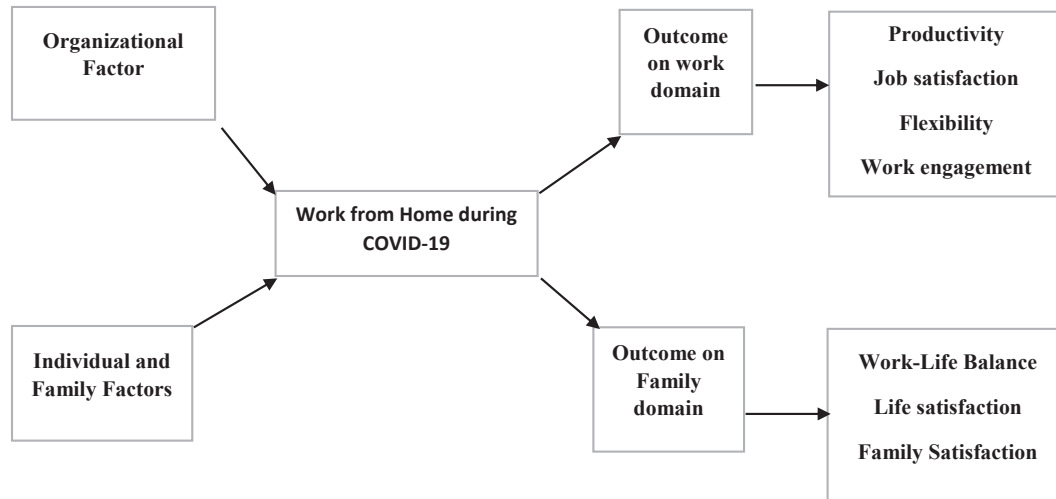
Fig. 1. Organizational and Individual Factors affecting Work from Home. (Source: Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020).

work with continual interruptions or gossip. On the other hand, working from home gives you a comfortable setup and uninterrupted environment which you desire.

- **Being around family** − WFH has given a big relief to mothers, especially young ones who can nurture their children, even though working. Work breaks can be a stress buster and if you can finish your household chores, manage kids, elders and pets in between. It means now without worrying about worklists, one can enjoy their leisure time.
- **Customized workspace** − WFH gives employees a free hand to set their workspace in their desired way. During the lockdown, social media was flooded with reels showing people enjoying and setting their workspace with plants, candles, cushions, coffee, etc. This gives one a positive atmosphere to work.
- **Benefits for Employers as well** − Employers benefited from WFH as well, as the cost of Real Estate, Electricity, Refreshments, Flexible Costs, Office Supplies and Stationaries, and so on decreased. People who previously left their jobs due to family obligations and migration are now more likely to stay on the job, which has dramatically reduced employment retention.

The above figure (Fig. 1) describes the major factors which affect Working from Home during COVID-19, which results to creates an impact on work as well as family. The outcome on the work ground is fruitful in terms of productivity, Job satisfaction, Flexibility in work, and more work engagements. On the other hand, the outcome on personal and family grounds results in Work-Life Balance (WLB), Life satisfaction, and Family

satisfaction. Young students at every home were tend to exposed towards the technology as the whole education system were on online mode (Shukla, 2020).

The trends toward flexible working patterns are also influenced by technological developments whereby business can be conducted away from the specified office environment and often at considerably lower financial costs, making working at 3 am and on holiday de riguer (Browne, 2002).

The relevant consequences on work and life domains that are embodied in particular elements are connected to the effects of WFH on work and life domains in order to study these effects. More explanations of the components of the framework presented in Fig. 1.

1.2. Challenges of work from home

- **A balance between work and home** − Maintaining a balance between professional and personal life can be challenging at times. When your home and office both serves as one place, the fine line between the two can often get blurred. A defined start and end time of the remote workers often gets affected and they end up working long hours and indefinite time.
- **Socially isolated** − Human being is a social animal that needs to be socially connected for self-development. Loneliness is the biggest challenge one faces in WFH. The employees miss the social ties and bonds as compared to the regular office culture. They are glued to their laptops and miss out on opportunities for social ties.
- **Extended Hours of work** − Many workers have expressed dissatisfaction with the long hours

Table 1. Working from home vs working from office.

S. No	Comparison Area	Work from Home	Work from Office
1	Communication	Digital Communication tools (video conferencing, email, chatrooms)are widely used	Typically, a mix of face-to-face and digital communication methods is used
2	Commute	Avoids unnecessary and lengthy commutes, and saves time and expense of traveling	Need to commute back and forth to the office, wasting many hours
3	Flexibility	Flexible working hours may be allowed	Strick working hours, typically 9-5
4	Financial Cost	Expenses such as internet, power, and furniture	Commuting expenses, meals bought out
5	Focus	With many distractions and temptations galore at home, work requires a certain level of self-discipline	Office environment may enable a more focused approach due to clear work separation
6	Comfort	Can work from the comfort of your home, freedom to wear whatever you want	Have to work from office cubicles and typically adhere to strict dress codes

their employers require of them in the case of WFH, leading to late-night meetings and phone calls. The employee gets irritated and guilty for not spending enough time with family.

● **Interruptions and Distraction** − Staying focused, motivated and uninterrupted at home can sometimes be a tough nut to crack. Some day you might be in a middle of an important meeting and the doorbell rings, or maybe your child is cranky around, or maybe your barking dog, which can be a few reasons to be your productivity killer.

1.3. Some comparison between work from home and work from office

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the partial comparison between work from home and work from an office has generated the most discussion in the professional sector. Both sides' supporters provide compelling reasons for their respective positions. In the table above (Table 1), we compare both models based on many criteria.

1.4. Work-life after pandemic

The pandemic has compelled the working culture to change itself. Organizations must reimagine their work and the role of offices in creating safe, productive, and enjoyable jobs and lives for employees (Boland et al., 2022). Many companies around the world have adapted to the unprecedented changes and challenges to cope with and safeguard the work life of their employees. The adoption of technology in human and work life was commendable as to how quickly things have changed for the betterment.

(Wheatley et al., 2021) argue that one of the most visible changes which have occurred because of COVID has been the shift of many employees into WFH arrangements across occupations even where this previously was not an option. Many large corporate firms and business ventures in the

Technology space (referred to as the IT/ITeS Sector), are planning and adapting the work-from-home culture to make it a major way of working towards the future by changing policies to support it (Deshpande, 2020.). Though this was not new for the IT sector as this has been in vogue for many years (K. B. Kumar, 2020). Work from Home is a familiar concept for the IT professionals as they are used to such work culture. The other sector's professionals were unaware are likely to get attracted to this culture as they get to eat home cooked meals, be around their loved ones, comfortable environment, save time and money on the daily commute though India it has not taken off in a big way in India. Virtual classrooms, webinars, and e-learning have emerged as commonly used tools and methods, although some companies have adopted some gamified &/or Artificial Intelligence based learning tools. The virtual world is emerging unimaginably just like the metaverse has the potential to change business and people's views towards technology (Mishra & Awasthi, 2022).

Every industry had to adapt to the policy change. The policies were designed to provide more flexibility for their employees to help employees to balance their roles in work and outside of work.

1.5. SWOT analysis

The feasibility of work from home for the individual and an organization can be identified and analyzed by its SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis primarily increases the awareness of any new adaptation or change. Work from home which has been forcefully adopted by the human race due to the pandemic has many assumptions and presumptions while being adapted. Everyone had made themselves aware of the technology, which played a key role in connecting everyone from different parts of the world. A self-explanatory table describes the SWOT Analysis of WFH aptly in many heads (Table 2) (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020).

Table 2. SWOT Analysis applicable for Working from Home.

	Work from Office	Work from Home
Strength	• One-to-one interaction/More networking opportunities • Collaborative Opportunities • Prevents Communication barriers/Effective administration • Separated work life and personal life • Greater sense of acceptance • Better induction for new employees • An intense environment • Accessibility to technology • Zero risk of revealed information	• Flexible environment • No distractions like the office (e.g. no office noise) • Liberty/Freedom • Cozy/Comforting environment (reduced stress) • Time-saving/No commuting • Money saving (e.g. spending less on renting office spaces) • Work-Life Balance • Reduce Absenteeism
Weakness	• Lack of flexibility • Inactive and monotonous lifestyle • Workplace conflict (e.g. office politics) • Noisy workplace (e.g. loud conversations) • Time consumption in unnecessary meetings • Irrelevant side conversations • Commuting expenses • Higher operational costs (e.g. utility bills)	• Household Interruptions (e.g. family members, household duties) • Uncomfortable living space • Lack of supervision • Communication barriers • Fear of missing out/loneliness • Lack of hardware support • Blurred lines between work and personal life • Unhealthy lifestyle (e.g. lying on the sofa all day) • Not favored by all employees • Injustice
Opportunities	• Maintain a professional appearance • (e.g. build lasting relationships with clients)	• Hybrid models • New talents from around the world
Threats	• Less workforce diversity (e.g. elderly & married women) • Air pollution during the traffic	• Cybersecurity (e.g. data theft) • Privacy (e.g. loss of corporate/employee/customer data) • No defined policies and regulations for WFH • Extra expenses associated with homework • High competition (e.g. jobs may be outsourced to cheap overseas labor)

2. Conclusion

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the subsequent. The working culture and function of almost every industry, city, and career in the world are influenced by these factors. In this paper we tried to give a better understanding of the benefits and challenges derived from the new normal, work from home. To compare working from home with working from an office, we used SWOT analysis. Is work-from-home an option in the long run? Is the issue that now needs to be answered? As per many articles and people's views the feasibility depends on the sector of your work. While many service industries like retail, healthcare, education, and entertainment have naturally adapted to the work from home culture, many are still bounded to physical locations and presence. While the IT sector is familiar with the concept and homes do attract professionals to operate around their comfort and loved ones, we all still have to go a long to adapt to this new concept. Since it is not practical in all types of working environments, the boundaries that are associated with this notion still have to deal with a lot of comparisons and disagreements.

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