

INFLUENCE OF WORKING FROM HOME DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND HR PRACTITIONER

**Dr. Rajaram Nathaji Wakchaure*

**Professor & HOD Dept. of P.G. Section in Commerce, Art, Science and Commerce College , Rahata, Ahmednagar,
E-mail: rajaramwakchaure@gmail.com*

Abstract:

The pandemic sweeping the world, COVID-19, has rendered a large proportion of the workforce unable to commute to work, as to mitigate the spread of the virus. Due to the pandemic, most if not all workers experienced work from home (WFH). Hence WFH has become a policy priority for most governments. In doing so, the policies must be made keeping in mind the practicality for both employers and employees. However, this current situation provides unique insight into how well working from home works, and may play a vital role in future policies that reshape the current structure of working hours, possibly allowing for more flexibility. The pandemic has changed the way people work, and more and more people are choosing to work from home (WFH). Unlike traditional work patterns, this approach has limitations and has had a significant impact on both organizations and individuals. It also brings many challenges to the work of HR practitioners. HR practitioners, as key players in strategic human resource management, need to take advantage of management innovations under the crisis to improve employees' work flexibility and effectively address the impact of working from home. This study aims to address the need for employee skill improvement, psychological stress relief, work-family balance, and company culture reinforcement from an HRM perspective because of the impact of WFH work patterns during the COVID-19 crisis.

Key words: *Pandemic, Traditional Work, Practitioner, Strategic, Employee.*

Copyright © 2022 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

Introduction:

The pandemic sweeping the world, COVID-19, has rendered a large proportion of the workforce unable to commute to work, as to mitigate the spread of the virus. Due to the pandemic, most if not all workers experienced work from home (WFH). Hence WFH has become a policy priority for most governments. In doing so, the policies must be made keeping in mind the practicality for both employers and employees. However, this current situation provides unique insight into how well working from home works, and may play a vital role in future policies that reshape the current structure of working hours, possibly allowing for more flexibility. Using an exploratory framework and a SWOT analysis, this study investigates the continuing experience of the employer. A critical insight and related recommendations have been developed for future policy decisions. It will also critically investigate if this work arrangement will remain as a transitory element responding to the exceptional circumstances, or whether it could be a permanent arrangement.

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic sweeping across the globe, has challenged society in ways once considered unimaginable, forcing people to reconsider a wide variety of practices, from work, to leisure, to basic travel

and daily tasks. Not only has this had individual impacts, but it has also impacted countries as a whole from an economic standpoint, bringing an array of economic sectors to a complete standstill. While there was a lot anticipated and there were countless warnings, especially from those working in public health, the challenge remained as a substantial change which requires planning, training, and facilitating. While the society did mentally prepare, the extent and solution still remained unthinkable and remains to be a big challenge.

The recent rapid worldwide spread of a novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19 virus) has led to a severe global economic down turn. Governments imposed total lockdown, banning non-essential travel, and requiring the closure of all non-essential activities. The strict government control measures led to many inconvenient working conditions. Traditional ways of working encountered serious challenges. The impact of COVID-19 on the global economy was similar to that of the 2008 crisis, although its long-term consequences were more severe. The impact on company performance is more pronounced in heavily impacted areas and industries, such as education and healthcare.

We need to adopt a temporary COVID-19 strategy with companies responding quickly. Many companies have opted for flexible work practices, such as working from home to reduce the spread of disease and losses. During the COVID-19 crisis, most people were already using online commerce as well as work from home (WFH) and digital businesses. In response to the outbreak of the crisis, work patterns changed and the WFH model grew rapidly however, with the rise of WFH, its corresponding side effects emerged.

First, unlike traditional office models, WFH requires people to learn new online office skills along with virtual work communication skills. There may also be unplanned virtual work sessions. In addition, working from home requires attention to the confidentiality of office data to prevent leakage. This also raises the need to adapt to the new office environment, and employees' WFH skills need to be trained and strengthened.

Second, when working from home, people lack face-to-face communication with colleagues, and once problems arise at work, it is difficult to solve them quickly through online virtual communication. Online network communication to solve problems leads to increased psychological stress and anxiety. This is also extremely harmful to people's mental health.

In addition, WFH leads to the occupation of family members' space. With the new crown pneumonia epidemic, people tend to occupy family space for their own work needs. When people work at home, some family tasks, such as childcare or housework, need to be shared between them. This creates a conflict between family and work. The imbalance between work and family can negatively impact job productivity, and HR practitioners need to consider how to mitigate this conflict.

The study found that while WFH has some advantages during this phase, it also has different effects on people, such as conflicts with family from taking up home space, inability to adapt to telecommuting, and lack of support from leaders or co-workers, but the following four areas are the objective and rationale of this study's discussion.

1. Employees who working from Home (WFH) face a home-based work environment where they need to learn special office skills.
2. WFH can make people feel isolated and can also lead to psychological stress.
3. During an outbreak, home-based employees often face conflicts between caring for their families and working.
4. Home-based employees often ignore the potential incentives of culture under the COVID-19 crisis.

Therefore, based on the impact of WFH on the above four aspects, this study proposes corresponding support measures from the perspective of human resource management.

Literature Review:

The theory of person-environment fit, first proposed by Lewin in 1951, considers the positive benefits of person-environment matching for individuals. People adapt to changes in their environment (e.g., those who choose to WFH due to a pandemic) and reap the greatest benefits, such as avoiding the risk of contracting COVID-19. In the wake of the new coronavirus outbreak, many academics and HR practitioners have been thinking about how to adopt flexible work arrangements (FWAs), such as WFH, as a more appropriate way of working.

Different aspects of the P-E fit model have been extensively studied by several scholars, and the person-environment fit can be subdivided into the person-vocation fit (P-V fit), person-job fit (P-J fit), person-group fit (P-G fit), and person-organization fit (P-O fit). From the division of these four concepts, it can be seen that the fit between the individual and the work environment should not only be in harmony with the organization at the macro-level, but also harmony with the work team at the micro-level, and most importantly, with one's work.

The P-V fit is like the P-J fit, but the difference between the two is that the P-V fit tends to be more of a professional skills match.

Without the professional skills required for the job, individuals cannot fully adapt to the work environment and thus constrain themselves, and the specialized skills needed by WFH require home-based workers to develop appropriate job skills, such as office skills and communication skills. These skills are different from those required for office work. New training models (online virtual) and content need to be provided.

Crisis Management during a Pandemic:

A crisis is a situation that affects a company's organizational sustainability, performance, and ultimately threatens its viability. Managers are concerned that crises can negatively affect different types of businesses at any time and place, as in the case of the new crown pandemic crisis. In the workplace, crisis management is an effective response to a crisis at work – discrimination, physical injury, emotional harm, or some type of natural disaster. Implementing crisis management requires managers to understand what people need and how they can help.

COVID-19 has a serious impact on the survival of the company, and the crisis management awareness of HR practitioners can reduce the impact of the crisis in four aspects: work skill improvement, psychological stress relief, family-work balance, and cultural role.

Impact on Businesses:

The new crown pneumonia pandemic caused widespread devastation in countries around the world. Tens of millions of people were infected; the economy was in recession and many people lost their jobs. Governments implemented many controls. These measures slowed the spread of the epidemic and some businesses were severely damaged.

HR Practitioners' Reactions to the Impact of WFH:

The main impacts during WFH are job skill requirements, psychological stress, conflict with family, and WFH culture. HR practitioners need to provide feedback and strategies to these impacts.

Upgrading WFH Skills: Innovative Training Content and Methods

During the pandemic, employees lost their motivation to advance in their careers because they were working from home too long. They needed to develop the knowledge and skills to thrive in their current environment. As remote workers become more interested in improving their capabilities, HR practitioners should take the lead in organizing relevant skills training to meet employees' desire to learn and grow. Predictably, when employees WFH, they will be trained to improve their performance and support the company's growth in the post-pandemic era.

Alleviate Psychological Stress Caused by WFH:

According to the principle of personal preference in economics, not everyone wants to WFH. The work-family conflict caused by WFH is a major source of stress for employees and has a negative impact on their psychological health; this imbalance can lead to managers' negative perception of WFH and affect their beliefs; and pressure from professional groups can also affect HR practitioners' idea of working from home. HR practitioners can take some appropriate measures to alleviate this stress.

One Support: Work-Family Balancing:

Some companies affected by new coronary pneumonia have had to adopt flexible working practices to reduce the risk of an outbreak. According to various analyses, WFH can help employees balance career development and work. It can also reduce commuting time and companies can save on office costs by having smaller office spaces (Research has found that work-family conflict is more correlated with work schedule flexibility when working from home).

Cultural Reinforcement in the WFH Model:

Corporate culture is a complex network of corporate norms, organizational vision, and member attitudes with specific group characteristics. It can be reinforced through training, punishment, rewards, etc. Culture needs to be adapted to the environment external to the organization, especially in the context of the new crown pandemic crisis. As the impact of the pandemic crisis expands and the psychological stress of work-at-home employees increases, corporate culture will become a focus of attention for managers or HR practitioners.

Future Research Direction:

Work from home will continue to have an impact on business and work. In addition to the recommendations, the study has already provided, there are some theoretical and practical studies on the HR side that need to be strengthened in the current and post-pandemic era: Organizations use E-HR in the WFH model to help HR practitioners work more efficiently; during the pandemic, traditional offline HR operations were replaced by online work.

Virtual online HR management is required to complete recruitment and staffing; unlike office workflow, HR practitioners need to optimize job responsibilities and workflow for employees working from home; and the impact of the crisis has led to a more popular relationship-oriented HR system. This system brings employees tighter together with the organization and brings a strong organizational commitment; in a pandemic situation, a period HR strategy should be developed to help the organization overcome the crisis; and corporate social responsibility helps companies to improve performance and better position themselves during the pandemic.

Limitations:

The study needs to strengthen the literature citations. Though the study reviews a range of literature and what we have reviewed is current and relevant, the recommendations need to be bolstered by the previous literature. In addition, this paper only analyzes the effects of WFH on people during COVID-19 and should compare the effect before the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, the study needs to compare and analyze the influence from the timeline.

In the future, we also need to consider: Does WFH still widespread in the post-COVID-19 era? If there are still many companies using the WFH model, what is the impact on people at that time?

Conclusion:

COVID-19 has affected the lives of many people. To prevent the future spread of this pandemic, many organizations have had to change their traditional ways of working. The advent of WFH has brought some convenience, but as the impact of the pandemic has deepened, it has also had certain effects on organizations, employees, and HR practitioners

that will continue in the post-pandemic era. Through a discussion of the relevant literature, this study argues that during the COVID-19 crisis, when people were working from home, our managers, especially HR practitioners, needed to address issues, such as job skills enhancement, employee stress under the crisis, work-family imbalance, and corporate culture reinforcement. Focusing on these issues has benefits for both organizations and individuals, especially in the current crisis. Future research will also need to consider the implications of this work model in the post-COVID-19 era.

References:

- 1) Ahlstrom, D., and Wang, L. C. (2020). Temporal strategies and firms' speedy responses to COVID-19 [Editorial Material; Early Access]. *J. Manag. Stud.* 5, 592–596. doi: 10.1111/joms.12664
- 2) Ahmad, K. Z. (2012). The mediating effect of person-environment fit on the relationship between organisational culture and staff turnover. *Asian J. Soc. Sci.* 8 62–71. doi: 10.5539/ass.v8n2p62.
- 3) Alhat, S. (2020). Virtual classroom: a future of education post-COVID-19. *Shanlax Int. J. Educ.* 8, 101–104. doi: 10.34293/education.v8i4.3238
- 4) Ali, N., and Kakakhel, S. J. (2013). Relationship between occupational stress and organizational commitment (empirical evidence from pharmaceuticals industry). *J. Manag. Sci.* 2:292
- 5) Allen, T. D., Merlo, K., Lawrence, R. C., Slutsky, J., and Gray, C. E. (2021). Boundary management and work-nonwork balance while working from home. *Appl. Psychol-Int. Rev.* 70, 60–84. doi: 10.1111/apps.12300
- 6) Al-Mansour, J. F., and Al-Ajmi, S. A. (2020). Coronavirus 'COVID-19' – supply chain disruption and implications for strategy, economy, and management. *JAFEB.* 7, 659–672. doi: 10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no9.659

Cite This Article:

***Dr. Rajaram Nathaji Wakchaure, (2022). Influence of Working From Home during the Covid-19 Crisis and HR Practitioner, Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal, XI (III) May – June, 1-5.**