

Impacts of Work From Home Among Employees During Lockdown (With Special Reference To Chennai District)

Dr. A.Vini Infanta¹

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce with Professional Accounting,
Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

Kalaiarasan C²

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Patrician College of Arts and Science, Chennai.

Prof.klirsn@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8435-9579>

ABSTRACT

‘Work from Home’ is the method which is in the recent trend, followed by most of the organizations so that the employees can work safely while no disturbance arises in the organizational objectives. This meant that many people unexpectedly started working from home with little or no choice of preparation. Many companies previously did not allow flexible working, believing that tasks could not be completed. The importance given to the physical location of a workplace has been gradually decreasing due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the growth of information technology. With an increasing number of employees working from home, it has also improved the employee retention rate. In the earlier days, people used to believe that only the corporate sectors followed the work from home model. This pandemic situation has changed the whole perspective of the people concerning working from home and has led the employees in different sectors bound to work remotely. This study aims at understanding the impact of work from home among employees with special reference to Chennai District.

Keywords: Work from Home, Lockdown and Employees.

INTRODUCTION

‘Work from Home’ is the method which is in the recent trend, followed by most of the organizations so that the employees can work safely while no disturbance arises in the organizational objectives. This meant that many people unexpectedly started working from home with little or no choice of preparation. Many companies previously did not allow flexible working, believing that tasks could not be completed. The importance given to the physical location of a workplace has been gradually decreasing due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the growth of information technology. With an increasing number of employees working from home, it has also improved the employee retention rate. In the earlier days, people used to believe that only the corporate sectors followed the work from home model. This pandemic situation has changed the whole perspective of the people concerning working from home and has led the employees in different sectors bound to work remotely. On 24th March 2020, the Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus. Since then, the whole country was under a series of regulations and enforcement to ensure the safety of the people. As industries and various sectors struggled to cope, one of the first to reboot was the IT industry, which started the working from home concept. Stanford Professor Nicholas Bloom says that ‘work

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from home' increased performance by about 13% and even resulted in lower attrition levels. In this modern world and also due to the current situation, the only flexible method an organization can follow is the 'work from home' method. The outcomes of this model can be both positive as well as negative. Positive impacts include a reduction in traveling time to the office, cost savings, and also childcare (if the employee is a parent). Whereas the negative impacts include lack of proper communication among co-workers, health issues, and also lack of proper face-to-face support. Most of the companies included work from home in their leave policy of employees to increase productivity. This study aims at understanding the impact of work from home among employees with special reference to Chennai District.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Maintaining the overall productivity levels is one of the biggest challenges that organizations are facing especially in the pandemic situations like Covid-19. Work-life balance is important for an organization as well as the employees. The most followed way to maintain the productivity levels as well as ensuring safety is the 'Work from home' model. Work from home for employees in a city like Chennai is indeed a new experience for most of the employees. This may have both positive as well as negative impacts. The willingness towards working from home may change from time to time, from situation to situation and person to person. This study attempts to examine the problems mentioned below.

- i. Does working from home affect the overall productivity of the employees?
- ii. What is the willingness of employees towards the work from home concept?
- iii. What can an employer offer to an employee during this situation, from an employee's viewpoint

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Many sectors are realising slowly that work can be something else. An official workspace is not necessary to make people do their job. This can be a boon or a bane. Remote work will probably be the most followed work style in the years to come. Many companies will introduce cost-saving techniques by hiring remote-first employees. On the other hand, talented people will start to look for jobs anywhere on earth, with the best companies, as distance no longer plays a role. The scope of the study is that it helps to understand how employees are being impacted by the work from home concept and how to best support them by analysing their productivity during their remote work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the responses of 111 respondents working from home belonging to the Information Technology sector during COVID 19. The data was collected during February and March 2021. Majority of the respondents of this study are fresher's. It consists of responses from employees from the district of Chennai. Google Forms Application was utilized to automate the questionnaire and distribute it through social media channels. Secondary Data has been also collected from various journals, websites and newspaper reports.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) investigated that depending on the interactions between work and private life work from home could be more or less favourable to overall life satisfaction. Irrespective of hours worked, employees value the flexibility of being able to work some of their

hours from home, and this is also generally associated with greater overall job satisfaction. However, other than for those who work the majority of their hours from home, working from home is associated with lower satisfaction with hours worked.

A. M. Dockery and Sherry Bawa, Curtin University (2014) Go, (2016) stated the focus on major failures and dark side of work from home, the cultural differences faced during webinars by the employees. Work from home creates a big gap in communication between superior and the subordinates.

Lee Stadtlander, Amy Sickel, Lori La Civita and Martha Giles (2017) virtual workers may find more work satisfaction by either separating their work area from the family home area or establishing separation by time. Understanding the needs of virtual workers provides employers with an opportunity to help new employees set up a controlled and secure work environment and better care for themselves, which may result in higher job satisfaction and productivity. Employers may be able to decrease the loneliness experienced by online faculty by establishing virtual communities where faculty can interact on a daily basis.

Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom and Steven J. Davis (2020) “we have presented evidence that our respondents report being more efficient while working from home during COVID than they expected”. Gajendra and Harrison, (2007) revealed in their study that it is difficult to monitor a worker's effort at home, especially when occasionally being interrupted by private responsibilities and family members. Recent studies conducted in the USA also find a high correlation between high income levels and high-speed Internet, thus meaning that WFH is easier for relatively rich people (Chiou and Tucker 2020).

Bonacini, L., Gallo, G. & Scicchitano, S (2021) An increase of the WFH feasibility levels of professions would be associated to a growth of the average labour income, probably because of their higher productivity.

Survey by Airtasker (2019) says working from home not only benefits employees by eliminating their daily commutes, it also increases productivity and leads to healthier lifestyles. It's a win-win situation that workers relish for its flexibility – but often at the cost of their work-life balance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the impact of Covid-19 among employees in CHENNAI City
2. To analyze the quality of work among employees during Covid-19.
3. To study the challenges of work from home among employees.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is restricted to the employees working in Chennai district of Tamilnadu, India. The study is based on 111 responses across the city. This study can also be taken further as lot of changes is arising due to the pandemic situation. The mentality of the employees also differs from situation to situation as well as from time to time.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table:1 Background Of The Respondents

S.no	VARIABLE	OPTIONS	RESPONSE (IN%)
1	Age Group	20-30	72.1
		31-40	18.9
		41 and above	9

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2	Gender	Male	36.9
		Female	63.1
3	Marital Status	Married	51.4
		Unmarried	48.6

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, it is inferred that,

- i. Majority (72%) of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 30
- ii. 63.1% of the respondents were female
- iii. 51.4% of the respondents were married and 48.6% being unmarried

TABLE 2:

S.no	VARIABLE	CHARACTERISTIC	RESPONSE (IN%)
1	Time taken to travel to the office	1 to 2 hours	81.1
		2 to 3 hours	13.5
		more than 3 hours	5.4
2	Money spent on travelling	0	13.5
		Less than Rs.100	47.7
		Rs.100- Rs.500	34.2
		More than Rs.500	4.5
3	Is work from home helping intime management	Yes, to a great extent	26.1
		Yes, to some extent	47.7
		No	26.1
4	Availability of equipment	Available	65.8
		Not available	34.2
5	Comparative measure of productivity	Less productive	27

It is found from table 2 that the majority of the respondents (81%) are spending 1-2 hours of travelingtime and 13.5 percent spend nearly 3 hours. Among them, 47.7 percent of the respondents feel that 'work from home' has reduced their traveling time to some extent. The study also revealed that 47.7 percent spend less than Rs.100 on travel whereas 34.2 percent spend up to Rs.500. Thus, the study suggests that work from home has reduced the money spent on such travel to a great extent or almost to 0. When asked about the availability of equipment to complete the work to their usual ability, 65.8 percent responded positively whereas 34.2 percent chose negative. The study revealed that nearly half of the respondents feel that they can maintain the same productivity levels at home as well. Whereas 27 percent feel that they are being less productive.

TABLE 3:

S.no	VARIABLE	CHARACTERISTIC	RESPONSE (IN%)
1	Was Able to learn and Grow	Strongly agree	12.6
		Agree	30.6

		Neutral	45.6
		Disagree	7.2
		Strongly Disagree	3.6
2	Preference towards work from home	Yes, even if I have the chance to goto the office	28.8
		Yes, if there is no other choice	39.6
		No, I prefer working in the office	31.5

From the table above it is understood that 30.6 percent of the respondents agree that they were able to learn and grow during their ‘work at home’ experience and 28.8 percent among them prefer to work from home even after the lockdown. 39.6 percent are ready to work from home only if no choice prevails. 31.5 percent prefer to working in the office even if the Covid situation persists.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time spent with family	111	1.0000	4.0000	2.000000	.9629500
Time spent to travel to the office	111	1.000	3.000	1.24324	.542992
Time management at home	111	1.00	3.00	2.0000	.72614
Cost on travelling	111	1.00	4.00	2.2973	.75792
Opinion on work from home	111	1.00	4.00	2.5405	1.27053
Learn and grow	111	1.00	5.00	2.5856	.92901
Availability of equipment	111	1.00	2.00	1.3423	.47665
Preference to working from home	111	1.00	3.00	2.0270	.77997
opinion	111	1.00	3.00	1.8919	.70519
Comparative opinion	111	1.00	3.00	1.9550	.70566
Amenities from the employer	111	1.00	5.00	2.0811	1.10483
Biggest challenges	111	1.00	4.00	1.6667	1.05601
Valid N (listwise)	111				

The maximum and minimum limits are 5 and 1 respectively. The total number of values being 111. The mean of all the attributes falls between 1 and 3. The highest deviation from the mean is shown by the opinion on work from home attribute and the lowest deviation being the availability of equipment. The attributes such as the amenities from the employer, biggest challenges faced, time spent with family and the measure of growth has the highest deviations from the mean. In this case it is understood that these attributes vary significantly from one response to the other. The attributes like time management and cost of travelling are the least deviated. Hence it is inferred that majority of the responses have the same outlook towards those attributes.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Opinion on work from home	Between Groups	.515	2	.258	.157	.855
	Within Groups	177.052	108	1.639		

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	Total	177.568	110			
Measure of Growth	Between Groups	2.983	2	1.491	1.752	.178
	Within Groups	91.954	108	.851		
	Total	94.937	110			
Preference toward work from home	Between Groups	.417	2	.208	.338	.714
	Within Groups	66.502	108	.616		
	Total	66.919	110			
opinion	Between Groups	1.115	2	.557	1.123	.329
	Within Groups	53.588	108	.496		
	Total	54.703	110			
Comparative opinion	Between Groups	.725	2	.362	.724	.487
	Within Groups	54.050	108	.500		
	Total	54.775	110			
Amenities by the employer	Between Groups	.361	2	.180	.145	.865
	Within Groups	133.910	108	1.240		
	Total	134.270	110			
Biggest challenges	Between Groups	4.157	2	2.079	1.894	.155
	Within Groups	118.510	108	1.097		
	Total	122.667	110			

The significance value is taken as 0.5. The attributes such as the opinion on work from home, comparative productivity, and the biggest challenges faced, came out to be less than the significance value. Hence, we accept the hypothesis. All the responses are fairly similar to each other. The attributes such as preference, measure of growth, and the amenities than an employer can offer came out to be greater than the significant value. Hence, we reject the hypothesis.

SECONDARY REFERENCE

Several studies over the past few months show productivity while working remotely from home is better than working in an office setting. On average, those who work from home spend 10 minutes less a day being unproductive, work one more day a week, and are 47% more productive.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that 82 percent of the respondents among the total 111 responses are experiencing work from home for the first and 18 percentages have already worked from home. The majority of the respondents experienced the work from home due to the situation aroused from

COVID 19. The study also reveals that 43.2 percent of the respondents spend nearly 3 to 6 hours of quality time with their family (Majority being the female) and 34.2 percent spend less than 3 hours.

SUGGESTION

- The study reveals that lack of experience and the lack of equipment are the major hindrance for the employees to work from home
- Most of the respondents are in the view that there is a communication gap with the co-workers. Thus, attempting to find a solution to bridge the communication gap would help the employees to increase their willingness to work from home as well as increase their productivity.
- Most of the respondents look forward to return to their official workspace environment as they are forced to work with little experience, resources and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Benefits and constraints are two sides of the same coin. It is found that the concept of work from home can increase productivity. But following this method consistently for longer periods may have a negative impact on the employee. The factors supporting productivity and willingness to work from home are more effective when compared to the hindrances and challenges faced. Thus, work from home concept may become more popular in the future.

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