



IMPACT OF WORK FROM HOME CULTURE ON WORK LIFE BALANCE – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON IT/ITES EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Many IT companies are asking their employees to work from home to remain safe and affected. As corona virus (COVID19) continues to capture headlines in the news and spread rapidly, employees are struggling with finding a sense of calm and stability throughout the ever changing updates and reality. Working from home has many benefits, some being flexibility, increased productivity and more quality time with your loved ones. Work life balance, especially during uncertain times like COVID19, is essential to employees' growth and personal happiness and company retention. When employees are encouraged to find positive work life balance, they tend to be more motivated to produce great work.

This also edibility among the employees over performance increases of work. Work from home enables more autonomy in job, which is likely to be associated with more productivity. Decreased control by colleagues or the supervisors is an important drawback of work from home. This is true for both the organization and the employee. The work avoidance is the result when someone's work is poorly monitored. Work from home will be helpful when there are issues to attend of work should continue. Most of the IT companies included work from home in their leave policy of employees in order to increase the productivity.

Keywords: Work from home, Work life balance, Strategies to work life balance

Introduction

The beginning of the year 2020 was marked by a major global public health crisis. The Corona virus Disease (COVID-19) that supposedly originated from Wuhan in China during December 2019 made its presence felt in more than 100 countries by the first week of March 2020. On March 12, 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) characterized COVID-19 as a “controllable pandemic” (WHO, 2020, COVID-19 Situation Report-52, 12th March). In India, the first cases of COVID-19 was reported on 30 January 2020, and by mid-March a total of 25 confirmed cases were reported.

On 24 March, Indian Prime Minister announced a 21 days' nationwide lockdown till 3 April 2020, which got further extended till 3 May 2020. Following the Government's mandate, some of the industries made their employees “Work from Home” (WFH) during this lockdown period. WFH, also known as telecommuting or telework (Bloom et al., 2015), has now become a popular practice due to the advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs). Telecommuting enables employees to perform the tasks allocated at the workplace by being at a place away from the normal workplace (Gajendra and Harrison, 2007). Some employees prefer WFH as it helps in attaining work–life balance (WLB), but managers become sceptical as it could lead to shirking from assigned responsibilities while being home(Bloom et al., 2015). COVID-19-induced lockdown has forced businesses to run through WFH. After the announcement of nationwide lockdown in India to contain the spread of the infection, WFH policy was opted by the majority of organisations. During this lockdown, the scenario at home was quite

different from the previous times, as all family members were lockdown together inside home. On the one hand, if this lockdown gave an opportunity for good family time, but on the other hand, it created challenges to manage family responsibilities. Restriction on out-door movements changed the lifestyle of every individual. Keeping all the family members engaged during the lockdown and facilitating their psychological well-being required a lot of effort from every member of the family. Many Indian households have a practice of hiring the services of paid domestic helpers to do the basic household chores. Due to the lockdown, the services of domestic helpers were hindered. In such a scenario, most of the working professionals got loaded with some household chores that consumed their time and energy and possibly made them feel exhausted.

Introduction to the topic work life balance

Do we live to work or we work to live? Research has shown that work and home (or family) is the two most important domains in the life of an employed individual. While some may argue that we realize ourselves through work – being able to self-actualize – attaining unto the very zenith of our chosen career, a truly all encompassing self actualization however, will integrate both our work and life (family, personal life, community service). When an individual is thus employed in an organization, he does not give up his life in exchange for work rather he attempts to maintain a balance between them. This balance is necessary for a healthy life. For many employees, the day is not over when they go home. Often, a second day of work starts at home and for most working mothers, they come home to the second shift (assuming the inescapable role of a wife and a mother). The challenge of balancing work and family (non-work) demands is one of today's central concerns for both individuals and organizations. People who have better balance have a greater job satisfaction and perform better in their position. When an individual maintains a balance between his personal and professional life, the phenomenon is called Work-Life Balance. This expression holds worth a lot because it is very important to have a balance between personal and professional life. Work life balance is at the forefront of the world of work.

People are more interested in looking for a job that gives them flexibility at work. Necessary arrangements for work life balance are required by all workers at different times in their lives because balance is instrumental in quality initiatives by preparing an individual to deal with the change. An individual can give his best only in a conducive environment e.g. students want to study and work at the same time; parents want to have time with their children and the older worker approaching retirement to have the opportunity to stay in the workforce on reduced hours. Mostly the employers and the employees agree that organizational objectives are more important, so it is the obligation of the employer to help people in work life balance.

Work from home

Telecommuting first gained notoriety in the late 20th century with the advent of home computers and sophisticated telecommunications technologies. Specific research on the patterns and practices of telecommuting first appeared in the 1970s when Jack Nilles coined the terms telecommuting and teleworking and directed the first telework demonstration project with partial funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The 1980s brought the initiation of pilot telework programs in the United State and by the 1990s many state, local governments and private sector corporations had implemented telework programs.

In 1996 the federal government introduced a national telecommuting initiative with the goal of increasing both the number of federal teleworkers as well as the number of teleworkers in other sectors. Telework is defined as work that is performed from different locations (such as home) that enables workers to access to their labor activities by the use of information and communication technologies (Nilles, 1997; Perez et al., 2003). It has been considered as an alternative way of organizing work. By offering the possibility to work anywhere and anytime, telework has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners. It has been seen as a win-win scenario for employees and employers, making it possible to choose from different talents, to reduce real-estate costs, to motivate employees, and to maintain employee work–family balance.

Work from home as a concept is very important in current times. It helps to keep productivity of the employee same or even better and at the same time supports the employee for being with family or handling some personal work. Also in the case the employee is facing some health issue of self or family, Work from Home (WFH) can be a great tool for helping employee stay at home and work at the same time. In 2020, during Corona virus (COVID-19) Pandemic, Work from Home enabled many companies to remain productive and keep themselves relevant. Roles like IT, Management, Designing, and Media etc. continued to work with the WFH option.

Literature review

According to Gajendra and Harrison (2007) Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) Amabile and Kramer (2013), the study revealed that it is difficult to monitor a worker's effort at home, especially when occasionally being interrupted by private responsibilities and family members. In a competitive labor market, such level. Evidence on the productivity effects of Work from home is inconclusive, but seems to suggest positive effects more often than negative effects.

According to Senthilkumar (2012) Pandita and singhan (2017) Studied the difference of opinion for part time and full-time mother's work-life balance. It was found that mothers who are working part-time give more preference to maintaining balance between work families as compared to mothers who are working fulltime. It was also found that mother who are doing part-time jobs have fewer responsibilities which leads to low stress which makes them spend more family time and are happy in life. The crux of the findings says that it is more beneficial to work part time as compared to full time as mothers are able to manage their both work and family in a balanced way.

Modi, Chima (2011) Lubana Riz V (2013) Work Life Balance policies and practices are a reality for employees in IT sector. The study also examined if there were any barriers and reasons for mutual adoption of Work life balance policies in IT sector. The study suggested an urgent need to communicate clearly about the Work Life Balance policies and practices to its employees, to raise awareness further and improve the knowledge and understanding of relevant policies. Studied the Work Life balance of working women in IT sector. They specified that the ultimate performance of its employees which in turn depends on numerous factors. The relationship between personnel and professional life can be achieved through emotional intelligence.

Ahmed & Ramzan (2013) Rivai & Sagala (2011) Stress is an undesirable reaction by individuals that must be faced with heavy pressure, work demands, workloads that affect the physical and mental employee. Job stress is generally defined as a psychologically depressed condition caused by unpleasant physical or psychological experiences. Work stress refers to the pressures or tensions that people feel in life between the external environment and us, which cause emotional and physical stress. Several previous studies mention that with stress an employee will act more than before to work better. However, if the stress is excessive, it will create anxiety for employees and the potential to reduce their performance.

Objectives of the study

- To study the work life balance of the IT employees during work from home.
- To identify the factors that impact the employees work life balance.
- To understand employees attitude towards work from home.

Research methodology

The study through 'secondary data' was collected from different websites and Research articles.

Scope of the study

The study focuses on finding out the factors affecting the work life balance of IT employees. The study was restricted to IT employees. The study is focused only on work from home employees.

Findings

From the study it is found that how factors that impact the employees work life balance.

As Communication one of the factor and it is part of working from home and it is treated as important to have access to your team members and be able to maintain regularly scheduled meetings. Many IT companies are taking action by allowing their employees to safely work from home and practice social distancing. This option comes as a challenge for many organizations that ever facilitated their employees working from home.

From the study it is found that, flexible working hours, increased productivity and more quality time with your loved ones and these things will help the employees in maintaining the good work life balance is, especially during uncertain times like COVID19, and it is essential for employees' growth and personal happiness and employees' retention.

The findings of this study is that the work is having a negative effect on the life of the employees and the overtime working demands the work, quality time of the employees is missed with their family because of work and the meetings conducted after the office hour.

The employees who working from home must have the family support to balancing their different roles which are played by them and to achieve the individual goals as well as organizational goals.

From the study it is found that Balance between work and family responsibilities will cause too much stress and emotional disturbances, which will have direct impact on work quality and also the growth of the employees.

Suggestions

The Organization should give flexible time table to employees to balance work and family life better, where flexibility in schedule of work is important for job satisfaction. They should also be given good compensation and job security so that they satisfied in their work as well as life. Welfare facility has to be provided like better compensation and rewards for the employees.

Employees have to be given necessary equipment by the organization while working from home during pandemic in order to complete their work effectively and efficiently. Motivating the employees to balance both the work life and personal life, while working from home, it encourages them to stay with the organization. The organization should focus on low-level employees to enhance employee relations within the organization may lead to higher productivity.

Strategies to work life balance

- Create boundaries Draw a clear line between work and personal time.
- Unplug – when you finish off work, switch off.
- Maintain a routine – plan your day to stay productive
- Share responsibilities

Conclusion

The work life is an important factor. Every individual has to balance their different roles. There are some factors to balance their roles they have to prioritizing the activites organizational climate, family support and different facilities which are provided by the organization. The balancing of different roles played by the employees in IT sector is very less because they are having lot of pressures and stress on their job when compared to others. So the management has to concentrate on these factors and try to develop the things which are influence the work life balance of the employees and also improve them to balancing easily.

It can be said that Work Life Balance is a very important issue in the Human Resource Management field and it has a vital impact on the productivity and growth of both the organization and the employee. Work life is all about a measure about controlling on when, where and how they work. Many factors are acting as supporting elements for employees to achieve balance between work and personal life. While certain elements like employees participation in framing the policies and taking key decisions, effective communication of organizations policies can be strengthened to make work and personal life of employees highly balanced.

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