

# WORK FROM HOME MODEL AS THE NEW HUMAN RESOURCE NORM –

DYNAMICS TO BE CONTEMPLATED UPON BY ORGANISATIONS BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

Covid 19 has brought in a wave of changes in every aspect of human life. These changes will definitely have a long term impact and in some cases permanent changes in basic dynamic. The corporate world has adopted this transition smoothly with changes and modifications in all business functions. The human resource practices have undergone considerable transformation. In the initial phase of lockdown, when employees were unable to go to work, the organisations shifted the working model to Work From Home. Today, organisations are contemplating on continuing the Work From Home Model to take advantage of the benefits emerging out of this setting. However, careful evaluation needs to be done before implementing the Work From Home Model on a long term and permanent basis. Various Human Resource dynamics that are affected and the outcomes of such new setting need to be contemplated before adoption of Work From Home Model. This study is an initial attempt to understand perspectives of people who have experienced Work From Home Model and get an insight into the positive and negative outcomes of this new norm of work setting. The study also tries to understand preference towards Work From Home Model. The study can be helpful to Human Resource Practitioners to evaluate and make decisions with respect to Work From Home Model before accepting it as the new norm.

**Key Words** – Work from home, Human Resource Practice, Job Satisfaction, Motivation, New Human Resource Norm.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Covid-19 brought in enormous changes in various aspects of human life. Changes are evident in the way we perform basic routine functions to how organisations do business activities and this has transformed human life. The pandemic forced countries across the world to go under lockdown forcing human life to stay at home. Organisations quickly adapted their way of doing business online using technology. Work From Home became the new mantra during the lockdown phase.

Work From Home (WFH) is not a recent human resource practice. Even before pandemic the practice of work from home was steadily on the rise. Work From Home refers to work setting wherein the job or work is done away from office in any remote setting. WFH is the acronym for Work From Home. Work From Home provides flexibility in jobs which does not require physical presence on the site or in the office. However, many organisations were compelled to transition in to Work From Home format during the pandemic. Technological and digital developments facilitated this smooth transition. Schools, Colleges, Offices, Businesses etc have now adopted Work From Home culture to continue with regular operations.

Work From Home provides many benefits like saving commute time and costs, location flexibility, better time management etc. this has made the Work From Home option very attractive to the working class or the employees of organisations. Similarly, Work From Home provides benefits like reduced operating costs, higher work scalability, availability of talent in remote setting, real time decision making etc to the organisations. Numerous organisations are now considering implementing or continuing with the Work from Home setting in future too. Even for those organisations which cannot totally move to Complete Work From Home model as considering Hybrid Work Model wherein the organisation can use Work From Home and traditional Work in Office formats alternatively or on a rotational basis. This is indeed a major change in Human Resource practices. However, this change will bring a lot of operational challenges along with benefits for the Human Resource Practitioners. Implementing and performing regular Human Resource functions like recruitment, selection, staffing, career advancement planning, development programmes, employee communication etc will become a challenging task for Human Resource practitioners. Human Resources Practitioners need to consider the issues and after effects of the Work from Home setting before adopting and implementing in totality. This study attempts to understand and put forth various dynamics with respect to Work From Home and to validate whether Work From Home is indeed a lucrative opportunity for Human Resource practitioners and organisations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A recent survey titled 'How do corporates envisage year 2021?' by TimesJob Survey conducted amongst 1376 Human Resource practitioners put forth very interesting insights with respect to the Remote Working Model. Approximately 50 % of respondents said they would continue with Work From Home Model in the next year where as 23 % of the respondents said they would continue the same for next five years. As per a survey by SAP Concur, 88% of the workforces in India prefer to Work From Home and 69 % believe that Work From Home Format increased their productivity. Work From Home has also generated employment opportunities with location flexibilities and also better gender balance in the workplace scenario. Numerous studies and researchers have made an attempt to study the variables influencing the Work From Home setting and the outcomes of the Work From Home model. It has been suggested that Work From Home setting benefits both the employment organization and the individual (Apgar, 1999; Bailyn, 1988; Davenport and Pearlson, 1998; Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996; Kurland and Bailyn, 1999; Stanworth, 1998)

Shamir, B.; Salomon, I. (1985) studied Work From Home and its implications on quality of Working Life and the possible outcomes in case of transfer of workplace from employer's place to employee's place. The researchers found that Work From Home model is beneficial to those individuals who find it difficult to go to employer's workplace and Work From Home is a good option only in some cases. Work From Home reduced the travelling stress and job related – role conflict. However, Work From Home also reduced the significance of task, quality and quantity of feedback, job enrichment based on work groups, social interactions, compensation opportunities, etc. The researchers stated that Work From Home model impaired chances of personality development and opportunities for promotion. They also stated that Work From Home is majorly suitable for white collar workers than production line workers and women segment of the workforce stand a high chance of losing out on growth related opportunities especially with respect to clerical jobs.

Alan Felstead; Nick Jewson; Annie Phizacklea; Sally Walters (2002) studied opportunities emerging from Work From Home setting, the researchers attempted to study various factors in relation to work life balance arising due to Work From Home model. The researchers found that the size and ownership structure of the organisation had an impact on the Work From Home option. They stated that public sector employees are more likely to opt for Work From Home rather than private sector employees. Workplaces that rely on employees monitoring themselves for their output were more likely to allow Work From Home option to employees. Thus employee trust factor is very significant for Work From Home.

Tietze and Musson (2002) studied experiences of professional management employees who worked regular periods from home, but remained full-time salaried employees. They observed that none of the respondents followed a strict working hours format in case of Work From Home. The researchers found that interruptions of work were unavoidable and the job related work happened in bits and pieces due to home related chores especially for employees with children. There was a loss of concentration not necessarily due to interruptions but also due to family commitments, social interactions and leisure activities due to the flexibility of continuing the work at other times. All the respondents in the study experienced higher pace and intensity of work in case of Work From Home. The respondents followed self-discipline in the management of their work. The researchers concluded that even though Work From Home model has many benefits, the employees and their family need to develop a coping strategy to manage both work and home.

Peeters, M. C. W., Montgomery, A. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2005) attempted to study Work Home Interference (WHI) and Home Work Interference (HWI) and their relation to burnout. They found direct and indirect relation of WHI & HWI with the burnout factor. The researchers stated that in their study the male and female employees responded differently to the WHI and HWI in somewhat different ways. Women employees have to face double burden of home and job demands in Work From Home settings. They found that for male employees the home demands were related to job burnout.

Baker, E., Avery, G. C. & Crawford, J. (2007) studied satisfaction and perceived productivity with respect to WFH. The researchers stated that Human Resource Practitioners played a key role in assisting Work From Home employees. Financial costs borne by companies for Work From Home costs were found to be helpful. Work From Home emerged as a good option for employees with family responsibilities wanting to continue their career and reduce work family conflict.

Nicholas Bloom and James Liang (2014) conducted a research by giving work from home option to the employees of Chinese travel website Ctrip where James Liang was a cofounder. The researchers found that Work From Home employees were not only happier than regular office going employees but also were less likely to quit and were also more productive. The company saved \$ 1900 per employee for nine months with respect to office furniture and space. WFH employees showed better productivity as they saved on travelling time and they started working early in the day with shorter breaks and working late till evening.

Singh, S. (2020) in the research paper on Work From Home - Advantages and Challenges, has stated higher productivity, higher flexibility, financial benefits in the form for cost savings, proximity to home and family as some of the benefits of Work From Home setting. The author also put forth challenges such as increase in set up costs, information security risk, communication and isolation problems, increased communication costs, increased distractions, decreased motivation, overworking, workspace issues arising out of Work From Home settings.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand the concept of Work From Home.
2. To understand the rise of Work From Home culture.
3. To analyse perspectives with respect to Work From Home culture.
4. To analyse acceptance level of Work From Home format
5. To analyse factors that make Work From Home an attractive option
6. To analyse factors that challenge the Work From Home format

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is an exploratory research examining the concept of Work From Home in depth in order to gain further insight. A general idea of Work From Home has been used as the starting point of the research and related issues have been used to understand and analyse the factors impacting the choice of Work From Home Model as the new Human Resource practice. Primary data has been gathered from 55 respondents using a self-completion online questionnaire. Secondary data has been collected from websites, research papers, and previous studies available online.

### **SAMPLING**

A sample size of 55 respondents has been used for the present study. Convenience sampling method has been followed to gather primary data. The sampling area is Mumbai Suburbs and Thane City.

## **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

Work From Home Model which gained tremendous boost during the lockdown phase of pandemic, is now being considered as a viable permanent option by organisations for future operations. This creates a need to study the dynamics of Work From Home Model and people's perspectives with respect to the working of Work From Home Model. It becomes imperative for Human Resource Practitioners to understand how employees accept and analyse Work From Home Model. The advantages and challenges that employees face in WFH setting should be considered before deciding and implementing the new way of working in the future.

## **DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

### **A. Reliability Test**

To test the reliability of the Measurement scale (questionnaire) used for data collection, Cronbach Alpha was used. The questionnaire has 55 questions and the Cronbach Alpha value is 0.8368. It is greater than the required value 0.70. Therefore the Test is satisfied. Conclusion is that the scale used for data collection is reliable.

### **1. Demographic Details**

#### **Total Number of Respondents - 55**

No	Demographic Variables	Details	
a	Age Group	Below 20 Years	04
		21 – 30 Years	15
		31 – 40 Years	17
		41 – 50 Years	12
		Above 50 Years	07
b	Gender	Male – 30	Female - 25
c	Marital Status	Married – 31	Single - 24
d	Occupation	Salaried	40
		Business	01
		Professional	04
		Other	10

## 2. Work From Home Data

No	Particulars	Number of respondents	
1	Have you ever worked from home till now?	Yes - 55	No - Nil
2	Are you currently working from home?	Yes - 40	No - 15
3	Did you work from home during the lockdown period?	Yes - 44	No - 11
4	How long have you worked from home?	Less than 1 year	48
		1 – 3 Years	06
		3 – 5 Years	Nil
		More than 5 years	01
5	Work from home was compulsory or optional?	Compulsory - 40	Optional - 15

**Interpretation & Findings** – 100 % of respondents have experienced Work From Home model. 42 (72.72%) respondents are currently working from home. 40 (80%) respondents worked from home during lockdown due to Covid 19. Majority of respondents - 48 (87.27%) have worked from home for less than a year. 40 (80%) respondents responded that Work From Home was compulsory for them.

## 3. Average ratings given by respondents to the various benefits of Work From Home on a scale of 1- 5 (1 being the least and 5 being the highest)

No	Benefits	Average Rating
1	No time spent in travelling	4.4
2	No money spent in commuting to work	4.3
3	Better time management	3.7
4	Increased focus on work	3.1
5	Working in comfort zone	3.6
6	Location Flexibility	3.8

**Interpretation & Findings** – Out of the list of benefits of Work from Home, the average rating is highest for ‘No time spent in travelling’ followed by ‘No money spent in commuting to work’. This shows that saving travelling time and Commute expenses are the most important benefits according to the respondents.

**4. Average ratings given by respondents to the various challenges of Work From Home on a scale of 1- 5 (1 being the least problematic and 5 being the highly problematic)**

No	Challenges	Average Rating
1	Less concentration / focus	3.1
2	Disruptions while working	3.4
3	No space at home	2.7
4	No designated work hours	3.7
5	Reduced face to face communication	3.7
6	Technical and Connectivity issues	3.1

**Interpretation & Findings** – Out of the list of challenges faced by respondents in Work From Home setting, ‘No designated work hours’ and ‘Reduced face to face communication’ have highest average ratings. This shows that respondents face challenges with respect to absence of fixed working hours and absence / reduction in interaction with others in Work From Home setting.

**5. Respondent’s perspectives with respect to Work From Home on various parameters**

No	Statements	Yes		NO	
		Nos	%	Nos	%
1	Work from Home increases your productivity	20	36.36	35	63.63
2	Work from Home increases your job related stress	27	49.09	28	50.90
3	Work from Home increases your motivation to work	14	25.45	41	74.54
4	Work From Home gives you better work life balance	21	38.18	34	61.81
5	Work from Home reduces employee commitment and loyalty towards the organisation	14	25.45	41	74.54
6	Work from Home affects your work experience and job related learning	22	40	33	60
7	Work from Home hinders your chance to get / give guidance with respect to work related doubts/ difficulties	25	45.45	30	54.54
8	Work from Home will require you to continuously upgrade your knowledge and skill	27	49.09	28	50.90

9	Work from Home culture will give rise to contractual jobs by organisations	32	58.18	23	41.81
10	Work from Home culture offers better and more work / job opportunities for women	30	54.54	25	45.45
11	Work from Home culture will have positive impact on environment	28	50.90	27	49.09
12	Organisations need to take more efforts in employee communication and welfare activities in Work from Home setting	37	67.27	18	32.72

### **Interpretation & Findings –**

1. Majority of respondents (63.63%) do not think that Work From Home increases productivity
2. Majority of respondents (50.90%) do not think that Work From Home increases job related stress
3. Majority of respondents (74.54%) do not think that Work From Home increases motivation to work
4. Majority of respondents (61.81%) do not think that Work From Home gives better work life balance
5. Majority of respondents (74.54%) do not think that Work From Home reduces employee commitment and loyalty towards the organisation
6. Majority of respondents (60%) do not think that Work From Home affects their work experience and job related learning
7. Majority of respondents (54.54%) do not think that Work From Home hinders their chance to get / give guidance with respect to work related doubts/ difficulties
8. Majority of respondents (50.90%) do not think that Work From Home will require them to continuously upgrade your knowledge and skill
9. Majority of respondents (58.18%) think that Work From Home culture will give rise to contractual jobs by organisations
10. Majority of respondents (54.54%) think that Work From Home culture offers better and more work / job opportunities for women
11. Majority of respondents (50.90%) think that Work From Home culture will have positive impact on environment
12. Majority of respondents (67.27%) think that Organisations need to take more efforts in employee communication and welfare activities in Work From Home setting



## 6. Effect of Work From Home on Income / Pay Scale

No	Has Work From Home has affected Income?	Number of respondents	
		Nos.	%
1	Yes	07	12.72
	If Yes, Income has increased	01	
	Income has decreased	06	
2	No	48	87.27

**Interpretation & Findings** – Majority of the respondents (87.27%) responded that their income has not been affected due to Work From Home setting. Out of the total respondents, 12.72% said that their income has been affected with a majority responding that the income has decreased.

## 7. Respondents whose organisation is considering implementing / extending Work From Home in future

No	Is your organisation considering implementing / extending Work From Home in future too?	Number of respondents	
		Nos.	%
1	Yes	10	18.18
2	No	13	23.63
3	Maybe	32	58.18
	Total	55	100

**Interpretation & Findings** – Majority of the respondents (58.18%) responded that their organisation may consider implementing or extending the Work From Home model in future too. 23.63% respondents gave an affirmative response that Work From Home will be extended in future and 18.18% responded that their organisation is not implementing or extending Work From Home Model in future.

## 8. Respondent's preference towards Work From Home

No	Respondent's Preference	Number of respondents	
		Nos.	%
1	Work From Home	22	40
2	Work in Office	33	60

Interpretation & Findings – 60 % of the respondents prefer to Work in Office. This shows that even though Work From Home setting offers a number of benefits as discussed earlier, respondents prefer to Work in office.

## **CONCLUSION**

Work From Home is definitely becoming the new norm for many organisation and employees. However, the study has put forth that there are some issues with respect to people's perspective towards Work From Home variables. Respondents think that Work From Home does not increase their productivity, motivation or work life balance. However, the study has also brought to focus certain positive perspectives towards other important variables, where respondents think that Work From Home has no impact on increase in job related stress. They also think that their work experience and work learnings are not affected due to Work From Home setting. Respondents also think positively about impact of Work from Home on environment. The study also shows that respondents think that Work From Home culture gives better chances or job opportunities for women. Respondents think that organisations need to take more efforts in employee communication and welfare activities in case of Work From Home Model. Organisations need to think about ways to enhance productivity, motivation and ensure that employees feel a sense of better work life balance if they want to follow Work From Home Model. Human resource practitioners will have to consider these dynamics and their influence. The study also sets forth a very interesting deduction that respondents prefer to Work in Office rather than Work From Home.

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