A study on Perception of Employees towards Benefits and challenges of Working from Home

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Abstract

The work from home culture was in existence before the COVID-19 pandemic too. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made widespread application of work from home culture across the world. This is the right time to understand the work from home culture in a more realistic manner. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess work from the home state of employees, to examine the perception of employees towards benefits of working from home, to identify the perception of employees towards challenges of working from home, and to explore whether employees are desirous to work from home in the future or not. The convenience sampling method was used for collecting data. A total of 165 online survey responses were received. Statistical techniques such as frequency, chi-square, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that nearly half of the respondents were willing to work from home in the future as well. The work from home culture was beneficial and equally challenging for employees. Proper guidelines and mechanisms to overcome the challenges can help to make the work from home a promising future working model.

Introduction

Working from home means allowing employees to work remotely either from their home or any other place other than the place of work (Reshma, Aithal, Shailashree & Acharya, 2015). The pandemic COVID-19 has forced companies to allow their employees to 'work from home' in order to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Working from home helps employees to work more effectively and productively (Mathias & Kumar 2020). The work from home culture offers several benefits to employees such as reduction in travel time, getting more flexibility in working hours, better work-life balance, and job satisfaction (Gibbs, Mengel & Siemroth, 2021).

Work from home is not a new concept. Some companies were allowing their employees to work from home before the COVID-19 pandemic as well. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the structure of the work from home culture has changed significantly. During pandemics work from home has become challenging for the employees; when they were asked to perform with the same efficiency and productivity as they were having when they were working from the office (Deepanshi & Arrawatia, 2020).

Due to the widespread application of work from home culture after the COVID-19 pandemic; its effectiveness is being questioned and significant debate is going on about its implementation and continuation (Gibbs, Mengel & Siemroth, 2021).

It makes it imperative to relook into the concept of work from home from a new perspective. Therefore this study was conducted to understand the state of working from home of employees.

Their perception about its benefits and challenges and also whether they are desirous to work from home in future as well.

Significance of the Study

The work from home culture was not much in practice before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it inevitable for organizations to make their employees work from home. The work-from-home culture has been adopted worldwide. This is the right time to study the realistic nature of work from culture, and its benefits and challenges from the point of view of employees. The work from home culture will be continued at least to some extent till the pandemic gets over. Therefore, a study like this can help to formulate the appropriate guidelines for employees working from home. This study will also help to check the possibility of adopting the work from home culture as a future working model. **Review of Literature**

Wheatley (2011) highlighted the conflict between the work to travel policy and work-life balance in the organizations in the UK. A case study method was used to study this conflict. The findings of the study revealed the imbalance between the work and non-work activities specifically with women employees resulting in stress among them. The findings specifically highlighted that the travel-to-work policy related to car parking created an imbalance between work and life.

Krasulja, Blagojevic, and Radojevic (2015) discussed the issues related to work-life balance and working from home. The authors highlighted that employees working from the office find it difficult to strike a balance between work and life. This imbalance may affect the motivation and productivity of employees. It was suggested by the authors that working from home can help employees to overcome the conflict of work-life balance.

Rahman and Arif (2020) conducted the study to explore the work from the home state of employees in Bangladesh. The researcher examined the aspects such as employee satisfaction levels, productivity, and challenges related to working from home. The findings of the study revealed that most of the employees were satisfied with the work from home culture and they were able to work more. Internet connectivity was the biggest challenge encountered by employees.

Employers' Federation of India (2020) conducted a study to offer the policy document on work from home culture. The policy document was intended to offer guidelines to implement effectively the work from home culture for a longer duration and with minimum disruptions of work. The study also highlighted the benefits and challenges of working from home.

Srivastava, Sethumadhavan, Raghupathy, Agarwal, and Rawat (2015) examined the suitability of the work from the home culture in the Indian work environment. 50 employees were selected from the IT sector of Pune. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the employees were in the favor of working from home; because it was helping them to strike a better balance between their work and life.

Vyas & Butakhieo (2021) critically investigated the work from the home scenario in Hong Kong during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study revealed that employees were not comfortable working from home. The researchers suggested having proper guidelines and training to make work from home more effective.

Paryani (2015) assessed work-life balance and stress arising out of it among the faculty of engineering and management. The findings of the study revealed that both faculty had a good work-life balance. Work policies were found to have a significant impact on the work-life balance of these faculty.

Ward (2017) explored the impact of working from home on the motivation and performance level of employees working in banks. The findings of the study revealed that there was a positive influence of working from home on the motivation and performance level of employees. It was also found that working from had increased the retention and productivity rate of employees.

Azimov (2020) conducted research to understand the reactions of employees to work from home specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic when they were forced to work from home. The findings of the study revealed that the work from home did not make any difference in the productivity and motivation of employees. The researcher suggested that work from home can be continued even when it is not mandatory.

Mathias and Kumar (2020) assessed the benefits and challenges of working from home as compared to working from the office. The study was conducted during the COVID-19. The findings of the study revealed that employees were ready to work from anywhere. The advantages of working from home were found to be based upon relaxed and quiet space at home, having the presence of loved ones at home, and internet connectivity.

Research Gap

After the literature review, the gap containing the study focusing on the work from the home state of employees of organizations in Mumbai, their perception towards benefits and challenges of working from home, and the exploring the desire of employees to work from home in the future of was identified.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To assess work from the home state of employees.
- To examine the perception of employees towards the benefits of working from home. ☐ To identify the perception of employees towards challenges of working from home ☐ To explore whether employees are desirous to work from home in the future or not. **Hypotheses of the Study**

The following hypotheses were framed for the study:

1)H_1: The desire of employees to work from home is influenced by the benefits of working from home.
H_0: The desire of employees to work from home is not influenced by the benefits of working from home.
2)H_1: The desire of employees to work from home is influenced by the challenges of working from home.
H_0: The desire of employees to work from home is not influenced by the challenges of working from home.
3)H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of male and female employees to work from home in the future.
H_2: There is a significant difference in the desire of male and female employees to work from home in the future.
4) H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of married and unmarried employees to work from home in the future.
H_1: There is a significant difference in the desire of married and unmarried employees to work from home in the future.
5)H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of employees of different age groups to work from home in the future.
H_1: There is a significant difference in the desire of employees of different age groups to work from home in the future.

Limitations of the study

1) The study is limited to the selected variables only.

2) The study is conducted with a sample size of 165 respondents only.

3) The study was constrained to the employees from various organizations/educational institutions in Mumbai.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

In order to study the benefits and challenges of working from home, primary, as well as secondary data, were collected. The secondary data were collected through journals, articles, thesis, and reports. The primary data were collected through an online survey using Google form by framing a well-structured questionnaire. After a rigorous study of the existing literature related to the work from home culture the questionnaire containing the questions related to demographic information of respondents, the work from the home status of them, their desire to work from home in the future, and their opinion about the benefits and challenges of working from home were prepared.

Sample Design

The convenience sampling method was used for collecting data. The prepared questionnaire was sent using online social media channels to employees of various organizations/educational institutions in Mumbai during.
The survey was kept open for the period of two months i.e. July to August 2021. A total of 165 online survey responses were received. Out of 165, 41 respondents were employees working in the educational institution and 124 were employees of various private organizations.

Statistical Techniques Used for Data Analysis

The primary data collected through an online survey were tabulated, analyzed interpreted. Statistical techniques such as frequency, chi-square, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used. The data were analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Data Analysis and Findings

Profile of Respondents

The following part of the study describes the profile of respondents. The profile of the respondents gave information about age, gender, education, and marital status. The collected information helped to find out the difference between the willingness of respondents to work from home. **Table 1 Profile of Respondents**

| Age	No of Respondents	%	Gender	No of Respondents	%
18-30	115	70	Male	83	50
31-43	25	15	Female	82	50
44-51	13	8	**Total**	**165**	**100**
52 and above	12	7	**Education**	**No of Respondents**	**%**
Total	**165**	**100**	Postgraduate	87	53
			Graduate	54	33
Marital status	**No of Respondents**	**%**	Undergraduate	17	10
Married	45	27	HSC	3	2
Single	120	73	Other	4	2
Total	**165**	100	**Total**	**165**	**100**

Source: Online Survey

With reference to the age of respondents (Table 1), 70% of respondents were belonging to the age bracket 18-30, 15% of respondents were in the age bracket of 31-43, 8 % of respondents were between the age group of 44-51 and 7 % of respondents were 52 and above. The majority of respondents were from the young adult age group of i.e. 18-30.   73% of respondents were unmarried and 27% of them were married. Further, an equal percentage of males and females i.e. 50% participated in the study. Regarding the educational status, 53% of respondents were postgraduate, 33% were graduate, 10% were undergraduate, 2% of respondents had finished only their Higher Secondary education. 2 % of respondents selected the option 'other'. The majority of respondents who participated in the study were postgraduates.

Working From Home during COVID-19 Pandemic

The working from home option was mandatory for many companies, therefore the respondents were asked whether they had worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic or not.

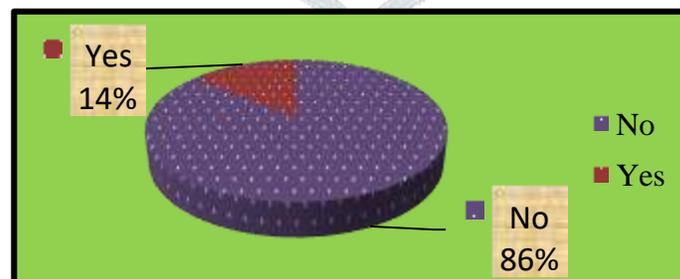**Figure 1 Respondents Worked from Home during COVID 19 Pandemic**
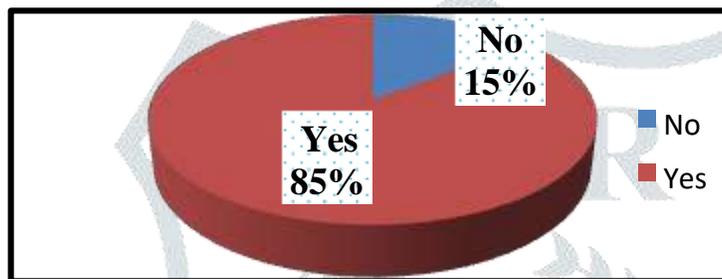
Source: Online Survey

It was found that (Figure 1) the majority of the respondents (85%) had worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 15% of respondents did not work from home during the COVID919 pandemic. The findings showed the extent of an overwhelming response of organizations; to the appeal of government to adopt working from home work culture.

Working From Home before COVID-19 Pandemic

In order to explore the extent of prevalence of the work from home culture before the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondent employees were asked whether they had worked from home before the COVID-19 pandemic or not.

Figure 2 Respondents Who Worked from Home before COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: Online Survey

The result in Figure 2 revealed that only 14% of employees had worked from before the COVID19 pandemic and the majority of respondents i.e. 86% of employees did not have experience of working from home before the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings confirmed the adherence to government calls by organizations for adopting work from home culture.

Duration of Working from Home during COVID-19 Pandemic

In order to know the extent of adoption work from home work culture, respondents were asked to mention the period for which they worked from home.

Table 2 Duration of Working from Home during COVID-19 Pandemic

Response for Duration of Working from Home during COVID-19 Pandemic	No of Respondents	%
More than 12 months	76	46
1 to 3 months	26	16
No, I did not work from home	23	14
4 to 6 months	13	8
Less than one month	10	6
7 to 9 months	9	5
10 to 12 months	8	5
Total	**165**	**100**

Source: Online Survey

The result in Table 2 revealed that the majority of respondents (46%) worked from home for more than 12 months. 6% of respondents worked from home for less than one month. 16% of respondents worked from home for 1 to 3 months. 8% of respondents worked from home for 4 to 6 months. 5% of respondents worked from home for 7 to 9 months. Another 5% of respondents worked for 10 to 12 months. 14% of respondents had not worked from home. It has been more than a year since the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that the majority of the respondents were working from home for more than 12 months as well. It shows that during the entire pandemic period these employees were working from home.

Number of Days in a Week Respondents Worked from Home

Further, the respondents were also asked how many days they were working from home in a week. **Table 3 Number of Days in a Week Respondents Worked from Home**

| Response for Number of Days in a Week Respondents Worked from Home	No of Respondents	%
Whole week	70	42
Five	61	37
Three	5	3
Four	3	2
One	2	1
Two	1	1
No, I did not work from home	23	14
Total	**165**	**100**

Source: Online Survey

The result in Table 3 showed that nearly half of the respondents (42%) had worked from the home the whole week. 37% of the respondents worked 5 days a week from home. 3% of the respondents worked for 3 days a week from home. 2% of respondents worked for four days a week from home. Only 1% of respondents worked for two days a week and only for one day a week from home respectively. 14% of the respondents did not work from home. It can be concluded that 44% of respondents were working from the office for some days in a week and 14% of respondents were working from the office completely as usual during the pandemic.

Respondents Desirous to Work from Home even in the Future

In order to understand the attitude of respondent employees towards work from home culture; they were asked whether they are desirous to work from home even in the future or not.

Figure 3 Respondents Desirous to Work from Home even in the Future
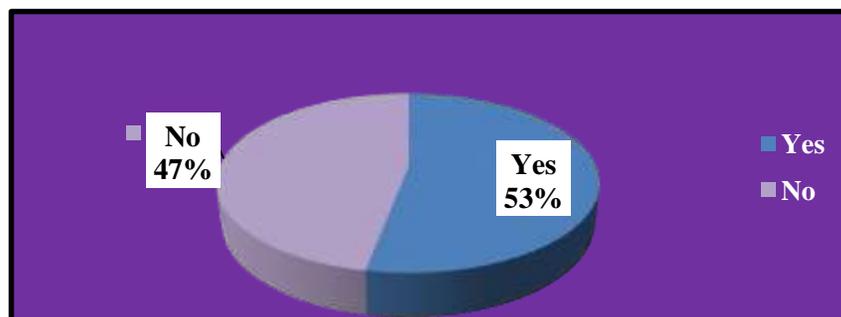
Source: Online Survey

The findings in Figure 3 revealed that the percentage of respondents who were desirous to work from home and who were not willing to work from home in the future were nearly equal. 53% of respondents were willing to work from home in the future as well. 47% of respondents were not desirous to work from home in the future. Before, the pandemic work from home was perceived as a welcoming work option from employees. The findings did not prove that perception true; in the case of nearly half of respondents who participated in the study.

Benefits of Working from Home

In order to understand why respondents were desirous to work from in future too. The opinion of respondents was examined with reference to some of the benefits of working from home.

Table 4 Benefits of Working from Home

Benefits of Working from Home	YES		NO		TOTAL	
	No of Respondents	%	No of Respondents	%	No of Respondents	%
It saves my travel time and expenses	157	95	8	5	165	100
It gives me flexibility and I can work at my pace	128	78	37	22	165	100
It saves my other associated cost of working from the office	136	82	29	18	165	100
I can spend more time with my family members.	114	69	51	31	165	100
It trains me to be technologically more sound	114	69	51	31	165	100
I can manage my work and family responsibilities better as compared to work from the office.	109	66	56	34	165	100

It has increased my work productivity	99	60	66	40	165	100
I feel more satisfied with my work	95	58	70	42	165	100
I am getting more free time for myself	89	54	76	46	165	100
Work from home increases my physical and mental health	71	43	94	57	165	100

Source: Online Survey

Table 4 highlighted that 95% of respondents agreed that work from home saved their travel time and expenses. 78% of respondents were of the opinion that working from home gave them flexibility and allowed them to work at their pace. 82% of respondents had saved their other associated costs of working from the office. 69% of respondents could spend more time with their family members and working from home helped them to be technologically more sound.66% of respondents could manage their work and family responsibilities better than compared to work from the office. The work from home culture helped respondents to increase the productivity of their work. 58% of respondents said that working from home gave them more satisfaction.54% of respondents could get more time for themselves. Only 43% of respondents agreed that working from home increased their physical and mental health. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were agreed with the benefits of working from home.

Challenges of Working from Home

Further, apart from benefits the opinion of respondents about the challenges of working from home was also examined.

Table 5 Challenges of Working from Home

Challenges of Work from Home	YES		NO		TOTAL	
	No of Respondents	%	No of Respondents	%	No of Respondents	%
Lack of face to face social interactions and social connect with colleagues	142	86	23	14	165	100
It increases the cost of electricity consumption and IT equipment	136	82	29	18	165	100
Lack of strong internet connectivity affects the speed of work from home	135	82	30	18	165	100
Absence of having office like work environment and equipment at home	133	81	32	19	165	100
Work from home increases my working hours	121	73	44	27	165	100

It is difficult to communicate and coordinate things with colleagues and superiors remotely	114	69	51	31	165	100
It is difficult to separate work and family responsibilities	110	67	55	33	165	100
Job interferes with the time for family and family interferes with the time for job	107	65	58	35	165	100
It disturbs sleeping and eating patterns	103	62	62	38	165	100
Lack of technical knowhow, makes work from home stressful	95	58	70	42	165	100
Cannot focus on work due to a lot of distractions at home	94	57	71	43	165	100

Source: Online Survey

The result in Table 5 indicated that 86% of respondents were missing face-to-face social interaction with colleagues. 82% of respondents felt that working from home increases the cost of electricity consumption and IT equipment. 82% of respondents faced the problem of low speed of work due to poor internet connectivity. 81% of respondents were missing an office-like environment and equipment. 73% of respondents were of the opinion that working from home increases their working hours. For 69% of respondents, it was difficult to communicate and coordinate things with colleagues and superiors remotely. 67% of respondents found it difficult to separate work and family responsibilities. 65% of respondents said that job interferes with the time for family and family interferes with the time for the job. 62% of respondents agreed that working from home disturbs their sleeping and eating patterns. 58% of respondents found that lack of technical knowhow was making work from home more stressful. 57% of respondents were of the opinion that they cannot focus on their work because of a lot of distractions at home. The findings revealed that along with the benefits, working from home culture is equally challenging for employees as well.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

H_1: The desire of employees to work from home is influenced by benefits of working from home.

H_0: The desire of employees to work from home is not influenced by benefits of working from home.

Table 6 Chi Square Test to Examine the Influence of Benefits of Working from Home Work Culture on the Desire of Employees to Work from Home

Chi Square Test to Examine the Influence of Benefits of Working from Home Work Culture on the Desire of Employees to Work from Home	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
It gives me flexibility and I can work at my pace	29.424[a]	1	.000
It saves my travel time and expenses	2.593[a]	1	.107

It saves my other associated cost of working from the office	11.537[a]	1	.001
I can manage my work and family responsibilities better as compared to work from the office	29.623[a]	1	.000
I can spend more time with my family members.	36.444[a]	1	.000
It trains me to be technologically more sound	7.090[a]	1	.008
I am getting more free time for myself	25.282[a]	1	.000
Work from home increases my physical and mental health	24.026[a]	1	.000
I feel more satisfied with my work	47.782[a]	1	.000
It has increased my work productivity	39.718[a]	1	.000

Table 6 highlighted the result of the chi-square test that was administered to find out the influence of benefits of the working from home culture on the desire of employees to work from home. It was found that all the benefits of working from home except only one i.e. It saves travel time and expenses (P-Value 0.107) did not show a significant influence on the desire of respondents to work from home in the future too.

Hypothesis 2

H_1: The desire of employees to work from home is influenced by the challenges of working from home.
H_0: The desire of employees to work from home is not influenced by the challenges of working from home.

Table 7 Chi Square Test to Examine the Influence of Challenges of Working from Home Work Culture on the Desire of Employees to Work from Home

Chi Square Test to Examine the Influence of Challenges of the Working from Home Work Culture on the Desire of Employees to Work from Home	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
It is difficult to communicate and coordinate things with colleagues and superiors remotely	11.636[a]	1	.001
It is difficult to separate work and family responsibilities	18.491[a]	1	.000
Work from home increases my working hours.	4.183[a]	1	.041
Absence of having office like work environment and equipment at home	1.521[a]	1	.217
Cannot focus on work due to a lot of distractions at home	9.072[a]	1	.003
Lack of face to face social interactions and social connect with colleagues	4.812[a]	1	.028
Lack of technical knowhow, makes work from home stressful	8.227[a]	1	.004
Job prevents time for family and family prevents time for job	9.462[a]	1	.002
It disturbs sleeping and eating pattern	11.017[a]	1	.001
It increases the cost of electricity consumption and IT equipment	2.309[a]	1	.129

Lack of strong internet connectivity affects the speed of work from home	4.389[a]	1	.036

Table 7 indicated the result of the chi-square test that was administered to find out the influence of challenges of the working from home culture on the desire of employees to work from home. It was found that all the challenges of work from home except only two i.e. absence of having officelike work environment and equipment at home (P-value 0.217) and it increases the cost of electricity consumption and IT equipment (P-value 0.129) did not show a significant influence on the desire of respondents to work from home in future too.

Hypothesis 3

In order to find out whether male and female respondents were equally desirous to work from home even in the future or not; the Independent T-test was conducted. The following hypotheses were framed out to administer the test.

H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of male and female employees to work from home in the future.
H_2: There is a significant difference in the desire of male and female employees to work from home in the future.

Table 8
Independent Sample T-test to Compare the Difference in the Desire of Male and Female Employees to Work from Home

Independent Sample T-test to Compare the Difference in the Desire of Male and Female Employees to Work from Home		T -test for Equality of Means		
		df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference
Are you desirous to work from home even in the future?	Equal variances assumed	163	.139	.115
	Equal variances not assumed	163.00	.139	.115

The test result of the Independent Sample T-test (Table 8) showed that the p values were not significant and they were more than the level of significance, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, and it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the desire of male and female employees to work from home in the future as well.

Hypothesis 4

In order to find out whether married and unmarried respondents were equally desirous to work from home even in the future or not; the Independent T-test was conducted. The following hypotheses were framed out to administer the test.

H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of married and unmarried employees to work from home in the future.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the desire of married and unmarried employees to work from home in the future.

Table 9
Independent Sample T-test to Compare the Difference in the Desire of Married and Unmarried Employees to Work from Home

Independent Sample T-test to Compare the Difference in the Desire of Married and Unmarried Employees to Work from Home		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference
Are you desirous to work from home even in the future?	Equal variances assumed	163	.099	-.144
	Equal variances not assumed	78.810	.102	-.144

The test result of the Independent Sample T-test (Table 9) showed that the p values were not significant and they were more than the level of significance, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, and it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the desire of married and unmarried employees to work from home in the future as well.

Hypothesis 5

In order to find out whether employees of different age groups were equally desirous to work from home even in the future or not; the One Way ANOVA Test was conducted. The following hypotheses were framed to administer the test.

H_0: There is no significant difference in the desire of employees of different age groups to work from home in the future.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the desire of employees of different age groups to work from home in the future.

Table 10 One Way Anova Test to Examine the Difference in the Desire of Employees of Different Age Groups to Work Form Home

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.128	3	.709	2.929	.035
Within Groups	38.999	161	.242		
Total	41.127	164			

The test result of One Way ANOVA (Table 10) showed that the p-value (0.035) was significant. It was more than the level of significance, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there was a significant difference in the desire of employees of different age groups to work from home in the future as well.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The work from home culture may get extended for some more time till the COVID-19 pandemic ends. Further, organizations of different types may adopt the work from home culture as a future working model. Therefore, it becomes necessary to devise guidelines to make the work from home culture the best working model. In order to adopt the work from home culture as a working model, it is imperative to study the challenges faced by the

employees working from home and to come up with the best workable solutions to overcome them. Organizations may organize virtual get together and cultural events by which the employees can have the feel of social connection. Employees working from home have to pay for electricity bills and purchasing IT equipment which might be a demotivating factor for employees to work from home; as it puts an extra financial burden on them. Organizations should provide financial assistance to employees for such costs. Online sessions of meditation, counseling and training should be organized to help employees to concentrate on their work and to strike a better work-life balance. Training sessions should also be organized to train employees to enhance their technical know-how and capability to coordinate effectively with their superiors and colleagues by using virtual platforms; without any tension and stress.

Future scope of the study

The Work from home culture will continue to evolve. The study can be extended to other cities like Mumbai, it can also be extended at the regional and national levels. A study of this kind can be conducted sector-specific as well.

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