

AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN DURING WORK FROM HOME

Aasia Ahmed Radiowala*
Dr. Manjusha S. Molwane**

ABSTRACT

Coronavirus has shifted work from office to work from home (WFH). The purpose of this study is to explore various problems faced by the females during WFH. Narrative method of qualitative research and text mining technique is used to explore various problems faced by the females during WFH. The most crucial problems contributing to the challenges faced by the females during WFH are managing kids and family, household chores, attending online meeting, lack of space, distraction, inability to concentrate, overburdened etc.

Keywords: *Work from Home (WFH), Coronavirus, Pandemic, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2.*

Introduction

The Coronavirus disease 2019 also called **COVID-19** refers to a contagious disease that is easily transferred from one person to the other person. It just gets transmitted from mere contact with the infected person. The Coronavirus disease is a type of a severe acute respiratory syndrome that is known as SARS-CoV-2 which is famously known as the Coronavirus 2. The first ever case of the COVID-19 was being discovered in the Wuhan district in the country of China that was being discovered in the month of December in 2019. After that the disease just spread like a wildfire throughout the globe. No country was being spared from this deadly virus. The virus resulted in death of a large number of population all over the world. It was being made compulsory for each country to impose strict lockdown that led to the shutting down of major businesses, industries and educational sector. The spread of this disease can be controlled through following some majorly important protocols and precautions on an individual level like wearing masks, covering mouth and nose while coughing or while sneezing, maintaining social distancing from one another, frequently using sanitizers, adequate ventilation and also keeping oneself quarantined. Also major countries all over the globe are trying to prepare vaccines so as to fight this deadly disease and in many countries vaccination drives are also being started.

Work from Home Mandate

The first ever case of the COVID-19 disease in India was recorded on January 30, 2020 which created a very severe situation in the country. Of all the countries all around the globe, India has been largely being affected by the spread of this disease. A large number of the population died due to this disease. To prevent the virus from spreading, the government of India announced a total lockdown, as a preventive measure also immediately imposed a work-from-home mandate, restricting people's mixing for all economic activities across the country.

After a few months, the lockdown was partially lifted, and government and private offices began to resume offline operations with fifteen percent of their workforce rotating on a weekly basis, eventually increasing to fifty percent.

The country is currently experiencing the second wave of this disease, which began in March 2021 and is more lethal than the first wave, which hit the country last year. After America, India is the second most affected country in the world by this disease. The country is also facing an acute shortage

* Research Scholar, Pursing Ph.D., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedker Marathwada University, Aurangabad & Incharge Principal, Anjuman-I-Islam's, Begum Jamila Haji Abdul Haq College of Home science, (Affiliated to SNDT Women's University), Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

** Research Guide, Pursing Ph.D., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedker Marathwada University, Aurangabad & Associate Professor, Government College of Arts & Science, Aurangabad, Ex-Joint Director, Higher Education, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

of beds and oxygen cylinders also which is the main reason for the large number of deaths due to the second wave. . The country once again declared complete lockdown, with the exception of essential services time restrictions to stop unnecessary public movement, in order to break the chain. Work from home was enforced once more. Thus with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, 'work from home' became a new norm and is still continuing till today.

Need of the Study

Every women, working or not, is confronted with a difficult situation at home. All members of the family are working from home including children attending online classes from home. Furthermore, Domestic help is avoided, leaving women to shoulder the brunt of household responsibilities. Working women is facing more challenging situation as they have to balance both that is work from home along with performing domestic duties.

The current study is an exploratory study undertaken to find out the challenges that women face while working from home.

Exploratory research can be defined as the basic primary as well as the initial examination being conducted for understanding the nature and to make the problem look not much complicated and finding out solutions for solving the problem. The Exploratory Research also enables to carry out additional investigations for penetrating deep inside to clearly understand the issue and giving it due importance and solving it effectively and efficiently. For determining the base problem, proper investigation is required which includes determining the need of the research, collection of relevant data related to the problem and finding out the hidden factors or issues which might be not possible to foresee just looking at the problem. A number of methods has to be followed in during Exploratory Research:

- **Secondary Research** can be defined as a research that is being conducted on the existing set of data and literature.
- **Informal Qualitative Approaches** can be defined as a contemplation of and communicating with all the major stakeholders of the company i.e. consumers, employees, management, competitors, etc.
- **Formal Qualitative Research** can be defined as conducting in-depth interviews also implementing studies such as pilot study, interaction with the focal group, assessing through case studies and implementing project techniques.

Review of Literature

The wide-ranging literature reviews on working from home are also included in this study.

Arshi Shaikh¹, Oli Devi², Aditi Patil³ (2021), in their research study, "To Study the Impact of Work from Home on Back and Neck Pain among Employees during Covid-19 Pandemic", published in Quest Journals, Journal of Research in Business and Management, Volume 9-Isse 2 (2021), pp: 29-32, ISSN(ONLINE): 234-3002, focused on the employees' neck and back pain before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The age group from 20 years to 45 years, were focussed in this study.. The data was collected from sample size of 52 employees using Random stratified sampling technique The result showed 19% employees had physical issues, 25% had neck pain, 36% had back pain, and extreme impact was on physical activity as 61% of employees had <1hr of physical activity in an entire day. The result also revealed that 52% did not have good work life balance and 57% used to do exercise to cope up with pain.

Merideth Ferguson, Dawn Carlson, Suzanne Zivnuska, Dwayne Whitten,(2012), revealed in their study, "Support at work and home: The path to satisfaction through balance", that employees experience heightened work-family balance due to social support from partners and co-workers and that support and balance impact satisfaction in both the work and family domains.

Powell, A. and craig, L (2015), in their research "Gender differences in working at home and time use patterns: evidence from Australia", Work, Employment and Society, vol.29, no.4, p571-589, revealed that it may be difficult for the women who work from their homes, to maintain boundaries between work and family responsibilities, thus exposing them to work-family conflict and increased stress.

VaniHaridasan, Kavitha Muthukumaran and Yogita D, Work-Life Balance of Women Working from Home during Lockdown an Empirical Study, attempted to find out professional and personal challenges and enhancers for work-life balance amongst working women through a survey of 128 women working in different sectors in south India. The regression analysis findings show that job performance

and personal well being are the main determinants of women employees' work life balance during work from home. This study suggested measures which would benefit all the sectors that employee women to realign their policies, benefit programs, work distribution and make job changes inside the organisation for an employee friendly remote working experience, thereby improving the workforce's efficiency and productivity

Materials and Methods

Telephonic interview was taken of 30 females working from home during covid19 second wave and audio file was converted into the transcript. in-depth analysis of the transcript was done using NVIVO 12 SOFTWARE .Text mining technique is very useful in providing data insights. Word cloud and word summary table were established for in-depth analysis.

Results

As per Figure Number 1 it can be clearly seen from the word cloud the most important challenges faced by the females during work from home are handling and managing the family members and kids followed by household chores, distraction by other members and lack of space. It can be also seen that Work life balance, concentration, stress leads to exhaustion and several health problems among the female workers.

Figure 1: Word Cloud



As per Table 2 it can be seen that managing family contributes to 14.38 weighted percentage in the challenges and has 45 counts followed by handling the kinds constituting 12.46 weighted percentage in problems faced by female workers with 39 counts. Also it is seen that household chores, distraction by other members, Lack of space, unable to concentrate contributes more than 5 weighted percentage in total challenges faced by the female workers during WFH.

Table 2: Word Summary

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) |
|------------------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| Family | 6 | 45 | 14.38 |
| Kids | 4 | 39 | 12.46 |
| Chores | 6 | 34 | 10.86 |
| Distractions | 12 | 27 | 8.63 |
| Space | 5 | 27 | 8.63 |
| Concentrate | 11 | 17 | 5.43 |
| Stressful | 9 | 14 | 4.47 |
| Exhausted | 9 | 13 | 4.15 |
| Harsassment | 11 | 11 | 3.51 |
| Wlb | 3 | 11 | 3.51 |
| Health | 6 | 9 | 2.88 |
| Responsibilities | 16 | 9 | 2.88 |
| Connectivity | 12 | 8 | 2.56 |
| Environment | 11 | 8 | 2.56 |
| Market | 6 | 8 | 2.56 |
| Isolation | 9 | 7 | 2.24 |
| Salary | 6 | 7 | 2.24 |
| School | 6 | 6 | 1.92 |
| Sleep | 5 | 5 | 1.60 |
| Backache | 8 | 3 | 0.96 |
| Eyes | 4 | 3 | 0.96 |
| Headache | 8 | 2 | 0.64 |

Discussions and Conclusions

During the initial stages of work from home it was very difficult to work from home for any individual. Living in a city like Mumbai is not easy and with space crunch working from home was like a major challenge. It was more difficult for working females as they always have to take care of home and office. The major challenge faced by the females during work from home turned out to be managing kids and family while they are working, taking care of household chores and simultaneously attending online meetings was a task. It was also seen that women found it hard to convince their families that they were actually working and the lack of space at home with lot many distractions made them unable to concentrate on the work. It was sometimes stressful, which made them exhausted. It can be seen that creating a office space at home is difficult as other people of the family also were either attending classes on working from home. Whatever it was, females tried their best adjusting with few getting support from their family and office as well. The office people can support females by paying them full salary at their earliest and sometimes allowing them to work at their convenient timings. Taking a holiday from WFH is not easy and operating from home sometimes lead to isolation. A little help and support can go a long way for females to maintain their work life balance.

Thus employer must reduce the shift timings with no reduction in the payment so that the female workers can easily cope up with the problem of work life balance. Other members of the family must support the working women to minimize the exhaustion and stress of the female worker. Also all the employee's either male or female should start their work with meditation, exercises, yoga's so as to reduce the overall mental stress.

References

1. Benavent F. & Ros S. et al (2005). A model of quality management self-assessment: an exploratory research. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, Volume 22, Issue 5, P. 432-451.
2. Berger C. & Moslein K. et al (2010). Co-designing modes of cooperation at the customer interface: learning from exploratory research. *The Journal of The European Academy of Management*, Volume 2, Issue 1, P. 70-87.
3. Horsburgh D. (2003). Evaluation of qualitative research. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, Volume 12, Issue 2, P. 307-312.
4. Meredith Ferguson, Dawn Carlson, Suzanne Zivnuska, Dwayne Whitten,(2012), Support at work and home: The path to satisfaction through balance, *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Volume 80, Issue 2,Pages 299-307,ISSN 0001-8791,
5. Qu S. & Dumay J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, Volume 8, Issue 3, P. 238-264.
6. Pettreson E. & Goddard T. et al (2004). UCSF Chimera – A visualization system for exploratory research and analysis. *Journal of Computational Chemistry*, Volume 25, Issue 13, P. 1605-1612.
7. Powell, A. and craig, L (2015),“Gender differences in working at home and time use patterns: evidence from Australia”, *Work, Employment and Society*, vol.29, no.4, p571-589,
8. Sandelowski M. (2004). Using Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, Volume 14, Issue 10.
9. Shen H. & Fu M. et al (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Firm Performance. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, Volume 56, Issue 10.
10. Lokhandwala S. & Gautam P. (2020). Indirect impact of COVID-19 on environment: A brief study in Indian context. *Environmental Research*, Volume 188.
11. Singh A. & Misra A. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 and comorbidities on health and economics: Focus on developing countries and India. *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews*, Volume 14, Issue 6, P. 1625-1630.
12. Vani Haridasan, Kavitha Muthukumaran and Yogita D, *Work-Life Balance of Women Working from Home during Lockdown an Empirical Study*, Publication, iaeme publication (2021).

