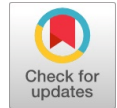# Work From Home Culture and Employee Well-Being: A Study in IT Sector

Samriddha Chatterjie, Shampa Nandi

Abstract: Purpose - Remote working, today, involves the concept of Work from Anywhere (WFA) offering both temporal and geographical flexibility, which helps workers to choose where to live and enables them to work from a preferred location. It has gained more popularity in the last 2 years with the outbreak of the pandemic. As the majority of the organizations have adapted to this new normal, it is important to understand the productivity of the employees in such a scenario. The major reasons interrupting the workflow are technical issues, other distractions at home. On the other hand, it has a positive impact such as an increase in work-life balance. In this paper, the authors have tried to establish a relationship between work from home and employee well-being of IT employees, with the outcome as productivity. The purpose of this research is to find out if productivity is increased or decreased as a result of work from home. Design/ Methodology/ Approach – This is a conceptual research method used to identify work from home's effect on employee well-being and productivity in the pandemic situation. This study is based on secondary data. Findings – This paper tries to study the relationship between work from home, which is the new normal situation, and productivity. Most research shows that work from home has led to an increase in productivity. This is also influenced by mediating effects of leadership style and demographics. Practical Implications - Based on this conceptual paper, an empirical study will be done on entry-level IT employees to test the relationship between work from home and employee well-being. Originality/value – It gives us a framework for building a model to depict the relationship between work from home and productivity.

Keywords: Work from home, pandemic, healthy workplace, organizational productivity, employee well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

An individual's experiences and events at work often tend to affect work as well as non-work domains. Health and well-being can define both the physical and psychological/emotional aspects of workers. Diener (1984) has used the term "subjective well-being". It describes an individual's overall experience in life and how a person himself defines happiness.

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Exploring the views of the authors who have dealt with well-being as a result of the interaction between subjective factors and characteristics of the workplace, it is possible to recognize a common root in interactional theories, which considers a person organization fit as being crucial in generating wellbeing (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996; Mininni, Manuti, Scardigno, & Rubino, 2010) [2][30][57]. Three main aspects of employee well-being have been identified through various studies- job satisfaction, positive emotions and relational interaction.

According to Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2003), two lines of research characterize the approach of identifying job satisfaction as an aspect of employee well-being. The first is connected to the theory of the person environment fit (French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982) [40], in which well-being is connected to the presence of appropriate requests to the individual by the organization [41]. A second line of research relates the performance and the quality of life of people with the presence of positive emotional states and satisfying relationships within the work environment (Isen, 1987; Warr, 1999) [16]. The second aspect has been identified as positive emotions. It has been found that positive emotions in general lead to well-being. Positive feeling and positive psychological functioning are two main aspects of subjective well-being [12]. The rate of job satisfaction which in turn contributes to an individual's life satisfaction plays an important role here [53]. The more the workers are satisfied, the higher the productivity [14].

The third aspect can be called the relational interaction or the interpersonal skills that an individual possesses. Social interaction and sociability have been known to improve employees' performance at workplace.

Previous reviews have concluded that human resource management (HRM) is positively related to performance (e.g. Combs et al. 2006) [27]. Recently, employee health and employee well-being have become widely discussed topics in organizational health [28]. Organizations are becoming more employee-centered. Workplace psychosocial factors such as social support, job control, and role conflict have been linked to sickness absence, hypertension, depression, burnout, cardiovascular disease, and other ailments (Boman, 1988; Burke, Shearer, & Deszca, 1984; Dormann & Zapf, 1999; Ganster, Schaubroeck, Sime, & Mayes, 1990; Johnson, Stewart, Hall, Fredlund, & Theorell, 1996; Kivimaki et al., 1997; Piko, 2003; Smith, Kaminstein, & Makadok, 1995) [38]. They also have been found to be predictive of healthcare costs (Manning, Jackson, & Fusilier, 1996) [15]. To safeguard employee health, then, it is important that we know how to abate not only physical hazards, but also psychosocial ones.

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Strength based employee trainings and development programs, and workplace counselling should be conducted to meet the psychological needs of an employee. These needs include competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Again, employee well-being cannot be solely achieved by measures taken by management. It is affected both by external and internal factors. It is true that more and more organizations are now becoming employee friendly which in turn helps improve organizational performance. However, the efforts to employee well-being should also come from below i.e., the employee level influencing individual traits and behaviours.

Gradually, a number of offices in the private sector mostly, started introducing work from home as an HR policy. In the IT industry, employee well-being has been given utmost priority and therefore, employee friendly policies like work from home, flexi timings, rotational shifts, shift allowances, cab facilities etc were introduced. Striking a balance between work and personal life is called an individual's work-life balance. This is gaining more and more importance in almost every organization, its employees and the policy makers (Russell & Bowman, 2000). The IT sector or the BPO sector requires the organizations to effectively create an attractive environment for its employees since the job stress in this industry is huge. Work-life balance should necessarily create an environment where work and personal life are together seen as complimentary elements of a full life.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, organizations throughout the world have started seeing the positive sides of remote working. The term 'teleworking' means working outside employer's premises, which can be home or other places like customer sites or home offices using different technologies. Work from home is a part of teleworking which has become very common in recent times with the rise of Covid-19 [10][11]. Prior to this remote working was not practiced widely. With the sudden outbreak of the pandemic, the organizations were bound to move to this global experiment almost overnight. It became a question of physical and financial survival. Though for many industries, there are controversies about the permanent inclusion of work from home even after pandemic; in IT industry, WFH has become an integral part and added as a new norm in HR policy [49]. It has already proven that productivity has improved in IT sector with the inclusion of WFH. Multiple reasons explored by various researchers are less fatigues of the employees, savings of travel time, more intensive work commitment, stretched working hours etc. But there is less discussion observed in how WFH is affecting employees' health and mental well-being. WFH has substantially erased the social interaction part of office life. Long hours in front of laptop without much movement causes obesity and other health ailments. In fact, stretched hours of working much beyond normal office hours is another area of concern. The fun and informal interaction with colleagues is missing completely, whereas extra responsibility to manage home choirs made the situation more complex. It has become essential to analyse and investigate the impact of WFH on health and well-being of IT employees specially in India as the workload and stress in IT sector is comparatively high to meet closed targets of foreign clients and for erratic time schedule to adjust various time zones.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last few decades, a lot of research work focusing on psychological health in the workplace has led to new concepts and ways of understanding the influence of healthy workplace initiatives. A range of disciplines that include psychology, medicine, sociology, public health etc have contributed to conceptualizing the theory of a healthy workplace.

The definition of a healthy workplace provided by Sauter et al. (1996) is any organization that maximizes the integration of worker goals for wellbeing and company objectives for profitability and productivity. When an organization tries to move towards a healthy workplace, the organization and the individuals within it must be taken into consideration. The need for dual consideration of the individual as well as the organization is epitomized by Browne's (2000) argument that human resource practices are only progressive if the concern for organizational level outcomes is matched by a concern for the well-being of employees who are directly affected by these practices. Hence, organizational well-being can only be attained by achieving the well-being for the employees working in it [62].

There are 4 principles stated by Adkins, Quick, and Moe (2000) towards organizational health. According to the first principle, organizations should not only try to diminish negative or poor health, they should take measures to specifically promote positive health. The second principle states that it is necessary top constantly maintain the good health, that it is an on-going process. The third principle says that organization can be healthy through inter connections between several factors in it, steps should be taken to minimize all the damaging factors. As per the fourth principle, organization health can grow with health interpersonal skills, like communication, collaboration and relationship building.

The concept of health workplace was formed many years back. Robin (2003) noted that originally the health of an organization was evaluated in terms of the bottom line. It started with few companies hosting picnics and outings, then slowly it began including fitness programmes. In the recent times, companies have started including a multitude of initiatives to promote employee and organizational health. DeJoy and Wilson (2003), Jaffe (1995), Schmidt et al. (2000), and Williams (1994) all suggest that organizational health can only be obtained by focusing on the organization as a system. Promoting positive health within the organization should be done at an organizational level. Also, they suggest development programs, policies to be designed keeping in mind individual needs of the employees.

Aldana (2001) defined health promotion programs as all "efforts that enhance awareness, change behaviour, and create environments that support good health practices".

Employee well-being is an integral part of organizational and community improvements. An average adult spends most of his life working. It is in the best interest of the employers and employees have a positive mental health since it directly affects performance.

Spector's (1997) review suggested that more satisfied employees are more cooperative, more helpful to their colleagues, more punctual and time-efficient, show up for more days of work, and stay with the company longer than dissatisfied employees.

HR practices and policies play an important role in job satisfaction, which in turn influences employee performance [21]. It has been observed through various studies that HR policies which are either high-performance or high-commitment practices help employees to be motivated by increasing opportunities of participation [50][51]. This is supported by the ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) model of performance, which states that performance of an employee is a function of his/her abilities, motivation and opportunity to contribute (Appelbaum et al., 2000). HR practices give employees a sense of attachment towards the organization as they feel the organization's concern for them. It is positively related to employee well-being and performance. It generally influences the psychological well-being (happiness) and social well-being (relationships). Therefore, studies have been done majorly on these two variables, physical well-being (health) is not directly linked to organizational policies.

To ensure employee well-being, different organizations have come up with different HR practices and policies. Employee friendliness is one of the major aspects of an organization's competitive advantage. One such HR policy is work from home or teleworking. The inception of teleworking goes back to 1970, when few women employees used to do part time jobs using home computers. Originally, a University of Southern California research group led by Jack Nilles conducted one of the first studies on telecommuting, during the 1973 OPEC oil crisis and high fuel prices. With the start of the personal computer industry, this became viable.

Work-life balance is the daily effort by an individual to make time for and divide one's energy among family life, friends, personal growth and care, other interests along with his/her work demands. Employees should not be worn out or feel overburdened with their job stress. Research in work–family balance has 'exploded' in recent years (Brough & Kalliath, 2009) [18]. Empirical findings demonstrate that work–family balance relates to job and family satisfaction, organizational commitment, and family performance (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009) [19].

Greenhaus (2002) defined work –life balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.

Felstead .et .al (2002) [24] defines work-life balance as the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labor markets.

Aycan et al. (2007) defined the subject only with work and family and put forward the concept of "life balance" with a more whole perspective.

Nowadays, we see that paid employment is no longer defined by fixed hours of work and in specified work spaces. Organizations are shifting to a model of 'flexible firm', in which they provide their employees a flexible working situation with no strict rules on how long, where, when and what time they choose to work. Flexible working is "a type of working arrangement which gives a degree of flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work" (CIPD, 2016) [42]. Technological advancements enable this process of carrying out work wherever workers happen to be and whatever the time (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016) [60]. It has been debated that this creates a win-win situation for employees and employers. Employers gain by reducing costs of infrastructure and a more productive workforce, on the other hand employees can have a work -life balance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Teleworking also checks the environmental impacts of mobility. The implementation of teleworking has been quite a slow process. Very few organizations had implemented this until 2020 [8], when the entire world had to shift to a new normal. Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015) conducted a review of various telecommuting studies and found that most definitions of telecommuting have two things in common: working from a different location other than the traditional office, and using technology to perform work-related tasks.

Earlier, most companies and their employees were comfortable with office-based work. With the sudden break of pandemic, organizations which were not at all prepared to shift to a complete remote working. However, with the start of lockdown, companies faced the real possibility of losing revenue and jobs. Organisations have been caught off guard and were ill-prepared for the sudden change, which has brought digital transformation into focus (Savić, 2020) [4]. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges to public health systems and global economies (McKibbin & Roshen, 2020) [3][36]. Governments have implemented social distancing through control measures on many aspects of society, in particular, mobilities (Walker et al., 2020) [5]. Over the years work from home has become the only potential solution [44][45][46]. Different surveys have shown a positive association between the intensity of remote working and other benefits such as reducing the strain of working under time pressure and enhancing the ability to alter work arrangements to suit personal circumstances (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Other organisational surveys provide similar insights, but significance tests and multivariate analysis are not always carried out (Beauregard et al., 2013) [6][7]. Also, Kelliher and Anderson (2010) [1] came to similar conclusions. They discovered that employees working from home had statistically higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction than employees who were bound to work in office premises [23].

III. RESEARCH GAP

A lot of studies have been done on employee well-being and employee productivity. Research work done in countries like UK, USA, Australia have discussed in length to understand the effects of work from home on productivity. Also, few papers have studied effects on HR policies and employee well-being and recent emergence of mental well-being of employees. While WFH and productivity have become a popular subject of study, when it is coupled with employee health and mental well-being, it becomes a whole new area of research.

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The topic WFH, employee wellbeing and productivity together is not much explored and hence it is difficult to do an extensive literature review in this combined area. The same topic needs much attention for IT industry in India, as Indian IT sector mostly serve foreign clients at different time zones and therefore, IT employees are mostly face higher amount of stress. In this paper we will try to establish a three-dimensional approach towards work from home, IT sector and employee well-being (subjective, mental and physical well-being) in Indian context.

IV. OBJECTIVES

This study will be a meta-analysis based on existing literature and aims at

- Provide an overview as to which types of resources in the organisation add value to employee wellbeing.
- Bring together all separate strands like Work from Home, work place resources, employee wellbeing and inherent resources of individual in a common platform
- Build a frame work for classifying all variables related to workplace resources, work from home and employee wellbeing and how they influence productivity.
- Examine the potential moderating variables which influence the relationships between work from home, employee wellbeing and productivity.
- Create a model aggregating all variables together.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a conceptual research method used to identify the factors which affect employee well-being and also the effects of work from home in a pandemic situation. This study is based on secondary data. A systematic literature search has been conducted in areas like employee wellbeing, factors affecting and consequences of employee well-being (eg. Job stress, absenteeism, work life balance, performance etc.). A total of approximately 60 papers have been referred to frame this conceptual paper. Research work starting from 2000 till present have mostly been reviewed. For work from home scenarios, papers predominantly starting from 2020 have been studied to bring into picture the Covid-19 scenario [25][29].

VI. DATA ANALYSIS/ DISCUSSION:

A. Job Stress-

Stress Is "real or an interpreted threat to physiological or psychological integrity of an individual that results in physiological and/or behavioural response" (Flick, 2000). Stress occurs when there is no match between what is demanded from a person and how much he is able to deliver.

There are two types of stressors – on the job and off the job stressors. Stress and employee well-being are inversely related.

Work stressors (e.g., hours worked, overload), non- work stressors (e.g. number of children, difficulties in marital relationships), and the interaction between work and family (e.g. inter-role conflict) are frequently studied (Frone, Yardley, and Markel, 1997; Greenhaus, and Parasuraman, 1986; Higgins, Duxbury, and Irving, 1992). All these stressors can have a negative impact on an individual in the personal as well as work front.

It has been estimated that 50% of absenteeism, 40% of turnover and 5% of total lost productivity is caused by occupational stress (Matesson and Ivancevich 1987).

Job demands have been considered as equivalent to job stress (Arla Day et.al. 2010) [17]. However, not every individual reacts in the same way to a particular job stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When stressors or demands are perceived negatively, it gives us negative outcomes. On the other hand, if they are viewed positively, it may result in positive outcomes. The advancements in technology and along with it staying connected even during non-work hours causes stress. The continuous expectation of organization from the employees to be updated with technological changes also leads to job stress.

Job stressors mostly create negative impacts on employees by affecting physical and mental health (Burkhard Schmidt et. al. (2019). It can affect individual's performance which might create losses in productivity.

Workplace stress causes negative impact on physical and psychological well-being, including complications in immune system (Ajay K. Jain et. al., 2013) [32][34]. Also, it reduces motivation, job satisfaction. Stress can be observed in the forms of exhaustion, detachment from job, lack of accomplishment etc [9]. Although stress is an integral part of any organization, efforts should be made to reduce the same [48].

Stress, quality of work life, and employee well-being are interrelated (Prateek Kumar et. al., 2017) [35][47]. Employee well-being depends on the quality of an individual's work life. Quality of work life in turn depends on the factors that maintain employee satisfaction. If this quality is hampered, it leads to stress. Job stress or role stress occurs when demands of job is more than capabilities of workers.

From these studies, we can frame a hypothesis,

H1 Organizational stressors will have a negative impact on the physical health and psychological well-being of employees.

B. Work Life Balance-

Employees suffer as a result of conflicting demands of society and organization, which makes work life balance an integral part of job satisfaction. It has been seen that the quality of family life affects a person's performance in the workplace. That is why organization's take steps to improve employee morale by supporting work/life programmes.

Rice, Frone, and McFarlin (1992, p. 156) state that the manner in which individuals perceive their work and family experiences reflects the `goodness of fit between work and non- work life'. Incase there is a lack of fit, individuals face a conflict. An individual with high work life balance can equally invest time and commitment to both work and non-work areas (Norizan Baba Rahim et. al., 2020) [20][58][59][61]. Work life balance has been defined by Ilies et al. (2017) as a situation where employees feel engaged fully in work as well as family life.

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Supervisor support in office and family support in personal life together plays an integral part in work life balance [26].

For instance, a spouse can help in day-to-day chores, help take care of children, thus providing support to the partner's work requirements. Family can ease out the burden on an individual by accepting responsibilities, thus leading to life and job satisfaction.

It is argued that if employees are able to manage work-family conflict, they can achieve work life balance and employee well-being (Conni Zheng et. al., 2015) [63]. Work-life balance is employee satisfaction and functioning effectively in work and nonwork domains (Kalliath and Brough, 2008) [54][56]. Employee well-being and work life balance are influenced by both individual and organisational efforts.

Work from home during pandemic has a positive and significant effect on work life balance (Amanda Putri and Ali Amran, 2021). The higher the rate of work from home, the more the work life balance. However, the companies should pay attention to the number of hours worked, so that the balance between personal and professional life is not hampered [22][37][43].

H2 work from home is a causal factor in work life balance. H3 work life balance positively affects employee well-being.

C. Leadership Style-

Increase in managerial pressure can lead to stress and affect employee well-being negatively. Therefore, it is important for managers to follow a leadership style that is inclusive in nature and supports the subordinates. Good communication and feedback are decisive factors of job satisfaction. Leadership characteristics and interaction between leaders and employees are decisive factors for employee well-being.

Good supervisors who rarely indulge in negative behaviour have subordinates possessing better psychological health.

It has been stated that negative emotions can affect work performance directly (Mosad Zineldin and Anders Hytter, 2012) [64]. One of the most important reasons for negative emotions is lack of trust and dependency on the leaders from the subordinates. Employees' well-being depends upon their inner relationships and also outer relationships (at the workplace). Self-efficacy, trust in management, occupational identities play mediating role between transformational leadership and well-being.

Leadership researchers mostly consider job satisfaction and employee well-being as two similar concepts (Ilke Inceoglu et. al., 2018) [31]. The authors have stated that association between leadership and job satisfaction is well established, however it does not necessarily depict a relationship between leadership and well-being. They talk about mediators that form the relationship between leadership and well-being.

H4 high (low) trust or dependency on leaders leads to high (low) employee well-being.

D. Productivity-

Work from home comes with both advantages and disadvantages for workers and the employers [55]. Productivity of workers in a work from home situation is influences by nature of work and type of industry. IT sector is one of the industries that could adapt fastest in this changing environment (Poornasree Haridas et. al., 2021) [13].

Remote workers on one hand have few advantages like they can attend to other appointments in between their work schedule. Also, there is less distractions as compared to conventional offices. On the other hand, it has its disadvantage like lack of social interaction. Productivity of remote workers is affected by all these factors (Revenio C. Jalagat, Jr. et. al., 2019) [33][39].

H5 Employee well-being affects productivity in an organization.

We take into consideration the independent, dependent and moderating variables and try to build a relationship between them. The following model depicts a framework to understand those relationships.
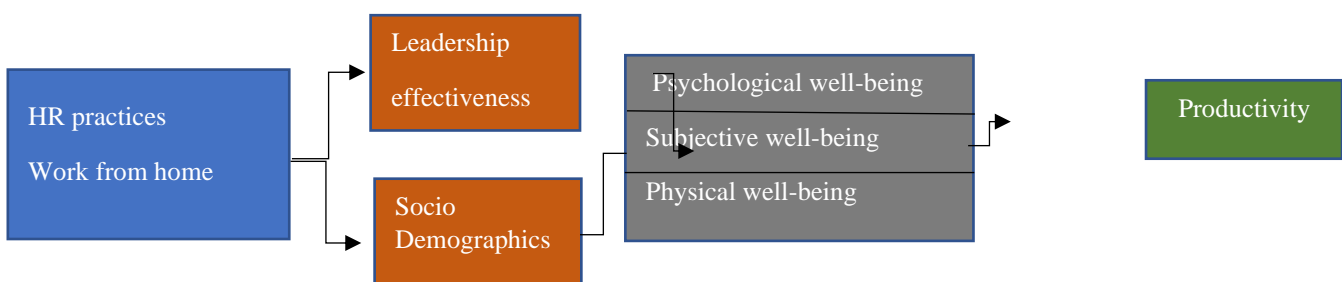

Fig 1. Graphical Representation of the Relationship Between Work from Home and Productivity

VII. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is an attempt to discuss in length all parameters involved in employee well- being and their consequences on productivity based on existing literatures. Existing researches on the effect of HR practices and its new norm "work from home" on employees' psychological, subjective and physical well-being and how they are related are investigated thoroughly. An attempt is made to analyse the impact of remote working on productivity and the various dimensions of productivity based on previous researches. With the spread of Covid-19, remote working has been the only option for organizations to run, looking into the health of the employees [52]. Studies have shown, if distractions are kept aside, work from home have mostly led to the increase in productivity of most of the sectors. In trying times like the pandemic, many companies are taking this way of working as a new opportunity.

Also, it acts as a competitive advantage to firms to sustain and grow organizational performance. The outcome of this conceptual paper is the building of a model which represents the relationship between the variables discussed.

A. Implications:

In a world of technological advancements, an increasing number of organizations are adapting themselves to remote working. Many studies have been conducted to understand the impact on productivity because of work from home. In this paper, the authors have tried to understand the independent, dependent and moderating factors in establishing a relationship between work from home and employee well-being.

From the secondary research, it has been found that employees suffering from job stress mostly have a negative impact on their productivity. However, if there is a balance between the expectations at work and the ability to perform, the productivity can be quite high in work from situation as well.

Employee well-being and productivity increases with high work-life balance. If employees are able to manage their work and personal fronts quite well, they prefer a permanent work from home. Also, they are better performers and have a high satisfaction level as they are now able to spend time with their families without comprising on their jobs.

The third factor studied here is the leadership style. There's a saying "People don't quit a job, they quit a boss". Studies have shown, that employee well-being and productivity are affected by the leadership style and the level of trust shared between the leaders and their subordinates.

Different organizational as well as job related factors have been found to affect level of satisfaction and productivity due to work from home in various ways. If work from home affects overall employee productivity positively, it helps in boosting the organizational performance.

B. Scope for Future Study:

This is a conceptual study based on secondary data. The end result of this study is a model to understand the relationship between work from home and productivity. A detailed study of the model can be done in future using empirical methods. It will provide an elaborate understanding of the effect of each of the variables on the final outcome, i.e., productivity.

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Authors Contributions	All authors have equal participation in this article.

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