Work Life Balance During Covid Pandemic

Aditi Singh* Dr. Archana Sharma** Dr. Hemendra Gupta***

*Research Scholar, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh
**Associate Professor, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh
*** Associate Professor, Jaipuria Institute of Management, Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT: Work life balance has always been challenging to achieve for every individual working in different sector especially for women as it is not easy to do day to day chores at home and office work together while working from home. This paper intent to discover the mental and physical exhaustion and difficulties and challenges encountered by employees during pandemic and small solutions or advices for it. The existing problem has pushed the employees to increase their limits to fight in such situation. And have made them capable of managing both job and home under one roof leading more towards work life integration than work life balance. Employees who have accepted the changes and embraced it and have upgraded themselves with the digitalization are able to meet all the demands relating to time, home, family, work, health and responsibilities.

Keywords: Work Life Balance, Work Life Integration, Work from Home, Problems and Challenges, emotional exhaustion.

OBJECTIVE:

To know the effect of Work from home on the people’s life commitments and work life balance.

INTRODUCTION:

Work Life Balance of an employee is a different connotation in both employer and employee perspective. For an employee it is difficulties and problems in fulfilling the responsibilities related to family and work. And for an employer it is about the problem in creating a supportive and friendly work atmosphereso thatpersonnel can give full attention to their job responsibilities forgetting the worries of their family responsibilities.

Work Life Balance plays a vital role in Human Resource Management and in efficiency and growth of both organization and employee. There are varioussupportiveaspects in retaining thestabilityamid work and life. The components like participation of personnel in making policies and taking right decision at right time can be reinforced to increase the balance of work and life. (Chaitra et al., 2017)

Balancing of work and life has always been challenging to achieve for individuals employed in different sector especially for women as it is not easy to do day to day chores of home and office work mutually while working from home regularly. There are decrease in well-being due to mental and physical exhaustion and difficulties and daresconfronted by employees during pandemic and small solutions or advices for it. The difficulties prevailing have pushed the employees to increase their limits to fight in such condition. And have made them capable of managing both job and home under one roof leading more towards work life integration than work life balance. Employees who have accepted the changes and incorporated it and have upgraded themselves with the digitalization are able to meet the demands relating to time, home, family, work, health and responsibilities.
Due the pandemic Lifestyle of people changed as there were many obligations and rules to be followed. For Example:

1. Global/ National/Local -Lock down
2. Housework (Atmanirbhar)
3. Health and Hygiene Consciousness for building immunity
4. Social Distancing
5. No domestic help
6. Responsibility Sharing
7. No external walks and exercise
8. Time to do office work
9. Space for office work
10. Skill up gradation
11. Dependence on Digital modes for work

At the starting time of global lockdown due to pandemic an unexpected and sudden situations occurred where women professionals faced lot of difficulties as they had to deal with work and family at one place, under one roof. (Latha&Swarna, 2020)

COVID-19 has resulted into disturbing consequences for individuals and its health, emotional and social working. Health care providers need to monitor and provide the psychological needs of an individual besides its medical needs. The psychological needs/support which is required to be provided to the patients should be included in general pandemic health care system. (Deshpande et. al., 2020)

Work from home initially was an initiative taken to help in maintaining work life balance of an employee. During nationwide lockdown due to Pandemic remote working was made mandatory for employees keeping in mind the health security. Many employees struggled in fulfilling their accountabilities and duties of their corporate and individual life together at one place emotional exhaustion and while trying to give their best in their job they experienced interference of family life in professional life. (Bhumika, 2020)

Formerly balance between work and life existed but during pandemic work and life got integrated and female employees faced problems due to this work life integration. Workplace has become virtual leading to virtual communication, which has many disadvantages. People have grown negative, distracted, uncooperative, less likely to share information, do not trust others, closed to new ideas and here team leader plays an vital role in managing their subordinates. (Patil & Gopalkrishnan, 2020)

**Challenges Faced by Remote Working Employees at Pandemic Time**

Remote working employees especially from home during pandemic face many problems and challenges on daily basis. 24*7 work culture emerged due to hyper-communication and digital communication which helps business to
grow which has become a new normal work culture during the pandemic period. Suddenly work meetings can happen any time of the day without prior information and warning and instant responses are expected. Recently it was seen that remote workers are likely to work for additional hours per month owing to the pandemic. Actually there is no separate lunch time given when you work from home. People/colleague ping you even after office hours. All this resulted in no separate and fixed working hours or office time eventually resulting or causing work time interference with family time. Workload increased extensively due to this long working or we can say never ending working hours affecting the personal/family life of the individual and creating imbalance between family/personal and work life. This lead too many medical issues like mental and physical exhaustion/fatigue, burnout, stress as individual could not replenished their depleted resources and inefficiency in work due to job demand.

Steps To Maintain Work Life Balance

Specific initiative or any solution is not there which can be taken in current situation of pandemic to retain balance of work and life as everyone has gone through the adverse effect of the pandemic due to the lockdown all over world. Although we can take somemoinor initiatives or solutions which organizations and employees can take and work on together for the betterment of the most valuable resource i.e. human resource. The Steps/Solutions are as follows:

1. Employees need to stay mentally replenished: specially working parents should replenish their resource since it can prevent them from burnout due to increased demand of their new responsibilities of schooling their children at home and possibly maintaining their work.

2. Elastic Scheduling: Employers should to elastic scheduling as it gives employees opportunity to adjust their work schedule with their most productive hours. Employees would appreciate their employers if they trust them to accomplish job within the time limits affectively and will enjoy the peace of mind.

3. Suitable Workspace: Employee should designate a dedicated workspace as it will help in compartmentalize work and home and should ensure the cleanliness, peaceful environment and reliable technology required in that space.

4. Schedule Work Hours and create routine: Employee should follow the work hours of office in their daily routine. To avoid fatigue and improve their focus employees should take power breaks in which they may explore their hobby or can do many other things like exercise, read an article, meditation, walk, cup of tea or coffee, and eat healthy food. Employees should also keep a notepad handy with pen so that whenever they remember some personal or family related work they can note it down immediately instead of getting up finishing that work leaving the office work without disturbing the focus and finish the work other than that of office after office hours.

5. Communicate with team: Employer should communicate with their remote employees using technology and software like MS Team and Zoom which can be in the form of formal meetings.

6. Social Interactions: Employee should schedule time to catch up with the colleagues, family and friends. Plan virtual social interactions through video calling.

7. Prioritize what matters or is more important and Communicate Boundaries

8. Employer should plan online social informal interactionsto reduce the stress of work.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The defendants were from diverse sector. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in the study undertaken to explore the affect of work from home initiative taken during COVID-19. 50 questionnaires were filled by men and women employees working in diverse sector and different socio-economic backgrounds. Areas studied included their working arrangements, family circumstances, physical and mental exhaustion considered as important points for work life balance.
From the 50 collected questionnaires, 50% were filled from women and other 50% i.e. 25 were filled from male employees. All the respondents were regular employees. Most of the respondents were aged in their 30s and had children.

**FINDINGS**

Although 40% of the female participants showed positive reaction toward having problems from long working hours whereas only 30% of the male respondents had problem which is less than the women respondents. All the employees/respondents i.e. 100% of them felt interference of professional life with family life and responsibilities they have of the diverse parts they play in their lives. 30% of the male employees agreed that their balance between professional and private life got affected from working from home regularly and 48% of female participants showed positive reaction same as male participants whereas, 70% of the men employees disagreed. 40% of female employees and 20% of male employees i.e., 60% of the total respondents felt emotional and physical exhaustion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Women Participants (25)</th>
<th>Men Participants (25)</th>
<th>Total Participants (50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have Problem with Long Working Hours</td>
<td>20(40%)</td>
<td>15(30%)</td>
<td>35(70%) (15Neutral-30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Work From Home has affected Work Life Balance</td>
<td>24(48%)</td>
<td>15(30%)</td>
<td>39(78%) (11Neutral-22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work life interference with Personal Life is felt</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emotional &amp; Physical Exhaustion</td>
<td>20(40%)</td>
<td>10(20%)</td>
<td>30(60%) (20Neutral-40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table I: Effect of Work from Home**

From analysis of data collected as shown in Table I, it was established that work from home has significant effect on the people’s life commitments and work life balance.

**CONCLUSION**

At the present of pandemic and lockdown done previously women employee’s workload has doubled. As in our society the roles played in household is gender specific due to which women are fighting hard to keep the stability concerning the duties, roles and responsibilities of the corporate and personal life. In such unplanned situations support from family members in perspective of liabilities or work to be done can be of great benefit to the working female. On the other hand self-awareness programs should be run about the new work style so that employees does a smart work and not only hard work as today it is more like work life integration instead of work life balance. Employees who can make smoothly to this transition have a stronger resilience as it is all about accepting and incorporating multiple demands and duties with time and skill between office, well-being, household, and friends. To conclude, it can be mentioned that the study made and the steps found may help women employees in refining the mental and physical well-being and improve work from home all through this pandemic.
REFERENCES


