

Challenges Faced By Female Employees Of Software Industry During Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic is a national and international crisis which badly affects a country's economy. During this outbreak situation many employees go through financial and emotional crisis. Companies are forcing their employees to do their official work from home especially in software industry. A survey was undertaken on 231 female IT employees to know how this Work From Home strategy (WFH) puts impact on their Work Life Balance.(WLB) As working women face more role conflict, this survey tries to find out whether WFH policy helps in balancing their WLB or it creates more hurdles. It was found that most of the female employees experience more problems during this time. Work From Home also negatively affects their mental & physical health conditions.

Key words: COVID-19, female employees, IT sector, work from home, work life balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic situation not only created global health emergency but also lead to the downfall of global economy. Currently all countries of the world are hit hard by COVID-19 and are striving hard to brace up their economy India being on the same continuum is no exception. In such a pandemic situation government has implemented social distancing and stays at home policies to restrict the spread of COVID-19. The most common impact of this COVID-19 pandemic situation is now employees are bound to work from their home. This work from home arrangement is not suitable for all sectors like manufacturing sector, health care sector, hospitality sector etc. whereas few sectors somehow manage work from home policy like IT sector, education sector etc.

This new changed arrangement not only put impact on organization but also has a major bearing on psychological, social, lifestyle and health aspect of employees. This article has made a modest attempt to study about the impact of work from home (WFH) on work life balance (WLB) of female employees of information technology (IT) sector. Women have to play multiple roles like mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, cook food for everyone, take care of kids, do household activities etc, and when she is a working her obligation increases a lot. In the pandemic situation when she has to do her professional and personal duties from her home itself, her work life balance is very much disturbed. Working women of IT industry experience problems in managing their multiple roles during this pandemic situation. As kids are not going to school and spouse is also at home a working woman's responsibility increase, like regularly cooking food in frequent interval on the demand of kids and husband etc. Not

only that, while performing their official work from home female IT employees faced many problems or obstacles like multiple works at same time, too much distraction, children's interference, internet connectivity problems, inconvenience while communicating with coworkers etc. This WFH have some advantages like they spend more time with their family, flexible work schedule, as there was no more travel it save time etc. It has some disadvantages too like social isolation, more distraction, difficulties in separating home from work and more work in comparison to working offline.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

COVID-19 possess a major threat to all industry. To manage this situation companies encourage and forced employees to work from their home. Working women face lot of problems and in this pandemic situation while working from home to maintain social distancing, their problems increases. This study aims to fulfilling the following objectives:

- To understand how WFH influence WLB.
- To examine the challenges faced by female IT employees during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To study how WFH impacts the stress level of female employees during pandemic situation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Review Related to Work from Home

Dusta Mustajab, Azies Bauw, Abdul Rasyid, Andri Irawan, Muhammad Aldrin Akbar, and Muhammad Amin Hamid (2020) aim to find out the impact of WFH on employees productivity and performance. This article shows that WFH is not applicable to all industries. WFH has both positive and negative impact on employees' productivity as well as organization productivity. A WFH strategy gives lots of chances in organizational culture and work productivity too. As this strategy is not possible for those employees who worked in factories and production units. These employees face more financial problems like reduction in their income, forced to stop on temporary bonus etc. **Kira Rupietta and Michael Beckmann (2017)**, in this article it was found that WFH has a direct and positive effect on employees' work effort. WFH also increase motivation in employees towards their work specially incase of male employees than in female employees. **Margrethe H. Olson (1986)**, researcher found that WFH reduce job satisfaction and reduce organizational commitment in employees. Technology plays in important role in performing work from home. This WFH strategy gives flexible working hours which help to motivate them. But it increases their role conflict. **Amit Kramer and Karen Z. Kramer (2020)**, in this article researchers show the impact of COVID-19 on employees and organizational productivity. Productivity of employees change with change in place like office and home. In this pandemic situation organizations become bound to force employees to adopt work from home policy. But this policy is not applicable for all industry and occupational group. Few industry can adopt this like IT, academic, online trading etc. and few can't like manufacturing industry, hospitality etc.

3.2 Review Related to Work Life Balance

Muhammad Atif Sheikh, Attiya Ashiq, Muhammad Ramzan Mehar, Ali Hasan and Madiha Khalid (2018), found in their research that with proper work life balance, working women can reduce their work family conflict. By prioritizing their roles in both personal and professional part, somehow they can manage their work life balance. **Julie Prowse and Peter Prowse (2015)**, researcher from this article try to show that family support and flexible working hours help to maintain WLB among working women. Flexible working hours reduce work pressure and mental pressure too. **L.O. Oyewobi, A.E Oke, T.D. Adeneye, R.A.Jimoh and A.O.Windapo (2020)**, in this study researcher prove that significant work life policies help the employees to balance their personal and professional life. They also found that organizational support has positive impact on employees' work life balance as well as organizational commitment. There was a positive and strong relationship between organizational policies, work life balance and organizational commitment. **Zafrul Allam and Abdul Rahman Shaik (2020)**, from this article researcher reveal that QWL in employees are directly affected by 6 main factors, namely autonomy,

recognition, inter-group relation, financial benefits, self respect and supervisory relation. Employees who are married face more role conflict than the unmarried one. They also face more difficulties in maintaining their QWL. Organizational and co-workers support influence employees' QWL and WLB. **Jennifer Smith and Dianne Gardner (2007)**, they found that in comparison to male employees, WLB initiatives are more use by female employees. Organizational climate and demographic differences also influences the needs and willingness of employees both male and female, related to their WLB. Supportive work environment help to reduce employee turnover and maintain WLB. **Dr.K.Maran and S.Usha (2014)**, researchers found that due to difficulties in managing WLB many working women from IT sector left their job. This article also discovered that there are some supporting factors which motivate women employees like salary, family support, supporting superior, supporting organizational policies, experience etc.

3.3 Review Related to Work-Family Conflict / Role Conflict

Dr.C.Somashekher (2018), he analyze in this article that Indian working women of IT sector experience role conflict and work-family conflict relatively at high degree. And this work-family is directly proportional to their stress level. Increased stress level put a negative impact on their performance. Stress on work place and family put negative impact on their psychology and health. **Cynthia J Patel, Vasanthee Govender, Zubeda Paruk and Sarojini Ramgoon (2006)**, in this article they found that married working women face more role conflict than the unmarried one. As working mother has to play multiple roles due to which they has face psychological stress. And this pressure put a negative impact on their performance both at work place as well as at family. **Jaunathan Bilodeau, Alain Marchand and Andree Demers (2019)**, they analyze that both men and women employees face psychological distress due work family conflict and family work conflict. This negatively affect their health also. In female employees it was found more. They also found that WFC put negative impact on female employees' psychological stress.

3.4 Review Related to IT Sector

K.Ragles Devi and S.Sakthivel Rani (2016), researchers reveal in this article about female employees of IT sector that their WFC is based on their multiple roles and role stress. Organizational support and family support somehow reduce their stress level. They found that WFC and job satisfaction has negative correlation. **Reimara Valk and Vasanthi Srinivasan (2011)**, in their article they show supporting organizational policies help female employees of IT sector in balancing their multiple roles. It was also found that rigid working hour is major issue for female IT employees. In case of special couples they also face more problems in WLB. **N. Kousalya and Dr.K.R.Dhanalakshmi (2020)**, in this study researchers focus on the problems of female working women especially from IT sector. Female employees face lots of health related problems like difficulties in sleeping, backaches, psychological stress, depression etc. organizational and family support play a major role in reducing their stress. Organizational policies should be flexible and supportive towards female employees.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this pandemic situation working from home becomes compulsory for all employees of IT sector. As it is a new strategy for IT employees they have to work regularly from their home maintaining social distancing, isolation, staying at home etc. In this study we try to find out the impact of WFH on WLB of IT employees especially women. Approximately 231 female IT employees were taken as sample. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 300 female IT employees out of whom 231 gave response. Regression and correlation analysis were use to find out the relation between WFH and WLB.

Table 4.1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.656 ^a	.431	.428	2.05473

a. Predictors: (Constant), TH

In this we consider WFH (work from home) as independent variable and WLB (work life balance) as dependent variable. The above table 4.1 gives us the value of R and R². As R represents the simple correlation. In this study the R value is 0.656 which shows a high degree of correlation. The value of R² is 0.431 i.e., 43%.

Table 4.2

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	731.786	1	731.786	173.330	.000 ^b
	Residual	966.820	229	4.222		
	Total	1698.606	230			

a. Dependent Variable: TB

b. Predictors: (Constant), TH

From table 4.2, we conclude that this regression model is significant because $p < 0.05$. Here F value is 173.330 and degree of freedom is 230. So there is a linear relationship between the variables in this model. From the table 4.3, value of t is 13.165 and value of p is 0.000. Hence this model is highly significant.

Table 4.3

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.311	.982		4.389	.000
	TH	.670	.051	.656	13.165	.000

a. Dependent Variable: TB

In table 4.4, variables are used in Bivariate Pearson Correlation. N is number of sample i.e., 231. As the correlation between the main diagonal are equal to 1, which means the variables are perfectly correlated. We can see that the Pearson correlation coefficient between WFH and WLB is 0.656. As $p < .005$ this model is significant for two-tailed test.

Table 4.4

Correlations

		TH	TB
TH	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	231	231
TB	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	231	231

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In this survey, out of total respondents 60.6% are married female IT employees and rest are unmarried. From the survey we found that only 38.9% of respondent experience disturbance from their kids during WFH time, whereas 74.4% feel too much distraction from home while performing their official work from their home. And 61% of them have internet problem issues.71% of them says multiple task at one time is their major issue during this pandemic situation. They also experience some advantages like 86.1% say that they get relaxation from regular hectic traveling to office and enjoy the flexible timing during WFH. And 70.5% spend more time with their during this COVID-19 pandemic situation time. We also found that out of total respondents 53.6% says they do more official work and more working hours during WFH strategy whereas 37.6% says they spend less working hours now, and only 8.6% have their neutral opinion. Near about 90% feel that female employees are facing more role conflict problems in comparison to male. And 43% says this pandemic situation put negative impact on their WLB where 18% have neutral opinion

5. CONCLUSION

As COVID-19 is spreading rapidly worldwide, to avoid this social distancing should be followed. With the fear of financial collapse and new recession due to COVID-19, many information technology (IT) companies forced their employees to do their official work from their home itself. WFH strategy put a major impact on both organizational and employees' productivity. WFH has many advantages and disadvantages for employees. Disadvantages like social isolation, more distraction, and difficulties in separating home from work and more work in comparison to work from office, disturbance due to children, multiple task at same time etc, similarly it has some advantages also like they spend more time with their family, flexible work schedule, as there was no more travel it save their time etc. Working women face more disadvantages than advantages. As they have to stay at home 24*7 in person without social contact, doing all household work as maids are not allowed, taking care of kids, kids on line classes, cooking food on the demand of family members and office work pressure too, doing all these works a working women of IT sector faces problems in balancing their work life balance. And in case of special couples where both are working and having small kid they face more problems. There have been instances of domestic violence against women as both the spouses are staying at home and spend more time with each other. It was clear that WFH put a negative impact on WLB of female employees of IT sector; it increases their psychological stress level and makes them feel more restless. This pandemic situation brings all members of family together at the same time it increases their stress level.

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