



ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORK FROM HOME –IMPLICATIONS FROM COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The study aims to comprehensively examine the antecedents and consequences of the work from home paradigm, with specific emphasis on the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an extensive review of literature, key antecedents identified were development in Information and communication technology, cost reduction, impact of family expectations, and the role of natural disasters, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, in promoting widespread adoption of remote work. During COVID-19 crisis the phenomenon of working from home witnessed a substantial surge, exposing numerous organizations and industries to this novel operational model. The mandatory shift to remote work during COVID period brought to light several organizational existing and novel benefits, including notable impact on work-life balance, stress reduction among employees, heightened work autonomy, decreased work conflict, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced productivity. The study delves into the implications of these antecedents and consequences for organizations, shedding light on how insights gained during the forced remote work phase can inform future work strategies. It also discussed potential challenges and solutions related to remote team collaboration, communication, and employee engagement.

Keywords: Work from Home, WFH, Covid-19, Pandemic, Antecedents, Consequences, Employee

INTRODUCTION

Work from home (WFH) refers to employment-related work performed at home” (Vitalari and Venkatesh, 1992). Since the mid-1970s, the phenomenon of Work from Home witnessed a great deal of attention in the literature (Nilles, 1988; Salomon, 1986, 2000; Mokhtarian, 1990). WFH, initially known as Telecommuting, and also telework, was promoted in 1980s(Nilles, 1988). The concept is about the use of computers and telecommunications equipment to do office work away from a central, conventional office during regular office hours (Kraut, 1987). Working outside of the employer’s premises became more sophisticated, causing WFH to evolve and spread out to other industries (Haddon and Lewis, 1994).

Many self-employed professionals, artists, writers, and craftspeople worked from home and scheduled themselves (Olson, 1993). Home-working had been an increasing phenomenon between 1981 and 1998, the number of people in UK working mainly from home almost doubled (Felstead and Jewson, 2000). More than a quarter of Britain’s labor forces were reported to work at least part of the time from home (Labour Force Survey, 2001). This was predicted to rise to at least a third of the workforce by 2006 (Henley Centre, 1998). Traditional forms of working from home was low paid activity for millions in UK (National Group on Home-working, 2002), but the wage discount (after controlling for observables) for working exclusively at home decreased from 30% in 1980 to zero in 2000 as WFH moved from being predominant in low-skilled jobs to a wider set of occupations (Oettinger, 2011). The workplace relocated either entirely or partially outside the employer’s premises and close to or into the employee’s home to avoid long, costly hours of commuting between home and work (Bloom et al., 2013). Home-based workers span a wide spectrum of jobs, ranging from sales assistants to managers and software engineers, with a correspondingly wide range of incomes (Bloom et. al., 2013). WFH became an increasingly common practice (Oettinger, 2011).

Academic debate caught up with the rising new mode of work, and its advantages and disadvantages were discussed across many disciplines (Di Martina and Wirth, 1990; Duxbury and Neufeld, 1999; Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Cascio, 2000; Bailey and Kurland, 2002). In recent decades work organizations have begun to spread beyond their temporal and spatial boundaries and work has become an “unbounded activity” to be conducted “anytime and anywhere” including the “other sphere” of the home environment (Kurland and Bailyn, 1999). Working from home requires individuals to deal with the contradictions of being both “at home and at work” (Alvesson et al., 2008; Watson, 2008). WFH is very much acceptable phenomenon by the organizations. The practice of tele or home-working, has been adopted by an increasing number of companies and workers in response to the changing economic and social needs that characterize the world of work today. Working from home brings new challenges as well as

benefits, and a variety of studies have examined the impact of Work from Home in terms of such benefits and costs (Sandi et al., 2000). However lately, the adoption of traditional Telework stagnated (Hjorthol, 2006) or even declined (Brenke, 2014). The outbreak of pandemic Covid-19 forced the organizations to let the employees work from home as the only option. The long duration of the pandemic led the organizations experience the pros and cons of WFH. As a result, it is anticipated that there may evolve a new trend of WFH more and more companies may shift their employees to WFH. In this article the researchers analyzed the antecedents and consequences of WFH and presented the discussions and its relevance during and post Covid-19 pandemic.

Computer based Work from Home is a large and rapidly growing phenomenon. The rapid increase in the capabilities of technology, and investments by organizations that allow remote work, more individuals are using technology after hours to complete work tasks.

ANTECEDENTS OF WORK FROM HOME

Development in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Computer and telecommunications technologies are enabling flexibility in work arrangements that were not available previously (Fritz, et., al. 1994; Olson, 1983; Schiff, 1983; Toffler, 1980; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). These technologies allowed individuals to telecommute (Nilles et al., 1976; Toffler, 1980), perform “mobile” work (Di Martina & Wirth, 1990; Fritz, et., al. 1994), or perform computer-supported supplemental work-at-home (SWAH) (Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). According to Harkness (1977) the technological development made many office jobs dependent on access to a computer terminal with telecommunications access to a company computer, all other materials required (including communications channels to other people) were available through the computer and it has been forecasted that most of the employee prefer to do Work from Home instead of central office location (Harkness, 1977). Among other means of information technology, computers are the most used and powerful tool on which people either do their office work or do other task (OECD, 2020). Computer with internet is being used by large number of people at their homes for their office work, information, and entertainment (OECD, 2020). A number of studies (e.g., Huws, et., al. 1990; Kraut, 1987; Olson, 1985) suggested that employees who perceived higher work expectations or were more involved in their work, computer based WFH enabled them to increase their output in an environment freer from distraction and interruption than the conventional office (Kraut, 1989). Because computers facilitated WFH (Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992) and were perceived to increase output, individuals with higher job involvement and expectations were more likely to adopt computer supported WFH than those

with lower involvement and expectations (Duxbury et al., 1996). Based on the above literature following proposition is suggested.

Proposition 1: Development in Information and Communication Technology facilitates WFH.

Cost Reduction

Researches revealed that companies are showing an interest in WFH for a variety of reasons. They are plagued by skyrocketing costs of office space. Travel and energy costs are increasing while the cost of electronic equipments as a potential substitute is decreasing (Olson and Primps, 1984). In another article published in The New York Times the columnist mentioned that, some employers are contemplating allowing more employees to Work from Home and even moving headquarters to a new building with better air circulation and also many employers may not be to spend a lot of money on outfitting their new office spaces, but rather simply having many employees continue to work at home, as a way to accomplish two goals: keeping people safe and saving money (Richtel, M., May 4, 2020). Another benefit in all of this for employers is that their applicant pool can now include more people that don't live in the vicinity of their former offices, and they can hire and retain talent from anywhere in the world. This also helps people working in expensive cities to move elsewhere if they want, since working from home could enable them to move someplace with lower rent than having to work in say, San Francisco, where the average monthly rent for an apartment is over \$3,600 (Pettijohn, N., May 20, 2020).

Proposition 2: Reduction in cost of organization is another reason to WFH.

Family expectations and involvement

Dickerson and Gentry (1983) found that home computer adopters were more involved with their families and more oriented to their home and to everyday home activities than were non adopters. The literature suggests that individuals with high family expectations (i.e., greater responsibility for child care and home chores) will be attracted to computer supported WFH as the work style which makes it easier for them to satisfy high work and family demands simultaneously by performing job-related work in the family domain (Leider, 1988). If individuals perceive that the acquisition of a home computer increases their ability to meet their family expectations, then family expectations should be positively associated with computer-supported work at home (Duxbury et al., 1996). The workplace was relocated entirely or in part outside the employer's premises and close to or into the employee's home to avoid long, costly hours of commuting between home and work (Bloom et al., 2013). In other words, having a computer at

home will change how an employee experiences both work and family environments (Dutton, et., al., 1985; Dutton, et. al., 1987; Kraut, 1987).

Proposition 3: Employee with family expectations and involvement prefer WFH.

Natural Situations such as burst of current pandemic (Covid-19)

Currently world is severely suffering from Covid-19. Approximately all the countries in the world are directly or indirectly influenced by Covid-19. It has a very negative effect on world economy and other major areas related to human beings. Many of the countries called for a full lockdown and because of this lockdown nation are severely affected by Covid-19. In this context, at the time of lockdown business and other organizations took help of the concept of Work from Home because in lockdown it was very much difficult to travel even doing the other necessary daily work. Here, Work from Home became a very effective and significant method for overcoming with this pandemic situation. Many office works, meetings, projects, seminars, presentations and other necessary tasks etc. has been performed while staying at home where employers and employees both were performing their work with the help of technological devices and tools. This situation also motivates the employers and employees to do Work from Home keeping in mind the challenges of traveling and safety of people. Because of the severity and a prominent effect of Covid-19 on whole human society, this pandemic situation has been recognized by various prominent organizations and experts. Here, Work from Home is considered as an effective and safe alternate of work rather than working in traditional way by attending the office premises. As per news published in Economic Times it was mentioned that Covid-19 crisis has provided an opportunity to India's largest IT firm TCS. TCS Global HR Head pointed out that its 20- year-old operating model and leapfrog are going into a new mode of work. About 75% of the firm's employees will Work from Home by 2025 (The Economic Times, April 30, 2020).

Proposition 4: Burst of Pandemic (Covid-19)/Natural Disaster leads to WFH.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORK FROM HOME

Many researchers acknowledged the differentiated nature of working from home. Home workers are diverse in demographics such as gender, age, skills and income. In addition, not all home workers successfully negotiate the social, personal, temporal and physical transitions between the boundaries of home and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996). There are potential difficulties and tensions that come with home working and tele-working (Bussing, 1998; Gurstein, 1991; Gurstein, 2001; Moran, 1993). There are personal and psychological consequences of home-based work (Ahrentzen, 1992;) which include personality as well as developed strategies for

working from home (Anderson, 1998; Gurstein, 1991; Lamond, 2000). WFH has positive as well as negative consequences. The following sections discuss some selected consequences one by one.

Work Life Balance

Some positive impact of working from home has been cited in various literatures which include familiarity and comfort, flexibility, self-management, quiet and working undisturbed, no travel, being with the children (Daniels *et al.*, 2000; Royal College of Art, 1999). Dickerson and Gentry (1983) found that home computer adopters were more involved with their families and more oriented to their home and to everyday home activities than were non adopters. The literature suggested that career individuals with high family expectations (i.e., greater responsibility for child care and home chores) will be attracted to computer supported WFH as the work style which makes it easier for them to satisfy high work and family demands simultaneously by performing job-related work in the family domain (Leider, 1988). If individuals perceive that the acquisition of a home computer increases their ability to meet their family expectations, then family expectations should be positively associated with computer-supported work at home (Duxbury *et al.*, 1996).

Proposition 5: WFH influences Employees WLB.

Reduction in Stress

The study of Shamir & Salomon (1985) revealed a positive effect of WFH. They concluded employees working from home enjoyed a reduction in Job related stress and also less stress of journey to work. Some literature showed that one of the major advantages of WFH from the point of view of the employee's well-being is the removal of the stress involved in the journey to work. It also has been concluded that for a considerable number of employees the journey to and from work provides a buffer of time and space between home and the workplace that may give a chance for "cooling off" and prevent the transfer of stress from one life sphere to the other (Salomon & Salomon, 1984). Duxbury *et al.* (1987) revealed that compared with managers, employees were more attracted to the benefits of working from home and that their interest focused on three areas: productivity, stress reduction, and quality of work life. It was also concluded that this type of work schedule reduces the stress associated with commuting and the cost of automobile repairs (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Young, 1991).

Proposition 6: WFH leads to reduction in stress of employees.

Increase in work autonomy and decreased work conflict

The literature on Work from Home gives the thought that the employee's level of autonomy is likely to be increased by the shift from the factory or the office to the home (Shamir & Salomon, 1985). Home computers have been linked to increased autonomy and control. In this line Venkatesh and Vitalari (1992) concluded that “self-determination” (i.e., a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one’s actions) is an important underlying motivation for a computer owner’s decision to work at home. They argue that computer owners have more autonomy and control over their work than their counterparts without computers. Beach (1989) linked computer supported WFH to a decrease in work conflict due to the increased autonomy and control. Home computers are positively associated with the perception of control and autonomy (Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). Thus, home computer users would be expected to display lower levels of work conflict than those who do not use computers for after-hours work.

Preposition 7: WFH increased job autonomy and decreased work conflict.

Increased Job Satisfaction

Hackman and Oldham (1980) report a positive association between flexibility and control and job satisfaction. If home computers do indeed increase an employee’s flexibility and control, as revealed by Kraut (1989) and Venkatesh and Vitalari (1992), then they should also be associated with greater job satisfaction. Others see Work from Home as a way to provide additional income while maintaining primary responsibility for child care. For some groups such as the elderly and severely disabled, WFH provides an opportunity to utilize valuable skill that would not otherwise be available (Olson, 1983). Based on the above argument following preposition is proposed.

Preposition 8: WFH directly influences Employees’ Job Satisfaction

Increased productivity

As per the information published as an interview in Gadgets Now, Mark Zuckerberg, commented on how WFH had a positive impact on Facebook’s employees. “The thing that’s been positively surprising to people is that people are more productive working at home than people would have expected. Some people thought that everything was just going to fall apart, and it hasn’t. And a lot of people are actually saying that they’re more productive now.” This is applicable to him personally too, he said. “I definitely think this is the longest stretch that I have worked remotely. It’s also been more productive than I thought it was going to be,” he also mentioned in his interview (Gadgets Now, May 24, 2020).

Preposition 9: WFH positively affects employee productivity

Conflict between Work and Life

A body of literature covers the work–home or work–life relationship. Across this literature, the major themes address the effects of (over)work on family life (Evans and Kelley, 2001; Pocock *et al.*, 2001).

There is little consensus in the literature regarding the relationship between a home computer and interactions within the family. In a key research study, Vitalari *et al.* (1985) found that the amount of time spent doing work at home increased, whereas the amount of time devoted to family activities and leisure decreased with acquisition of a home computer. Bird, *et al.*, (1990) reported that fathers who used the home computer 11 hours or more per week were less available to their wives and spent less time performing household chores. The home use of a computer for work-related purposes has been linked to an increase in family conflict (Gottlieb & Dede, 1984; Tinnell, 1985). Bird *et al.* (1990) found family conflict to be especially high in households where fathers traded off time with their spouse and time in home chores to spend time with their children on the computer. Bird *et al.* (1990) also blamed the fact that computer based Work from Home often done in a room separate from the rest of the family, for an increase in family conflict. The home computer has also been found to generate conflict when it is perceived by an employee's spouse as an intrusion of the organization into the family domain (Rogers, 1985). Some work–family environment variables, namely overload, interference, and stress, are both antecedents and consequences of computer-supported WFH (Duxbury *et al.*, 1996). Some literatures suggest that overload, interference, and stress will increase as a consequence of computer based work at home. It is more difficult for employees to separate work and family roles and keep conflicting roles at bay (Olson, 1985; Shamir & Salomon, 1985; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). Computer based WFH might also increase overload and stress by acting as an agent that promotes or reinforces, and over time legitimizes, after-hours work at home (Vitalari & Venkatesh, 1989).

Preposition 10: WFH is a source of conflict between Work and Life

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this article was to highlight the antecedents and consequences of WFH and what may be the future after pandemic Covid-19. Based on the above study following model of antecedents and consequences is proposed (Figure 1).

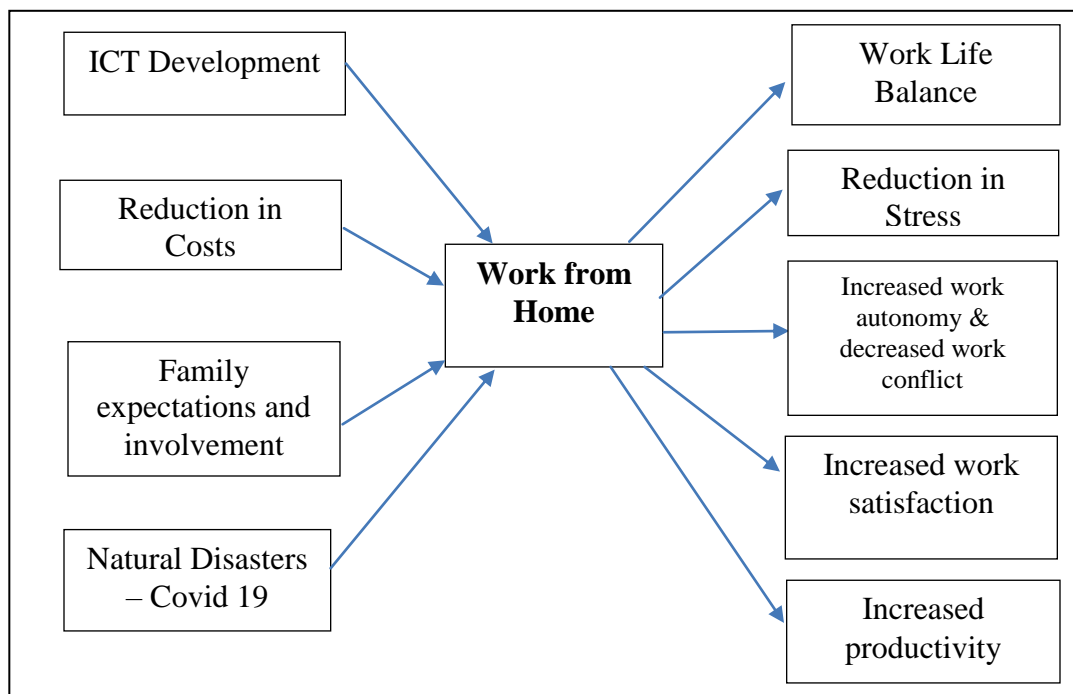


Figure 1: Antecedents and Consequences of WFH

As suggested by the literature the WFH is not a new concept. It existed in some form since early 1980s. There had been various researches conducted on the antecedents and consequences of WFH including its effect on cost, stress, work and life, productivity, job satisfaction et al. However, it can be noted that the development in ICT has greatly increased the WFH culture. ICT has facilitated the effective communication between the employees and organization even if the employee is working remotely. Today's interest in work from home is motivated by the availability of new technology. It was forecasted that with the continuous technological development many office jobs will be dependent on access to a computer terminal, and most of the employee will prefer to do work from home rather than a central office location (Harkness, 1977). In the United States, about 10% of the workforce reported working from home at least one day a week (Census 2010), while the proportion that primarily work from home has almost doubled over the past 30 years, from 2.3% in 1980 to 4.3% in 2010.

These devices, also called New ICTs (Golden and Geisler, 2007), enabled employees to stay connected to their colleagues from anyplace any time. Computer at home changed how an employee experienced both work and family environments (Dutton, et. al., 1985; Dutton, et. al., 1987; Kraut, 1987). Computer based work from home is a large and rapidly growing phenomenon. With rapid increases in the capabilities of technology, and

investments by organizations that allow remote work, more and more individuals are using technology after hours to complete work tasks. Current tendency of organizations to downsize and to do more work with fewer number of employees further highlights why individuals are performing computer based work from home (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). Computer and telecommunications technologies are enabling flexibility in work arrangements that were not available previously (Fritz, et. al., 1994; Olson, 1983; Schiff, 1983; Toffler, 1980; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). In particular, these technologies are allowing individuals to telecommute (Nilles et al., 1976; Toffler, 1980), perform “mobile” work (Di Martina & Wirth, 1990; Fritz, et. al., 1994), or perform computer-supported supplemental work-at-home (SWAH) (Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992). One of the most visible ways information and communication technologies (ICTs) are affecting organizational life is through reshaping the structures, practices and experiences of working routines and environments; technical mediation and connection enables patterns of paid labour to shift beyond traditional temporal and spatial boundaries (Gershuny, 2000; Castells, 2001; Doyle and Reeves, 2001).

Another important reason is reduction in the cost for the organization promoting WFH. WFH home reduces various office related fixed costs such as rent of office space, furniture and other operating expenses of maintaining an office. Family expectations and involvement is also a major cause of WFH. Employees may prefer to work from home so as meet the family expectations of spending more time with them. Another reason could a natural situation which may prevent the employees going to office such as the outbreak of the current pandemic covid-19. During the pandemic governments opted for complete lock down as measure to control the spread of the virus. Companies were left with no other option than letting their employees work from home. Even after the lock down was lifted organizations allowed limited number of employees in offices and factories in order to practice social distancing.

WFH has pros and cons on various aspects such as work life balance, job satisfaction, autonomy, stress, productivity as shown in fig1. Literature in this context suggest that some companies are finding it difficult to attract or retain qualified personnel who must commute long distance to the job or who, for the other reason, find the location or schedule of traditional office job unacceptable. In some low skilled clerical job there is huge turnover and absenteeism are serious issues. For these and other reasons also WFH becomes an attractive alternate for certain jobs and certain situations (Olson and Primps, 1984). Various studies conclude that several ways in which computer-supported Work from Home may reduce overload, interference, and stress. Some of the advantages noted as are:

(a) increased work-time and work-location flexibility (Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992); (b) increased control over the pacing and scheduling of work (Jarratt & Coates, 1990; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992); and (c) an increased opportunity to spend more time with one's family (Antanoff, 1985). Literature shows that many people value the increased flexibility of being able to work their own hours, set their own pace, and to wear casual clothes (Olson, 1983). Emotional impact of Work from Home on individual i.e., in research of Sandi et. al., (2000), showed that Work from Home influences individuals in the form of reduction in travel, cost implications, effect on family life, etc. as the positive effect and social isolation, reduction in affective bonds between colleagues, lack of technical and emotional support, etc. which can be determined as negative effect. Computer based Work from Home has been linked to decreased marital satisfaction. Increasingly, couples find themselves tangled in domestic conflicts involving the computer and its effects as it becomes a part of everyday life (Rossman, 1983). Marriage counselors are now addressing difficulties in developing and maintaining relationships among those who are using computers in the home. Some complaints that have surfaced include a possessiveness with work, the emergence of the "computer widow," and a reduced time commitment to spouse and parent roles (Rossman, 1983).

An article in Forbes magazine argued that while some companies, like Twitter, have announced that they will allow employees to work remotely forever (Pettijohn, N., May 20, 2020). An interview of Tech Mahindra's official Bhat was published in business standard magazine in which he was considering that they believe 25-30 per cent is a number that can easily be sustained for Work from Home in the current financial year 2020-21. We have seen a lot of willingness from customers to consider remote working. But we have to work with our customers to make this a viable model which will happen in the next 1-2 quarters," Bhat told to *Business Standard*. He also added that the point is to get to know what is collectively happening in WFH, work from the premise or client location and how to do you track the outcome and productivity on a real-time basis,". At the end of the year Tech Mahindra had a headcount of around 125,000. According to the company, around 94 per cent of them are currently working from home, owing to the lockdown that has been imposed to contain with the spread of Covid-19 pandemic (Ishwar, May 5, 2020). Here, the author argues that many companies will need offices still for these reasons, but a large portion of the tech industry and other industries can likely continue operating and growing just fine without an office in the future. We don't really ever have to go back to "normal." At the end of the day, more companies ought to follow Twitter's lead, and allow their employees at least the option to continue working from home for the foreseeable future, if not forever (Pettijohn, N., May 20, 2020). In this line, current tendency

of organizations and employers to downsize and to do more work with fewer numbers of employees further highlights why individuals are performing computer based Work from Home (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). Much of the research on Work from Home has found that Work from Home is diversified by gender (Olson and Primps, 1984; Gurstein, 1991; Gunnarsson and Huws, 1997). The indication from the current study is that because men define themselves primarily as wage earners, they have fewer personal conflicts when combining home and work than women. However, traditional male home workers suffer increased tensions because they tend to earn very little. This stratification of gender differences according to occupation was also found amongst women. It is possible that the greatest impact of computer based Work from Home may be seen in households with children. Vitalari et al. (1985), for example, reported that time allocation patterns associated with computer based Work from Home changed more dramatically in household with children than those without. In December 2019, Zoom had 10 million monthly meeting participants, and in April of 2020 that number went up to 300 million monthly meeting participants (Pettijohn, N., May 20, 2020). This shows that people are accepting the technological up gradation and also going to be familiar working with latest technology.

CONCLUSION

Present study after an extensive literature survey confirms that Work from Home (WFH) is a very important aspect in individuals as well as organizational perspective. As literature confirms that there are many factors which could be considered as antecedents for the growth and adoption of this Work from Home concept i.e., technology up gradation and adoption, cost reduction and employee safety, talent pool retention, attraction towards family, employers' changing view regarding work culture and most especially burst of covid-19 pandemic. These situations forced the organizations and employees to adopt the concept of Work from Home. As we know that many phenomenon in the world has positive and negative aspects, after adopting this concept the related parties observed some consequences in the form of positive impact and outstanding benefits i.e., work life balance and devotion of time for family, variation in working style, positive emotional effect on individual, reduction in stress, increase in work autonomy and less work conflict, Work from Home and gender differences, increased job satisfaction, effective utilization of leisure time, increased productivity but also they faced some negative outcomes i.e., conflict between work and life, negative emotional effect on individual and decreased marital satisfaction which makes this concepts suspicious and challenging for some individuals. In this context it is also important to observe that due to Covid-19 pandemic situations, many prominent organizations have changed their view regarding normal work culture and they are

also supporting the concept of Work from Home and media in this case is also taking interest to cover this issue.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since this study is a type of literature survey, it could be very useful for scholars and managers to understand the concept of Work from Home, its historical perspective and its relevance in current situations. A very little information is available regarding the concept of Work from Home in a systematic manner where its antecedents and consequences has been discussed in an organized way and with the support of some effective literature and also which covers present Covid-19 pandemic scenario and Work from Home implications in this situation. This research could give an assistant to the scholars to understand the key aspects regarding Work from Home in a single research paper and this could be a significant research contribution with regard to the concept of Work from Home.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There is abundance of literature regarding Work from Home but researchers have considered only those literatures which are appropriate to the objective of the research. Researchers have done their best to cover maximum literatures regarding Work from home considering the objective of research but it is known fact that everything cannot be covered in a single research paper. In the present study literatures Hence some more recent literatures could be added and Work from home can be linked with other various consequences i.e., employee performance, employee retention, employee motivation, employee productivity etc. and some more empirical studies could be carried considering the above consequences and some more research attempts could be made to know more about the positive and negative aspects of Work from Home.

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