Perception of Work from Home and Employee well-being: A Pilot Study on Entry Level IT Employees

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Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic has necessitated governments to enforce social distancing norms and lockdown. Organizations had to implement complete remote working in order to keep the business running. This sudden change could not provide training to employees to move to this new arrangement. Also, these measures taken by governments across the world had huge impacts on labor markets. Though the term workplace flexibility was first introduced by the IT industry, Work from home (WFH) as a permanent component added in the HR practices has multifaced consequences. Few types of research have shown positive effects like, work-life balance, cost reductions, increased productivity, where as some have contradicting impacts on employees e.g., work family interferences, increased stress, burnout and unpaid overtime. Leadership’s effectiveness may act as an influencing factor in employee well-being, especially at entry-level employees who need more guidance in on job role and responsibilities. The present research aims to bring together three separate strands-work from home, IT sector, and employee well-being. This paper measures employees’ perception towards well-being by considering pre-validated items and measuring each construct like Psychological well-being, Subjective well-being, Physical well-being, Leadership effectiveness, and Perception of Employees on WFH. Based on a pilot study on 33 entry-level IT employees during December 2021, this research has validated the measurement of each construct through multiple measurement items and established an indicative relationship between Perception of WFH on employee well-being. Data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software.

Keywords: Employee Well-Being, Work from Home, Leadership Effectiveness, Covid-19

Introduction

Since the last couple of years, the world has seen a forced adaption of a new normal. This includes social distancing, wearing masks, shifting to complete work from home, children attending online classes to name a few. Effects of the pandemic situation have spread across our personal, social, economic spheres. How one deals with this change depends on the ability to adapt, overcome obstacles, flexibility, and other individual characteristics.

With the enforced work from home arrangements, it became difficult for employees to continuously maintain a healthy work-
life balance and look for coping strategies to deal with work stress. Employees have reportedly found it difficult to focus on work with the given distractions they face at home. Therefore, it is important that organizations provide better support to employees so that they can develop strategies to cope with these issues. The overnight shift to remote working demands digitalization of work and increased importance to employee well-being. They have incorporated several training and development programs for their employees and are building an employee-friendly culture. It helps in boosting employee morale and employee performance.

The biggest challenge faced by any organization during the pandemic has been to strike a balance among factors like work-from-home, productivity, and mental health of employees. In such a situation few leadership approaches have been found to be effective (Maria R. Shirey, “Leadership Lessons from COVID-19 and the Path Forward,”). The first lesson is to keep the mission, i.e., to follow the policies and procedures to protect the organizational mission. Secondly, organizations should have leaders who believe in agility. Thirdly, effective communication is important to maintain transparency. The fourth lesson is to look into the most important asset of any organization, the well-being of the human resource.

Also, various studies have identified a few other factors like spousal support, gender, marital status, etc that can affect the relationship between work from home and employee well-being in this pandemic situation.

On one hand, there have been negative effects of remote working given the current crisis, such as the interference between work and home, increased absenteeism, and decreased job performance (Anderson, Coffey and Byerly, 2002; Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997). Few positive aspects like time and cost savings, along with the extent to which the different organizational factors are in favor of employees’ efforts towards maintaining work-life balance have influenced employee well-being and productivity positively.

Literature Review

Employees have always faced the concern of managing their work and family lives, which has aggravated with the onset of work from home. Over the last two decades, many companies especially in the IT industry had introduced flexible work arrangements to promote work-life balance by giving them autonomy at work (Hill et al., 2008). But, with the lockdown, more or less everyone had to work from home as the offices were shut down. This led to a change in which work was done, e.g., virtual meetings, and nature of work activities, e.g., online teaching.

The different aspects of work from home form a new area of study for researchers given this pandemic situation. Currently, the importance of social distancing and shift to remote working are the two major factors that the organizational policymakers have to take into consideration, keeping the pandemic situation in the picture.

Research has shown that organizational support plays a vital role in employees’ perception of a supportive culture and it directly affects employee well-being. This is of utmost importance in a complete work from home situation, where employees and managers hardly have face-to-face interactions in the office. It meets the employee’s need for emotional support at the workplace (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Also, this in turn helps employees cope with psychological and psychosomatic strain during high work demands (George et al., 1993). Employees’ perception of the amount of organizational support to maintain their personal and work fronts is termed as work-home culture (Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999). An organizational culture that supports employees’ efforts to balance work-home issues, affects a lot of work- and family-related outcomes (Kinnunen et al., 2005). This fosters greater job satisfaction (Allen, 2001).
However, organizational culture can at times lead to employee strain through the interference between work and home. It can be seen as an inter-role conflict where work demands overlap with family demands and they are mutually incompatible (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 1997). This can also lead to work overload and other negative repercussions like stress and anxiety and disrupt well-being.

Promoting employee well-being, now, is one most important policies implemented by organizations. As per the happy-productive worker theory, employees who are happy can perform well and vice-versa (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). To foster employee well-being, and drive organizational growth and performance, there is growing attention towards resources at work. Subjective well-being can be stated as “how people evaluate their lives—both at the moment and for long periods such as the last year” (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003, p. 404). Only job satisfaction was earlier considered as a measure of well-being at work. However, later studies have shown both situational (e.g., Fried & Ferris, 1987) and dispositional (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005) influences exist on job satisfaction. A broad definition of well-being given by Danna and Griffin (1999) is an individuals’ mental, physical, and general health, including their work and non-work satisfaction. It depends on the pleasure or displeasure derived out of the job, interactions with friends, family, colleagues etc. Quite a lot of importance is given to the mental health of employees as a driving factor of employee well-being. It defines our ability to deal with stress and make choices. Another component discussed in this paper is physical well-being, which can be defined as the ability to perform physical activities without any limitations.

The productivity of an employee can be ensured by the worker’s ability to focus when required and disengage at other times from work for a healthy work-life balance. During the lockdown, the stress resulting from work often interfered with non-work domains.

Organizations have witnessed a change in terms of policymaking and business strategy formulation, as they now give importance to employee well-being. Employee-friendly organizations are the key to organizational success, which gives them a competitive advantage. Therefore, it is vital for organizations to adapt strategies that would help in running the business smoothly, even in every stressful situation.

**Problem Statement**

Different aspects of current work from home scenarios like digitalization of work, striking a work-life balance, limited interaction among colleagues, etc, have resulted in a pressing need to study the effects of these factors on employee well-being in the long run.

**Research Gap**

As such no research paper has discussed a model that describes the effect of work from home on subjective, mental and physical well-being separately. After reviewing approximately 60 research articles, to establish and gather secondary data, a model is built on the antecedent and descendent relationship between various components of HR practices, leadership styles, socio demographic parameters and employee well-being. 10 different conceptual papers on employee well-being and approximately similar number of papers on work from home have been reviewed, where research is mostly done in countries like UK, Italy, USA, Spain, Netherlands. Two research papers by Daniel C. Ganster, Christopher C. Rosen, 2013; and by Sven Tuzovic, Sertan Kabadayi, 2018 have taken into consideration employee well-being as a whole but did not break it down into its components. Similarly, Juan Sandoval-Reyes et. al. has talked about only effects on work-life balance in their paper. None of the papers discuss the different aspects of work from home that are causing an impact on subjective, mental and physical well-being among entry level associates in an IT company in India.
Objectives
This paper aims
• To empirically test the variables in order to establish a relationship between work from home and employee well-being.
• To check whether each construct namely Psychological well-being, Subjective well-being, Physical well-being, Work from home, Leadership Effectiveness are measured well by pre-validated items.
• Bring together all separate strands like Work from Home with other HR practices, elements of leadership effectiveness, employee well-being and inherent socio demographic variables of individual employee in a common platform.
• To create an aggregator model depicting the relationship between work from home and subjective, mental and physical well-being.
• To get an indicative relationship between work from home and subjective, mental and physical well-being and the impact of employee perception on leadership effectiveness on Employee well-being.

Research Methodology
This is a research paper written based on a pilot study done on entry level IT employees and the data is collected in December, 2021. The primary data has been collected through the survey method using Google Forms. The questionnaire has been filled out by respondents between 25-38 years of age. The sampling method used is convenient sampling. The sample size is 33. Data has been analyzed through SPSS and AMOS software. Structural equation modeling is used to measure each construct through various items and pre-validated questionnaire is used (Basi, R. K., 1999, Oyinlade, A. O., 2006, Nima, A. A., Cloninger, K. M., Persson, B. N., Sikström, S., & Garcia, D., 2020, Pradhan, R. K., & Hati, L., 2019). A 7 point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 7- Strongly Agree) is used to measure constructs.

Data Analysis
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| Group          | Respondents’ Characteristics | Number of Respondents |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Gender         |                               |                       |
| Male           |                               | 11                    |
| Female         |                               | 22                    |
| Age in years   |                               |                       |
| 25-31          |                               | 26                    |
| 32-38          |                               | 7                     |

Descriptive Statistics: Items used to Measure Employee Well-Being and Reliability Test of Each Construct

| Sl No. | Statements                                                                 | Average | Standard Deviation |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| PC1    | I easily adapt to daily challenges due to work from home situation.          | 5.94    | 1.30               |
| PC2    | I manage my responsibilities well even in a remote working arrangement.      | 6.45    | 1.06               |
### Psychological Well-being
This quotient is high since employees in the current sample have not faced much challenges psychologically in shifting to work from home.

| PC3   | In a work from home situation, I have become very flexible when it comes to my job. | 6.18 | 1.31 |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| PC5   | I know what is expected from me in my current role and in a remote working arrangement. | 6.55 | 0.79 |
| PC6   | I can make decisions wisely now since there is a work life balance due to work from home. | 5.91 | 1.59 |
| PC7   | I felt depressed and perturbed by the stress and demand of day-to-day life, when I had to regularly go to office. | 4.00 | 1.98 |

### Subjective Well-being
The influence of Work from home on subjective well-being is moderately high.

| S1    | Mostly I feel happy when I get a chance to work from home. | 5.76 | 1.48 |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| S2    | I feel good about myself when I can manage both family and work in a remote working arrangement. | 6.09 | 1.33 |
| S3    | My life has become sorrowful post the pandemic due to family issues in a work from home situation. | 5.42 | 1.94 |
| S4    | If I could live my life over, I would look for jobs which allow remote working from the start of my career. | 4.55 | 1.94 |
| S5    | In most ways my life seems ideal with a perfect work-life balance post work from home. | 5.45 | 1.54 |

### Physical Well-being
There is not much effect on physical well-being as a result of work from home. However, the overall physical well-being quotient is positively affected by WFH.

| PH1   | I sleep well during the night since I can complete my job on time as I work from home. | 5.09 | 1.93 |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| PH2   | I rarely experience headaches since my organization has moved to a remote working setup. | 4.67 | 1.99 |
| PH3   | My stomach used to get upset quite often when I worked from office, as I had a lot of street food. | 3.70 | 2.21 |
| PH4   | I rarely have had a bad cold or flu, as I don’t have to work under the AC for 10-12 hours. | 4.52 | 2.17 |
| PH5   | I don’t get sick very often. | 5.12 | 1.88 |
| PH6   | I smoke less now, since I am working from home and it has improved my health. | 4.64 | 2.38 |
| PH7   | I can spend more time in workouts and sports, due to work from home, which makes me satisfied. | 4.64 | 2.10 |

| L1    | Whenever there is an issue due to remote working set up, I look up to my manager since he has good knowledge of policies. | 5.82 | 1.49 |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| L2    | My leader has good resolution skills for any issues that I face pertaining to remote working. | 5.91 | 1.40 |
L3 | My manager is self-motivated and also motivates his team, even when there is no face-to-face interaction among the employees. | 6.06 | 1.39
L4 | He/She is very supportive of the actions and decisions we take, even in a remote working set up. | 6.03 | 1.38
L5 | Since work from home arrangement, my leader provides more opportunities to each one of us in the team, by delegating authority. | 5.85 | 1.42
L6 | He/She has good vision for the future and always guides us to help us move ahead in our career path. | 5.73 | 1.59

**Perception on Leadership Effectiveness**

Perception of leadership effectiveness is quite high during the work from home.

|   |   |   | Cronbach Alpha 0.957 |
|---|---|---|----------------------|
| WFHN1 | Due to this work home situation, there is very little interaction with colleagues. | 4.55 | 2.20
| WFHN2 | I find it very difficult to voice out my problems because we work from home and there is no face-to-face interaction. | 3.00 | 1.85
| WFHN3 | I am often overloaded with work and need to extend beyond my working hours since this remote working arrangement. | 4.97 | 1.91
| WFHP1 | I like working from home since the traveling time and cost are saved. | 5.94 | 1.58
| WFHP2 | I am not much of a social person, therefore there is not much of a difference due to work from home arrangement. | 3.27 | 1.97
| WFHN4 | I mostly miss the office cafeteria since lockdown and complete shift to work from home setup. | 4.24 | 2.09
| WFHP3 | I want a hybrid arrangement with a mix of work from home and work from the office, I don't want to return to office permanently. | 5.85 | 1.84

**Perception of Work From Home**

Perception of work from home among employees is positive, with most employees looking for a hybrid arrangement going forward.

|   |   |   | Cronbach Alpha 0.623 |

**Initial Proposed Model**

![Initial Proposed Model](image)

**Figure 1: Proposed Model on Employee Well-Being**

**Hypotheses**

- **H01**: There is no influence of the employees’ perception related to work from home on employees’ subjective/psychological/physical well-being.
- **Ha1**: There is an influence of the employees’ perception related to work from home on employees’ subjective/psychological/physical well-being.
- **H02**: There is no influence of the employees’ perception related to leadership effectiveness on employees’ subjective/psychological/physical well-being.
• **Ha2:** There is an influence of the employees’ perception related to leadership effectiveness on employees’ subjective/psychological/physical well-being.
• **H03:** There is no significant difference in employees’ positive perception of WFH and negative perception of WFH.
• **Ha3:** Employees’ positive perception of WFH is higher than the negative perception of WFH.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The purpose of “Confirmatory factor analysis” is to check whether each item loaded well on their respective factors.

![Confirmatory Factor Analysis diagram](image.png)

**Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for three Dimensions of Employee Well-being**

In Figure 2 of the model estimation, Regression weights are shown by the values given on the arrows pointing towards the rectangles and squared multiple correlations are above the boxes. e1 to e19 are the associated error terms for the respective indicator variables and can be calculated by subtracting the respective squared multiple correlations from 1. For example, value of e3 = 1-0.65 = 0.35. PC1, PC2,….,PH4 is observed or endogenous variables. Psychological Well-being, Subjective Well-being and Physical Well-being are Exogenous variables, along with all the error terms e1 to e19.
Table 3: Standardized Regression Coefficients of all Dimensions of Well-Being

| Endogenous Variables | Constructs              | Estimate | SMC  |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------|------|
| PC1                  | Psychological_WB        | .674***  | 0.454|
| PC2                  | Psychological_WB        | .665***  | 0.442|
| PC3                  | Psychological_WB        | .804***  | 0.646|
| PC5                  | Psychological_WB        | .352     | 0.124|
| PC6                  | Psychological_WB        | .695***  | 0.483|
| S1                   | Subjective_WB           | .848***  | 0.719|
| S2                   | Subjective_WB           | .960***  | 0.922|
| S3                   | Subjective_WB           | .600***  | 0.360|
| S4                   | Subjective_WB           | .366     | 0.134|
| S5                   | Subjective_WB           | .782***  | 0.612|
| PH1                  | Physical_WB             | .299     | 0.090|
| PH2                  | Physical_WB             | .433     | 0.188|
| PH3                  | Physical_WB             | .624     | 0.390|
| PH4                  | Physical_WB             | .848     | 0.719|
| PH5                  | Physical_WB             | .828     | 0.685|
| PC7                  | Psychological_WB        | .255     | 0.065|
| PH6                  | Physical_WB             | .481     | 0.232|
| PH7                  | Physical_WB             | .449     | 0.202|

*** Significant at 1%,

Table 3 shows that many of the values of the estimates are greater than 0.5 ie all those variables are showing high correlation to each construct. The SMC (Squared Multiple Correlation) gives the percentage contribution of set of predictors in explaining dependent variables. For example, the SMC of variable PH4 (I rarely have had a bad cold or flu, as I don’t have to work under the AC for 10-12 hours.) is 0.719 which explains PH4 contributes 72% of the variances of Physical Well-being. The structural model was tested with maximum likelihood estimation using AMOS 16.0 to assess the model fitness and interrelationship among the constructs.

The overall model fitness indices $\chi^2 = 208.00$, df = 132, $\chi^2$/df =1.576, CFI = .731, TLI = .688, NFI = .522, GFI = .630, RMSEA = 0.134 reflect the model does not fit well. The primary reason is the small sample size. Our objective of the study is not to get the best fit model but to check whether each construct is well explained by all endogenous variables. High loading in Standardized Regression coefficient assured that though the relation between the item to constructs are not statistically significant but each item has a high contribution to measure the construct. Therefore, the research result can be indicative, not conclusive.

Path Analysis Modelling to Check Relationship Between Perception of Work From Home on Employee Well Being

The next objective is to establish a causal relationship between IT employees’ perception of the three dimensions of Employee well-being namely Psychological well-being, Subjective wellbeing and Physical well-being. Employees’ perception on Work from Home is measured through six
items consisting of both positive and negative perceptions of work from home. Items having negative perception on WFH show negative loadings in WFH construct whereas, positive items loaded with positive values.

Referring above Figure, it is observed that,

- Standardized Regression Coefficient between Perception on WFH and Psychological well-being is 1.0** and is significant at 5% level of significance. H01 is rejected. So, Employees perception on work from home has a strong positive influence on Psychological well-being.
- Standardized Regression Coefficient Perception on WFH and Subjective well-being is .093** and is significant at 5% level of significance. H02 is rejected. So, Employees perception on work from home has a strong positive influence on Subjective well-being.
- Perception on WFH and Physical well-being is 0.65 and is not significant at 5% level of significance. H03 is not rejected. So, Employees perception on work from home has a positive influence on Physical well-being but not statistically significant.

Path Analysis Modelling to Check Relationship Between Perception of Leadership Effectiveness (Related to Work From Home) On Employee Well Being

Leadership can be called a job resource since it plays a vital role in achieving organizational goals. Engaging leadership is defined by a practice in which managers support and involve themselves in forming and implementing the HRM practices and also in creating the employees’ perceptions towards these practices. Engaging leadership acts as a moderator in the relation between HRM practices and employee well-being (Andres Salas-Vallina et. al., 2021).
Figure 4: Relationship between Perception on Leadership Effectiveness on Employee Well-being

Referring above Figure, it is Observed that,

- Standardized Regression Coefficient between Perception of Leadership effectiveness related to WFH and Psychological well-being is 0.28 and is not significant at 5% level of significance.
- Standardized Regression Coefficient between Perception of Leadership effectiveness related to WFH and Subjective well-being is 0.06 and is not significant at 5% level of significance.
- Standardized Regression Coefficient between Perception of Leadership effectiveness related to WFH and Physical well-being is 0.06 and is not significant at 5% level of significance.

Positive Perception on WFH Vs Negative Perception

The shift to complete work from home arrangements provide a unique context to study the relationship between WFH and well-being. The different aspects of work from home affect the employee well-being in different ways. The extended and continuous stay at home have contributed to general depression or anxiousness. On the other hand, most of the recent research have found positive impact of WFH on both employee and organisation.

Comparison on Employees’ Positive Perception on Wfh Vs Negative Perception on WFH

Table 4: Perception of Work from Home

| Positive perception on WFH                                                                 | Mean | Negative perception on WFH                                                                 | Mean |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I like working from home since the travelling time and cost is saved.                   | 5.94 | My family issues affect my well-being and work performance in a work from home situation. | 3.42 |
| Mostly I feel happy when I get a chance to work from home.                              | 5.76 | Due to this work home situation, there is very less interaction with colleagues.          | 4.54 |
I feel good about myself when I can manage both family and work in a remote working arrangement. 6.10
I find it very difficult to voice out my problems because we work from home and there is no face to face interaction 3.00
I easily adapt to daily challenges due to work from home situation. 5.94
I am often overloaded with work and need to extend beyond my working hours since this remote working arrangement. 4.96
I mostly miss the office cafeteria since lockdown and complete shift to work from home setup. 4.24

Overall mean 5.93

T stat 5.86
T critical (One tail) 1.66
P-Value 0.0000000874***
Respondents have much higher positive perception than negative perception and the difference is significant.

Above table shows respondents prefer to have the option to work from home and have adopted very well with the new normal. The result is aligned with previous research which found that remote working is beneficial for organizations and its employees, and even for the urban economy (Apgar 1998; Gajendran and Harrison 2007; Nätti et al. 2011). It is associated with perceived autonomy (Dambrin 2004; Wilson and Greenhill 2004), higher productivity (Kemerling 2002), higher work–life balance and less stress (Azarbouyeh and Naini 2014; Felstead et al. 2002; Raghuram and Wiesenfeld 2004; Sullivan and Lewis 2006), greater employee satisfaction (Wheatley 2012), and better job performance (Fonner and Rolof 2010).

**Conclusion and Managerial Implication**

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to several challenges for organizations to cope with. The organizations had to come up with policies to help their employees move radically from working in the offices to remote working structures. Further, the lines between the work and family spheres have been blurred due to this. In our pilot study, three constructs of Employee well-being called Psychological well-being, Subjective well-being, and Physical well-being are measured by various pre-validated items as observed by the loading of each item. Their high covariance values supported that they are all measuring Employee well-being quite well. The psychological well-being has been affected positively due to work from home since there has not been much issues while shifting to a remote working setup. Various items fitted well to describe Subjective well-being (SWB) which is defined as ‘a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life’ (Diener 2002; Lucas, & Oshi, 2002, p. 6‘3). In our paper we have observed that WFH has a high impact on Physical well-being which is about health issues, employees’ lifestyle, eating habits, physical activity (Xiao et. al., 2021). Among the employees in the current sample, it is seen they are liking the work from home arrangement and do not want to return to office completely. In such a situation the best strategy for companies should be introducing a hybrid arrangement.

With more than two years into this pandemic, there is no reason to think that this will be over soon. Therefore, its consequences on organizational life will also not be short-lived. The changes happening with the new normal have to be considered as opportunities and new ways of life, offers new opportunities and ways of life. This paper has created a framework to understand the link between remote working, and employees’ subjective, mental and physical well-being.
Limitation and Scope for Future Study

The aggregator model proposed in this paper is indicative of the relationship between work from home and employee well-being with leadership effectiveness as a mediating factor. This is not a conclusive model. Since this a pilot study, the sample size is very small and moreover sample is collected through convenient sampling, a non-probability sampling. The same model has to be tested using a larger sample and rectifications have to be done based on the findings. The items with lower loading will be dropped and a generalized result can be established.

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