



Impact Of Covid-19 Outbreak On The Work-Life Balance Of Service Professionals

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled businesses globally to accelerate their transition to internet operations. Human resource management is pivotal in these transformations, aiding organizations in maneuvering through the unpredictable present and future. To ensure the company's longevity and employees' work-life balance, Human Resource Management must effectively manage personnel within businesses, particularly during crises such as COVID-19. Modifications in regulations, methodologies, work environments, and employee contentment are gaining significance as the future introduces more adaptable, remote-compatible, digital work standards. This study aims to investigate the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on the work-life balance of service professionals. The E-Survey approach is employed to gather data from respondents. Service professionals working in different industries were selected using purposive convenience sampling technique of non-probability method. The sample of 197 service professionals was used in the present study. The study found that the 'work from home' (WFH) model adopted by the organizations during COVID-19 outbreak did not maintain the work-life balance of service professionals. Further, the study also found that there is association between service professional's gender, income group and age with professional's choice of preference for the work from home/work place and the strength of association is average, moderately strong and weak for professional's gender, income group and age respectively.

Keywords: Work-Life balance, Covid-19, Work From Home (WFH) and Service professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance helps employees in improving their performance efficiency and productivity, strengthen their mental health, motivate them, encourage them for further growth, creativity, new and innovative ideas generation etc. Organizations put their best

efforts to maintain the work-life balance of their man power offering them convenient working hours which prevent adverse effect on their physical and mental health, provide them sufficient scope to fulfill their commitments with family-friendly. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled businesses globally to accelerate their transition to internet operations. Human resource management is pivotal in these transformations, aiding organizations in maneuvering through the unpredictable present and future. To ensure the company's longevity and employees' work-life balance, Human Resource Management must effectively manage personnel within businesses, particularly during crises such as COVID-19. Modifications in regulations, methodologies, workplace environments, and employee contentment are gaining significance as the future introduces more adaptable, remote-compatible, digital work standards. Globally, employees were forced to work from home to stop the spread of virus during COVID-19 outbreak. Initially, when organizations explored the possibilities to start their operations using the 'work from home' model, employees also started to find some benefits as they got the opportunity to work from home. It was an emergency situation, and none of the organizations and individuals was ready for it. Large number of studies reported that many companies made mistakes, many employees were failed to manage their responsibilities successfully. And all these things advocated the need for study the issue of work-life balance during COVID-19. The present study is aimed to examine the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on the work-life balance of service professionals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous researchers examined the various impact of COVID-19 outbreak on different determinants of HR. Most of them used primary data to study the change in work life balance of employees due to change in the work environment during corona lockdown. Vinberg and Danielsson (2021) conducted research to determine how executives of micro-sized businesses are affected by the Covid-19 epidemic in terms of company management and its employee's work-life balance. The research also attempts to explore comparisons between executives of micro- and small-sized enterprises. They used mixed-method approach of research which was based on qualitative interviews of 10 managers belong to micro-sized businesses and data was collected using a questionnaire by the sample size of 95 managers of micro- and small-sized businesses in northern Sweden. They found that the mental well-being, job satisfaction and life satisfaction of managers belong to micro-sized companies are very low as compare to the managers belong to small-sized companies.

Both companies and its employees desired alternate work conditions as advocated by Vyas&Butakhieo (2021) in their study which was based on the data from a fast-paced metropolis like Hong Kong. They observed that most of the people were forced to work from home (WFH) due to spread of COVID-19. And due to this pandemic, as a result, most governments preferred the policy of Work From Home on top priority. They recommended that the WFH policy must be developed considering the practical aspects of both employers

and employees to keep work life balance and work efficiency. It was exploratory research, in which they investigate working experience both of the key stakeholders i.e. employer and employees in Hong Kong. Further, SWOT analysis was also used in the study. The study presents the critical recommendations and road map for future policy decisions.

Oakman et al (2020) quoted in their study, the COVID-19 outbreaks has led to a shift the employment conditions of large numbers of people employed in different industries, who are now doing work from home and may continue to do the same in near future too. As they suggested to improve employee performance, choices on how to enhance individual employee's health while working at home (WAH) must be based on the best available evidences and feedback/ recommendations received from experts. They examined the impact of Work at Home/ Work from Home on employee's' mental and physical health, as well as identify any gender differences, in order to offer suggestions for management and workers to provide health related safety .

The COVID-19 outbreak, according to Tul et al (2021), has affected person's personal and professional life. While the majority of research have concentrated on the current adverse effects of COVID-19 outbreak, positive changes in people's everyday lives have gotten less recognition. As a result, authors investigated at the real and anticipated overall impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on individual's personal and professional life, as well as the implications for psychological well-being and self-rated health among German and Swiss professionals. An online questionnaire was developed to gather cross-sectional data from 2118 German and Swiss professionals (18–65 years old, who work at least 20 hrs in a week) and who were recruited using an online panel service. The sample used for the study represented working population from both the countries. They applied logistic regression to analyze impact of selected socio-demographic determinants and changes reported by the respondents in their personal and professional life on respondents' perceived overall impact of COVID-19 outbreak on their personal and professional life. The study observed 30% of employees reported that their personal and professional life is badly affected during this pandemic, about 10% said positive change in their professional life, 13% noticed in their personal life.

Wolor et al(2020) and Mwita (2020) worked on study the effectiveness of online training, electronic leadership and employees' work-life balance in current environment (after COVID-19 outbreak) Silungwe (2020) examined effect of work from home on the efficiency of the employees during corona outbreak taking the primary data from in Chipata district. Irawanto et al (2021) says the outbreak of corona virus has drastically changed the people working life. It also affected the performance of the companies and their management policy globally. Reza, T. (2021) considers professionals from banking industry to examine the impact of corona pandemic on their work life balance. The study founds that during pandemic most of the banking professionals developed their own smarter way of working to maintain their work life balance. According to Rudnicka (2020), during COVID-19 outbreak all governments advised their citizens to strictly follow the "social distancing" and prefer to

work from home only to stop the spread of Corona virus. Due to this change in the working life, everyone put their best efforts to manage their life according to the situation and started work from home which somehow affected their personal life too.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory by nature. Initially, exhaustive literature review was carried out to gain in-depth insight about the research problem and its current scenario. The quantitative data used in the study to meet the objectives was collected using self structured and administered questionnaire. E-survey method is used to collect data from the respondents. Service professionals working in IT industry were selected using purposive convenience sampling technique of non-probability methods as only those professionals are considered in the sample who chosen work from home model. The sample of 197 service professional was used in the present study. Necessary data was collected using the same set of items measuring service professionals' work life balance in normal working life (before COVID outbreak) and work from home (during the COVID outbreak). Although, respondents was contacted only one time. Numerous standard parametric and non-parametric statistical tools including paired t-test, independent t test, Chi Square, Cremer V etc were applied to test formulated hypotheses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study is based on sample size of 197 service professionals working in different industries and was doing work from home during initial outbreak of COVID19 virus. The following table depicts the brief summary of the respondents' profile;

Respondents Profile

Age	Below 30 years	32.07%
	30-40 years	39.67%
	41-50 years	11.88%
	51-65 years	9.50%
	Above 65 years	6.88%
Educational Qualification	Post Graduate	58.1%
	Graduate	32.9%
	Others	9.0%
Income group	Less than Rs. 25,000	25.74%
	Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 35,000	29.41%
	Rs. 35,000 to Rs. 50,000	14.20%
	Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 70,000	15.69%
	Rs. 70,000 to Rs. 90,000	9.57%
	Above Rs. 90,000	5.39%

The majority of the respondents (more than 70%) are belong to the age group of below 30 years and between 30-40 years. Other side, most of the professionals' monthly salary is less than 35000 per month, which indicates that majority of the participants (more than 50%) belong to middle income group. The table given below shows the results of the hypotheses testing ;

Results of the Hypotheses Testing

Sr. No.	Ho	Applied Test	Sig. ($\alpha=0.05$)	Results
1	There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the work life balance before and during Covid-19 outbreak.	Paired t-Test	0.013	Not accepted

2	There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the work life balance of married and unmarried service professionals.	t-Test	0.028	Not accepted
3	There is no association between the professional's gender and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place.	Chi Square	0.032	Not accepted
4	There is no association between the professional's income groups and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place.	Chi Square	0.044	Not accepted
5	There is no association between the professional's qualification and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place.	Chi Square	0.609	Accepted
6	There is no association between the professional's age groups and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place.	Chi Square	0.010	Not accepted

Paired t-test is applied to examine the difference between the mean scores of the work life balance before and during Covid-19 outbreak. As the results depict, in the present case the t statistic is found statistically significant ($p = 0.013$ which is less than 0.05 level of significance), which indicates there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the work life balance before and during Covid-19 outbreak. Therefore, it is concluded that the work life balance of service professionals is affected by Covid-19 outbreak.

The p value for the second hypothesis is less than the level of significance ($0.028 < 0.05$), which shows that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the work life balance of married and unmarried service professionals. Therefore, it may be said that work life balance of married and unmarried service professionals is not statistically significantly same. This indicates that marital status plays an important role in work life balance.

The Chi-square test for independence (χ^2) is also applied to examine the association between the categorical variables. Further, Cramer's V test was also used to examine the strength of association between the variables.

There are two groups for gender, six groups of income, four groups for qualification and five groups for professional's age in the present study. The results table depicts there is significant association between professional's gender, income group and age ($p < .05$) with their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place. Thus, there is significant evidence to not accept the null hypothesis. Hence, it is concluded that there is statistically significant association between the professional's gender, income group and age and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place. Further, it is found that there no association between the professional's qualification and their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place as the p value is less than 0.05, i.e. level of significance.

Cramer's V value is 0.452 (gender), 0.658 (income group) and 0.288 (age) which show that the strength of association between professional's gender, income group and age with their choice of preference for the work from home/ work place is average, moderately strong and weak respectively.

CONCLUSION

Examining the results of present research, it may be concluded that the 'work from home' (WFH) model adopted by the organizations during COVID-19 outbreak did not maintain the work-life balance of service professionals. Further, the study found that there is association between service professional's gender, income group and age with professional's choice of preference for the work from home/ work place and the strength of association is average, moderately strong and weak for professional's gender, income group and age respectively. Initially, when the work from home model was adopted by the organizations, most of the employees were happy in the beginning but within very short period of time professionals started facing numerous issues. The study found COVID-19 significantly affected the work life balance of service professionals. The study observed that during corona outbreak, when most of the service professionals were managing their responsibilities from home, it was becoming too much challenging for them to manage balance between their personal and professional life. This pandemic situation has taught a valuable lesson to all the organizations and their man power.

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