



Virtual Working- Boon or Bane on Family Relationships and Sense of Well-Being

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Abstract. The world of work has undergone a radical change after getting hit by the waves of pandemic and extensive utilization of digital technology. Due to these, the term work from home revolutionized from just an option in hand to a necessity in our present lives. This reaction of organizations to pandemic has led to both boon and bane for us. The review paper aims to look into the role that virtual working plays on family alliances or relationships and its implications upon well-being. It also explored several lifestyle factors associated with it. A systematic literature review of UGC Care List of journals was conducted from 2020 to 2024. From there 25 research papers were selected on the basis of certain criteria which included studies that involved employees who belong to the age group 25- 50 years, urban areas, regularly worked at home, and reported effects on physical, mental health and also on well-being. It has brought down the commuting cost and resulted in expansion of autonomy and control over one's schedule. It also increased amount of time spent with loved ones, opportunities for self-care. Whereas a mixed finding has been found regarding the feelings of loneliness, low, depressed, anxiety.

Keywords: Pandemic, virtual working, commuting cost, autonomy, well-being, family relationships

1 Introduction

In the beginning of the year 2020, millions of people changed their kitchen tables into desks, closets into boardrooms, and online meetings when they started working from home to take care of their family members during the pandemic. It was a NASA engineer, Jack Nilles who first prescribed the word telecommuting in the year 1973. Working from home means executing one's duties and responsibilities allocated by the company at the place of residence, and also utilising various digital tools and platforms for the purpose of relaying information (Agba et al., 2020).

It is beneficial for both companies and employees- reduces the time and costs associated with travel to workplace while saving these for other fruitful works, more flexibility in working hours which enhances their ability to oversee and handle personal and office works, enhanced autonomy in the management and execution of tasks, better quality

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P. Sharma et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Management for Business and Industrial Growth (AIMBIG 2025)*, Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research 355,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-898-1_2

and more efficiency of production, decreased employee turnover (Bloom et al., 2014) and better work- life balance. It also facilitates their freedom of choice regarding working location at their residence, and at the same time provides comfort and a positive ambience for carrying out their assignments. Earlier those who were jobless, it helped them especially to find some remote jobs and support their family as geographical barriers could no longer refrain them from doing it. Well- being is also elevated due to reasons like their pressure of reaching the office on time is no more prevalent whereas, they can take break when needed which would aid them to decrease their stress level. Along with this, it has cut down costs of electricity, maintenance, refreshments, stationaries etc. of the companies.

But it's not limitation free like taking care of sick family members, performing household chores, fluctuation of concentration as home space is full of distractions and interruptions, internet connectivity, failure of network, mixing up personal and professional time, restricted chances of promotion, attending late night meetings and conferences with colleagues of different time zones, facing psychological issues such as anxiety, irritation, burnout, depression as a result of social isolation, lack of assessment, recognition and valuable feedback from the employers affects their motivation level and delays the submission of projects and assignments within the deadline. Lastly, managers suffer from their inadequacy to supervise, direct, and support the employees during remote or virtual work as they didn't receive proper training.

A study performed by the economists of University Chicago revealed that 37% of the jobs of the US Work Force can be done efficiently from home.

Remote jobs are more apt for categories like academics, managerial, clerical jobs. In contrast, forestry and fishery labours, machine operators, assemblers have very less scope of it.

The world of work will change more in the future after being affected by the waves of pandemic. The number of remote workers are expected to double than pre- pandemic level. By increasing communication, teamwork, cooperation, incentives companies, as well as working in a quiet and disturbance free place at home, and a strong and accessible internet connection can ensure that their workers can successfully do their work remotely and sustain a healthy equilibrium between work and family.

Therefore, the government and organizations should understand and recognize the implications of remote work and make sure that they formulate policies with society's interest at the core and at the same time eradicate the negative effects and elevating the positive ones.

2 Review of literature

R. Meenambiga, and Dr. N. Saranya Dev (2023) investigated the role of carrying on work virtually from home on mental wellness and to understand what workers

anticipate from their companies' policies on occupational health. A cross-sectional research was done. Google form was circulated to collect information about employees' health-care requirements (n= 74). The findings revealed workers feeling stressed, angry, isolated, socially detached, being off- track and breach of privacy. It was found that work from home doubled their workload. WFH was also related with work-life imbalance, being engrossed in thoughts of work, shortage of play time with children, fear of the future.

Divina Raghav, and S. Srilatha (2022) studied how remote work in India acted as a challenge for employees' psychological health and work- life harmony. Results showed that they experienced an unhealthy work-life equilibrium which led to conflicts between personal and professional lives as compared to the regular employees who had a negligible change in their everyday live. The clashes in turn affected their mental health. Female faced increased conflicts than male.

S Phadnis, S Sengupta, and A Chakraborty (2021) investigated the role that is played by WFH on employees' mental health and discovered their expectations from the organization's occupational health policy. The findings indicated that their amount of work has elevated drastically during remote work. They also reported various issues in mental health due to work from home- loneliness, lost and disconnected from the real world.

G. Ramya, and Dr. C. Kathiravan (2024) determined the relation between Working from Home and Work Life Harmony among BPO Employees. Data collection was done by the help of a questionnaire. Administration was done on Bangalore's BPO Employees. To perform analysis in this study, multiple regression analysis was utilized. The findings indicated that remote work and work life stability have a direct relationship and there exists a significant impact of online working on harmony amidst work life and family life within the BPO Employees.

K.D.V. Prasad, R. Vaidya and R. Rani (2023) studied how teleworking and strain on them impacted job contentment, motivation, and output of workers of IT industries in Hyderabad Metro. The general linear model findings found that age difference was significant in case of contentment from job, motivation, and productivity or output; whereas, there were no significant statistical differences in case of gender. Also it was found that remote working resulted in anxiety and technostress as there was no such conversation with colleague, scarcity of enjoyment and fun during gaps and clashes on work family handling issues.

Dr. Rizwana Khatun (2023) studied Indian workforce's perspective and experiences that they faced during two years of remote work, and some still continuing this method. The purpose was to find out the subjective reasons responsible for one's readiness to pursue work remotely even after the crisis period. This study found that females faced greater stress experiences and challenges than males. Males faced problems in maintaining a work-life balance. The essential determinants of readiness to pursue it

even after crisis- age and also, lack of possessing offsprings, especially under the age of ten.

Shradha Kundra, Naman Sreen and Rohit Dwivedi (2022) explored the influence of remote work and family support among Indian female employees in the time of COVID- 19. Information was taken (n= 266) which included demographic profile, and also about subjective assessment of perceived productivity, and support of family. Indian women employees preferred WFH as they experienced flexibility and because of this they mentioned that it led to higher work productivity. Better management of time between duties towards work and family as they didn't need to commute. Childcare existed as a primary responsibility of females which led them to be less productive.

3 Methodology

An online literature search of Indian research papers belonging to the year 2020- 2024 was conducted using the following databases: UGC Care List of journals, Scopus, Web of Science etc. The different keywords were used to search information about the topic- work from home, remote work, mental health, well- being, family dynamics, childcare. This review paper included only journals, research papers, studies, scientific articles.

- Firstly, the keywords were used to search information and research papers for preparation of the review paper.
- Secondly, the title and abstract of the papers was read carefully. If the findings of the studies were not clear then it was made sure that the whole study is accessible to read.
- Thirdly, the superordinate themes were selected, i.e, work from home or remote work and its influence on mental health along with family relationships. After that under these themes other topics or divisions were taken in to consideration for the study- impact of work from home on well- being, stress level, family dynamics, marital relations, childcare, elderly care, sleep cycle, parent- child relationship and its merits.
- Fourthly, after selecting research papers the duplicate papers and irrelevant ones were removed.
- Fifthly, some studies were screened out on the basis of criteria.

Inclusion criteria:

- Only Indian studies were included.
- Working population (25- 50 years) were considered.
- People living urban areas of India.
- People working regularly from home
- Studies from 2020- 2024 were accepted.

Exclusion criteria:

- Studies written in any other language except English were discarded.

- Foreign studies were excluded.
 - People living in rural areas and working remotely were excluded.
 - Any other study outside the time frame 2020- 2024 were not considered.
- Finally, 25 studies were selected for the purpose of preparation of this review paper.

4 Findings

Table 1. Summary of the findings of the studies.

Researchers of the study	Subjects	Method	Results
1. R. Meenambiga, Dr. N. Saranya Dev (2023)	IT Workers (n=74) across the nation	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They reported feeling stressed, angry, isolated, socially detached, being off-track and breach of privacy. • Majority of workers (67 %) firmly agreed that work from home doubled their workload. • Almost a third of the participants found that they can't balance household work and office work. • WFH was also related with work-life imbalance, being engrossed in thoughts of work, shortage of play time with children, fear of the future.
2. Dr. K. Meenatchi Somasundari, Mr. M. S. Mukil (2022)	Female school and college faculty members (n=152) Coimbatore district TN	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers (70.4%) believed that deadlines for works were unrealistic and its upshots them under pressure. As a result they became emotionally drained at the end of the day which affected their sleep • They were facing role conflicts but managed well as they performed multiple roles even before pandemic. The majority of the respondents (65.8%) were able to balance between their work and life.
3. Chitra Krishnan, Shailender Singh, Mubashir Majid	Academics at universities (n=456) Delhi NCR	self-reported scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home were positively related with high levels of anxiety, worry, feeling of fatigue, depression, even physiological effects of stress, and low amount of job satisfaction.

Baba (2024)			
4. Dr Prashant R. Kamble & Ms. Rhea Bangeera (2021)	Remote employees of different industries (n=100)	Questionnaire, Research paper, Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote employees had complains that they had to give importance and priority to the office work above family and personal life, abandoned sleep for projects and work, had to work even on weekends because of excessive workload. • They rated themselves high in work life balance.
5. Mondal et al., (2021)	Remote workers (n=106)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual or home- based workers reported that they went through increased amount of anxiety, depression, and insomnia in contrast to conventional office employees.
6. Vibha, Christy et al (2021)	Female IT employees (n=200) in Bangalore	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of IT female workers preferred virtual work as they had to look after their children at home, and also had adequate and comfortable workspace at home and good internet connectivity. As well as no travelling costs. • They also reported it was not limitations free like feeling of tied to computer, being isolated and lonely. It had a detrimental effect on their mental health.
7. Deeksha Tayal, & Aasha Kapur Mehta (2023)	women employees in diverse occupations (n=30) Delhi NCR	personal interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote women employees highlighted the advantages of it-reducing travelling time to office and potential risks, but their workload made it difficult for them to distinguish between personal and professional boundaries as they had to work more than the normal 8-hour work schedule. It created job dissatisfaction. • Employees who pursued such an occupation where they had to travel to the workplace, were distressed due to fear of getting infected from office or in the journey to and from it and contaminating their family members.

8.	Rizwana Khatun (2023)	Indian workforce(n=287)	online survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study found that females faced greater stress during work from home due to the fact that males and females experiences several divergent incidents, occurrences and obstacles. • Whereas, men faced difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance. • The essential determinants of readiness to pursue it even after crisis- age and also, possessing no offspring, especially under the age of ten.
9.	K.D.V . Prasad , Rajesh Vaidya , Ridhi Rani (2023)	Remote employees of IT and ITES sectors Hyderabad metro (n=513)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings found that age difference was significant in case of - contentment from job, motivation, and productivity or output; whereas, there were no significant statistical differences in case of gender. • It also revealed that work from home led to anxiety and technostress as there was no such conversation with colleague, scarcity of enjoyment and fun during gaps and clashes on work family handling issues.
10.	Gokul Santhanam, K. D. Balaji (2023)	IT employees working in India (n=181)	online questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was depicted that a high level of emotional demands in employees led to elevated amount of work pressure, and it in turn affected adversely their job stress level. • An increase in autonomy in execution of job resulted to decline in work pressure. • It showed that almost 72% confirmed that virtual working is demanding and stressful and they wished to resign from their present workplace within a year.

11. Deba shish Seng upta And Dwa Al-Khalifa (2022)	Indian millennial workers (n= 30)	Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working virtually caused conflicts in both family and work. • Using various digital working platforms led to the problem of coping with updated technologies which made them stressed out. • Participants who had bigger or joint families often perceived shortage of space at home and faced difficulty in adjusting with it. • Employees recognized the positive side of new working arrangement as they could ignore long distance travel to office and were able to lessen the chances of catching infection and remain healthy.
12. Rakhitha Rajapakse (2024)	Families (n= 10)	Interviews , observations, research based diary entries, focus groups, and content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings revealed more flexible schedules, kids could spend more time with their parents, members engaged in enhanced conversations. • Responsibility to maintain an equilibrium between personal and professional life unfolded as a significant challenge which led to increased stress and fatigue. • Blurred distinction between office and family life led to increased working hours, disturbed schedule and also hampered their personal bonds.
13. G Remya, Kathiravan C. (2024)	BPO employees in Bangalore (n= 381)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study disclosed that remote work and work life stability have a direct relationship. • There exists a significant impact of online working on harmony amidst work life and family life within the BPO Employees. • Work from home is not a common or universal solution.
14. K C Vijay, S S Sreejith (2021)	Managers in IT industry (n= 137)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family time and flexible routine was stated as the main advantages of work from home. • Demerits- unplugging oneself after the work is over is considered problematic as, in case of remote work there is no proper ending time of office hour. This

			resulted in mixing up personal and professional time.
15. Sonal Gupta, Sona Vikas, Ashish Mathur (2024)	Remote Indian professionals (n=300)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals who worked from home during crisis reported a positive role balance amidst work and family. • Teleworking during crisis allowed them to stabilize an equilibrium between personal and work life. • Male professionals perceived WFH more positively than females.
16. Dr. R. Sridevi (2021)	IT employees in Coimbatore (n=111)	Questionnaire, journals, websites and newspaper reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of employees reported health issues and lack of proper communication due to WFH. • It also however helped in cutting down travelling time and costs. • Even many of them felt convenient to continue this practice after the lockdown period.
17. Dr. Mubarak (2021)	IT sector employees (n=50) Davangere residents.	Questionnaire and in-depth interviews, articles from books, journals, periodicals, research papers, newspapers, and reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority mentioned that their job gave them sufficient elasticity to work remotely. Working from home often results in interruptions. • 68 percent reported better balance of work and family life, while 54 percent agrees with the fact that it cuts down time. • Disadvantage- 76% stated that it led to absence of interaction and engagement with colleagues, whereas, 30% thought that it reduced their promotion chances. • Majority agreed that virtual working could be a better choice for the women who are married.

18. Shradha Kundra, Namana Sreen and Rohit Dwivedi (2022)	Professionally active female participants (n=266)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian women employees preferred WFH as they experienced flexibility and because of this they mentioned that it led to higher work productivity. • Better management of time between duties towards work and family as they didn't need to commute. • There was less family support as they didn't perceive it as demanding work. • Childcare existed as a primary responsibility of females which led them to be less productive.
19. KD V Prasad and V K Satya prasad (2023)	Remote IT Employees (n=301)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings revealed that virtual working aided to keep harmony and a healthy balance of work with life. • It was found that the social support, particularly from co-workers and family members facilitated work-life balance during working home based.
20. Rohit Raj , Vimal Kumar, Nagen dra Kumar Sharm a, Suma njeet Singh, Seema Mahla wat, Pratima Verma (2023)	Remote workers are from the Indian cities of Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, and the National Capital Region (NCR) (n=128)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting work-life balance had a favourable impact on a company's success. • It has been found that encouraging work-life balance and hosting social events online can help to work emotionally in remote mode, leading to higher business performance.

21. Divina Raghav, S. Srilatha (2022)	Remote workers	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The differentiation between personal and professional life was so disrupted that it was challenging to handle and adjust with it. • They experienced an unhealthy work-life equilibrium which led to conflicts between personal and professional lives. It was more dangerous for females than males. • There was adverse effects of the clashes on the mental health of people.
22. Subha B., Madhusudan R., Ajai Abraham Thomas (2021)	Women remote IT workers in Bangalore	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a negative and inverse association between the five factors of Occupational Stress-amount of work, job insecurity, poor work condition, problems of family, and scarcity of structure during virtual working at the residence and mental wellness. • Distress, tension and uncomfortable working environment in house was found to be related with declined level of productivity, truancy, surging rates of accidents and adversities during and out of work and negative mental health and well-being issues.
23. S Phadnis, S Sengupta, A Chakraborty (2021)	Remote IT employees (n=74)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67% employees stated that their amount of work has elevated drastically during remote work. • They also reported various issues in mental health due to work from home- loneliness, lost and disconnected from the real world.
24. S.Vijayalakshmi, T. Nirmla and R. Subasree (2023)	Indian IT women employees (n=170)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work at home has complicated mental health issues – stress, burnout, lack of work family balance (especially when both need more attention and effort), depression, and loneliness. • Women may experience greater emotional exhaustion when remote working.

25. Tanuka Bhatta Charya (2024)	Remote IT and education sector employees in Ranchi (n=653)	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results are indicative of positive correlation between virtual work facilities and employees' productivity. It declines stress by removing travelling time. • This gave workers flexible work schedules along with freedom in managing it. Also, a stabilized state of work-life was found. All these pushed their productivity and efficiency up. • Older and experienced workers, who had an established schedule, may adjust well to virtual work and have better and stronger interpersonal skill than younger ones.
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Work from home and mental health- The studies indicated that work from home affected the mental health of remote employees from different sectors in drastic ways- feeling of loneliness, stressed, disconnected from reality, anxiety, depressed, exhausted, burn out. All these happened as the workload doubled, strict deadlines, they were always preoccupied with their work even in their minds and absence of communication with co- workers.

Work from home and gender factor- Especially in case of women it was observed that, there was lack of family support for continuing work from home and there was role conflict. Additionally childcare, care of elder people, household chores etc. acted as a burden on their already huge workload.

Work from home and personal and professional life balance- It affected work life harmony and balance severely making the boundaries between two spheres of life hazy, unable to unplug from work, couldn't spend quality time with partner and children. Sleep cycle got disturbed even leading to insomnia. They had to start their work just after waking and continued till late night. It led to health issues.

Work from home and age factor- Studies indicated that younger employees, who are accustomed to handle and utilize digital tools, experiences problems in stabilizing a harmonious equilibrium amidst professional and family life, resulting to deterioration in their performance. Again few studies revealed that aged people were facing adjustment issues in case of remote working as it was a completely a new experience for them to shift from pen and paper to computers.

Positive side of work from home- Although there are several problems associated with it, the studies indicated that there are many benefits also like autonomy in executing tasks and flexible schedule of workers. It reduced travelling time, expenses and stress, fear of catching infection and managed to perform multiple roles in family and work. All these motivated them to carry on working from home even after the crisis COVID-19.

5 Limitations of study

This review has different limitations. The studies reviewed how stressors affected mental health and family relations of remote employees only throughout the global health crisis and new- normal or after pandemic period (2020- 2024). There was lack of coverage of studies during pre- pandemic period. The studies workforce were Indian and belonged to urban areas. No comparison could be made with foreign studies and rural areas. Lastly, limited number of review papers were considered in this review paper due to time constraint and lack of relevant Indian studies.

6 Conclusion

It can be concluded, pandemic helped us to realise that work from home has both merits and demerits on our mental health and family relationship just like two sides of a coin. Majority of the studies confirmed that it has variety of negative consequences on the psychological health like worry, irritability, depression, social isolation, lack of interaction, lost, feeling of tied to computers etc. Even in case of work life balance there are lot of adverse consequences that remote working resulted like diminishing professional and personal boundaries, role conflict, managing excessive work pressure and household duties simultaneously, lack of vacation and leisure time with family. Though there are certain advantages of it like flexible schedule, less travelling cost, time, no fear of contaminating family members with infection etc. but it overweighs the harmful effects of it. More and more research is required in this field to make employee friendly policies and practices to continue remote working in future.

7 Implications

- In this area more researches are required especially in West Bengal and other non- metropolitan places of India. Even comparative studies of foreign and Indian workers are required for work from home.
- Researches should also focus on its relation with partner's relation, domestic abuse or violence, elderly care.
- The researchers should consider greater sample size and also consider more parameters related to work from home. Special focus should be given on remote working in rural areas and among old aged people.
- More researches would be helpful to formulate remote work policies, investment in technology infrastructure, training programs so that we are ready to face such similar situation in future with better efficiency.
- The information be beneficial for employees to have a comfortable workspace at home beforehand, setting clear boundaries, and managing time effectively.

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