

Employee Perception on How Much Supportive the Employers Are To Manage Work-From-Home during COVID-19 Pandemic - An Empirical Study from A Developing Country

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Abstract

Originality: From the early stage of this Pandemic of COVID-19 and a long lasting impact of Corona virus that spread all over the world employees and professionals are facing new unprecedented dynamic situation like work-from-home. Employee Perception on Employers support during Work from home during COVID-19. **Purpose:** This paper aims to find out role of business or organizations to support employees on different extent as well as work-from-home that will be a win-win situation for the firm. **Method:** An online based structured survey was conducted on 350 employees of different levels, Gender, Age of different private limited companies and different industries. 240 employees have responded properly. Participants completed five point likert scale questionnaires in a goggle form. Simple Statistics were calculated for demographic and work-from-home related variables. **Outcomes:** In this research, 70% of the employee's statement depicts about top management's approval for work from home, only 33.3 % of them have got somewhat training on Work from home. 32.1% employees of total respondents have found having a positive perception regarding Top management support while employees are working from home during this COVID-19 Pandemic situation and that is mainly for technological utility support necessary for work from home program was very poor (8.3%) and many employees have reported Partial reduction in existing salary (60.4%) while employees are working from home. **Conclusions:** Employee assumes more support from management to perform their task from home and they also require to assurance about exerting full effort and maintain morale.

Keywords: Work from home (WFH), Employee Perception, Management Support, COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of COVID-19., Conventional HR practices require huge modifications. HRM researchers suggest flexibility, new work plan etc in such COVID-19 Situation (Boon *et al.*, 2019) and sense it's time to balance numerous stakeholders requirements (Collings *et al.*, 2021). As the COVID-19 pandemic have got a severity and as the government of different countries declared different types and tenures of lockdown basing on the particular country or state situation, organizations have to switch to new operational plan like flexible work schedule, work from home, temporary cessation of work, isolation of infected employees, quarantine at home etc. The author himself, an employee of Private University of 300 regular teachers working, feels pressure at the early stage of lockdown for not having right equipment, utility support and software, lack of proper training to

conduct online classes through zoom ,meet etc. & online evaluation process etc. along with at least 70% internal colleagues the same experience. This is almost a snapshot of total readiness of the employees of Bangladeshi organizations and academic institutes regarding work from home situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Started from Uhan China COVID-19 Pandemic is a global health crisis caused by corona virus that started in 2019 and spread to all over the world with in few months (Mallah *et al.*, 2021), As of 19 June 2021, more than 177 million cases have been confirmed, with more than 3.85 million confirmed deaths attributed to COVID-19, and in Bangladesh 8.5 million confirmed cases & 13,466 deaths making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history. (DGHS Bangladesh and World metres, 19 June 2021).

There exists lack of adequate study references on the relevant field as it a very recent academic issues in nature. Based on survey data on almost 5,000 US Employees researchers found that due to COVID-19 pandemic 71.7% employees prefer work from home on on June 2020 that was 35.2 % and 8.2% on May and February respectively (Bick *et al.*,2020). A research conducted on Indonesian Teachers regarding WFH Program found mixed outcome that includes favorable review on flexible or no office hours , no transport cost including negative outcome like lose work motivation, increased cost to some extent and data security threat (Purwanto *et al.*, 2020). Although no research work were found regarding number of employees started work from home during COVID-19 Pandemic, in 2009-10 there were 2 million employees working from home which is 41% higher than that of 2005-06 (Mahmud, 2014).

Another survey on 2700 employees found that employees are feeling more socially isolated (75%), Stress (67%), and higher levels of anxiety (57%) (R. Smith, 2020). For Particular professionals like Teacher of Schools, Colleges & universities, consulting firms etc. it causes a sudden shutdown of workstation while for IT professionals like web page developer, graphics designer, freelancers it's quite as usual to stay home and work from home. A lot of employees who previously have to maintain offices or classrooms as workstations have got a completely new situation and challenges. As a developing country with very limited internet infrastructure and minimum average uses of work-from-home friendly equipments, it was very tough for the employees to cope with it. Public & services has been much slashed and officials started to work from home. Very few Private School, college and universities started their operation on trial and error basis after the primary shocks while no public school, public college or public university have started till July 2021. Although a lot of private firms have started their activities online and work-from-home basis, employees are facing difficulties to cope with the new working environment and many of them have to equip with new devices, most of them requires training the uses of meeting software, using online work stations etc. It leads to conflict in organizations between "those who can work from home" versus "those whose roles do not allow work from home" (Bapuji *et al.*, 2020; Jacobs, 2020). Even, Women employees "work from home" creates work-family conflict (Uddin, 2021). In a 2020 research by Islam *et al.* reported several difficulties in implementing work from home program by the Small and Medium Enterprize (SME) that contains monetary limitations, bureaucracy, lack of acquaintance and curiosity, communication problem, employee trustworthiness.

Meanwhile, employees who have infected with COVID-19 and got health hazards like pre and post COVID-19 difficulties, require some other management

supports. But, most of the cases employee have managed by themselves and in fewer cases management provide necessary supportive roles. Since, employees are facing new challenges due to COVID-19 and since the world is not getting rid of from such situation soon, management has to come forward to support employees to match with the new work culture for the betterment of both employee and organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic employers are facing several HRM challenges includes adjusting new and current employees to considerably changed work settings, work-family conflict and management have to adapt their HR practices so that it enhance employees capability to flourish in such dynamic and unsure situation (Carnevale, & Hatak, 2020). This paper tries to evaluate the employee perceptions on management support that evident from survey as well as practical experience and provides recommendations for further research for tomorrows work from home culture.

METHODOLOGY

Despite of COVID-19 pandemic situation data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources through an online based structured survey questionnaire. Google form link have been sent to 350 mid level and entry level employees, where numbers of respondents were 240 of different levels, gender and age. Respondents from different private limited companies and different industries have participated in this survey. Participants completed five point scale questionnaires in a google form of psychometric response scale in which responders specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in five points: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Indifferent/Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree and (5) Strongly agree. Simple Statistical tools like percentile and average method were calculated for analyzing the data on work from home related variables regarding employee perception on Management support.

DATA ANALYSIS

For testing employee perception regarding Management support regarding Work from Home (WFH) a structured questionnaire survey was rendered and data have been analyzed and summarized in table1.

It is very evident from the employee responses regarding Employee Perception on work from home (WFH) that about 70% of the employees reported about top management's approval for work from home without retrenching employees and in the pursuit of employee retention effort. Even, 46.3% employees are expecting to Return-to-work after the situation getting normal or about to normal, that a very good sign about management effort to make the employee comfortable as well. 47.5% respondent are on communication from Management during their staying & working from home on a regular basis, even they are residing in remote area and even whenever they are infected such

communication enhance their morale and reduce stresses.

Table-1: Employee Perception on Employers support during Work from home during COVID-19

Employee Perception on WFH	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Indifferent %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
Allow WFH	45.0	25.0	23.0	7.0	-
Assist WFH	10.4	12.1	13.8	27.1	36.7
WFH Utility Support	3.8	4.6	0.0	29.2	62.5
Train WFH	18.8	14.6	22.9	27.1	16.7
WLB WFH	14.2	9.6	18.8	31.3	26.3
WFH with existing Salary	6.3	8.3	25.0	36.3	24.2
COVID-19 Medical Allowance	10.4	12.5	12.5	31.3	33.3
Communication while WFH	28.8	18.8	21.3	18.8	12.5
Return-to-work after WFH	40.0	6.3	25.0	12.5	16.3
Average	19.7	12.4	18.0	24.5	28.5
					n=240

About 91.7% employee responded that they have to purchase their own technical devices and have to pay their internet bills that caused a sudden expenditure for the employees.

Although 63.8% of respondents that top management have assisted them to work from home, 60.4% of them have experienced revised lower salary while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employer's are also helping to maintain Work-life-balance as said by 57.5% employees, and 43.8% of the employees have got somewhat training that helped them to work from home as well.

On an average, only 32.1% employees of total respondents have a positive perception regarding Top management support while employees are working from home during this COVID-19 Pandemic situation. This is mainly poor utility support from management and Partial reduction in existing salary while employees are working from home.

CONCLUSION

Employees are very important human capital in any organization. So a favorable management support is mandatory for maintaining a healthy relationship with employee and employer. Such supportive functions need to be revised and upgraded to help employee survive in such a COVID-19 pandemic situation while employers have to accept work from home as well. Even though such a situation is very uncertainly lasting for a long time and no one knows when it will be stopped, as the human life have to move forward new dimension of "strategic HRM, sustainable HRM, Socially Responsible HRM" etc. are evolving over the time. To keep a good employee perception of new HRM horizon like work from home program that may assist employee to cope easily with new environment management should introduce simple but effective techniques that will be beneficial for HRM ecosystem.

Future Research

Requirements for WFH support vary basing on profession, nature of business engagement, access to new technology, proper family support etc. Rigorous research is urgent with in each area within nearest future to assist the policy maker and business leaders for the upcoming HR practices where artificial intelligence, robotics etc. are going to make it even more easily and cheapest that will allow employee to work from any place anywhere.

Respondents Demographical data		
Gender:		
	Male	197
	Female	43
Employee Level:		
	Mid level	87
	Entry Level	153
Age Distribution:		
	below 30	81
	31-40	129
	40-50	23
	50 and above	7
n=240		

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