



# Work from home- A new dimension and the challenging role of HRM

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**Abstract:** The paper is about today's scenario of building a workspace remotely away from the traditional office setup. The various challenges that are turning up towards the same both for the employees, the Managers, the organization and as a whole for the HRM. The study of various relationships of peer-peer, employee-manager, employee-family, family-organization, work-output, employee-stress. It emphasizes on the new concept of Work from Home which is attracting and influencing the employee behaviour and creating a new facet towards the job. In this midst of the crisis, where the whole world is confronting with Covid-19, to keep up the economic growth and the competitiveness most organizations have resorted to find a replacement to the age-old practice of working in a structured work station with the concept of work from home or work from remote space. Establishing the several factors affecting Work from home and the role of HR.

**Key Words - Flexible timing, motivation, work life balance, work performance, stress, telecommunication**

## I. INTRODUCTION

We are moving towards always adopting new challenges and getting accustomed with the changes around the environment. The new crisis which is revolving around us- "the pandemic" has forced worldwide to change everyone accordingly to combat the virus. So, every industry and every organization are being affected by the same.

For every organization to overcome this situation it was an immense challenge, but almost all of the companies (except few) encouraged "Work from home"- as part of new normal. The Human resource department had a lot to do to bring the concept work amusingly. To change the traditional working of an employee in an efficient office space to work remotely from home was itself a massive challenge in front of the HR managers, at the same time keeping in mind the various hurdles that were coming the way. "Work from home" concept worked undoubtedly well in a few industries like the telecom sector, IT, in the area of academics encouraging various online courses, webinars, conferences, tutorials and many more. Work from Home is a new dimension in today's era and to encourage it to work well constructively was itself a tremendous task for the organizations especially the Talent Management department or the HR department.

When Covid-19 outbreak happened, it was difficult for both employers and employees to cope with it. For a few industries like IT, and the education sector specifically took the crisis as a threat to find a new dimension of opportunity which came in the way as- "Work from Home".

This came in the way to be a great challenge to the HRM, as to make the employees inspire to work remotely. The other terms that can be used interchangeably is Remote working, Flexible timing or flexi jobs. The concept did not just abruptly come on the way due to Covid-19 but was a part of the modern revolution in the competitive environment. It laid the first stone back in the 1970s-1980s in the USA with the advancement of the telecommuting sector.

A Report published by LinkedIn based on Global Talent Trends for the year 2019 reported that 72% of HR professionals accepted that flexibility in work life would be a cardinal part of making the coming days of HRM. It also published that there was a 78% increase in the posting of job advertisements in LinkedIn portal as a part of flexi jobs. Luke (2019)

With the progress and improvement in the telecommunications and IT industry, work from home or remote work has been able to pace up by developing various work monitoring software, performance tracker software, developing various data and applications security maintaining software making the Work from Home concept reliable and safe and more realistic.

## Work from home environment and its various factors

Work From Home in recent times have flourished as an emerging concept for the development of well-being of the employees especially in the critical phase of Covid-19 enabling to be with their family and exposure to positive as well as negative effects both on mental and physical health. The several factors contributing to Work from Home can be summarized below:



Figure 1 Work from home (Work from Home) Framework

#### A. *Work from home and Motivation:*

In such a challenging environment, encouragement from the organizations and the HR departments is a necessity to make them feel associated with the team and an integral part of the organization.

- Various virtual team activities
- Continuous feedback from Team Managers and HR
- Encouraging communication with peers and the team
- Various discussions to keep themselves motivated growing a positive mindset
- Timely recognition of performance and efforts.
- Enabling employees to have proper gadgets as such- Laptop, smartphones, high speed internet connection etc. to work either by providing them from the company or assisting them to purchase by providing various corporate benefits like reimbursement of the payment made, corporate credit cards, easy EMI, quick loan services etc.

#### B. *Work from Home and managing Stress:*

Stress is harmful for employee well-being as it has a negative impact towards proficiency and profitability of the organization. There is always a dissension between the job requirements and the environment and control over the emotions of the employee. Tran, Tran, Nguyen, Mach, Phan and Mujtaba (2020) felt it is important for the HR team to ensure the employees are being able to work in a healthy environment with less pressure from their team leads or their managers. According to Bhui, Dinos, Galant, Jongh and Stansfeld (2016) there are various reasons contributing to employee's stress like-

- Type of work performed.
- Physical environment (small work place, noisy surroundings, lack of proper infrastructure, proper ventilation and sufficient lighting etc.)
- Extended working hours
- Too much work pressure or overload
- Mental elements- Friedman (2021)- sense of over self- criticism, anxiety, envious, losing temperament
- Socio- Psychological elements- loneliness, relationships breakdown with family, siblings, children, even colleagues, loss of closed ones etc.

HR teams should assist employees by the following: Daniel (2020)

- Offering Flexible Time for work
- Examining timely that the employees are not pressurized extremely by their managers.
- Encouraging rest pauses or breaks
- Encouraging team meetings with managers.
- Mandatory annual leaves
- Arranging training sessions for a healthy mind and body of employees
- Informal virtual team meets

#### C. *Work from home and work culture:*

Work Culture at home unlike the traditional corporate office setting is somehow challenging. There are numerous noises around such as family interaction, parenting (if both husband and wife is working), technological interference, adequate work space, timely rest breaks, managing real time jobs virtually etc.

Keeping in mind that it also helps to build a positive well-being as such even in the course of work employees are being able to be with their parents, wife, children being the greater part of the family making them feel connected with their much-loved ones, enabling them to engage in a quality work life balance.

#### D. Work from Home and work- life balance:

Work- life balance becomes at stake if the personal life is in turmoil, as because there is a positive correlation between work from home and work-life balance, indicating performance and productivity increases if there is a healthy relation between the employee and his/ her personal life setting and vice- versa. We can very well understand it from the Yerkes-Dodson Law which clearly states the same by measuring work performance in x- axis and stress in y- axis and the graph so obtained is a bell-shaped curve. Corbett (2015)

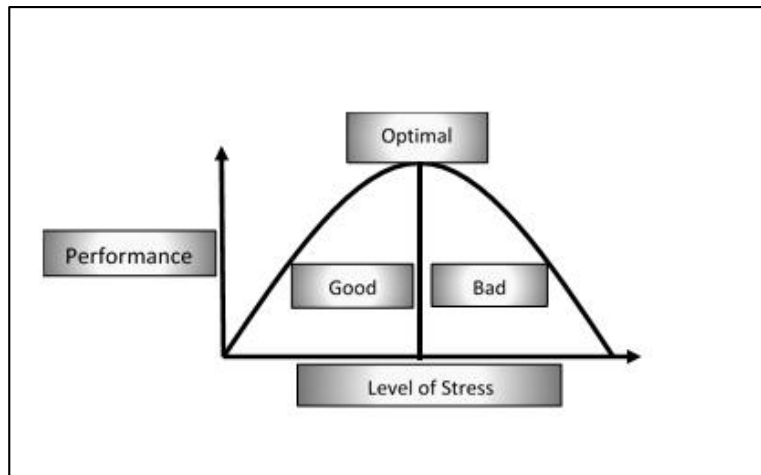


Figure 2 According to Yerkes- Dodson Law (Source: Corbett, 2015)

#### E. Building Trust:

Trust is the building block of enforcing employee confidence and motivation. But with the new trend of Work from Home, trust is henceforth seen to be the most vital part of working remotely. It is on the way of the managers to create the bond with the remote employee's and the team.

The research work conducted showed that 91% of workers said they experienced a better work- life balance while working from remote. 76% said productivity has increased and 78% said home- working reduced their stress. Whitehead (2020)

There are various online Psychology courses made available for managers to help them build trust on their remote team members. Whitehead (2020)

As depicted in Fig.1 it can be understood that several factors influence the culture of Work from Home, where the utmost essential element is Trust building the employees-

- Allowing them their pace of work
- Maintaining a translucent work structure
- Empowering them
- Involving them to get exposure to important projects and decision- making.
- Entrusting their view, ideas and opinions
- Managers should play a vital role in bringing more clarity in the daily work process

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Olson and Primps (1984) explored that working remotely becomes more comfortable if the jobs are proposed to be more systematic and fortified. The researcher focused on companies that were undertaking work from home trails mainly those companies that were experimenting Work from home as a model and the high-tech companies to understand the correlation between employees, management, job, non-job dominion. It emphasized on how technology is vital but has been observed that neither the organizations nor the employees are making the most out of it. The paper suggests for further investigation in the decision of work from home for the good fortune of both employees and the organization.

Shamir and Salomon (1985) made an attempt to attract to the traditional instances of studying several factors of using technology and computers for future advancement. The article converges on the concept of independent working with no direct observation and less regulation of the employees by the managers thereby helping employees to happily perform the job and enjoy the flexibility and also carry out the family duties which in turn might compromise with the freedom either. After thorough analysis and findings, the paper suggests work from home will help in better life balance provided there is flexibility or only for some special cases where it may be successful.

Venkatesh and Vitalari (1992) investigates that working from remote is possible for some designated jobs. It used empirical study to find the association for positively and negatively correlated determinants which affects the performance of the employees and its influence keeping in mind the organizational structure setting. The paper suggests for further analysis of the alternative work setting away from the employer's province for better future development.

Leiter and Durup (1996) did a detailed continued study of the health workers of a Canadian based hospital to understand the relationships of varied socio- psychological situation that affects the yield of the health workers such as marital status, care from closed ones, disagreement and differences of opinion in the family, to decipher the edges between territory of home and the organization and its interconnection with the several fatigue elements. But the study was restricted to only female health workers and was confined to solely one hospital. It is to notice that differences in gender varies and impacts the job and the personal space. Lourel, Ford, Gamassou, Guéguen and Hartmann (2009) also did a similar study finding the connection between the balance of contrary forces mediating stress, work life balance, work happiness conducting a sample survey of the French employees.

Demerouti, Geurts and Kompier(2004) carried a study on the employees of Dutch Postal Service to find the direct consequences

of remote working synergy with respective components of human and societal elements which have both direct and indirect correlation with employees' job environment which influences the performance. The study was however restricted to discover the supremacy of other related emotional and mental components.

Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker and Schaufeli (2005) also emphasizes on elements of emotional collapse and nervous exhaustion out-turn on the interplay mediating Work and Home. The findings of this article realized that female workers will experience emotional breakdown if susceptible to working from home but when compared to male workers they are much better in managing the stress in both environments.

Bick, Blandin and Mertens (2020) investigated the research article on the working population of the USA to examine the relocation of work areas from employers to employee's space due to Covid-19. The research was based on the survey of changing behaviour towards the telecommuting environment of the real-time population workers. The article is restricted with the possible behaviour of the employees working remotely which is parallel to the various employee productiveness and the inter-linkage.

Dey, Frazis, Loewenstein and Sun (2020) examined the labour market of the USA with effect from the pandemic focusing in the jobs where telework line of business is possible. The study was further carried with the help of the surveys arranged by reliable sources and databases. The pandemic took on the impact on almost all the vital industries, the article investigated those jobs which were performed remotely from home way before the pandemic and the jobs that took a pace to working from home after the pandemic. The author's replicates that employee work settings might take a turn in upcoming improvements with the evolution of telecommunication.

Banerjee and Ghosh (2020) did a study of the universities and the research centers established in Singapore to analyse the operations during and henceforth of the pandemic. The emergence of the concept of work from home, its influence, its benefits and disadvantages and the future prospect. The paper demonstrates that it can be an achievement if these organizations adhere to updating their guidelines and code of conduct accordingly and cohere with the same. The study was limited to only educational areas, there are diversified sectors where there is a scope of further analysis.

From the previous literature reviews, it can be summarized that work from home has been investigated, examined and analyzed in various domains with the passing of time, but there was always an uncertainty regarding the progress of the working remotely and though various relationship was established regarding the work home interaction but not much was discussed regarding the changing role of Organization, Managers and the Human resource Department in the entire scenario.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Purpose of the study:

- 1) To determine the fundamental causes that regulate work-from-home relation and understand the aspect in connection with the employees.
- 2) To explore the changing role of the managers and the employers in coping with the telecommuting and working remotely and the role of the HR department in it.

#### B. Research Approach & Investigation:

- 1) Research is carried out by surveys based on an online survey research.
- 2) The sampling size for this research is of 60 respondents.
- 3) Research area is focused on the sectors mainly where work from home is prevalent and target population is the corporate professionals experiencing the same environment.

#### C. Instrument of study:

- 1) The study has been done by developing a questionnaire enclosing the pertinent factors in connection to work from home with the help of an online survey forum.
- 2) The Questionnaire link was shared and disseminated to social media platforms, known contacts and companies in the field of IT, Education and others (job role related to the cybernetics, AI, information processing, ICT)

#### D. Acquisition of Data:

- 1) Primary Sources: Through survey responses received to definite responsive questions with categorical responses (yes or no).
- 2) Secondary Sources: Published articles and journals, newspaper, magazines available over the internet for better vision and understanding of the subject matter.

#### E. Data Evaluation and explanation:

- 1) Ratio of Male to Female respondents and the marital status:

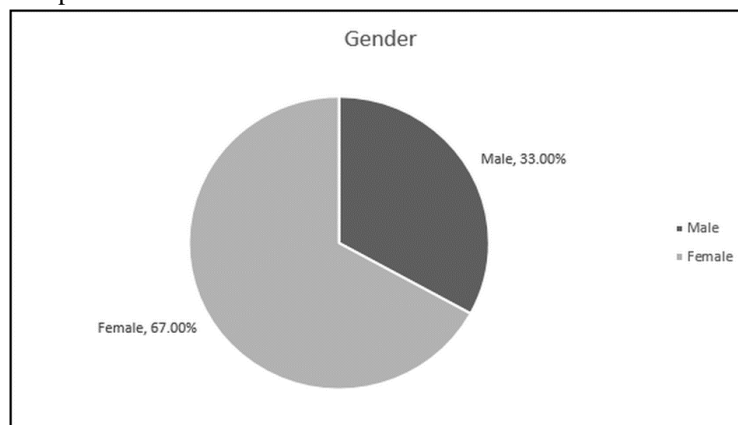


Figure 3. Ratio of male to female respondents

#### Interpretation:

The categorical responses in Figure 3 and Figure 4 are very significant before going into the detailed data analysis-



**Ratio of male to female and married and unmarried status:**

The research work had 67% of female respondents and 33% of male respondents with 46.3% unmarried and 53.7% married respondents. Working remotely for female employees becomes more challenging as compared to male employees whether married or unmarried.

Married female employee's faces much trouble in balancing their work and personal life as compared to unmarried female employees. Work performance of married male employees having children may be hindered because more attention and care needs to be given to their children.

## 2) Industry focused for research:

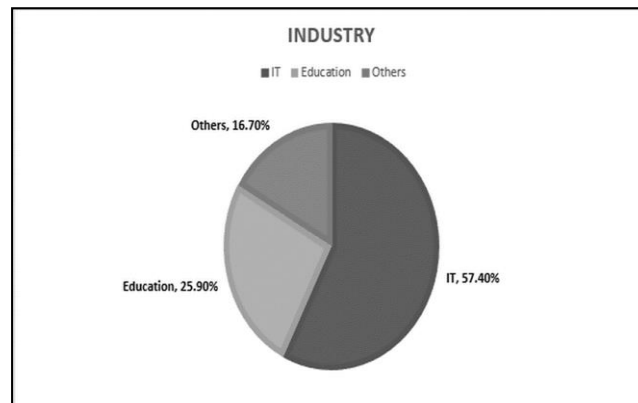


Figure 5. Industry focused for research

**Interpretation:**

Information Technology: 57.4% of the respondents were from IT industry

Education: 25.9% respondents from education sector

Others: Rest 16.7% were other industries where work from home was predominant like- E-commerce, online service companies like (BPO, Recruitment, and other outsourcing companies).

## 3) Feeling of satisfaction among employees working from home



Figure 6. Percentage of workers satisfied working from home

**Interpretation:**

70% of employees said that they are feeling satisfied working from home and only 30% employees feel unsatisfied.

**Interpretation workers satisfaction level working from home:**

The employees feeling unsatisfied working remotely are mainly those who are single or are staying away from family due to some reasons, or are those where there is too much distraction in their work setting.

## 4) Employees feeling disconnected with co- workers

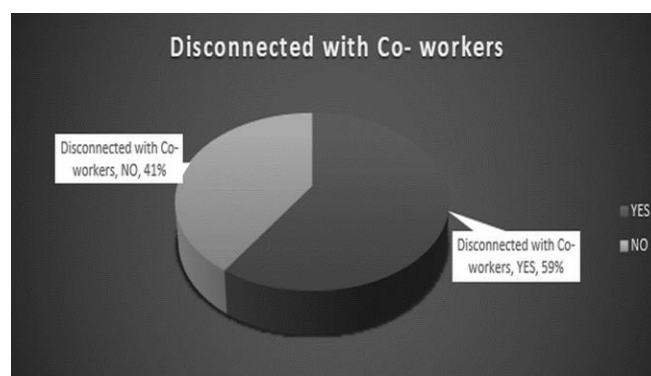


Figure 7. Percentage of workers feeling disconnected with their co-workers

**Interpretation:**

41% have responded that they are in good connection with their colleagues and 59% said they feel lost and lonely sometimes and feel disconnected from their co-workers.

**Interpretation of disconnected feeling of workers with their co-workers:**

It is just that the employees are into adopting the new culture, changes in the work schedule because most organizations are offering flexible timing whereby there is a mismatch in the timing of the co-workers. As a result of which there is a communication gap among them.

## 5) Virtual team meetings friendly enough to motivate employees

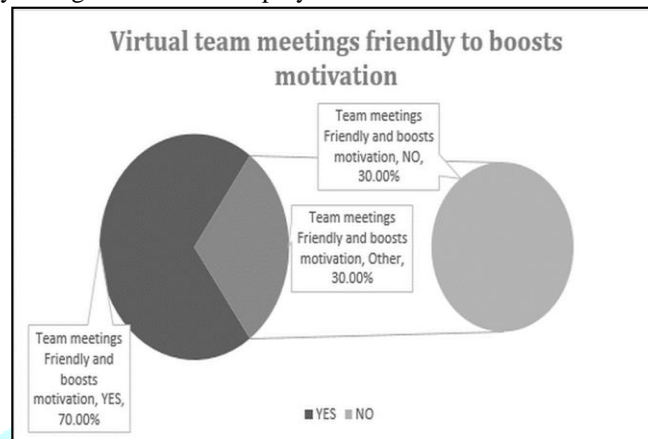


Figure 8. Virtual team meetings friendly to boosts motivation

**Interpretation:**

70% responded they feel inspired and encouraged and feel included in the team decisions allowing them for opportunities, sharing clear goals, empowering them to express their opinions and the rest 30% do not find motivation in the virtual team meetings.

## 6) Manager/ Leader trusts you while working from home

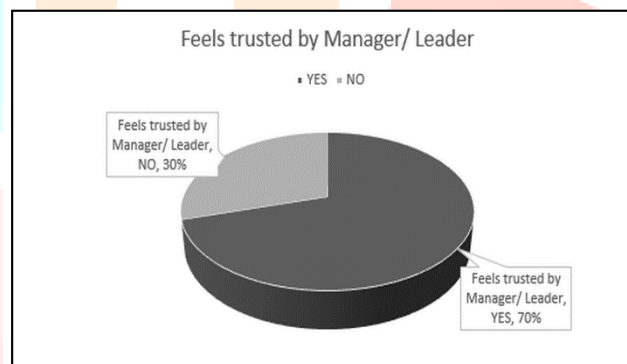


Figure 9. Employees feel trusted by their managers while working from home

**Interpretation:**

30% felt they are not trusted while working remotely which depicts a reason for them feeling demotivated sometimes. Trust building is an essential element to create a good relationship and a strong bond among employees and for the well-being of the personal and their professional career. While 70% of remote employees experienced, they are in good faith of their managers or leaders.

## 7) Having a healthy work- life balance working remotely

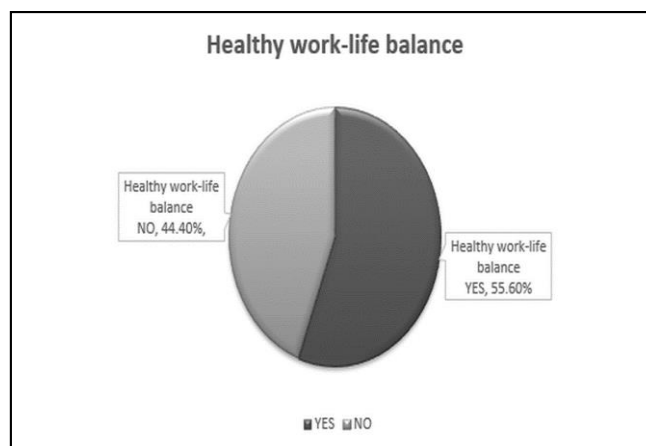


Figure 10. Percentage of employees having a healthy work-life balance

**Interpretation:**

44.4% feel that their work life balance is at a stake working from home.

As because there is less or no direct interaction or physical supervision by their managers which makes them distressed thinking much about the recognition, commitments, productivity, targets and so much. This is the very reason that some employees go beyond

the stipulated office timing to prove themselves in their work area. As a result of which there is an imbalance in their personal and professional lives. In contrast 55.6% of employees could maintain a good and harmonious work-life synergy.

8) Having all the resources that needs to be more successful, working from home

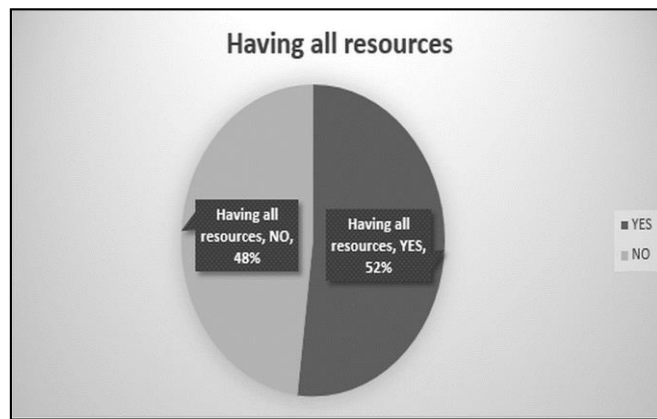


Figure 11. Percentage of remote employees having all required resources

#### Interpretation:

48% responded that they are not supported by their organization well enough to perform their jobs efficiently from remote. Most of the organizations are yet to discover the most out of the culture of working from home and so they are not strategizing it for the future developments as they believe that the best can be extracted only from working in the traditional work setting under the close supervision and monitoring of the employees. They are longing for the situation to be as usual to resume back to their traditional office setting. 52% of employees are having adequate resources to support their work.

9) Get feedback and continuous encouragement from Manager

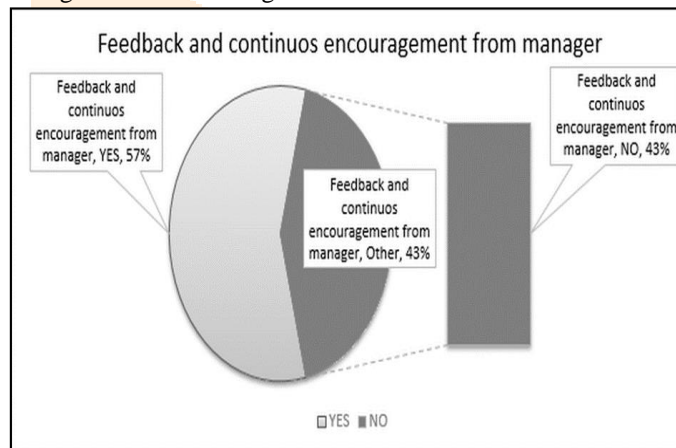


Figure 12. Percentage of remote employees getting continuous feedback and encouragement from manager

#### Interpretation:

57% expressed that they are in continuous touch with their manager and the manager provides them enough response and feedback in the course of the job. The day-day activities, in meeting the deadlines, assisting them in emergency issues and many more. Whereas, 43% of remote employees sensed that the feedback and the encouragement received from the manager are not enough to keep up their work setting.

#### IV. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION IN WORK FROM HOME CULTURE:

- 1) Providing the right software and technology to the remote workers: Most of the employees are not comfortable working remotely as there is not much available resources with them, it is the part of the organization to take care that the software's used are accessible to all and ascertaining the availability too. Providing the easy access to work well virtually with the team.
- 2) Flexible meetings and discussions: It is one of the most vital parts working virtually as such employees need to work with co-workers and clients across different regions having different time frames. So keeping in mind of one and all meetings should be arranged accordingly as everyone is valuable.
- 3) Organizations should have clear goals and estimates: every member and every employee should have a clear and well-established picture of the objectives and the expectations from them.
- 4) A committed communication channel: It needs to be conveyed to the employees working remotely the proper means or the right person to contact for any difficulty or for healthy working.

## V. ROLE OF THE MANAGER IN WORK FROM HOME CULTURE:

The manager is the central position and the liaison between the management and the employees so they are the ones who can build up the confidence, productivity and enthusiasm of the virtual teams.

- 1) Communication should be transparent, comprehensible and frequent: As per the survey it has been observed that few Managers communicate with their team members frequently but there is also a little share of respondents who felt there is a communication gap between them and their managers. There should be an increase in the video conferences, virtual meetings, discussion to encourage the team members. There should be transparency regarding the financial status, organizational performance, crisis if any.
- 2) Setting rational and logical team goals and targets: Work from home for employees does not allow organizations to take down work creating pressure situations and stress setting unrealistic targets and goals. Although employees need little time to cope with the new climate accustomed already with different disturbances as compared with the office setting.
- 3) Creating an environment of confidence and possession among the team members: Once the team and the individual goals are conveyed, the manager should allow each team members their space to prioritize their area of work, take decisions thinking it to be their own, also managers should have a consistent discussion with each member to explore their performance and provide judgement.
- 4) Appreciation, recognition and rewards: Constant monitoring and evaluation of the performance is utmost necessity for the manager team's success, but it is also the part of being a good leader to boost up the confidence of the members by cherishing the final result and acknowledging the performance if they meet up the expectations.

## VI. ROLE OF THE HR DEPARTMENT IN WORK FROM HOME CULTURE

The HR department is the connection among all units in the organization, every employee looks up to them when it comes to facing any job, health, personal related problems and issues. It should be well built to deal with the affairs of the employees and extend support to all extent.

- 1) Providing guidelines regarding the changing policy and strategy of the organization: Showcasing how the organization is planning about work from culture now and also for the coming days. Communicating the changes in the organizational policies undertaken and how it is to be carried out in the future.
- 2) Conveying the future job roles and expectations: Sharing the job roles of the employees clearly and the scope of the same for the future and the designated changes that are to be done like transferring or shifting to other project teams, shuffling the team members, change of the team leaders.
- 3) Assisting them with e-attendance and e-leave portal: Since the employees are working virtually and remotely, attendance is the basis for calculation of the hours of work and monetary value. A separate application for attendance as well as for leaves should be supported by the organization in consent with the HR department.
- 4) Enabling the flexible hours and child care space: Employee well-being is considered to be taken into consideration if the HR department as part of the organization helps the employees to take freedom of working in flexible hours especially for the couples having children and where both the parents are working. In terms of also helping them to have a quality work life balance.
- 5) Technical support and guidance: The HR department should also make arrangements for the remote workers with laptops, tabs, smart phones if possible and a dedicated technical team to look after the problems like email configuration, VPN (Virtual Private Network) connectivity failure, problems with the verified apps. Also communicating them the entire process like how, to whom and exact procedure to get in touch with the technical team.
- 6) Health care and medical support: As the entire planet is fighting the emergency situation of Covid-19. It is the duty and the responsibility of the HR department to assist the affected employees with medical benefits and mandatory leaves and also communicate with them to provide them mental support.
- 7) Performance evaluation policy: The HR managers should thoroughly provide instructions to the remote workers relating how the performance is to be evaluated like the number of client problems resolved, number of hours worked in a month, number of new clients absorbed and many more.
- 8) Performance measurement software's: Back-end software's to be installed to track the performance by measuring the number of hours the employee was active in his/ her respective machine also ensuring that the hours spent was productive by monitoring the different browsing history and the applications worked on.
- 9) Arrange for various training and developmental programs: It is the obligation of the HR department to arrange for various virtual training programs and developmental programs for its employees like various virtual training programs on technical issues, how to communicate with co- workers virtually, training related to productivity and performance, various sponsored certification courses and others.
- 10) Organizing various virtual events and virtual breaks: HR departments should also take care of the mental as well as the physical health of the remote workers ensuring the workers are not overburdened with work pressure and unfair job conditions. Enabling certain fun, relaxing and refreshing activities to relive the employee's performance like virtual tea breaks, virtual quiz, debates and many more encouraging participations by furnishing certificates, rewards, gems.

## VII. CONCLUSION

From the research analysis it has been observed that work from home or working remotely or telecommuting has better prospects for the upcoming future contributing towards sustainable development and in greater respect can be considered to be a part of green HRM concept leaving behind a lot of advantages in building the organization.



**Benefits for the organization:**

- 1) Remarkable increase in the output or performance of the employees is observed as per various reports published by a number of companies, as they are allowed to work in flexible timings and there is always a tendency on part of the employees to get recognized by their managers.
- 2) Employers' office space rent, electricity consumption, cost of other accessories and equipment gets saved.
- 3) Employee turnover or the attrition rate improves as employees feel more committed and enthusiastic working in the new culture.
- 4) Decreased miscellaneous expenses like managing canteen, housekeeping, security, pick and drop vehicles and other expenses like maintaining cafeteria space and a lot more other utility.
- 5) Enabling the healthy development of our environment as there will be less consumption of petrol, diesel and other polluting automobile fuel. In this regard enhancing a better public image and also awareness about nature.
- 6) Added advantage for the business in bringing in talented and expert professionals to the organization by saving the other expenses.
- 7) Positiveness- Working remotely allows worker to be happy, content, enthusiastic increasing the productivity of the organization.
- 8) Decrease in rate of absenteeism, as the employees are doing their job staying at home there is no late comings, or the rate of taking leaves went down drastically.
- 9) Commitment, the employees will feel devoted and will dedicate themselves for the organization thinking about the opportunities that the organization is allowing them to work from home.

**Benefits for the employees:**

- 1) The most important advantage for the employees is that they can be connected to their job from anywhere and can work from anywhere.
- 2) Organizations provide them flexibility and options to choose their appropriate work timings.
- 3) There is zero or no commuting needed for employees.
- 4) Accommodate special needs
- 5) Working from home means working at the same time living or spending time with family. Being able to see the children grow, sharing lunch, dinner together thus entitling today's better work life synergy.
- 6) Working from home allows remote employees to enjoy their work more with less interference and more liberty empowering the employees to take decisions in their dominion.
- 7) As there is no travelling needed it saves a lot of time and gives more opportunity for savings of the employees.
- 8) The employees feel happier and content doing their job.
- 9) Privacy is essential for the well-being of the employees, thus work from home ensures for all the remote employees to maintain a private life comfortably and with dignity.
- 10) Less emission of automobile pollutants and the carbon contents into the environment, a step towards sustainable development.

Hence the research article was to bestow with some suggestions and the recommendations on the role of human resource management and the organization for the future development in connection with work from home concept.

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