

# Transformation of Workplace due to COVID-19

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**ABSTRACT:** There is mayhem around the world due to this COVID -19 which has become a game-changer and has impacted the organizations and human life in a significant manner. It had challenged the earlier way of doing things in the workplace and created problems for the HR managers of different organizations. They are challenged to transform their workplaces. Adapting to this abrupt change has become a question of survival. The immediate shift from office to work from home has become the need of the hour which itself laid many challenges before the employees. It was required on part of employers to manage this crisis period effectively by facing their problems and overcoming the challenges. Many companies have been forced to implement the concept of work from home (WFH) while using different online modes like Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx, Microsoft Team, etc. HR managers and consultants are challenged to rethink and redesign their workplaces. Moreover, the practices like Employee-connect, virtual teams, adoption of re-skilling, design thinking, analytics, and training have become significant for making the workplaces adaptive to the changes

This research paper is an attempt to examine the impact of COVID -19 in the workplace with special preference to this new normal; work from home (WFH) and to analyse role of technology in people management for smooth functioning of organisation. The study is descriptive and analytical which is based on both primary and secondary data. The study is descriptive and analytical and based on both primary data and secondary data.

**Keywords:** Transformation, Workplace, COVID-19, Lockdown, HR Roles, Online platforms, Employee-connect, Virtual Teams, Virtual Leadership, Re-skilling, Multi skilled employees, etc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The first case of COVID-19 was flared up in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Due to the initial ignorance and mishandling of the problem by the World Health Organization (WHO), people were allowed to move globally which has led to the outburst of several cases all around the world. This on-going pandemic has affected workplaces all across the world. The extent of infection, illness, and fatalities has compelled the organizations to either closed their operations or completely transform their way of working. To curb the fast spread of this virus, the need for social distancing arisen. This intern has given birth to the concept of Work from Home (WFH) so that the organization can survive, keeping the spirit of employees alive.

Different companies are adopting different practices for making their organizations continue to run in this crisis. Although practices like work from home, virtual teams, employee connect, etc might prove helpful, they all have their negative aspects also. The pressure on employees to completely shift to different online platforms requires a huge amount of effort and training. The problem of social distancing has led to loneliness and the dual responsibilities of managing work with the office have led to stress and burnout.

Here the role of HR managers and consultant become quite important as they will act as a catalyst for making this transformation smooth. There is a challenge before the HR people in every organization to continue to develop their employees who can adapt to the external changes. Getting employees, who remain committed to the organization and productive is a herculean task. So it becomes quite important to examine such aspects and their respective consequences. Additionally, the practices promoted by the organization during this COVID-19 have created a huge impact on the performance and well being of employees. Therefore, there is a need to examine such consequences to help employees, employers, organizations, and society as a whole.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

While COVID-19 suddenly changed the normal work routines, it also accelerated the trend involving the migration of work to online mode and that too from home. Although the concept of Work from Home (WFH) is not new, earlier it was always taken as an optional practice depending upon employee preferences. But this Pandemic has forced many organizations to make this optional practice into a mandatory one. A survey conducted by Gartner (2020) has shown that approximately half of the companies have 80 % of employees working from home during the early stages of this Pandemic. It has been estimated that there will be an increase in such numbers. Moreover, the presence of communication technologies and the rise of connectivity have made this remote working possible. While remote work is a broader concept which doesn't only include work from home, an employee can work from anywhere (not necessarily home). Although, we don't know that the complex work that requires little peer interaction is preferred working from home (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014). Yet many employees are forced to work from home and they are facing tremendous challenges of not having proper space in the home and good network connectivity.

Similarly, the concept of virtual teams (Mak and Kozlowski, 2019) was very popular before the pandemic though it has become the need of hour during COVID-19. Although several pieces of research conducted in the past have proved that the problems in the teamwork of traditional teams can escalate in virtual teams (Mortensen & Hinds, 2001). For example, an increase in the distance among workers may reduce the helping behaviors which were possible in the case of physical teams. On the other hand, some other studies are claiming that a team operating online tends to be more effective at brainstorming than face-to-face teams (e.g., DeRosa, Smith, & Hantula, 2007). With the advent of Work from home practice and the virtual team's existence, the role of leaders has become also very important. It is encouraging to note that a leader can effectively exercise leadership while working from distance (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). Additionally, researches also indicated that the absence of traditional physical cues of dominance and status in online settings (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002) can facilitate more participatory relationships.

### Challenges emerging from pandemic

COVID-19 forged the organizational restructuring influencing facets of employees life and quality of work life. Organizational HR

department responded in light of pandemic to accommodate employees in changing scenario. The pandemic paved challenges to organizations with respect to maintaining employees working spirits and productivity during lockdown.

The changing scenario demands change in work policy and practices to introduce new working practices. Organizational workforce started remote work. New work code viz work from home largely dominates organizational culture and this scenario demanded robust attendance model. Introduction of new working code WFH is introduced, job descriptions were revised due to prevailing remote working conditions. The departments were forged to issue new guidelines for performance appraisal systems setting new work force targets, redefining expectation band and reward system. Situation demand implementation of innovative ideas at the workplace to keep workforce motivated.

### Indian Workplace scenario in Lockdown 5 : An insight

The lockdown paved challenges for employees due to increased workload and responsibilities at home. The sense of job security declined leading to job stress. The physical situation also affected the individual leading to insomnia, backaches, anxiety and restlessness due to prolonged work from home as the country entered the fifth week of the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. The paper attempts to study impact on job stress due to this prevailing situation. Indrajit Goswami, Nigel Raylyn Dsilva (2019) stated work related factors such as unsafe working conditions, work load, relationship on the job were the most prominent sources of stress. As survey conducted by DNA zee news that Indian considered as the hardest working country with 69% of full-time employees.

The report by Kronos Incorporated considered India as the most overworked country. Work place stress results in unhealthy mind that results in poor productivity. World Health Organization (WHO) report disclosed that workplace stress is costing nearly \$1 trillion annually to the international economy.

1. Stress is dominating these days in Indian workforce due prevailing pandemic situation leading to health complications in employees leading to poor business performance. The linkedin report stated numerous reasons for work stress among Indians : Excessive workload

2. Stringent Deadlines disturbing work life balance
3. Job Security
4. Quality of Worklife at workplace
5. Workplace politics

The key skills required by employees to deal with stress are as under : Practice “ No” to unmeetable targets Learning of new technologies to increase efficiency in work from home code of work.

- Channalize and organize the task allotted by the authorities
- Organizations should be forged to practice and redefining the human resource policies that assist employees to positive direction inclined to work targets
- Holistic approach for employees should be taken care of to increase employee performance.

#### Technology and Human Resource Mangement during Covid 19

Since few decades, human capital management , to a large extent is influenced by technology. Organisations these days are dominated by dispersed workforce that demand implementation of technology for effective performance. Onset of covid pandemic further triggered the implementation of technology in routine functioninig of organisational workforce. Seismic shift due to covid 19 drifted organisation into WFH culture, remote working due to voluntary sut down that drastically changed organisational culture and employees performance and health status. The production and operation based organizataions were largely dominated by employees working on shifts and sites, research and development organisations were dominated by research work in labs, WFH is altogether a radiant drift in functioning of such organisation posing challenges in meeting annual targets. Organisations were supposed to consider multiple level of sensitivities in declaring WFH code of work ethics..Creating home labs , virtual R&D experience is altogether challenging task.

To manage people in WFH culture demand communication to go beyond email, in organisational hierarchy. Technology contribute in enhancing employee productivity in virtual mode.organizations are using various platform like Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx, Microsoft Team to maintain communication flow with employees. Teambuilding is crucial in covid times due to dispersed workforce. Considering big picture tools and data is required to be assembled at a place to ease employees in functioning. WFH cukturetooincreased employees stress as work life

balance is disturbed due to prevailing situation. Organisation shouls take a charge to motivate, train and compensated workforce to decrease their stress llevel and enhance productivity.

1. Following values and behaviour can be established to drive success in post pandemic workplaceTeam working to adapt and implement ne processes
2. Remote working
3. Social distancing restrictions
4. Planning
5. Work from home policies
6. Flexible working hours
7. Employee motivation session
8. Technology driven learning.

Although the situation is critical but advent of new technology has made the task comparatively easier

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