

A Study on Work from Home, Motivation & Productivity of Employees in Indian Population during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in lockdown affecting all businesses globally. Employees of multi-national companies were forced to work from home leading to challenges in productivity and motivation.

Methods/Statistical analysis: 613 working professionals from multi-national organizations who worked from home participated in the online survey with semi-structured questionnaire using non-probability snowball sampling technique. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the findings. to collect data method.

Findings: 50% of the responders agreed to an increase in their productivity, while 26.7% had a decline in work productivity, 56.7% of the responders mentioning time management as the motivating factor in increasing productivity during lockdown. 66.7% of the participants motivated their subordinates and peer through the work they did while 20% shared motivational videos and articles to motivate subordinates and peer, and 6.7% used methods like online jam up sessions to motivate peer and subordinates. The results showed that 23.3% of participants were expecting pandemic to have a negative effect on their appraisals. Time management practices can be an extremely effective method to motivate self and this has a ripple effect on performance of subordinates and peers.

Novelty/Applications: Post COVID-19 pandemic and during COVID-19 pandemic, it could be extremely beneficial if organizations concentrated on effective time management methods for their employees to increase the productivity of employees and to keep them motivated.

Keywords: Work from home, motivation, productivity, and COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

Corona Virus Disease COVID-19 is recorded to have started in December 2019, in Wuhan city of central Hubei province of China ([Holshue et al., 2020](#)). World Health Organization (WHO) along with Chinese authorities started working together and the etiological agent was soon established to be a new virus and was named Novel Corona Virus (2019-nCoV). Looking at the stretch of countries this outbreak spread to, WHO declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January 2020 (WHO, 2020b, 2020c). Coronaviruses are a family of enveloped RNA viruses ([Burrell et al., 2017](#)). They are generally pathogenic to mammals and birds and cause mild upper respiratory tract infections in humans and can occasionally be transmitted to a larger human population manifesting into pandemic. Lockdown affected global economy leading to halting of services and products, leaving work from home as the only option for multi-national companies to sustain ([Ebrahim et al., 2020](#)).

Work from Home has been the only option for organizations to sustain businesses during lockdown. While several businesses could not cope, several organizations considering WHO and Government health care guidelines declared compulsory work from home during lockdown. This Study is first of its kind that helps understand the positive and the negative effects of work from home within Indian multi-national organizations during COVID-19 pandemic.

Productivity is critical to any business; No-Declining productivity growth rates have been typically considered a problem since it is thought to be linked to income levels, and, through this, to wellbeing (Banting, Sharpe, & StHilaire, 2002; Kuegler, Schoenberg, & Schreiner, 2018). Productivity can be increased by improving levels of employee wellbeing (Austin, 2019; Bevan, 2018; The Work Foundation, 2015). Working conditions may be worsened and productivity growth may reduce employee wellbeing when under pressure (Jackson, 2017; Mair, Druckman, & Jackson, 2018).

Motivation has been studied extensively by researchers in terms of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation and is understood as something done by one person or group to another. One of the major implications of motivation usage is that the motivated parties need to be induced to perform some action or expend a degree of effort which they would not otherwise wish to do; and is considered an issue of vital importance to the prosperity of commercial organizations is emphasized by Lawler (1973): “Those individual behaviors that are crucial in determining the effectiveness of organizations are, almost without exception, voluntary motivated behaviors”. Motivation concerns that “psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of behavior” (Ilgen and Klein, 1988).

Of the many theories of work motivation, Herzberg's (1966) (Figure 1) motivator-hygiene theory has been one of the most influential in recent decades. Basically, the theory divides motivating factors into two categories: Motivator factors, which have something to do with the work itself, and Hygiene factors, which have something to do with the surrounding context. One of the psychological views suggests that very high levels of intrinsic motivation are marked by such strong interest and involvement in the work, and by such a perfect match of task complexity with skill level, that people experience some kind of psychological "flow," a sense of merging with

the activity they are doing (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). The major psychological view suggests that extrinsic motivation works in opposition to intrinsic motivation (Deci 1975; Deci & Ryan 1985). Extrinsic motivation takes place when individuals feel driven by something outside of the work itself such as promised rewards or incentives. In general, these theorists suggest that, when strong extrinsic motivators are put to work, intrinsic motivation will decline.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Method

The present study was a cross-sectional, observational study carried out in India through snowball sampling technique. Google forms was used to develop an online semi-structured questionnaire with a consent form appended to it. The link of the questionnaire was sent through LinkedIn, Facebook, e-mails, WhatsApp and online organizational groups to the contacts of the investigators. The participants were free to roll out the survey to as many people as possible. Thus, the link was forwarded to people apart from the first point of contact and so on. Clicking on the link led the participants to fill agree to participate in the survey for this study. Demographic details were filled in by the participants. A series of questions then appeared sequentially for the participant to answer.

Since the study was an online study, participants with access to the internet could participate in the study. The sample selected from the participants were working from home during the lockdown and held a salaried position in various multi-national companies. The data collection was initiated on 23rd May 2020 at 4.25 PM IST and closed on 26th May 2020 at 4.25 PM IST. We were able to collect data from across various states of India. The socio-demographic variables included age, gender, marital status, number of children and their designation at workplace was collected.

The online self-reported questionnaire developed by the investigators was designed to collect information about Productivity during work from home, intrinsic motivation, motivating others and challenges faced during work from home that affected productivity exclusively in relevance to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was designed with multiple choices. Descriptive statistics have been used in the study to analyze the findings and to estimate the results of the study. A sample size of 613 was used in the study.

2.1. Statistical analysis

A quantitative semi structured questionnaire with multiple choices was shared online with the participants who agreed to participate in the study. A total of 613 participants filled up the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the findings and to estimate the results of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

The results were analyzed in four areas.

1. Productivity of the employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Intrinsic motivational factors of the employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Techniques used by employees to motivate others like their subordinates and peer during work from home in the COVID-19 pandemic
4. Perspective on effect of COVID-19 on work and in general
5. Challenges faced during work from home

3.1. Productivity

Figure. 2 shows that out of total participants, 50% answered that the work productivity had increased during work from home in the COVID-19 pandemic; also 3.3% of participants mentioned that they were not working during the previous week to collecting data for study. 26.7% negated any increase in productivity while 20% of the participants had no opinion on increase or decrease of productivity as the work was lesser than usual.

3.2. Intrinsic motivation

Figure 3. shows that out of the total participants, 56.7% gave credit to their effective time management during lockdown for motivating self while 10% of the population believed that the reason for their motivation was fear of losing job. 13.3% of the participants were not able to cope with work admitting their work to be in a mess.

3.3. Motivating others

Figure 4. shows that 66.7% of the participants motivated their subordinates and peer by sharing their work while 20% of the participants motivated their subordinates and peer by sharing articles, videos on motivation in order to increase productivity during COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4. Perspective on effect of COVID-19 on work and in general

As shown in Figure. 5, 60% of the participants had a positive outlook towards the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on nature and relationship by admitting that it is good for earth and for other creatures on earth and relationships too. 23.3% of the participants were worried considering poor appraisals in the current year.

3.5. Challenges faced during work from home during COVID-19 pandemic

As shown in Figure. 6, 46.7% of the participants expressed addiction with screen time to be the biggest challenge they faced while working from home during COVID-19 pandemic. 43.4% of participants with children found it challenging to engage children in order to work from home. Cleaning was seen as a challenge by 36.7% of the participants with cooking being a challenge for 33.3% of them. The study, however showed 13.3% of participating considering relationship stress as a challenge in their work from home.

Community can face challenges during such pandemics and epidemics in terms of work and productivity. Mental well-being of employees can be affected adversely when they are forced to live in a lockdown. The fear and anxiety employees experience can affect their perspective towards motivation, productivity and the effect pandemic can have on their work in general. Hence, this study attempted to evaluate the productivity of the employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic, intrinsic motivational factors of the employees working from home during COVID-19 pandemic, techniques used by employees to motivate others like their subordinates and peer during work from home in the COVID-19 pandemic, and perspective on effect of COVID-19 on work and in general.

Changes like – isolation, social distancing, self-quarantine, restriction of travel and the ever-spreading rumors in social media are also likely to affect mental health adversely ([Banerjee, 2020](#)). In our study, we found 50% of the participants being able to increase their productivity due to effective time management skills despite adhering to government declared health guidelines and work from home while 26.7% were actually unable to cope and increase their productivity while working from home. One of the effects of the pandemic that led to work from home for employees was reduced volume of work and 20% of the participants had agreed that their work had reduced during the pandemic period. While motivating oneself can be very challenging for many people, 56.7% of the participants expressed their intrinsic mode of motivation was through time management. Fear of losing job was experienced by 10% of the participants as a reason to feel the necessity to increase the work productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The anxieties and distractions the employees experienced could be the reason for 13.3% to experience a complete mess in their work while working from home. However, a large population of 66.7% were able to motivate their peer and subordinates by sharing the work they had accomplished and completed. They were able to motivate others by setting an example which could be due to their leadership quality. 20% of the participants shared motivational information in the form of videos, articles etc found in social media to motivate their peer and subordinates. While there were 60% of population that showed a very positive and empathetic outlook towards the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on nature and their relationships, 23.3% of the participants experienced a fear of poor appraisals as an effect of COVID-19 pandemic. 46.7% of the participants expressed addiction with screen time to be the biggest challenge they faced while working from home during COVID-19 pandemic. 43.4% of participants with children found it challenging to engage children in order to work from home. Cleaning was considered a challenge by 36.7% of the participants with cooking being a

challenge for 33.3% of them. The study, however showed 13.3% of participating considering relationship stress as a challenge in their work from home.

Introducing concepts of effective time management exclusively for employees working from home can have an increased productivity. Motivating employees while they are at workplace and while they are working from home puts forth different challenges. Team of psychologists can introduce such programs for employees of organizations that contribute in increasing productivity while maintaining mental health.

The study is limited to the people who had access to smartphones, e-mail IDs and LinkedIn profiles. The study was essentially on employees who were working from home in multi-national companies.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes the time management as a source of self-motivation for increasing productivity during work from home and reinforces leadership skills in the form of setting an example, and knowledge sharing as a motivating factor for others in increasing productivity while working from home. The present study reveals a high regard to nature and relationships during pandemic times rather than a negative approach towards it. The present study brought to surface addiction to screen time as a major challenge being faced in working from home followed by keeping children engaged in activities as children too were under locked down at home during the pandemic. Chores like cleaning and cooking also affected productivity during work from home.

5. Acknowledgement

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Figures

Figure 1 Herzberg's two-factor model

Hygiene Factors	Motivators
Status	Being able to achieve
Security	Being recognised
Work conditions	Given responsibility
Work relationships	Growing and learning in the job
Pay	
Bureaucracy	



- *Absence of hygiene factors leads to dissatisfaction; presence does not lead to motivation*
- *Motivators work more powerfully than hygiene factors*

Herzberg's two-factor model

Figure 2 Productivity increase during work from home

Did the work productivity increase during work from home in the COVID-19 pandemic?

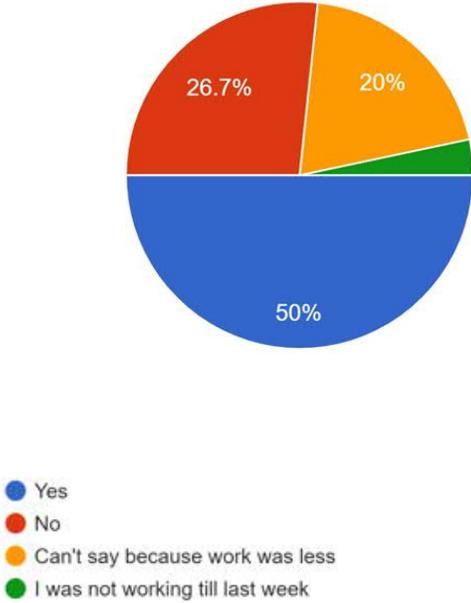
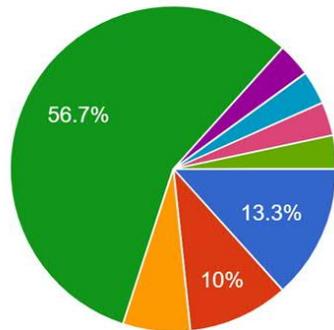


Figure 3 Intrinsic motivation

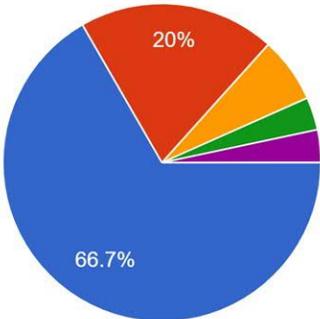
How did you motivate yourself to work during the COVID-19 pandemic?



- My work is in complete mess.
- Fear of losing job motivated me
- Appraisal may get affected- this thought motivated me
- My time management during lockdown
- To ensure that WFH is business as usual and prove this can be successful
- One step at a time
- Just the way my team mates were sup...
- I was not working

Figure 4 Motivation of subordinates and peer

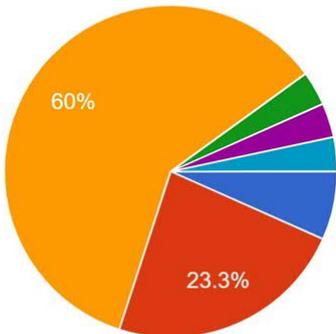
How did you motivate your subordinates and peer?



- I shared what I did
- I shared some article, videos etc on motivation
- I created jam up sessions online
- Daily calls, adhoc meetings, email, one to one calls. Provide updates on a regular basis
- I was not working

Figure 5 Effect of COVID-19 on work

What is your view of effect of COVID-19 pandemic on work?



- Fear of losing job
- Poor appraisals this year
- It's good for earth and other creatures on earth and relationships too
- It gives an option that work from anywhere or home is a new normal
- It's a warning to humans to respect nature and live life for the moment and...
- People are showing off that they are working and that is causing stress on t...

Figure 6 Challenges faced during work from home

What are the challenges you faced during work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?

