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PROJECT REPORT

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“Exploration and evaluation of the influences of the Work From Home (WFH) on the dynamics of family relationships and the emotional connections among family members”

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Introduction

As the name suggests Work From Home(WFH) is a flexible work arrangement that allows employees to perform their job duties from their homes, instead of working from a traditional office or workplace. It enables seamless communication and collaboration irrespective of geographical location. WFH influences not only work and life but also the family relationships. The work from home has become more dynamic during covid-19 pandemic. In fact the cross geographic work environment and covid-19 pandemic acted as catalyst for the shift towards WFH. As governments worldwide imposed lockdowns and social distancing measures to curb the spread of the virus. The current case studies explored and evaluated the impacts of WFH on family relationships and identified effective measures for maintaining family relationships under WFH.

By examining the influence of work from home on family dynamics and emotional connections, this project aims to contribute to our understanding of how remote work affects the relationships and well-being within families. The findings and recommendations will serve as valuable resources for individuals, employers, and policymakers to optimise family dynamics, enhance communication, and foster emotional well-being during work from home, ultimately promoting stronger and healthier family relationships.

Theories and hypothesis

There are various sociological theories which explore the impact of WFH on individuals, family and society.

1) Structural functionalism : Every individual in the family has some functions and they have to work together to promote solidarity and stability. Home as a tradition is seen as a place of rest but with WFH boundaries have become blurred and home also became a place of work. This leads to redefinition of roles within the family.

For example, with the advent of online schooling due to the pandemic, parents working from home have to juggle between their professional responsibility and helping their children with school work.

2) Conflict theory : This theory depicts the role of coercion and power in producing social order. In the context of WFH, potential conflicts could arise from the blurring boundaries between work and home.

For example, many employees during the pandemic have reported feeling overworked and stressed due to inability to separate their professional and personal lives. This has led to conflict and increased stress level impacting their overall well-being.

3) Feminist theory : This theory provides the experiences and perspective of women, highlighting the social structures and gender norms that lead to inequality.

For example, traditionally, women have been expected to take on a larger share of domestic responsibilities, including childcare, cooking, and cleaning. With the advent of WFH, these responsibilities may clash more directly with work responsibilities, leading to a double burden or second shift for many women.

The detailed study on the impact of WFH on Family relationships by ***Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, United States*** developed a *hypothesis of adaptive processes* i.e spending time with family members and balancing work which is positively related to family relationship quality.

An online survey suggests that overall the WFH improves family relationships through proper adaptive processes.

Role of neighbour in family relations in work from home

The "work from home" setup can have both positive and negative impacts on neighbour relations, and the influence on the relationship depends on various factors.

- ❖ **Networking and collaboration:** Neighbours who work in similar fields or industries can collaborate on projects, exchange ideas, or offer professional advice. They can facilitate networking opportunities and connect families to relevant contacts, expanding their professional circles and potential career opportunities. Such collaboration can enhance personal growth and career development.

- ❖ **Emotional support and interaction:** Working from home often means spending more time in one's neighbourhood, which can lead to increased interactions with neighbours. Neighbours can provide emotional support to families working from home by being empathetic listeners and offering a sense of community. This emotional support can foster resilience and well-being within the family.

- ❖ **Work-life balance:** Neighbours can help promote a healthy work-life balance by respecting each other's working hours and noise levels. They can be mindful of noise disruptions and maintain a quiet environment during designated work times. This consideration can contribute to a more peaceful and productive work environment for families.

- ❖ **Noise and Disturbances:** Excessive noise from neighbours' activities, such as loud music or construction work, can disrupt the work-from-home environment. Continuous disturbances can lead to frustration, decreased productivity, and strained neighbour relations.

- ❖ **Lack of Right Understanding or Empathy:** If neighbours fail to understand the challenges and demands of remote work, they may not provide the necessary support or show empathy toward families working from home. This lack of understanding can hinder positive family relations and a harmonious neighbourhood environment.

- ❖ **Invasion of Privacy:** Lack of respect for privacy can negatively impact family relations. Neighbours who intrude upon personal space or monitor activities can create a sense of discomfort and strain trust within the neighbourhood.

Role of individuals in family relationship

Family relationships are very important to our happiness and mental health. Strong family ties are an important source of social support that can help with mental issues like anxiety and loneliness. Family relationship quality is also influenced by the balance between work roles

and family/life roles. A good mix between work and family life can make work-family conflicts less likely and help families get along better. Work and life become more interconnected with WFH plans. Studies have shown that, compared to working in person, WFH allows workers to have more flexible schedules, spend less time moving, and get more help from their families. This helps them find a better balance between work and life. Recent studies of the COVID-19 outbreak showed that some workers had a better time balancing their work and personal lives when they worked from home. On the other hand, other workers had more problems with work-life balance because it was hard to tell the difference between work and life during WFH, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positive Impacts

- 1) Increase Family Time-Harmony in family
- 2) Flexible Schedule-Happiness
- 3) Shared Responsibilities - their fulfilment, evaluation leads to mutual happiness
- 4) Improved Understanding-Right Understanding
- 5) Reduced Commute Time-environment
- 6) Opportunity for personal development

Mahatma Gandhi has once said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

A.M. Shah has written extensively on Indian family structure and its resilience. He argues that the Indian family system, characterised by living together, sharing resources and mutual cooperation, has been able to survive and adapt to changing socio-economic conditions. The WFH criteria can be seen as a modern adaptation to this.

A case study by ***Indian Institute of Management Bangalore*** indicates increase in family time, Reduced stress level, Improved productivity, Increased job satisfaction.

Negative Impacts

- 1) Blurred boundaries and increased responsibilities
- 2) Increased stress
- 3) Lack of Privacy
- 4) Distractions
- 5) Lack of Social interaction
- 6) Communication Issues
- 7) Impact of children

Sociologist Meeta Singh points out that in Indian Society, where joint families are common, this issue can be even more pronounced. Also sociologist Dipankar Gupta highlights this issue in his work, pointing out the gender disparities that exist in Indian society.

According to the report by the ***National Commission for women (NCW)*** in India, there was a significant increase in the number of domestic violence complaints during the lockdown. This can be attributed to the increased stress and tensions due to the WFH situation.

The article ***“The dark side of working from home, by “The New York Times (April 20, 2022)*** explores the negative psychological effects of WFH, such as increased anxiety, depression and loneliness.

The rising wave of the Covid-19 outbreak in India forced the corporate world in the country to opt for 'work from home' widely. Work from home was the only viable option to continue and sustain economic activities in the country to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Overall impact of WFH on family relationships:

Stronger Bonds: While working from home a person spends more time with family, which helps in strengthening family bonds.

Proper Attention to Children: Work from home gives adequate time to parents to spend adequate time with their children, which is good for parent-children relationships.

Better Take Care of Old People: While working from home the young generation can better take care of their old parents and provide them with the requisite attention.

Domestic Violence and Children Abuse: According to an official data, National Commission for Women (NCW) registered an increase of at least 2.5 times in domestic violence complaints during the nationwide lockdown.

Strained Marital Relations: When a husband and wife spend extended periods of time together without leaving the house, the likelihood of disputes between them increases and already tense marital relations worsen.

Disputes in family: While working from home one shares the same workplace with other family members (wife, son, sister, brother) who may also be working from home. One may be sharing the same resources as the internet, computer, Fan etc .If work timing or meeting time clash then it leads to arguments.

Leads to Frustration: Working from home makes some people frustrated due to lack of required infrastructure.

Disturbed Domestic Chores: Due to the same timing of work of both husband and wife it causes the negligence of routine domestic works which creates a situation of stress and tension between two.

Conclusion

Work From Home(WFH) has both positive and negative impacts on the family relationship. It depends upon family and individuals how they adopt.

Evaluation-More positive or negative impact?

Self Exploration and self verification as well as various case studies evaluated that if there exists a harmony in relationships with right understanding then our family relationships get better and with lack of right understanding relations get worse by spending time with family members(adaptive processes).

It is examined that by proper adaptive processes overall WFH improves family relationships by developing the right understanding of relationships.