Virtual Jobs: A Quantitative Case Study of Coping with the Stress Level and Identity Crisis.

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ABSTRACT--_Corporate companies across the globe embrace home based work policies to promote employment. With the rapid growth of work from home policies it is very tough to regulate job stress and to motivate the employees. Virtual jobs fail to provide a proper job profile to their employees and fall short in their efficiency to boost their self-esteem. The main objective of this study is to analyse the very term virtual jobs with reference to the factors that influence people to opt for these jobs and its impact on the workers. On the basis of the survey conducted and personal interviews this paper studies the various methods to release stress and how to strike a balance between work and home._

Keywords-- _Work from home, flexible time frame, identity crisis, new trends and future expectation._

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Home based work was initially known by the name "telecommute" which was actuated by NASA in 1973. Home based works brought a revolution in the society as a whole. People no longer have to commute from their home to the age old conventional office space to get their work done. Work today can be done anywhere and at any time. Work from home not only proves beneficial to the employees rather it gives the employer or the company an added advantage of not maintaining a formal office space. Multinational companies over the years have started promoting home based work policies in order to strike a balance between life and work. Work from home or virtual jobs have been increasing in the modern era as more people are being absorbed into the the corporate companies with the promise of providing a better work experience at their pace and convenience. With the advent of advanced technologies people can communicate, conduct official meetings with people across the globe using the most advanced and modern technologies. Work from home is getting more effective in terms of consuming less office space and maintaining effective communication even in the absence of a corporeal space and hence it in a way become a virtual job.

The home based work policies enable start-up companies to hire more employees who can work from home which reduces the cost of running and maintaining an office space. This also provides a plethora of opportunities for those who after their retirement is looking for a stable income to meet their expenses. Since it is a platform that offers jobs for different age groups based on their qualification even home makers can utilize their time to bank a fixed amount, unlike the work they do at home.

Flexible time frame enable many to reduce their work load and stress thereby help them to manage both household

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chores and office work. To work anywhere at any time is the key to this scenario as it helps people to manage their time more effectively rather than allotting time to a parallel system.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the factors that prompt people to opt for home based work and its impact on the employees.

2. To determine the new trends and the future expectation from the work at home culture.

III. METHODOLOGY

Owl Lab, Global Workspace, Upwork and various other industries and research centers conducted numerous surveys and formulated reports stating why people prefer home based working policies over a traditional office space. The studies conducted focus on:

1. The new trends in home based works.

2. The popularity and growth in the work from home sectors.

3. The benefits and challenges of work from home.

4. The future expectations from work from home sectors.

Based on the above reports, the survey conducted and the interviews taken this paper analyses work from home with respect to gender, age, education. On the basis of the reports published by various corporate companies, questions were prepared and using Google forms a mini survey was conducted to study the various factors that influence people of various age groups especially women to choose work from home. Apart from the mini online survey conducted, random people who work from home were interviewed so as to gather information regarding the pros and cons of work from home.

IV. ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

A study conducted by the Owl Lab from 2017-19 states that around 44% of the corporate companies across the globe do not support work from home policies for these companies still rely on the traditional concept of a formal office space rather than a home based working scenario. The reasons provided by most companies for not utilizing work from home is that many industries are stakeholders of sensitive data and reports and hence would prefer not to operate them in the absence of a proper focus point, say in this case a corporeal office space. Issues on the privacy regarding the safety of data might affect the reputation of the company hence many would not dare to risk their credibility.
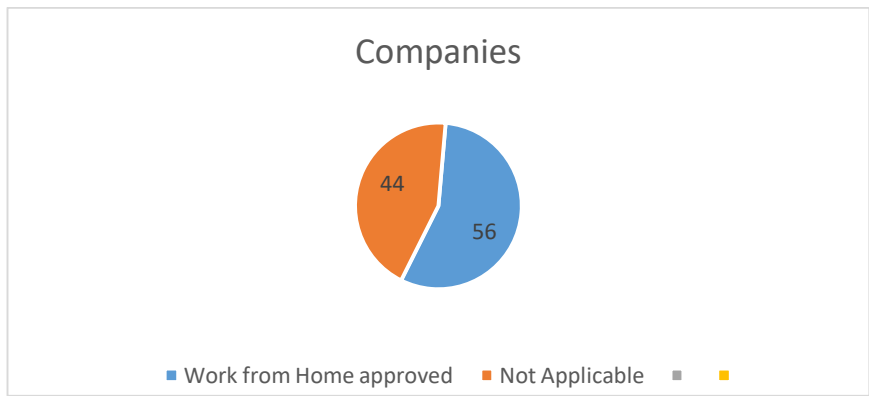
Figure 1: Owl Lab Reports based Diagram

Work from home provides job opportunities for people who reside in rural areas with fewer job opportunities and exposure. Today work experience along with qualification is liable to fetch more credits than just mere degrees in the subject hence people especially the younger generation prefer to work along with their course work. Remote jobs or work from home policies based in rural areas offer a platform for those away from the cities to be a part of the corporate world. The means and the expense of commutation is one of the major reasons why even the educated from the rural areas resort to meagre jobs in their villages.

In agreement with the Global Workspace Analytic Reports published, there are about 24.3 million remote workers in the world who make up 3.2% of the total work force. The report states that in 2020 around 60% of the companies across the world offer remote work as an option than what these companies offered five years ago.
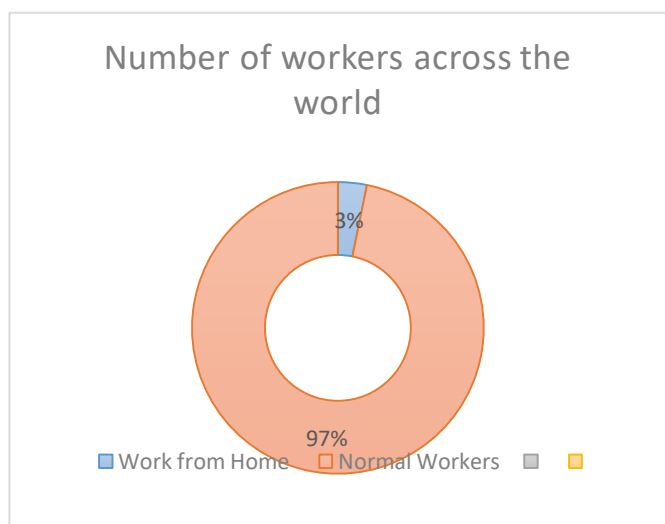

Figure 2: Global Workspace Analytic Reports based Diagram

Salespersons these days are assigned work at home to reduce the office expenses. Salespersons are expected to visit sites and report back via email or a telephone call. Initially work from home was assigned to people who are appointed to do data entry, information verification and proof reading in order to make the office job easier and faster. However, with the advanced technology and changing trends in the work space work at home is becoming popular in every job sector. Work from home sector displays an exceptional growth of 15% in the past

decade according to the reports of State of Telecommuting Analytic. The Upwork research study claims that the home based work will by 2028 become almost parallel to the office jobs as it has proved over the course of time to be profitable for both the employer and the employee.
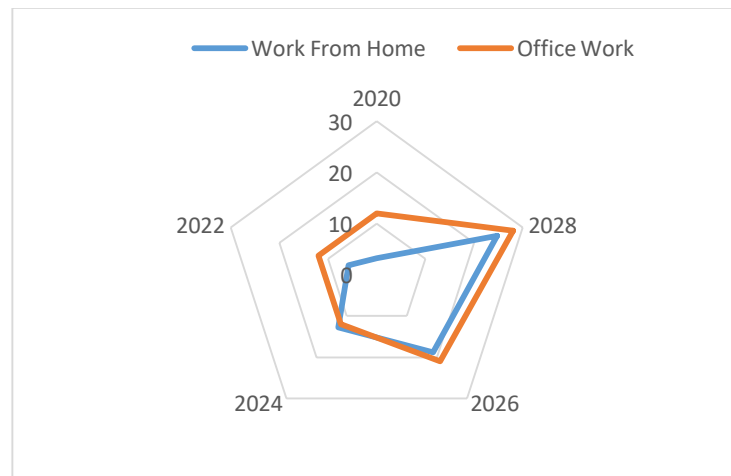

Figure 3: Upwork Analytic Reports based Diagram

Shamna, a thirty year old woman who works from home for one of the popular private banks in India, finds it easy to strike a balance between the time allotted for her family and her profession. Her daughter and husband leave for school and office respectively by nine in the morning. By the time they leave Shamna makes sure that she has finished all her household chores including cooking and cleaning so that she can work from 9am to 1 pm at a stretch undisturbed. She says that work at home policies are beneficial for all those, especially women, who find it difficult to manage both home and office. She after having a child was in a dilemma not knowing how to manage both her profession and her new born. Shamna lives in an apartment with her husband and child away from her native place and therefor she does not have the luxury of leaving her child with her or his parents. Moreover she cannot afford a maid to look after her child and she does not consider it as a practical solution for her child is just few months old to trust leaving her alone with a stranger.

Shamna claims that there are many women like her working for the same bank and she feels work from home is a life saver for most women. Rather than quitting their job for the sake of their family they can now always resort to some companies that offer work at home options. She says many companies these days offer a flexible time frame and they allow their employees to work at their pace and convenience. The only demand they place on the employee is to finish the assigned job on time and though it might sound stressful the targets assigned can easily be fulfilled with ample amount of time devoted for the family.

Abijith, a language trainee, who works from home states that though it offers a decent salary and a flexible work time yet people often regard these jobs as a mere pass time activity. He on the basis of his observation states that may of his co- workers are women who are married with a child and despite of being highly qualified they resort to these online jobs because they find it difficult to manage their home affairs while working in an office away from home.

The online survey conducted via Google Forms shows that more than 60% of the younger generation prefer to work from home if offered a decent salary and a flexible time frame. Almost 80% of the women prefer to do

home based work for they claim that it helps them to strike a balance between home and office work. More than 85% of them are fond of taking breaks from their work life hence they say if they opt for work from home it will help them to work even when they are on a vacation only if they prefer to do so. Listed below are some of the benefits of work from home based on the survey conducted.

Benefits of Work at Home (WAH)

●   75 % of the people who work from home do so because they favour the comfort of their home and wish to isolate themselves from the formal office space. They remark that being at home permits a more comfortable and composed work space when compared to working in an office. For mothers with babies to work from home is a bliss for they no longer have to choose between their family and profession.

●   However 80 % of them still opt to work in the office if the concerned authorities are willing to make their working hours more flexible so that it would enhance their work and morale competence. The survey conducted shows that people are critical about the rigid time frame with limited annual casual leaves. With WAH policies in companies it allows the employee to work from anywhere and at any time.

●   75% of the workers feel that working from home can reduce the pressure and stress level for the comfort of home and a peaceful work atmosphere can lead to a better diet and eventually a healthy lifestyle. The survey shows that the workers believe that when at home they will have the time and the desire to eat on time especially if there are other family members in the house they will be concerned about your food habits and would remind you to eat on time which might not be the situation when he or she is in the office

●   The statistics derived from the survey results shows that about 21% of workers are willing to give up their casual and annual leave to convert their work time to a more flexible schedule. More interestingly employees are even ready to cut down 10-20% of their salary to relish a better time stretch. Letting the employees work from home in spite of the reduced salary in a way saved a good portion of their salary by cutting down on fuel costs.

●   The survey also shows that the employees who work from home are found to be happier than when they worked in the office.

Challenges of Work at Home (WAH)

●   The people who work from home have difficulty in cutting off from work as they fail to distinguish between the time for work and family. They prove to be inefficient in making use of the free time. Works that promote the scheme of payment based on the quantity of work done rather than a fixed salary per month will leave people wanting to do more work leaving behind no time for the family. At least 22 % of the workers feel isolated according to the survey conducted. Being at home for a long time, they feel , would make them inert and would prefer staying at home even when the family demands a time out. Working from home also would reduce the space for cordial interactions with the co-workers.

●   Some companies do not let their employees to completely resort to work from home as they feel it would reduce their control over them when there is an absence of a proper focus point- an office where the employees are almost under constant surveillance.

●   As mentioned above due to a lack of constant monitoring the employees fall short in their efficiency. More than 80% of the workers agree that there is a higher chance of loosing track when at home for one may encounter many distractions.

- According to the survey it takes strenuous efforts to conduct meetings and bring together people from across the world on a single platform at the same time. Multinational companies may have employees from different parts of the world hence it is challenging to bring every member under a single umbrella at a particular time. More than 90% of the workers agree that innovative ideas and projects are a result of effective brainstorming but this becomes difficult with people working from home.

- One of the crucial challenges faced by those who work from home is that of identity crisis for they claim that people often regard them as jobless people or as workers involved in some meagre jobs. Even if they are highly qualified and paid for their work yet these jobs they claim lack respect. Society still to a greater extend upholds conventional office jobs. Even today most people place government jobs on a higher pedestal in comparison to other private jobs and in turn when private jobs become working from home then it is rarely considered as a job says Shamna, who works from home for one of the top private banks in India. On the basis of having interviewed few people who work from home especially for private banks and online English language training centers they claim to experience the same. Though they are satisfied with their payment scale yet people fail to attach dignity to these jobs. Working from home according to Abhijit, a language trainee, is often regarded by society as a temporary job with no job security. At times people even consider it equal to some hobby done to escape from boredom.

The future expectation from the work from home culture.

- Social messaging groups are the new face of most of the businesses endeavors where the employees can discuss and the minutes are passed at live time to the workers so as to make the employees feel more closer. The discussions and client meetings are done over Skype or Video calling apps that enable workers to come together and this in turn save a lot of time, money and energy. Development in such online communication platforms will result in better involvement from the workers.

- With companies converting themselves to be more flexible and dynamic, employees at the lower base will be recognized and they will be assigned a proper designation. A proper designation would boost the employee's dedication and morale to the company they work with.

- Most companies these days work on the basis of target that is to be met by the end of every month. If these companies decide to lower the target sales it will eventually help in reducing the stress level among the workers. There has to be proper training, management programs, motivation classes and even annual trip in order to ensure that the workers are emotionally and physically secured. There need to be several stress reducing activities or engagements that will help the employees to cope up with the work pressure if there is any. Proper guidance should be given to the employees so as so differentiate the time allotted for work and family. Employees should be made capable of yielding maximum result with minimum stress and a flexible time frame so that at the end of the day they will be happy and this in turn will result in the betterment of the company.

- Management appreciation and gifts are a big factor in motivating the employees to increase their efficiency .

V. CONCLUSION

Work from home is a boon to many irrespective of their age group and gender. On the basis of the online survey conducted and the interview taken it has been found that work from home has its own advantages and

disadvantages. Work from home proves to be beneficial for those who find it difficult to manage both their family and profession.

However the survey and interviews conducted state that women who are married with a child find these policies more effective for often, according to the data collected, they are made to quit their profession for the betterment of their family.

Work from home provides opportunities for people who have health issues and to those who wish to work from home even after their retirement. However as mentioned earlier it has its own disadvantages as well for it might make people slothful and introvert.

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