

Research Article

Impact of Work from Home on Married Women During COVID-19 Induced Lockdown

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Abstract

Background: A shift from “work at office” to “work from home” were take place during COVID-19 pandemic. These times are particularly hard specially for the working women who are mothers and wives. The study was conducted to analyze the work challenges along with the mental health challenges faced by working women in context to work from home.

Materials and methods: A cross sectional survey using google forms was conducted among 209 married women in India. The link of the questionnaire was sent through e-mails, WhatsApp and other social media for the collection of the data. The four-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4) was used to assess the anxiety and depression among the participants.

Result: It was found that more than 8 hours of working in a day was reported in 60.3% women. In addition, 64.6% of women work for 2-5 days in a week. 32.1% of women were unsatisfied with working hours arrangement. The arrangement of working hours was strongly associated with general anxiety regarding coronavirus ($p < 0.001$), having distractions at home ($p = 0.005$), maintenance of regular schedule ($p = 0.022$) and being not able to complete work on time ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: It was concluded that for married working women, work from home in COVID-19 pandemic can be severely impactful in terms of depression and anxiety. The study showed that majority of married working women were unsatisfied with the work life arrangement amid pandemic which could challenge their physical health, psychological health, and social relationships.

Keywords: Work from Home; Married Women; COVID-19

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic on 11 March 2020 [1]. Several nations, including India, have introduced emergency steps to deter the spread of infection consisting of schools and colleges, hospitals, businesses, kindergartens, cinemas, museums and restaurants being shut down. Due to COVID-19, Work from home has become the 'new normal'. It sounds to be pleasant working from home but it's not that easy. Nearly all business houses, companies or institutes switched from 'work at the office' to 'work from home' [2]. People are witnessing Covid-19's impact on all stages of life, in all countries and in all industries. No one is certain about how much and how long the impacts of the pandemic will last [3]. These times are particularly hard specially for the working women who are mothers and wives.

They have to prepare, clean, keep their kids occupied and be a superwoman, while still doing "Jobs from home" [4].

Maternal employment can have a beneficial impact on the mental health of women with young children by improving access to financial resources, social support and perceived personal skills [5-8]. These however, depend on whether work-related attributes are supported by family or not [9-11]. A major struggle for working women is the work-family balance and for many, coping with this stress can lead to depression [9, 11, 12, 13]. Depression among mothers with young children can have serious consequences, including disturbed mother-infant relationships and impaired cognitive and emotional development in infants [14].

Studies suggest that family-friendly workplace attributes facilitate a woman's working situation and are associated with improved mental health by decreasing tensions between work and life and reducing stress associated with balancing different roles [9, 11-13, 15, 16]. Working on an asymmetric schedule and high work intensity can make a significant contribution to poor mental health via increased family conflict, as mothers may find it difficult to coordinate family schedules and take part in family activities and events [17].

Stressful work environments place high psychological demands on workers resulting in high levels of strain that can manifest in negative mental health outcomes, such as depression, for employed women with young children [15, 18, 19]. Only few studies in India have analyzed the challenges faced by the working women in relation to work from home during lockdown. However, in our knowledge this will be the first study in India to analyze the work challenges along with the mental health challenges faced by working women in context to work from home. Our research aim is to study the

common challenges that a married working woman faces and its impact on mental health amid Covid-19 induced lockdown.

2. Methodology

The Cross-sectional online survey was carried out in India. A self-designed online questionnaire was developed with an informed consent attached to it. The Questionnaire was administered by online survey through google doc. The link of the questionnaire was sent through WhatsApp and other social media for the collection of the data. The sampling frame consisted of all married working from home women. The data collection was initiated on 16 June 2020 till 30 June 2020. The online self-reported questionnaire covered the information related to participant's socio-demographic profile, attitude and behaviour towards work from home. The four-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4) was used to assess the anxiety and depression among the participants. It is an ultra-brief self-report questionnaire that consists of a 2-item depression scale and a 2-item anxiety scale [20]. The responses were recorded on a four-point Likert scale ranging from not at all to nearly every day. The total score is determined by adding the score of each of the 4-items. An elevated score indicates towards anxiety and depression disorder. All recorded data entered in MS-Excel and was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics have been used in the study to analyse the findings.

3. Result

Table 1 represents socio-demographic variables of 209 married women participants with a mean age of 38.80 ± 7.44 years. 66.5% women were post graduated and 33.5% were graduated. Out of all the respondent 37.8% women were having kid/kids below age 5 years. Majority of women 72.2% were working in private sector, where as 27.8% were in government job. Out of

209 study participants, It was found that more than 8 hours of working in a day was reported in 60.3% women. In addition, 64.6% of women work for 2-5 days in a week. 32.1% of women were unsatisfied with working hours arrangement. With respect to sleeping hours variables, 78.5% of the women reported to have affected sleeping hours during work from home. 42.1% were unsatisfied with their work -life balance and 77.0% were facing too many distractions at home during work. After the assessment of psychological distress (PHQ-4) among women (Table 3), it was seen that 31.6% of women were having severe psychological distress with 24.9% being moderate and 30.6% being mild. 69.8% women were undergoing anxiety during work from home and 53.0% were suffering from depression. 50.2% women were feeling nervous and anxious nearly every day during work from home. It was reported that 37.8% women were unable to stop or control worrying during their work.

Table 4 shows that on Bivariate analysis between Socio-demographic and work from home related variables and challenges faced by the respondents during working from home, it was reported that the qualification of women was a significant factor ($p=0.004$) with respect to not meeting the work deadlines. Having kid/kids below the age of 5 years were associated with the challenge of keeping a regular schedule ($p=0.006$) and meeting work deadlines ($p=0.001$). The arrangement of working hours was strongly associated with general anxiety regarding coronavirus ($p<0.001$), having distractions at home ($p=0.005$), maintenance of regular schedule ($p=0.022$) and being not able to complete work on time ($p<0.001$). Also, anxiety due to the effect of coronavirus ($p=0.003$) and situation of doing multiple tasks at home (Household chores, childcare, office meetings etc.) ($p=0.006$) were significant factors regarding balancing between personal life and work life.

| S. No | Socio-demographic variables | Frequency | (%) |
|-------|--|------------------------|------|
| 1 | Age (in completed years {mean \pm SD}) | 38.80 \pm 7.44 years | |
| 2 | Sex | | |
| | Female | 209 | 100 |
| 3 | Qualification | | |
| | Up to graduation | 70 | 33.5 |
| | Post-graduation | 139 | 66.5 |
| 4 | Field of working | | |
| | Government sector | 58 | 27.8 |
| | Private sector | 151 | 72.2 |
| 5 | Monthly Income | | |
| | 0-30,000 | 95 | 45.5 |
| | 30,001 and above | 114 | 54.5 |
| 6 | Relationship Status | | |
| | Married | 209 | 100 |
| 7 | Do you have kid/kids below the age of 5 years | | |
| | Yes | 79 | 37.8 |
| | No | 130 | 62.2 |

Table 1: Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents.

| S.No. | Variables | Frequency | % |
|-------|---|-----------|------|
| 1 | How many hours are you working in a day? | | |
| | 6-8 Hours | 83 | 39.7 |
| | More than 8 Hours | 126 | 60.3 |
| 2 | How many days are you working in a week? | | |
| | 2-5 days | 135 | 64.6 |
| | 6-7 days | 74 | 34.4 |
| 3 | How satisfied are you with your working hours arrangement? | | |
| | Satisfied | 62 | 29.7 |
| | Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied | 80 | 38.3 |
| | Unsatisfied | 67 | 32.1 |
| 4 | How satisfied are you with your work-life balance? | | |
| | Satisfied | 56 | 26.8 |
| | Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied | 65 | 31.1 |
| | Unsatisfied | 88 | 42.1 |

| | | | |
|----|---|-----|------|
| 5 | Are your sleeping hours getting affected by working from home lately? | | |
| | Yes | 164 | 78.5 |
| | No | 45 | 21.5 |
| 6 | What are the challenges you are currently facing while working from home? | | |
| | 1. General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life | | |
| | Yes | 156 | 74.6 |
| | No | 53 | 25.4 |
| | 2. Too many distractions at home | | |
| | Yes | 161 | 77 |
| | No | 48 | 23 |
| | 3. Keeping a regular schedule | | |
| | Yes | 171 | 81.8 |
| | No | 38 | 18.2 |
| | 4. Unable to meet work deadlines | | |
| | Yes | 102 | 48.8 |
| | No | 107 | |
| | 5. Multitasking at same time (household chores, childcare, office meetings etc.) | | |
| | Yes | 191 | 91.4 |
| No | 18 | 8.6 | |
| 7 | Does working from home affects your relationship with your spouse/partner, family members? | | |
| | Yes | 118 | 56.5 |
| | No | 91 | 43.5 |
| 8 | Does your husband help you in carrying out household chores at home along with your job? | | |
| | Yes | 176 | 84.2 |
| | No | 33 | 15.8 |
| 9 | How many hours are you getting for yourself throughout the working day? | | |
| | Less than 1 hour | 83 | 39.7 |
| | More than or equal to 1 hour | 126 | 60.3 |
| 10 | How many hours does your husband/ partner gets from himself throughout the working day? | | |
| | Less than 1 hour | 23 | 11 |
| | More than or equal to 1 hour | 186 | 89 |

Table 2: Work from home related variables and responses of respondents.

| S. No | PHQ-4 related variables | Frequency | % |
|-------|--|-----------|------|
| 1 | Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge | | |
| | Not at all | 40 | 19.1 |
| | Several days | 41 | 19.6 |
| | More than half the days | 23 | 11 |
| | Nearly every day | 105 | 50.2 |
| 2 | Not being able to stop or control worrying | | |
| | Not at all | 37 | 17.7 |
| | Several days | 79 | 37.8 |
| | More than half the days | 23 | 11 |
| | Nearly every day | 70 | 33.5 |
| 3 | Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | | |
| | Not at all | 55 | 26.3 |
| | Several days | 60 | 28.7 |
| | More than half the days | 29 | 13.9 |
| | Nearly every day | 65 | 31.1 |
| 4 | Little interest or pleasure in doing things | | |
| | Not at all | 50 | 23.9 |
| | Several days | 63 | 30.1 |
| | More than half the days | 28 | 13.4 |
| | Nearly every day | 68 | 32.5 |
| 5 | PHQ-4 (psychological distress) | | |
| | 0-2 (None) | 27 | 12.8 |
| | 3-5 (Mild) | 64 | 30.6 |
| | 6-8 (Moderate) | 52 | 24.9 |
| | 9-12 (Severe) | 66 | 31.6 |
| 6 | Anxiety subscale | | |
| | 0-2 | 63 | 30.2 |
| | 3 and above | 146 | 69.8 |
| 7 | Depression subscale | | |
| | 0-2 | 98 | 47 |
| | 3 and above | 111 | 53 |

Table 3: Assessment of PHQ-4 among respondents during work from home scenario.

| S.NO. | Variables | General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life | | p-value | Too many distractions at home | | p-value | Keeping a regular schedule | | p-value | Unable to meet work deadlines | | p-value | Multi-tasking at same time (Household chores, childcare, office meetings etc.) | | p-value |
|-------|--|--|-----------|---------|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|--|-----------|---------|
| | | N (%) | | | N (%) | | | N (%) | | | N (%) | | | N (%) | | |
| | | Yes | No | | Yes | No | | Yes | No | | Yes | No | | Yes | No | |
| 1 | Qualification | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Till graduation | 56 (35.9) | 14 (26.4) | 0.206 | 56 (34.8) | 14 (29.2) | 0.469 | 58 (33.9) | 12 (31.6) | 0.782 | 44 (43.1) | 26 (24.3) | 0.004* | 62 (32.5) | 8 (44.4) | 0.305 |
| | Post-graduation | 100 (64.1) | 39 (73.6) | | 105 (65.2) | 34 (70.8) | | 113 (66.1) | 26 (68.4) | | 58 (56.9) | 81 (75.7) | | 129 (67.5) | 10 (55.6) | |
| 2 | Field of working | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Government sector | 51 (87.9) | 7 (12.1) | 0.006* | 46 (79.3) | 12 (20.7) | 0.628 | 48 (82.8) | 10 (17.2) | 0.827 | 32 (55.2) | 26 (44.8) | 0.254 | 55 (94.8) | 3 (5.2) | 0.41 |
| | Private sector | 105 (69.5) | 46 (30.5) | | 115 (76.2) | 36 (23.8) | | 123 (81.5) | 28 (18.5) | | 70 (46.4) | 81 (53.6) | | 136 (90.1) | 15 (9.9) | |
| 3 | Do you have kid/kids below the age of 5 years | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | 61 (77.2) | 18 (22.8) | 0.505 | 61 (77.2) | 18 (22.) | 0.961 | 72 (91.1) | 7 (8.9) | 0.006* | 50 (63.3) | 29 (36.7) | 0.001* | 76 (96.2) | 3 (3.8) | 0.053 |
| | No | 95(73.1) | 35 (26.9) | | 100 (76.9) | 30 (23.1) | | 99 (76.2) | 31 (23.8) | | 52 (40.0) | 78 (60.0) | | 115 (88.5) | 15 (11.5) | |
| 4 | How many hours are you working in a day? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6-8 Hours | 63 (75.9) | 20 (24.1) | 0.733 | 59 (71.1) | 24 (28.9) | 0.097 | 61 (73.5) | 22 (26.5) | 0.011* | 27 (32.5) | 56 (67.5) | <0.001* | 72 (86.7) | 11 (13.3) | 0.052 |
| | More than 8 Hours | 93 (73.8) | 33 (26.2) | | 102 (81.0) | 24 (19.0) | | 110 (87.3) | 16 (12.7) | | 75 (59.5) | 51 (40.5) | | 119 (94.4) | 7 (5.6) | |
| 5 | How many days are you working in a week? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2-5 days | 103 (76.3) | 32 (23.7) | 0.458 | 100 (74.1) | 35 (25.9) | 0.169 | 117 (86.7) | 18 (13.3) | 0.014* | 73 (54.1) | 62 (45.9) | 0.040* | 127 (94.1) | 8 (5.9) | 0.062 |
| | 6-7 days | 53 (71.6) | 21 (28.4) | | 61 (82.4) | 13 (17.6) | | 54 (73.0) | 20 (27.0) | | 29 (39.2) | 45 (60.8) | | 64 (86.5) | 10 (13.5) | |
| 6 | How satisfied are you with your working hours arrangement? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Satisfied | 37 (59.7) | 25 (40.3) | <0.001* | 40 (64.5) | 22 (35.5) | 0.005* | 44 (71.0) | 18 (29.0) | 0.022* | 100 (16.1) | 52 (83.9) | <0.001* | 54 (87.1) | 8 (12.9) | 0.345 |
| | Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied | 59 (73.8) | 21 (26.3) | | 70 (87.5) | 10 (12.5) | | 71 (88.8) | 9 (11.3) | | 54 (67.5) | 26 (32.5) | | 75 (93.8) | 5 (6.3) | |
| | Unsatisfied | 60 (89.6) | 7 (10.4) | | 51 (76.1) | 16 (23.9) | | 56 (83.6) | 11 (16.4) | | 38 (56.7) | 29 (43.3) | | 62 (92.5) | 5 (7.5) | |
| 7 | How satisfied are you with your work-life balance? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Satisfied | 33 (58.9) | 23 (41.1) | 0.003* | 31 (55.4) | 25 (44.6) | <0.001* | 34 (60.7) | 22 (39.3) | <0.001* | 8 (14.3) | 48 (85.7) | <0.001* | 45 (80.4) | 11 (19.6) | 0.006* |
| | Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied | 56 (86.2) | 9 (13.8) | | 54 (83.1) | 11 (16.9) | | 60 (92.3) | 5 (7.7) | | 34 (52.3) | 31 (47.7) | | 62 (95.4) | 3 (4.6) | |
| | Unsatisfied | 53 (73.6) | 19 (26.4) | | 61 (84.7) | 11 (15.3) | | 64 (88.9) | 8 (11.1) | | 48 (66.7) | 24 (33.3) | | 70 (97.2) | 2 (2.8) | |
| 8 | Are your sleeping hours getting affected by working from home lately? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | 127 (77.4) | 37 (22.6) | 0.076 | 136 (82.9) | 28 (17.1) | <0.001* | 140 (85.4) | 24 (14.6) | 0.011* | 95 (57.9) | 69 (42.1) | <0.001* | 155 (94.5) | 9 (5.5) | 0.006* |
| | No | 29 (64.4) | 16 (35.6) | | 25 (55.6) | 28 (17.1) | | 31 (68.9) | 14 (31.1) | | 7 (15.6) | 38 (84.4) | | 36 (80.0) | 9 (20.0) | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|------------|-----------|-------|------------|-----------|--------|------------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 9 | Does working from home affects your relationship with your spouse/partner, family members? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | 90 (76.3) | 28 (23.7) | 0.537 | 97 (82.2) | 21 (17.8) | 0.043* | 104 (88.1) | 14 (11.9) | 0.007* | 70 (59.3) | 48 (40.7) | 0.001* | 112 (94.9) | 6 (5.1) | 0.038* |
| | No | 66 (72.5) | 25 (27.5) | | 64 (70.3) | 27 (29.7) | | 67 (73.6) | 24 (26.4) | | 32 (35.2) | 59 (64.8) | | 79 (86.8) | 12 (13.2) | |
| 10 | Does your husband help you in carrying out household chores at home along with your job? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | 130 (73.9) | 46 (26.1) | 0.551 | 131 (74.4) | 45 (25.6) | 0.039* | 146 (83.0) | 30 (17.0) | 0.325 | 83 (47.2) | 93 (52.8) | 0.272 | 162 (92.0) | 14 (8.0) | 0.656 |
| | No | 26 (78.8) | 7 (21.1) | | 30 (90.9) | 3 (9.1) | | 25 (75.8) | 8 (24.2) | | 19 (57.6) | 14 (42.4) | | 29 (87.9) | 4 (12.1) | |
| 11 | How many hours are you getting for yourself throughout the working day? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Less than 1 hour | 58 (69.9) | 25 (30.1) | 0.199 | 70 (84.3) | 13 (15.7) | 0.042* | 70 (84.3) | 13 (15.7) | 0.443 | 43 (51.8) | 40 (48.2) | 0.481 | 81 (97.6) | 2 (2.4) | 0.009* |
| | More than or equal to 1 hour | 98 (77.8) | 28 (22.2) | | 91 (72.2) | 35 (27.8) | | 101 (80.2) | 25 (19.8) | | 59 (46.8) | 67 (53.2) | | 110 (87.3) | 16 (12.7) | |
| 12 | How many hours does your husband/ partner gets from himself throughout the working day? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Less than 1 hour | 19 (82.6) | 4 (17.4) | 0.352 | 18 (78.3) | 5 (21.7) | 0.882 | 19 (82.6) | 4 (17.4) | >0.999 | 10 (43.5) | 13 (56.5) | 0.588 | 21 (91.3) | 2 (8.7) | >0.999 |
| | More than or equal to 1 hour | 137 (73.7) | 49 (26.3) | | 143 (76.9) | 43 (23.1) | | 152 (81.7) | 34 (18.3) | | 92 (49.5) | 94 (50.5) | | 170 (91.4) | 16 (8.6) | |

Table 4: Association between Socio-demographic and work from home related variables and challenges faced by the respondents during working from home.

4. Discussion

For most women, working from home has resulted in an increased workload. In the absence of support, their private and professional lives have been affected adversely. Total 209 married women participated in the study with a mean age of 38.80 ± 7.44 years. In our study it was observed that 64.6 % of women work every week for 2-5 days and 42.1% were found unsatisfied with their work -life balance. Similarly, one study conducted in India found that 52% of working women considered 'work from home' being more challenging than 'work at office' [21]. Contrarily, another study done in India found that 48% of the working women were maintaining a good quality of life since lockdown [22]. In both the studies, working women were considered irrespective of being single, married or divorcee which is different than our study as till now this will be the first study in India to include only married working women to understand the impact of work from home during COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of the women in our study were working more than the normal working hours which is similar to the study findings done among working women in Chandigarh [21].

Our study with the help of PHQ-4 ruled out that due to work from home amid pandemic, majority of the married working women were experiencing depression and anxiety. The reason might be working hours arrangement being strongly associated with anxiety due to coronavirus ($p < 0.001$), distractions at home ($p = 0.005$), maintaining regular schedule ($p = 0.022$) and being not able to meet the deadlines ($p < 0.001$). Also, anxiety ($p = 0.003$) and doing multiple tasks at home (Household chores, childcare, office meetings etc.) ($p = 0.006$) were significant factors regarding personal and work life balance. The study showed that working from home amid COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected working married women.

5. Conclusion

It was concluded from the present study that for married working women, work from home in COVID-19 pandemic can be severely impactful in terms of depression and anxiety. The study showed that majority of married working women were unsatisfied with the work life arrangement amid pandemic which could challenge their physical health, psychological health, and social relationships. Hence, it is very crucial to support married working women during this alarming situation and to be more sensitive to their needs.

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