

TECHNOLOGY DURING COVID 19: BOON OR A CURSE

Dr. Shivani Mehta, Dr. Avani Maniar

Temporary Assistant Professor

Head & Associate Professor

Department of Extension and communication, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences,
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

ABSTRACT

Coronavirus outbreak has significantly changed how we see work from home (WFH), which is presently a considerably more broadly acknowledged practice. This would appear on a superficial level to be an equalizer move. This paper is an attempt to look at the WFH from academician's point of view. The virtual method of working is getting progressively well-known because of its potential for cost-savings; it is additionally a route for an association to be more dexterous and adjust to emergencies, for example, worldwide pandemics. Restrictions on movements and closure of offices during Covid-19 forced people to remain confined at home. This along with ample free time made many get accustomed to the Internet in an unprecedented way. When almost every business derailed, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) saw an exponential increase in usage. Thanks to the Internet, office work got done at home. Until a few years back, having a telephone or mobile, computer, printer, Wi-Fi password and email was a notion of entitlement and social dignity. Even a telephone at residence or mobile with sufficient talk time brought happiness. In spite of having pronounced benefits, the use of ICT produces unintended and unwelcome consequences including IT-based cultural domination, new colonization, technological slavery, attacks on privacy, hindrance to personal safety, insecurity, family conflict, mental pressure, health hazards, and hindrance to creative thinking. Long working hours that began with Covid-19 has led to high blood pressure, insomnia, mental disorders, fatigue and boredom. Technological domination by developed nations emerges as a new form of colonization as developing countries are the markets. Developing countries struggle to keep pace with technologically advanced countries. Through this paper an effort has been made to understand and highlight the usage of technology during COVID 19 and the impact it has on the people is it a boon or curse for them.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Work from home, Technology usage*

INTRODUCTION

In light of the technological and digital development that dominates all areas of life in our time, there are many challenges and opportunities available to the information technology sector, the most prominent example of which is the pandemic, which affected the entire world more than two years ago, and as a result of this global epidemic, there was an imposition of many restrictions that dominated most areas of life such as work, education and the economy. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on working lives is enormous. As the virus spread across the globe in the early months of 2020, quickly witnessed fundamental changes to work and social lives. Across the world, millions of workers suddenly found themselves unemployed or furloughed as businesses struggled to meet costs (Lewis and Hsu, 2020). The full economic impact of the pandemic is yet to be determined, but it will be significant (see Keogh-Brown *et al.*, 2010). Displays of emotions in the workplace have increased, and tensions have become heightened as society struggles to adjust to widespread illness and death of friends, family and colleagues (Williams, 2020). When Covid-19 struck, it forced societal changes around the globe. Nearly overnight, governments issued orders that limited large gatherings of people, restricted in-person business operations, and encouraged people to work from home as much as possible. In response, businesses and schools alike began to look for ways to continue their operations remotely, thanks to the internet. They turned to various collaboration platforms and video conferencing capacities to remain engaged with their colleagues, clients, and students while working from home offices.

These points are now as pertinent as they ever have been as people experience radical disruption to the ways in which they work. As noted by Donnelly and Proctor-Thomson 'Disasters disrupt the nature of work, creating a

culture of ambiguity with shifting priorities for individuals, organisations and their wider communities. Operating within subsequent uncertain environments promotes a reassessment of the spatial configuration of work and the adoption of new ways of working’.

Work - Life Balance and Technology

Progress of technology is the process of combining and rearranging knowledge so that it can generate new ideas; the rapid development of technology will impact the performance of companies (Martínez-Caro et al., 2020). There are technological advances that come from internal progress (Pavitt, 1991), where internal progress comes from employees’ ability. There is a close relationship between technological progress and employee performance (Alam & Murad, 2020; Song et al., 2019; Dnishev & Alzhanova, 2016). Technology can lead to increased productivity or improved performance when combined with other resources by human resources or when done effectively, and using technology productively and ethically (Singh & Verma, 2019). Amid the fight against COVID 19, one thing that has empowered humanity’s fight against pandemic is the use of technologies which have become an integral part of our lives. In such a time when we are heavily relying on technology for our daily activities, it is natural that we are also getting influenced by it. Restrictions on movements and closure of offices during COVID-19 forced people to remain confined at home. This along with ample free time made many get accustomed to the internet in an unprecedented way. When almost every business derailed, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) saw an exponential increase in usage. Internet has been a blessing during this time to get office work done at home. Apart from the office work, people are accustomed to do day-to-day activities including ordering food, buying necessary items through online, connecting with friends and family members virtually.

Until a few years back, having a telephone or mobile, computer, printer, Wi-Fi password and email was a notion of entitlement and social dignity. Even a telephone at residence or mobile with sufficient talk time brought happiness. In spite of having pronounced benefits, the use of ICT produces unintended and unwelcome consequences including IT-based cultural domination, new colonization, technological slavery, attacks on privacy, hindrance to personal safety, insecurity, family conflict, mental pressure, health hazards, and hindrance to creative thinking.

In addition, organizations introduced employees to new technologies to perform their tasks with the pandemic onset. The studies conducted shows that implementing new technologies fundamentally affects individuals by forcing them to develop task-related digital competencies, evaluate different new digital communication tools, and adopt the most efficient digital communication tools. Accordingly, acceptance and use of new technologies required employees to evaluate the various tools introduced during working due to COVID-19 restrictions. COVID-19 has proved that technology innovations have been helping in managing the epidemic in a timely, systematic, and calm manner. A lesson learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic has been to stay prepared well in advance against any crisis at both an individual and collective level. All we need to fight an epidemic like COVID-19 is preparedness. Advancement in technology is steadily progressing; it will undoubtedly continue to grow exponentially. It’s we humans who have to adapt to changes in technology faster and COVID-19 has proved that technology innovations have been helping in managing the epidemic in a timely, systematic, and calm manner. A lesson learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic has been to stay prepared well in advance against any crisis at both an individual and collective level. All we need to fight an epidemic like COVID-19 is preparedness. Advancement in technology is steadily progressing; it will undoubtedly continue to grow exponentially. It’s we humans who have to adapt to changes in technology faster and continue to invest in building the technology systems for better preparedness.

Beyond the heightened expectations of productivity, there are negative personal and professional consequences when the boundaries between work and home are blurred through ICTs. The spillover effect of work into home life has a negative effect on attitudes toward work and family satisfaction, especially among women. Employees can also experience “technostress” due to the use of ICTs. Additionally, having greater expectations for work hours and productivity contribute to work-life conflict, job dissatisfaction, and employee burnout. For employers concerned with employee retention, these longer-term consequences of expecting employees to complete work at home are especially costly.

These consequences of work-life imbalance rooted in the overuse of organizational ICTs may carry significant implications in the aftermath of the work from home incited by Coronavirus. During COVID-19, research has shown that organizational technology reliance can contribute to increases in cyberbullying, intensified work environments,

and more surveillance measures. The COVID-19 pandemic may further reinforce perceptions of work and productivity differences between parents and childless employees that were already present, as many parents negotiate the role conflict of acting as home school teachers and working as full-time remote employees. However, while research about these ramifications are salient and grounded in application to the lives of workers, employee retention, and job satisfaction, individuals may justify supposed temporary imbalances or negative consequences because of the uncertainty of employment

Usage of Technology a Boon or a Curse?

Several questions may arise when mobilizing digital technologies in order to respond to the current crisis. Digital technologies may be seen as a gateway to solve many of the problems arising from the crisis: How can we control the spread of COVID-19? How do we continue to provide education to the many people who have to stay at home? How people work from home? How usage of technology affects the life of working people. At the same time, digital technologies may pose challenges related to several human rights: Are my digital rights protected? Is the government acting in a transparent manner when resorting to digital technologies to face the crisis? To harness the potential for technology to effectively respond to the crisis, it is essential to prioritize the use of technology through a human rights lens aimed at protecting citizens, maintaining essential services, communicating life-saving information, and fostering socioeconomic interactions for the benefit of all.

The studies conducted shows that technology, automation, and collaboration is rated high within positive impacts of technology. This is then followed by working from anywhere (WFA) and new business models (IBM) in positive impacts of technology. This pandemic disruption cannot be avoided as business needs to continue as usual to some extent and it requires employees to work from home or anywhere. WFH or WFA require fundamental technology (TAC) to allow seamless working with the co-workers and customers. Technology, automation through technologies, and collaborative technologies are the important IT platforms as needed for every employee in the organization. Not only for employees, but eLearning acceptance by students proves that COVID-19 is enabling digital technology directly. Changes in operation or business model is very much driven by technology in COVID-19 situation. Since the pandemic is widespread and global, employees need to connect globally which requires collaborative technologies.

Although ICT-induced devices helped people spend time, this eventually came to dominate people's lives. Information Technology (IT) has captured every aspect of human life -- from personal to professional. The dramatic rise of IT has brought tremendous benefits to human life. It has changed the working process, service delivery and even thinking capacity. Modern life without IT seems disabled. COVID-19 has pushed companies to transform business forever with an greater use of ICT in all processes and procedures. Thus, companies, specially IT sector across the world did the record business during the pandemic even after a declining profit in all business sectors. It is obvious a setback to administrative culture, decision-making process and service delivery system.

On the other hand, there is negative disruption which indicates that employee work-life balance is affected and important to be recovered by maintaining due diligence of employee engagement in the pandemic. While digital tech does allow employees to converse with one another even when not in the workplace, whether workers actually do this is questionable. Digital technologies have facilitated an increase in flexible and remote working, giving workers more freedom to work when they please. However, while this sounds attractive in theory, there are some downsides. With an absence of smaller, casual conversations in the office, people have a tendency to try to keep emails, video calls and instant messages work-related. Chats about our weekend, that can help de-stress us, are no more - instead, all communication becomes work-focused. This can make it more difficult for employers to know when employees are stressed, or in need of assistance.

It is important to engage employees within office hours and give room for balancing their life. As this paper clearly indicates that employers must maintain due diligence of engagement to maintain work life balance. This will also improve social and health well-being. Societies, organizations, and economies are to be mindful of social and health well-being while using positive disruption as opportunities. Looking at the situation and implications and implications, a qualitative study can be done.

Due to the increasing use of ICT, the higher the position in office hierarchy, the higher the work-life conflict. It

turns a man into a mechanical being; citizens transform to Netizens, humans become I-humans. Developed countries have already issued restrictions over calling and sending email after office time, compulsory leave for those with families, shortening office time, and introducing Wednesday holidays to enjoy life better. The work-life conflict that Covid-19 has intensified must be mitigated, and human-friendly steps must be taken to balance work and life with the restricted use of ICT. Is the use of ICT leading to work-life balance or conflict? Work-life balance amounts to spending more quality time with the family, emphasizing family bonding.

After stipulated office time, office work is carried home with the digital device. If the phone rings or a message comes through social media or cell phone, the user becomes restless until the issue has been addressed. Messages from senior officials change behaviour, at times leading to unpleasantness with family members. The use of IT increases expenditure but decreases the quality time for family members and family activities. The use of ICT and multiple devices turn life to 24/7 office through all seasons. The pandemic has extended the work hours, hampering personal time.

Children are annoyed at times by the excessive use of the Internet by parents. Office work even moves from one's home to another's. Invited guests ask for Wi-Fi password after entering the house and start working on urgent official business or attending social media. Social media dramatically reduces social linkages. Expression of love has been replaced by emoji. People's reliance on the Internet and social media apps for commutation continue even as the severity of Covid abates. Technology has inherent problems. IT infrastructure requires uninterrupted electricity supply, better Internet bandwidth and effective software. Interruption between calls or social media keeps individuals busy until the connection is restored. Social media makes the user look repeatedly for the number of likes and reactions by viewers. Long working hours that began with Covid-19 has led to high blood pressure, insomnia, mental disorders, fatigue and boredom. Technological domination by developed nations emerges as a new form of colonization as developing countries are the markets. Developing countries struggle to keep pace with technologically advanced countries.

Developed countries have already issued restrictions over calling and sending email after office time, compulsory leave for those with families, shortening office time, and introducing Wednesday holidays to enjoy life better. The work-life conflict that Covid-19 has intensified must be mitigated, and human-friendly steps must be taken to balance work and life with the restricted use of ICT.

CONCLUSION

Technology is always evolving. While we may be facing challenges now, what the future may hold is still unclear. It's important to bear in mind that while there are negatives to overuse of digital technology at work, the general use of tech in our working environment can be extremely beneficial. That's why, whether you're an employee or an employer, it's essential to understand when technology becomes too much, and you start to feel disengaged, stressed or overwhelmed. A number of previous review pieces have provided useful oversight of the literature as it has developed over time. This paper has not attempted to be as broad, instead confining its focus mainly on developments within Technology. What remains to be seen is whether we will see major ruptures in the ways in which work is organised and managed, or an intensification of existing trends. However, it is clear that whether workers are in physical workplaces, or in their own homes, papers in this journal offer insights into this important area.

As COVID-19 is something serious and affects every citizen in the entire world, technology is somewhat of a buzzword that most of the business and community sectors are talking about. As reviewed in the literatures cited in the above section, COVID-19 is leading to both negative and positive impacts in the technology journey. The change in IT culture has a great impact of COVID 19 that has emerged as a new global culture. The safety and health views have transformed the social behavioural culture affecting the organizations' work culture, values, interactions, and challenges while working from home. Primarily the IT work culture was focused on work from home while it has increased the opportunity to work with the best talent from anywhere. Employees work remotely with convenience, flexibility, and relaxed environments with increased productivity and job satisfaction. While some organizations creatively implemented their hybrid methods of working from home and office by investing in cutting-edge technology and efforts to enhance the outcomes. On the other side, technical issues, overloads of online meetings, stress, and lack of social touch also burdened employees working from home and those

maintaining organizational culture. Considering these positive and negative impacts on work culture, new global remote working culture has developed and is widely accepted by organizations to save investment costs and convenience of workers. However, it is unclear whether the positive impact is on social and economic wellbeing, and at the same time the extent of negative impact is unclear. As COVID-19 is impacting everyone and everyday life, including businesses, technology is one of the key players which drive virtual business and social community. COVID-19 has many effects in both positive and negative senses. This topic of study is still quite new at this time, so it is quite important to research this topic to contribute further to how the COVID-19 pandemic can be translated into positive aspects. At the same time, it's important to investigate the social wellbeing and business factors which are negatively impacted so that they can be mitigated when this paper is utilized properly. The authors of this papers are motivated to address these following questions.

- Is COVID-19 a driver of digital transformation?
- What are the top three positive factors that COVID-19 is attributing to digital transformation?
- What are the top three negative factors that COVID-19 is attributing to digital transformation?

To address our questions, a new adoption framework with homogenous factors is needed. Our study will develop a model framework to identify and analyse the variables responsible for the positive and negative effects of COVID-19 in the field of advanced technology.

REFERENCES

- [1] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354095061_Positive_and_Negative_Impacts_of_COVID-19_in_Digital_Transformation [accessed Dec 28 2022].
- [2] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353417114_Impact_of_Technology_on_Various_Aspects_of_Human_Life_During_Covid-19_Pandemic_A_Survey [accessed Dec 28 2022].
- [3] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354095061_Positive_and_Negative_Impacts_of_COVID-19_in_Digital_Transformation
- [4] <https://blog.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/how-does-the-increased-use-of-digital-technology-at-work-impact-our-mental-health>
- [5] <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOId=9063396&fileOId=9064234>
- [6] <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/74135>
- [7] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8084752/>
- [8] <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-10788-8>