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A Study On Challenges Faced By Women Employees Working From Home During Covid – 19

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Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic has changed the working culture across the world especially IT sector. The Information sector is one of the less effected sector compared to other sector due to work from home facility provided by the organizations to their employees. The change of working environment affected the women employees' work-life balance. The present study emphasized to know the challenges, which classified in four segments. The organizational, technical, Psychological and Home related challenges considered in the study. The study has considered the convenient sampling method for the primary data collection in Hyderabad. The study applied the exploratory factor analysis has been applied and extracted the high loading among the four classified segments. The neural network methodology applied on the identified factors to prioritise the key challenges to overcome issues to maintain the work-life balance among the workingwomen in IT sector.

Keywords: Absence of team environment, Challenges of workingwomen, Covid -19 Pandemic, Work-life Balance and Work from Home.

INTRODUCTION:

In this challenging and pandemic environment, work and home life are especially overwhelming for women, as women spend disproportionate time balancing homework, childcare and office work. An individual may live a life in which the work-life balance is happy, healthy and even effective. Harmony between work and life has undoubtedly been a primary concern for all those who want a high quality of life. The relationship between employee satisfaction and peace and productivity in a particular work environment remains confirmed. The primary compromise, however, is that a happy employee becomes a productive and successful employee. In management, it is still a big challenge

to keep employees safe and keep them working for longer period. Normally, wealth and employee well-being, whether physical or psychological, are very important and, in many studies, the well-being of employees often underscore the success of the company. For example, employees who feel good and have the ability to cope with less stress at work and at home are more likely to do their work, which can have a complete effect on their well-being and business organisation.

Importance of Work Life Balance

The value of the work-life balance was mainly due to changes in circumstances such as technology, economy, culture and the environment (Covid-19 is the best example). The nature of work, organization, jobs, leadership and relationships also shifts as a result of these changes. Many social and systemic changes are taking place, and these changes naturally impact the lives of Indian families. It is therefore extremely necessary for individuals to distinguish between working life in a way that does not interfere with the other. This has many important benefits, such as preserving mental well-being, physical wellbeing, improving organizational complementarity and rising performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pradhan and Hati, (2017), Research has been conducted to examine the influence of employee welfare (i.e. meaning, skills, self-identification and effects) on psychological empowerment. Attempts have made to investigate the interim role of satisfaction in the relationship between well-being and empowerment of employees. The study considered 96 sample and randomly selected Indian service sector managers collected data. The final result of the study showed that the well-being of staff was positive about the capacity of employees. Happiness has been a crucial mediator between the well-being and empowerment of workers.

Khaled Adnan Bataineh (2019), the research inspected the work / life balance, happiness and performance of employees. Accordingly, the above model based on the data set of the (Med Pharma) Pharmaceutical Industries (Jordan) tested in a questionnaire-based survey. The results indicate that the combination of work-life and happiness has a significant and essential effect on employee performance. However, the output of employees does not have an impact.

Ashwini A Yarnal. (2020), WLB study is a modern feature of the medical field, as workers need to thrive simultaneously on family and leisure interests at work. The reason for stressed workers is to handle these two limits and managers thus see it as an hourly requirement and want to create

methods for controlling the working life, plans and policies for the morality, morale and productivity of employees. This paper highlights the wide range of choices that managers and employees make in terms of work-to-work engagement and personal performance balancing.

Shareena, Shahid, Mahammad. (2020): The COVID-19 pandemic has converted the concept of 'Work from Home' (WFH) into strictly applied, formally enforced legislation. The WFH meaning established from all fields, from IT to teaching. The idea of WFH has become a new concept for most workers, as COVID 19 forced almost everyone in all sectors to work from home for the first time. The focus of this article is to learn about the experience of staff at work from home in relation to work in offices, since employees are experiencing new conditions. The study found that the readiness to work at home depends entirely on the presence of children at home, secure quarters, a secure home atmosphere and strong internet connectivity.

Latha, Swarna. (2020): Work-life balance is still a problem for all workers, since it is not easy to work at home and at work, but it is still a major challenge for women. The goal of this paper is to examine and address the questions and problems of the work-life balance of working women professionals in pandemic situations. The economic crisis has forced many families to work under the same roof, and they are struggling to cope with what is now obvious to all. The paper addresses the problems and challenges encountered by workers and recommendations for strengthening work at home during the pandemic.

Kevin M. Kniffin (2020): The impact of COVID-19 on workers and workplaces around the world has been drastic. In order to explain the implications for staff, teams and business organizations, we present a large overview of previous study and organizational psychology research and related fields. The major factors of the research review and description are: (i) emerging developments in job practices (e.g. work from home, virtual teams) and (ii) economic and social psychological implications (e.g. unemployment, mental well-being). The research also explores age, race and ethnicity variables, gender, family status, personality and cultural differences that may be moderating in order to generate different outcomes. The study concluded with the conclusion: our broad-based analysis highlights the benefits of team science and provides an inclinational approach to considering the effects of COVID-19 on work and organization's.

Titan Alon Matthias et al. (2020): The current economic downturn of the COVID-19 outbreak has a huge effect on gender equality, both before and after the downturn. The drop in jobs associated with social separation initiatives has a significant impact on sectors with a high female employment rate compared to "natural" recessions that are more severe for women than for women. The study found that due to high returns on job experience, the effect of the crisis on working mothers is likely

to be continuous. There are competing forces that would theoretically foster equality between women and men on the labour market beyond the current crisis. The study concluded that First, companies are increasingly introducing flexible, likely to continue working arrangements. Second, many fathers are now largely responsible for childcare, which is likely to undermine societal norms that lead to a slow distribution of work in the home and childcare.

Peter Bamberger (2020): The COVID 19 pandemic has a health, social and economic effect on women around the world. Women lead the medical response in the first place: women make up about 70% of health staff and are more likely to be sick. The study found that women are also at high risk of losing jobs and income and face heightened risks in times of crisis and quarantine of violence, abuse, harassment or harassment. The study concluded that policymakers should take emergency steps to help parents manage employment and care, strengthen and extend income support initiatives, improve support for small businesses and self-employed people, and establish policies to protect women victims of violence.

RESEARCH GAP

Based on the above reviews, though there are few studies related to challenges faced by employee working form home during the pandemic situation. The present research focused to find out the prominent factors among the factors affecting the work life balance of women employees during COVID 19. Thus, in order to fill the research gap, the study framed the title "A study on challenges faced by women employees working from home during covid – 19".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does any challenges are there experienced by the workingwomen employees during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. There will be any measures to improve the work life balance of women during the covid-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the challenges faced by women employees working from home due to COVID 19.
2. To elicit the measure for the Work life balance of Women during COVID 19

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The study framed the hypothesis to know the prioritised factors for the work life balance during the pandemic- Covid -19. The following is the hypothesis framed.

H0: There is no effect of Identified factors on the work-life balance of women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study has considered the working-women in IT sector, who are working from home for the organization with the balance of personal life. The paper mainly examines the challenges experienced by them for the work life balance.

Research Design

The study developed a research design based on primary data and attempted to know the challenges faced by women IT employees who are working from home.

Data Collection: The study is based on primary data, in order to obtain primary data, a structured five-likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data from the front-line to the supervisor level of women employees working in the IT sector. The survey was designed with 14 factors work from home-related issues faced by women employees working due to COVID 19. The questionnaire framed in a likert scale structure to take the opinion of the respondents, i.e. Women employees, employed in the IT profession.

Sample Method:

The present study is exploratory research applied on the primary data. The study used the Convenient Sampling Method to determine the sample size for the collection of primary data. Primary data collected in the district of Hyderabad. There were 150 samples collected from the online survey using a convenient sampling method, but only 120 responses were considered, remaining were eliminate in the process of data cleaning. The survey designed with 14 home-based issues related to the challenges faced by employees working on the due to COVID 19.

The study considered similar scaling questions. Reliability test used to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Using the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha was applied to the likert scale questions and the observed alpha value of Cronbach is greater than the base value (0.871 < 0.7). The following statistical techniques used to analyse the data:

Exploratory factor Analysis: The study used an exploratory factor analysis to extract high loading factors related to work from home-related issues faced by employees working in COVID 19.

Network Neural: The study used the Neural Network to identify the priority factors among the identified factors related to four classified segments of organizational, Technical, Psychological and Home related factors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Working from home sometimes produces positive and sometimes negative results for employees and employers; for example, employees can find a better work-life balance, which is also a plus for employers in terms of reduced turnover and reduced need for office space and associated costs. The negative result of working from home could be a tendency to work long hours, overlap between paid and personal life resulting in an intensification of work. One example could be home-based teleworkers reporting better work-life balances, while "high-mobile" workers are more at risk of negative health and well-being (Euro found and the International Labour Office, 2017). Pandemics such as COVID-19 have forced organisations to work virtually even though they may not be ready for infrastructure. The study attempted to identify the challenges faced by employees working from home as a result of COVID 19. Factors analysis used to extract high loading factors related to work from home-related issues faced by employees working in COVID 19 and the Neutral Network as a priority factor among identified factors related to work from home-related issues.

Objective 1: To identify the challenges faced by women employees working from home due to COVID 19.

This objective identifies the problems faced by employees working from home due to COVID 19 and the study considered Hyderabad as the area of the study. The study focused on fourteen common challenges faced by employees during the pandemic situation (COVID). The study used Exploratory Factors Analysis has a statistical tool to determine the high load factors among the fourteen challenges. The below table represent the KMO and Barlett's test which is used to identify the sample adequacy of the data and explain it as follows

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.784
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	195.101
	Df	91
	Sig.	0.034

Source: Primary Data

The above test reflects the sample adequacy to run the exploratory factor analysis to identify the challenges faced by women employees working from home due to COVID 19. The KMO result reveals the 0.784, which is greater than base value of 0.7. The probability value observed to be significant (i.e. $0.034 < 0.5$) and the chi-square value found to be indicating the data is normally distributed. Therefore, the collected primary data observed to be adequate to run the exploratory factor analysis on the framed questions. The validation of the data is therefore adequate and the significance of the model is strong, indicating that the Factors analysis will extract from the data collected.

The below table represent the Exploratory Factor Analysis with respect to the challenges faced by the employee due to work from home

Component Matrix	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working hour stretch	0.785		Organizational factors			
Lack of contact with decision makers	0.412					
Absence of team environment		0.621				
delays in receiving Critical information		0.751				
Lack of productivity tools			0.464	Technical factors		
Outdated equipment or technology			0.421			
Feeling of Isolation				0.421		Psychological factors
Motivational problems				0.412		
Temptation to relax instead of work				0.408		
Inability to establish a work rhythm					0.556	
Spending time on non-work related issues			Home related factors		0.624	
Demands from family members						0.653
Non work demands that exist in a home environments						0.624
Presence of young children						0.584

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a. 6 components extracted.

Source: Primary Data

Table highlights the challenges faced by women employees working from home due to Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, four factors related to organisational, technical, psychological and home challenges considered. Out of fourteen factors, eight factors found to be high, which means that, due to these eight factors, most female employees face problems with working from home. It synchronised that, among four factors, organisational and home-related factors are considered to be highly influential than other factors, such as technical and psychological factors. Of the eight high loaded factors, three factors are loaded under the Organizational segment and four under Home related factors and one under Psychological factors.

Organizational factors:

It indicated that, out of four organisational factors, three were found to have a significant impact on the work-life balance of workingwomen employed in the IT profession. Among the three, "Working Hour Stretch" (0.785) is the top rated challenge faced by women due to the lockdown. It also noted that, as a result of working from home, most of them are facing issue with respect to "delays in receiving critical information". And most women strongly agreed that, lack of a team environment has adverse effect on the productivity of the employee.

Home related factors:

It synchronised that all factors within the home-related segment found to have an impact on the work-life balance of employees. Among the four, "Spending time on non-work related issues" rated high, followed by "Family demands," "No work demands that exist in the home environment." The presence of children is 0.584. These four factors identified to be having significant impact on the work-life balance of women employees as well as a negative impact on productivity of employee.

Objective 2:

To elicit the measure for the Work life balance of Women during COVID 19.

Organizational factors

From the above exploratory analysis three factor under the segment of organizational factors identified and tried an attempt to find out the prioritized factor among three organizational factors by the Neutral network method. The study allocated 68.7% of sample to training set and remaining 31.3% allocated to testing set.
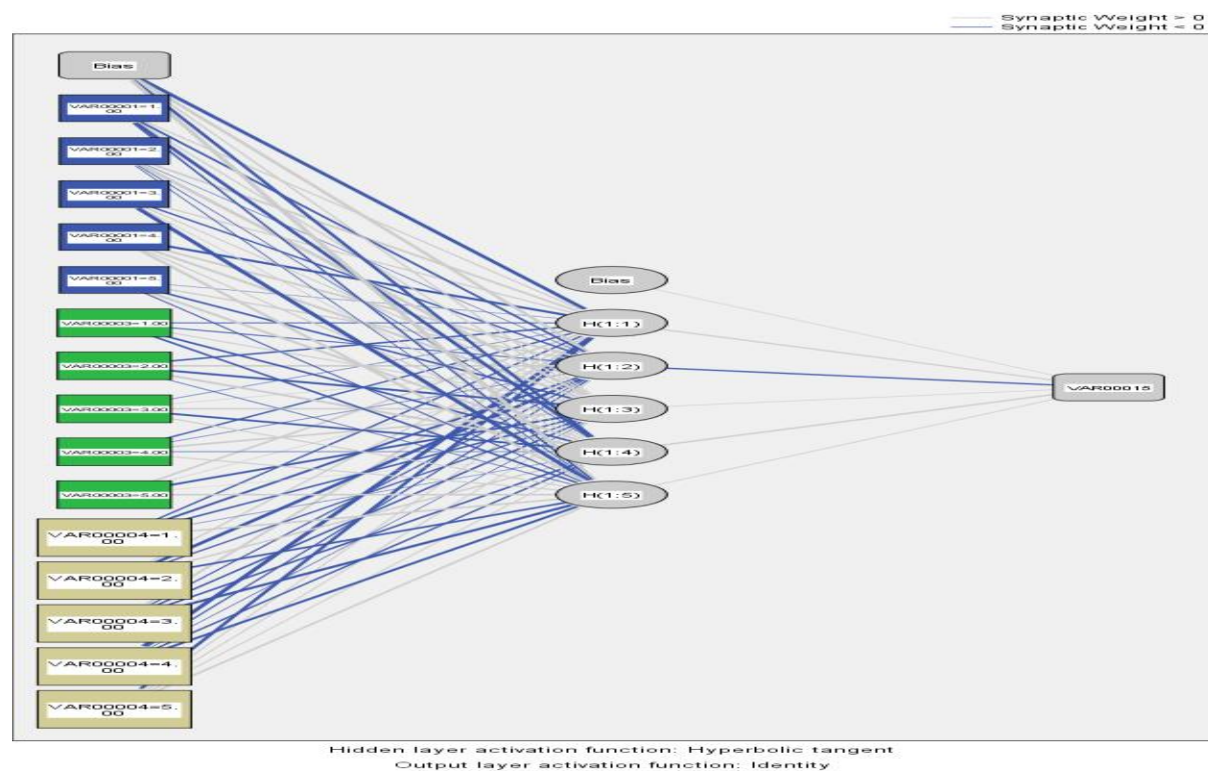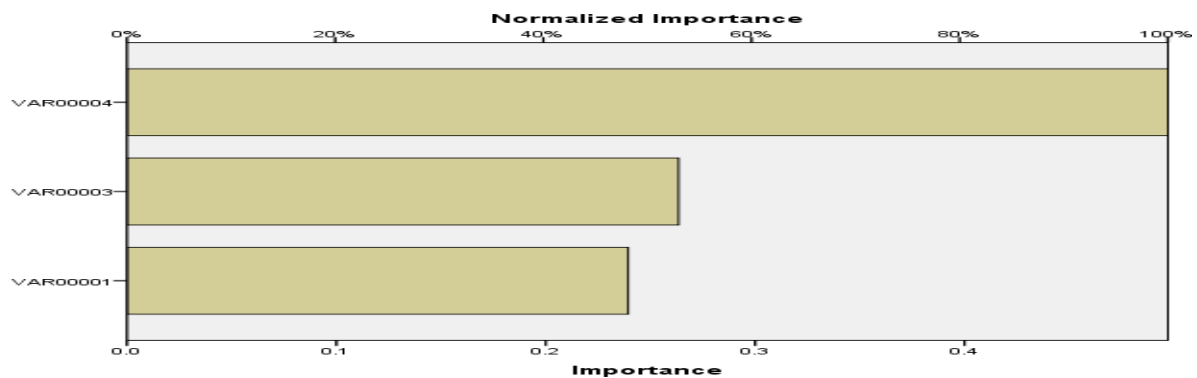
Source: Primary Data

The above graph depicts the network information in layers. In which each input layer is linked to hidden layer and hidden layer generate the output layer i.e., Work life balance. It indicates that, 6 hidden layer were used to generate the output layer. Further, The model summarized that in training the relative error is observed to be near to 1 (i.e., 916) and for the Testing segment the relative error found to be less than the 1 (i.e., 0.959). Therefore, the model summary states that the testing sample is strong for neural network.

Importance and Significance of Select Variables

Independent Variable Importance		
	Importance	Normalized Importance
Working hour stretch	.239	48.1%
Absence of team environment	.263	53.0%

| Independent Variable Importance		
	Importance	Normalized Importance
Working hour stretch	.239	48.1%
Absence of team environment	.263	53.0%
delays in receiving Critical information	.497	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Table and graph represents the challenges faced by the women employee WFH due to Covid-19 pandemic. The study stated from graph and table that, if there is a suitable workspace at home, employees work more productively when they can focus on their work and finish their tasks without being interrupted and distracted by their colleagues in the office. On the other hand, lacking face-to-face communication with the colleagues has adverse effect on the productivity of the employers. It becomes more difficult to access people for help and cooperation in the absence of a team environment, which may lead to delays in receiving critical information.

Home-related factors

From the above exploratory factor analysis four factor under the segment of home related factors are identified and try made an attempt to find out the prioritized factor among four home related factors by using Neutral Network method. The study allocated 66.7% of sample to training set and remaining 33.3 % allocated to testing set.
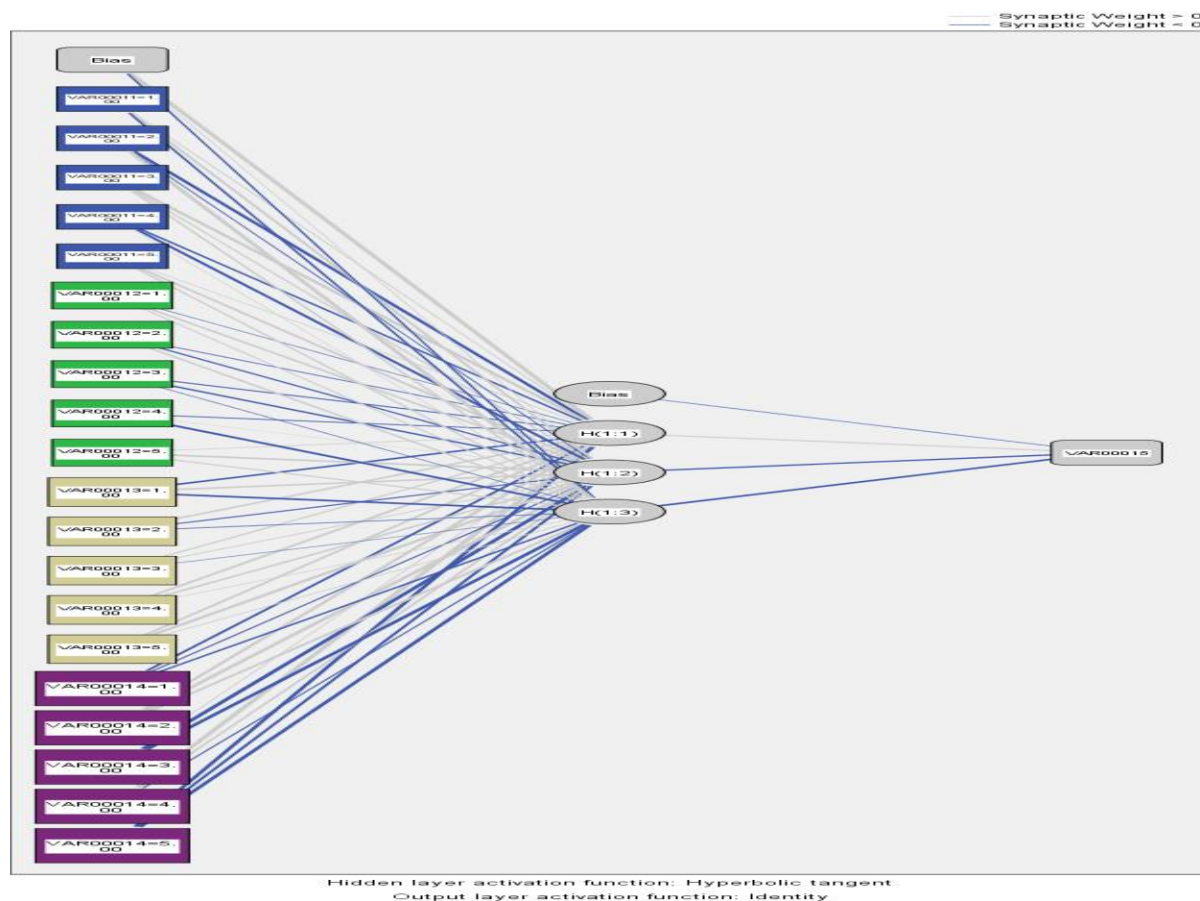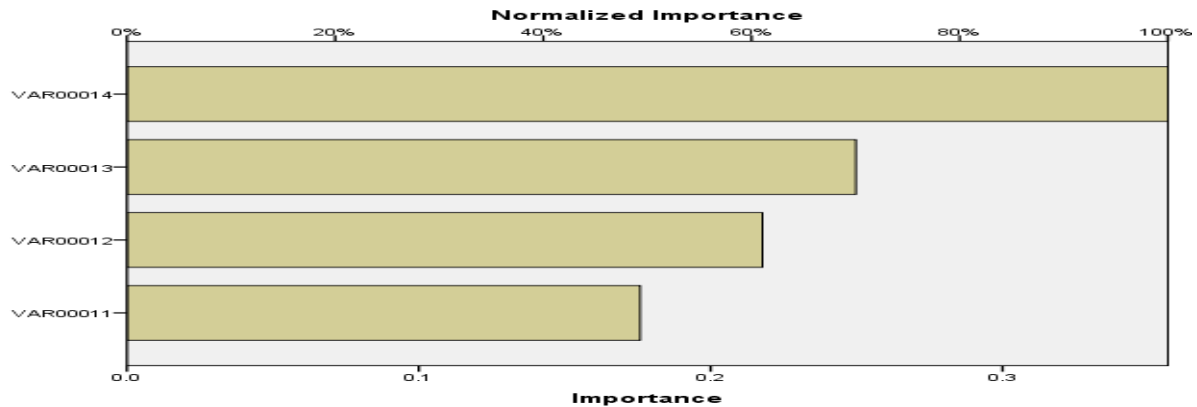
Source: Primary Data

The above graph depicts the network information in layers. In which each input layer is linked to hidden layer and hidden layer generate the output layer i.e., Work life balance. It indicates that 3 hidden layer were used to generate the output layer. Further, The model summarized that in training the relative error is observed to be near to 1 (i.e., 822) and for the Testing segment the relative error found to be less than the 1 (i.e., 0.862). Therefore, the model summary states that the testing sample is strong for neural network.

Independent Variable Importance		
	Importance	Normalized Importance
Spending time on non- work related issues	.176	49.3%
Demands from family members	.218	61.0%

Non work demands that exist in a home environments	.250	70.0%
Presence of young children's	.357	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Table & graph represents challenges regarding the home-related factors. The study stated that as WFH gives more freedom to the employees about their work times, they spend more time with their families, which reduces work-life conflicts and increases job satisfaction levels, which in turn increases their productivity. On the other hand, the same factor can decrease their productivity, if it becomes stressful to balance work and domestic chores with the demands from the family members and presence of young children at home. The influences of working in a comfortable home environment depends on the employees, too. If they perceive home only as a place to rest and if they are tempted to spend time on non-work related issues, such as doing household chores, watching movies, playing computer games, using their smartphones and spending time on social media, their productivity will be low.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The study synchronized that, majority of the women employee working from home are facing challenges with respect to organizational and home-related factors, apart from these two factors, technical factors found to be adverse effect on the productivity of women employee.

2. It stated that accessibility of suitable workspace at home, employees work more productively when they can focus on their work and finish their tasks without being interrupt and distracted by their colleagues in the office.

3. It also examined that lacking face-to-face communication with the colleagues has adverse effect on the productivity of the employers. It becomes more difficult to access people for help and cooperation in the absence of a team environment, which may lead to delays in receiving critical information.

4. Employee strongly agreed that, it becomes stressful to balance work and domestic chores with the demands from the family members and presence of young children at home. The study agreed with the view point of **Esra thorstension (2019)** that their work-life balance is also disturbed, as they cannot receive household support services from their cleaners, babysitters, caregivers because of Covid-19 prevention quarantine period to apply social distancing. Therefore, they need to do the household chores and take care of their children and elderly themselves in their work environment, which leads to low levels of productivity.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The present study emphasized on the women work life balance challenges during the Covid – 19 pandemic. The study has considered the women employees in IT sector who are working from home. The study applied the convenient sampling methodology for the collection of primary data from the respondents. The study classified the challenges in four segments, namely Organizational, technical, Psychological and Home related factors. The study applied the exploratory factor analysis to extract the high loading among the four classified segments. The result stated that working hour stretch, Absence of team environment and delays in receiving critical information extracted from the Organizational challenges. Among the technical segment, no factor extracted by the EFA. The study identified that all the framed factors under the Home related challenges extracted as high loading with the EFA. The study applied the neural network for the measures to improve the work-life balance for the women in IT sector. The study result reveals that "Non work demands that exist in a home environments" followed by the "Presence of Children" are causing the workingwomen more comparing with the factors under the home segment. The organizational challenge factor - delays in receiving Critical information is causing the work-life imbalance.

Further Research Scope: The present study has been emphasized workingwomen in IT sector. The study recommends expanding the study for other areas such as Hospitals, Pharma sector and Education sector. The study also suggests comparing the two different sectors working women stress and work-life balance.

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