Multidimensional analysis on Work-from-Home in COVID-19

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Abstract

Contemporary worldwide disaster COVID-19 encountered by people seemed to be widely spread like a fire in the jungle. This surge impacted the lives of many and even caused fatalities. Staying at home and not going outside is one of the hot topics of the moment. The population around the world found a major lapse when it was found that the epidemic of COVID-19 is not only infecting non-Muslims but also Muslims. Meanwhile, due to this worldwide disaster, countries facing the issue altered their work status to working from home after collecting readily available data from previous studies and recently published articles on several worldwide pandemics. This study discussed the effects of COVID-19 on the population, especially organizations with the practice of working from home. It also discussed the effectiveness of social distancing to avoid the spread of this virus. Moreover, this study discussed the benefits of working from home along with enlightening the Islamic perspectives to strengthen the study.

Keywords: COVID-19, Work from home, Pandemic

Introduction

Several contagious diseases infected a lot of people in the past and continuing their effect in the future, such as AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), plague, influenza, cholera, Ebola, and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) (Cutsem et al., 2016; Kupferschmidt, 2016). Among these known diseases, in late 2019, a newly invented disease called Corona. According to (WHO, 2020), Coronavirus has early been named the 2019 novel coronavirus, now officially named COVID-19. The virus is just like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), in which the respiratory infection takes the form of pneumonia, but in actuality, it is COVID-19. Investigated to be an infectious disease that transfers through saliva excretions or droplets of sneezing or coughing from the affected to the normal people. Until now, no devised vaccine or specified medicine has been investigated to prevent its dispersion more effectively among the public, thereby according to the situation, less physical or direct contact, as well as keeping oneself as clean as possible, is also a remedy to avoid its widespread. During these circumstances, it is thereby challenging for people to work while being at their workplace. Organizations cannot stop progressing while waiting

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for the unknown period of the continuity of this disease. They need to manage their work from a place with less physical interaction just for the sake of everyone's safety. Therefore, the possibility of working from outside the work territory entailed the significance of working from home. However, working from home is appropriate facilitation for employees in their workplace due to some of the circumstances. In this arrangement, employees can dedicate their duty hours outside the boundaries of the organization. It provides a balance between employee work and family life (Christensen et al., 2013). Employees can work in any mobile place, either at home or can be any place (Venkataraman et al., 2018). It is for the well-being of the employee, and therefore working from home facility helps to retain the employees (Rodwell & Martin, 2013). Moreover, it is beneficial for organizations to strategize their policies more effectively. Therefore, efficiency is also increased (Jansen & Hlongwane, 2019).

Working in a safe and sound environment enables the employees to augment their productivity Christensen et al., (2013), and this enhancement plays significance in employees' personal and professional life. According to Taamneh et al., (2018), internal satisfaction of employees from work leads them to organizational well-being. The debate about those practices which are employee friendly and that help to balance employee work and family life (Shakir, 2019). With these facilitations, employees found themselves more empowered to work; hence these relaxations at work increase their loyalty. Sometimes negating the idea to facilitate the employee to work out of the boundaries of work results in a lack of loyalty (Kim & Lee, 2019). On the other hand, an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of employees is also identified (Jansen & Hlongwane, 2019).

This study involved a situation in which the disease is infectious and influencing many of the population worldwide. While giving importance to individuals who are in need of going out either to work or to pray is one of the main points of discussion nowadays. With the help of game theory, it has been made easy and understandable that to avoid circumstances, we need to strategize our plans and routines (Begley et al., 2020). Like, it is a zero-sum theory for rational decision making in which every participant in the game or the situation has the same benefit and loss as compared to the others. Referring to the game theory, individuals change their behaviors according to situations to avoid the worst circumstances. For example, in this COVID-19, the only solution is social distancing to avoid oneself contact with infected ones. Some of them, who are not understanding the situation same time, will soon change their behavior after observing those who are taking precautionary measures and are staying safe from the pandemic. Social distancing is one of the solutions to save oneself from a situation like infectious or viral diseases.

Therefore, from the above discussion, the following points are raised that are entailed to be discussed in this study:

1. Effects of COVID-19 in the organizational context how it is affecting the employers and employees.
2. Does social distancing effective in avoiding infectious diseases?
3. What is the Islamic perspective behind this?

Literature Review

a) Effect of Coronavirus on the Population:

COVID-19, a pandemic disease, escalated like fire in the jungle. According to WHO (2020) started on 31st December 2019. The pandemic, with a sudden push, infected around 294,110 population worldwide. The latest number of deaths reached 12,944. The affected countries from different territories across the border were infected by this disease. This coronavirus, named COVID-19, caused disruptions in the social life of the individuals living in the specified affected territories. With the effectiveness of the virus, it has an effect on 1/3 of the world population (Begley et al., 2020). Asserting the influence on the population, quarantine was suggested that is, a state of being isolated at a place due to hygienic reasons and to avoid contact with several epidemics and infectious diseases (Altinoz et al., 2012). The prevention of to spread of the disease is the best remedy for infectious and viral diseases (WHO, 2020). Thereby, to provide safety from the affected ones to the unaffected, self-isolation is the best remedy.

Among the seven continents of the world, Asia is the largest continent with a huge figure of population (Moen et al., 2017). Discovered as an initiator of COVID-19 due to the population and tourism. North America, although ranked fourth in the populated country's list, recent surveys found the maximum number of cases in the United States (WHO, 2020). Europe is on the third level in the most populated continent (Moen et al., 2017) and is the majority of countries facing the maximum number of cases (WHO, 2020). The United States, to date, is the most affected territory with the highest number of cases, 104,671, while Italy is on the second number of positive cases, 86,498, and has the highest number of fatalities, 9,134. China, which initiated the virus, now is at the highest recovery rate of 74,971 patients. Other countries like Spain, Germany, and France are also with a high rate of positive cases. Iran was found to be with the highest rate of fatalities and continuing with the positive cases among the Muslim countries.

b) Globally Infected Muslims:

Among all, Muslim ummah is also suffering from this chronic disease. Several countries have a huge spread of the disease with a lack of knowledge, precautions, and resources. A major spread was during the Friday prayer, where most of the Muslims gathered, took the hype of the disease; countries included who were affected

after those gatherings were Malaysia, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia (Dwyer, 2020).

Iran was found to be the highest and most affected country among Muslims, with 21638 to date cases and several deaths (WHO, 2020).

Other countries with a Muslim majority are affected by viral diseases, such as Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait also the United Arab Emirates. The widespread of this among Muslims was due to religious gatherings (Emont & Shah, 2020). These gatherings caused a severe dispersion of the virus, and the migrants from other countries spread the virus to those host countries. Workplaces, offices, shops every kind of business were suspended, and even the air service was also disconnected by the affected countries to avoid the circumstances from getting worse.

Globally, organizations are pursuing to work from home facilitations for their employees just to avoid the country-level situation of COVID-19. People are required to stay at home and do their work from home (Lufkin, 2020) even though the major worship holy places like the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the Prophet's (SAW) Mosque of Medina were closed for the public to minimize their contact (AFP, 2020).

c) Social Distancing:

Distancing is isolation and hostility, and social distancing is to make a specified distance in view to disassociate oneself with others. Individuals' level of closeness within the same or different groups in their social association (Arenas et al., 2004) due to differences in age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or maybe gender-based (Elaine, 2008). The tenderness and warmth are felt by them within a similar group or with those who are the intruders (Bogardus, 1947). According to Robert E. Park (1924), social distancing is the diminution of the understanding, involvement, or intimacy that is present in an individual or collective relationship.

d) Islamic Perspective:

There are some verses from the Quran teaching the sense of self-caring and safety.
- "Everything good that happens to you (O Man) is from God; everything bad that happens to you is from your own actions." (Quran 4:79).

It is an assessment from Allah, so people who will save themselves and take precautionary measures will be saved from COVID-19 disease. Those who ignore the safety measures and keep socializing themselves will be the suffering ones without any doubt.
- "O mankind: Eat of what is lawful and good on earth" (Quran 2: 168).

This verse of the Quran defends the prohibition of eating non-halal food, which can be dangerous to health. The non-halal food impedes several kinds of germs which are

dangerous and somehow poisonous to the human body. COVID-19 was found to be originated in the non-halal food market (Jewell, 2020) and propagated to others who are not in consumption to that.

Methodology

The methodology of the paper explains the summary of the research design. Data has been gathered by collecting information from previously published relevant research articles. The researcher collected those specific articles with content related to a global pandemic and its effect on the community. Along with that, the online published articles were considered with up-to-date effects of the pandemic COVID-19 globally.

Research Implications

a. Benefits of Work from Home:

Thus, working from home incorporates benefits to both parties, i.e., employers and employees.

b. Benefits to Employers:

There are several studies that have discussed the work from home facility to the employees (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020; Beauregard, 2011; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Germeys et al., 2019; Hytter, 2007; Judge & Ilies, 2004; Ke & Deng, 2018; Mauno & Ruokolainen, 2017; Mayo et al., 2016; McNall et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2009). Researchers identified some of the benefits to the organizations that practice work from home.

- ❖ Operating Cost. Offices normally cater to several people working as employees. They used to work normally for 9 hours, accommodating themselves under these working hours. Utilization of office stationery, lots of documents, electricity, and other utilities somehow make a huge expense to the organization. Moreover, the rental incurred by the office place. Working from home helps to reduce the cost of this work operating cost.
- ❖ Productivity. An increase in productivity is when employees feel more relaxed while working because of a sense of autonomy and change in the working environment. Employees feel more comfortable and work more proficiently hence, lessening their work anxiety and stress. Thereby increasing workability and productivity.
- ❖ Turnover. Reduced turnover from several studies investigated if the employees were satisfied with their jobs. This satisfaction leads them to stay with their jobs. Flexibility at the workplace helps to intensify their mode of happiness and joy, removing stress and lessening the number of leaves. Turnover is itself a huge cost for the employers; if employees are leaving so

frequently, it will cause bad word-of-mouth for the prospective employees; also, the time and money cost associated with hiring and the overall recruitment activity will be incurred by the employers.

❖ **Behavioral Positivity.** Leading towards the feeling of freedom of workplace, employee freedom of workplace, employers take benefit in the form of a positive attitude of employees.

❖ **Impact on the Environment.** Reducing transport to travel reduces the fuel cost and the associated environmental cost therewith. By communicating via electronic media, the employees need no travel; hence, the environmental benefit is also on the employer's side.

c. Benefits to Employees:

According to previous studies on work from home (Allen et al., 2016; Amorim & Santos, 2017; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Mansour & Tremblay, 2018; Sharma & Yadav, 2019), employees also benefit if they are allowed to work from their place such as the following:

❖ **Work-life Balance.** It creates a balance between employee work and family life. When employees are provided with deadlines, they schedule their work timing accordingly to complete their tasks on the deadline. It makes it easy for them to take care of their dependents as well as to do their work.

❖ **Productivity.** Increases as the employee are working under less pressure in the workplace environment.

❖ **Stress.** Lessening of stress by the variance of tasks associated with work and life. Employees, as family members, take care of the family, as well as work for the job. This balance of life makes him or her mentally relaxed and therefore reduces stress.

❖ **Less Cost.** Staying at home, not traveling every day to the workplace, sometimes far from home, reduces the time and money costs associated with traveling.

❖ **Satisfaction.** More if an individual is working in a family environment and flexible hours. This job autonomy gives the person more satisfaction with the job and family life.

❖ **Less Health Hazard.** If someone at the workplace is suffering from an infectious disease, it will be transmitted to the persons working in the surroundings. Working from home can reduce this effect.

d. Limitations of Work from Home:

Working from home seems like a perfect and ideal situation (Madell, 2019) in which an employee will not have any trouble getting ready, working in an office environment, working under supervision, and fuel-saving (Bussing, 2019). But, along with the benefits associated with both employers and employees, it also has some limitations, as described below.

- ❖ Lack of Productivity. Without supervision, sometimes it becomes difficult to manage work-related tasks (Michelle Kiss, 2019). It is, thereby, investigated that while sitting out of the boundaries of the workplace, it is difficult for the employees to work efficiently and effectively.
- ❖ Absence of concentration. A balance between work and family life disturbs if an employee is somehow not very compatible to create a balance between both. This time mismanagement may thereby trigger a lack of concentration (Madell, 2019).
- ❖ Telecom cost. Being online and connected with colleagues and subordinates may also cause the telecom cost to the employees and the employer. This stay-connected practice can cause a huge amount of bills to the parties involved (Michael Hurd).
- ❖ Less incorporation. Coordination can also be subordinated if the employees do not face-to-face connected. Sometimes some issues cannot be handed over without the presence of the relevant staff, causing disruptions in the services (Michael Hurd).

Conclusive Remarks

COVID-19, a global catastrophe calamity that started from a wet market in Wuhan, China (Citroner, 2020), affected up to 100 countries worldwide (WHO, 2020). Including among the Muslim community, which are those infected individuals who had direct contact with the affected ones in religious gatherings. Muslim worship places with restricted time before but now suspended their operations until the situation gets better (Soumaré & Crétois, 2020). Thousands of Muslim migrants who were there for worship in Iran were infected by this virus (Emont & Shah, 2020). Regarding the situation, there are many controversies among religious bodies. For worship especially, the Mosque of Makkah and the Prophet's (SAW) Mosque of Madinah should always be operational until the day of judgment. Taking the point towards practicality and avoiding the current scenario to get it to the worst situation, it became mandatory to avoid those places in which people are gathered and are in direct contact with each other.

Work from home is a practice intended for employees to work from home or remote places. This facilitation is nowadays implemented due to chronic disease and infectious nature triggered many casualties. To avoid the circumstances getting more miserable, it is thereby executed by most companies worldwide, including Microsoft, Google, Twitter, Spotify, Hitachi, Apple, Amazon, and Chevron (Lufkin, 2020). Thereby, less probability or occurrence of getting infected. It can be elaborated as if an employee is suffering; others can also be transmitted by casual contact while working together. Covid-19 is also specified as a precaution to stay at home, intensifying the possibility of work by staying at home.

Considering all the facts, COVID-19 is propagating its effects day by day, from one to several individuals who are in contact. It can only be avoided by making distance a social aspect. Islam also taught us to save ourselves and others from loss of health. Flexible work practices are also there to facilitate people working with their organizations. In both scenarios, there is a possibility to work and pray from home to prevent the circumstances from getting worst. Although not a permanent solution also, the situation will not sustain for a prolonged time. So, for the betterment of the individuals is to keep their distance, keep connected, keep working, and keep praying at home.

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