

Challenges and Opportunities of Work from Home: Bangladesh Perspective

*This report is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the degree of
Master in International Human Resource Management*

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Letter of Acceptance

This is to certify that Nabila Faruqi, ID No. 115192003, MIHRM Program, School of Business & Economics, United International University (UIU) has successfully completed her project work under my supervision.

The title of her report is “Challenges and Opportunities of Work from Home: Bangladesh Perspective”.

I wish her a total success in life.

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Letter of Declaration

I, Nabila Faruqi, the undersigned, hereby declare that I have completed my project under the supervision of Dr. Farid A. Sobhani, Professor, School of Business & Economics, United International University (UIU), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

I have prepared a report on “Challenges and Opportunities of Work from Home: Bangladesh Perspective” that is my own work.

Neither part of this report is copied from elsewhere nor submitted before for any academic qualification, certification, diploma or degree to any other university.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Background of the study

The most trending topic in the whole world including Bangladesh right now is Corona Virus 19 or Covid 19. This pandemic has turned the world and its regular work-life process upside down for almost a year now. The usual process of workplace has changed because of the virus as people are not being able to leave their homes and attend office premises for their jobs and businesses. Alongside the virus, there is another name which is very buzz worthy in Bangladesh right now which is Work from Home or WFH. Although working from home is not a new model of working for the world but it is fairly new in Bangladesh perspective. Previously, working from home was not much appreciated or in practice but this exceptional situation has made it possible.

The effectiveness of working from home has been a great value added to slow down businesses due to the virus. So, employers are now actually seeing the benefits of this new concept and willingly accepting it in their establishments. Most offices have been shifted to work from home and both the employers and the employees are actually doing their work without even leaving their houses. However, this entire process is also suffering from a lot of complications and hurdles because of the absence of a proper guideline and policies regarding this. This is the why it is very bothersome to carry out working from home and thus it is not adding satisfactory benefits and advantages and as well as hindering the productivity rate of the employees. The purpose and aim of my report is to provide an overview of available knowledge regarding the challenges and opportunities about this new method of working in Bangladesh. My research technique is to reach out to professional individuals in different field to discuss about their thoughts and experience regarding

working from home and then try to develop and suggest some framework and policies regarding this as this method of working can be a very good addition to traditional working method.

These frameworks will be developed to help both the employers and employees' and set the policies and strategies to keep this way of working available in workplaces even after the massive outspread of this pandemic will subside. The core intention is to understand both the positive and negative effect of this at home working circumstances and try to propose some policies and structure to maximize the efficiency so that it aligns with company goals and objectives and employees work more productively whether they are working at home or at office premises.

1.2: Objectives of this study

The objectives of the study are as follows –

- To perceive the challenges of working from home;
- To identify the opportunities of working from home;
- To suggest some policy guidelines regarding work from home.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

If we talk about this concept and go long way back, working from home is not something new. It always has been around for hundreds of thousands of years. But as we progressed into telecommuting and internet based digital world, it is being more and more popular because of the easiness in the method of communication. One can just sit in any corner of the world and communicate with someone at the different continent, country and time.

Working from home concept took a splurge in being in action during 1950's when telecommunication joined hand with computer technology. Offices could relocate their employees in different places that just working in traditional offices which actually enabled the opportunity to work from distant places and from home. The inkling of WFH concept has been generated in the year 1973 due to the first international oil crisis that eventually give rise to concerns over gasoline consumption, long work travels, and traffic blocking in major metropolitan areas.

Work from home is basically made available to combine work space and living space so that working individuals can efficiently pool resources, use their time effectively and increase their productivity without visiting an office space. Gone are those days when one kept their official affairs at office only. People are now working almost 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and even when they are supposed to be on a break or vacation, they are always connected to their work. This concept definitely has it good sides but the not so good side is there too which sometime makes it impossible to get the most out of this method of working.

Initially, at-home work in the intermediate phases covered professions like bakers, seamstresses, shoemakers, potters, weavers, ale brewers, and blacksmiths. Particularly, the gender issues were not a significant factor, given that home-based workers could as easily be male as female. Home and family life was a pivotal fact of initial work-from-home concepts. Handling the home projected that one can do multiple works at a time and handling resources, savings, and splitting up of effort. Limitations between home and work life, if they occurred at all, were indistinct.

Initial at-home work in the mid centuries covered occupations like which were more of crafter works. Remarkably, the gender inequality was not a major issue, known that home-based workers could as easily be any gender.

As time passed by, sellers and crafts worker earlier the Industrialized Rebellion shaped these home offices that started all of it. These mixture of work & homes had street-facing work stations and shops, and also had private spaces kept aside for family life.

But a rising attention in keeping historical records, managing formal business, and creating an integrated whereabouts for these deeds led to have some of the very first organizational constructions.

“One of the most notable examples is the Uffizi Gallery, built by the Medici family in Florence in 1581. This process required the administration, archives, and a state court to come together in the same building.” (1)

This space officially became an art museum in the 1700s and is still one of the best-known museums in the world.

The Industrial Revolution conveyed thoughtful modifications for genders. Manufacturing works, particularly in the knit industry for females, started the custom of leaving household and working in outdoor work surroundings.

The manufacturing phase gave birth to a new society of practiced labors and started an outside homeworking model that many businesses still follow till these day, even though it's grow into gradually old-fashioned.

Isolated workers did not start instantly even when the internet was initially introduced to mass in the 1980s. Functioning distantly was an existed model even before business district office spaces and travelling even happened.

Before the Industrial Revolution, maximum people worked from their home environment. Skilled crafters individually set up workshop at their house and retailed their merchandises.

With the Industrial Revolution originated a necessity for automated machines and the formation of manufacturing workplaces. Massive machineries and bulky manufacturing required workforces to have physical appearance at workplaces to complete their work. This is also when individuals in full swing started to travel to chosen "workplace."

But even this didn't stay for long time.

If we jump to right after World War 2 and the whole situation accelerated even in advance.

As the American economy solidifies, so did the growth in commercial head office, bigger workplace spaces, and lanes of monotonous workspaces. The Eight hours in office was also introduced during this same period of time.

With this commercial growth created progresses in workplaces and proficiency with technologies that initiated the smooth method for present day distant employments. Furthermore, the number of people owning personal computers increased in a multiple manner and additionally they were connecting their home environment to the world wide web or internet world, two big happenings of 20th century that would made the way for remote work to thrive like we are seeing today.

So the internet and open or portable Wi-Fi connections turned the office distant yet productive yet again.

Whether functioning from a homebased work place, bringing laptop at a public place, or even having a smartphone, the internet gave workforces entrance to cloud-based storage which allows them do the whole lot that they would in their workspace but this is working outside the workplace.

Now computer dependent workforces grind at any given hours of the day and can be connected with their colleagues from any part of this world than and all is for the blessings of the virtual world of internet.

And This is the vital reason why distant work carry on to be so widespread.

The technology which made it potential to be a completely worldwide labor force consist of this stages of change:

Telephones, since approximately 1900

Electronic mail, since 1971

Wired chat, since 1982

Folder sharing structures, since 1986

Virtual audiovisual chat, since 1996 — but with considerably former origins.

Social media, Since 1997 – with the start of Six Degrees.

Nowadays the number of different technologies being technologically advanced continually to make distant labor promising, nevertheless of remoteness. The result of this efforts of advancement of technology unfailingly gathered around a huge quantity of distant workers taking the advantage of flexible labor.

Distant working essentially means being occupied while being detached where employees do not have any specific abode where they operate their work from. It basically means one work in the go and always be connected.

This may sound very easy but distant work involves a profound and thoughtful understanding of the systematically diverse methods of significant and execution of work and labor. It can be completed by independents or full time workforces, on an assignment or project basis, or as a flexible contract covering numerous jobs and goods. Before starting distant working, it's vital to realize all the features of distant labor. It's not as understandable as it appears as soon as one gets down to explore all the features. While technology has constantly well-defined the capability to accomplish distant work, making a worthy use of it needs a totally fresh understanding of the flow of work itself.

It seems humble enough, but it is actually not at all. When the judgement is prepared to implement a distant initial establishment, there are countless additional features to think through. Such an establishment is fundamentally diverse, mostly if it functions within a worldwide labor force. It is a serious subject to shape an establishment from the foundation

to distant work in order to understand its many benefits. The most unpretentious explanation is not sufficient to make it take place, mainly because it is not sufficient to understand how primarily diverse distant work is. To gain that information, it is critical that one first anticipate the nature of their service and product and have the squad that is essential to make it into a reality.

There can be a question about remote working or work-from-home like why is it needed? Why we need to work from home. An improved way to ask this is to question is “why we should not?” In its spirit, distant work is a venture that requires no investment – a bonus that not only saves establishments functioning expenses, but recompenses disbursements in uncountable other methods both noticeable and not.

Workforces themselves are altering their working preferences too – the immense population of workforces are set to take on a distant work chance, and contemplate it a key aspect in their quality of work life balance. It would be more challenging now to find workforces who doesn't want out-of-the-way independence in their work. It costs the establishment zero, and increases the establishment incalculable developments in different ways. So once more, if front-runners are asking themselves the question “why?”, they might change the demand to re-evaluate and ask “why not?”

Freelancers are always working from home or remote places without even visiting the workplace. There are many people in the world who are earning their livelihood even without showing up in physical offices ever. They just communicate via different communication instruments and just get the job done without even have to leave home for the work.

In Bangladesh, even if we still prefer traditional offices, WFH can be a great addition to workplace work strategy because there is unusual amount of traffic most of the days and also when there is less pressure of work, employees can choose to work from home if there is an option available. Because commuting to work for just a meeting can be quite much of pressure on both the employers and employees. Covid-19 has showed us that if we can properly use the technology, we can get our work done at home as efficiently as we can do it in office.

If we can incorporate work from home work strategy with traditional offices, short-term work from home activities can be permitted for situations such as extreme weather conditions, different projects or occupational leisure work load. These schedules should be permitted on an option of working strategy only, with no expectancy of continuing prolongation.

Other comfortable, temporary measures may be acceptable for workforces on personal or medical leave of absence to the degree which is practical for the employee and also for the establishment and with following the companies' work from home policy.

All casual homeworking schedules should be prepared on an individual basis, concentrating primarily on the professional needs of the business. Also, we are now digitally connected with each other and also with our workplaces more than ever so it is the best time to utilize it as much as we can.

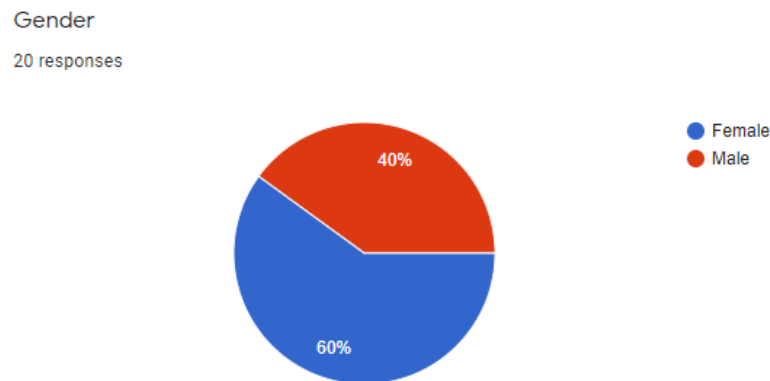
Chapter 3: Methodology of the study

Research methodology is the detailed processes or methods used to classify, select, develop, and evaluate information about a subject matter. In a research paper, the methodology segment allows the reader to analytically assess a study's overall legitimacy and trustworthiness.

For this study, I have done an extensive assessment regarding this topic by conducting both primary and secondary research method. The reason behind this mixture of both methods is that it has given me a more in depth ideas about this topic and helped me to understand the work from home method better.

As the challenges can be only faced while practically doing WFH so I conducted a survey of 20 professionals from different sector such as Bank, Government institution, Business, Telecommunication, Semi- Government and others. In the survey, 12 females and 8 male working individuals participated who have experienced working for home in this pandemic.

Figure 1 – Survey participants gender ratio



The interviews were conducted by doing a question answer survey in google form as the participants I selected were more comfortable in answering the questions in form than personal interview. After getting their filled up form, I also contacted some of them to understand about their selected answers by discussing thoroughly with them. That has given me a real and genuinely detailed insight about the challenges they are facing while doing work in this kind of new method. I have also asked their valuable opinion about opportunities of this method of working for future and they have given me some very useful suggestions. This was the primary data's that I have worked on and prepared my report according to it. The sample of the survey questionnaire is mentioned in the appendix section.

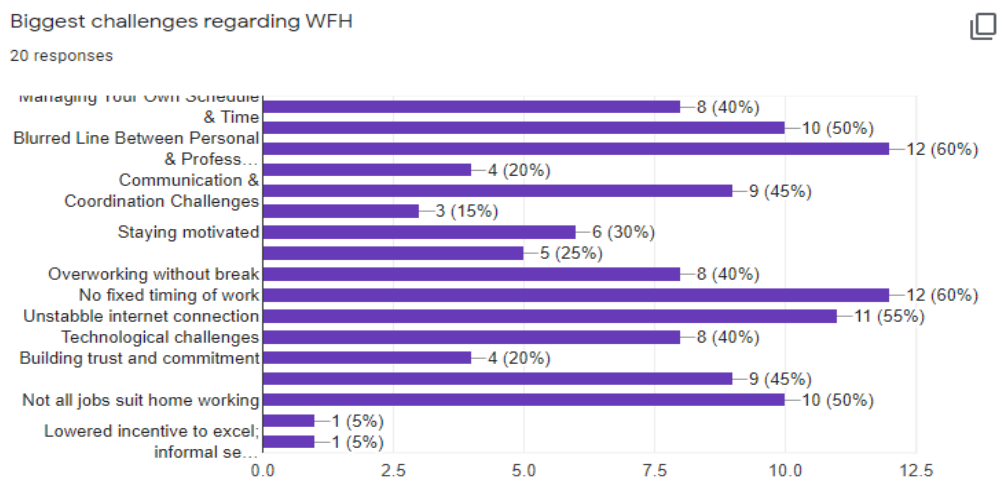
The questions in the form included the name of the survey participants, their designation and company name, the challenges they think they are facing while doing work from home also the opportunities they think work from home can offer in future. For both the challenges and opportunities I have provided approximately 15 described points in checkboxes each so that they can choose multiples choices from that they think are relatable choices. I had also kept an option open for their additional suggestions and thoughts regarding their experience of this WFH. The participants were from different sectors of professions which is a very good thing for my project because I could explore their experiences regarding work from home based off of their professions. The whole survey is added in the appendix section of this report.

I have also talked with some of the participants over the phone and messages to understand their opinion regarding work from home more detailed manner. They have expressed their views and suggestion really clearly which has shown me more in depth situation regarding

this manner. This gave me a very detailed and insight about the challenges and regarding to work from home and will help me to form a policy regarding WFH in future.

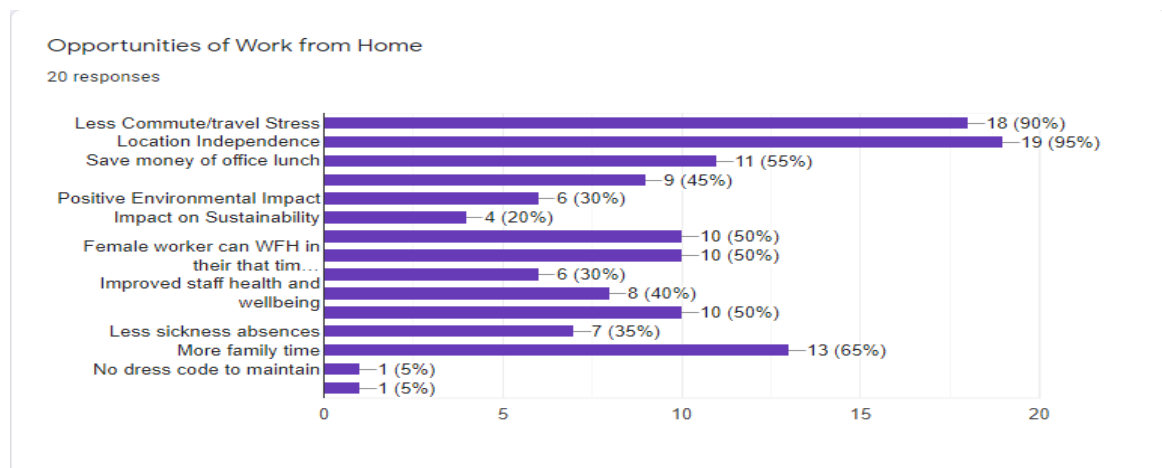
My findings from the survey is that most of the individuals are comfortable working from home but they face some challenges while doing it. Such as there are blurred lines between personal and professional life as employers think being at home means they can do work all the time. Out of 20 participants, 12 have chosen that they can hardly differentiate between personal and professional life. As they are at home all the time, the balance between both lives is now weakened drastically. Participants also expressed that they are easily distracted by everything going around them at home. As the distraction is more in the home, they are finding it hard to concentrate while working. There is also a criticize about having no fixed working hours, Unstable internet connection, facing communication challenges and also some of them think not all jobs are suitable to work from home.

Figure 2 - Answer chart regarding Challenges of WFH from Google survey form



About the opportunities, 19 participants have chosen less time to travel to workplace as one of the most positive prospect about working from home. They do not have to wake up 2 hours early and commute to workplace as Dhaka’s traffic congestion is known to be very severe during working hours. Also, less commute means there is less vehicles on the road which will eventually help in increasing environment quality. They also think location independence is one of the vital pros of working from home. They can work from anywhere and not just in their designated physical offices. As they are working from home, more family time is also considered an opportunity. Saving lunch and snack cost at office was also one of the most selected opportunities regarding work from home.

Figure 3 - Answer chart regarding Opportunities of WFH from Google survey form



If I have to say some words to wrap up about my findings regarding my survey, I would like to say that I have found that most of the participant of my survey replied really positively about working from home. They also mentioned the challenges they are facing but they really prefer working from home if there is a policy and proper guidelines regarding this which is the main objective of my study. From my survey, I could see the potential good sides about working from home in Bangladesh. As we progressing digitally

and almost everyone is connected via telecommunication and internet, it is high time we use them in maximum capacity. By doing mixture of physical office and work from home can be a great addition in the regular working methods and can enable more potential in employees because they can do work in their own comfortable spaces while doing work from home whenever needed.

For the secondary research method, before conducting the survey as my primary resource, I have done an extensive research regarding the topic work from home and read as much as report I can. For this, I have taken the help from google and google scholar where I have read many informative articles regarding the challenges and opportunities related to working from home in Bangladesh. I have learnt how we are more proficiently make a use of the WFH method to mix it with traditional office method in near future. This actually helped me to prepare my survey and also have a theoretical view regarding this topic. Work from home is not a new thing in this world but in Bangladesh context it is a fairly new thing that everyone is still getting used to. This pandemic has showed us that working from can also be a great addition to regular work office premises. Though people still prefer traditional work places and their cubicles but work from home can be great option when there is a problem where employees cannot join offices. The secondary research actually helped to enrich my report as I have studied about information from the past regarding WFH also there are several information regarding the challenges and opportunities regarding WFH and how to overcome them. It also gave me different topics to think about while framing a policy regarding work from home. I have tried my best to study as many information as can in the internet regarding WFH so that I can explore various information regarding my selected topics.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1: Challenges of Working from Home

Well, working from home is not always rainbows and unicorns. No matter how many positive sides this working strategy have, it also comes with hefty amounts of challenges which Bangladeshi organizations still need to overcome to make this working from home in its full potential manner. This may sound like the professional rebellion that we needed the most but it's not a magic that companies can simply shift to and confident about it to work perfectly. As per everything, there are quite a few shortcomings to work from home that employees' experiences and face challenges while working from home, as well. As per my survey, I am listing the most faced challenges in the summarized way that the 20 professional I surveyed on faced while working from home.

No fixed time for work

One of the reasons many supervisors don't support of working from is because they dread the idea that employees will be procrastinating in their work in short of that in-person supervision. On the other hand, in real facts, the contrary inclines to be the truth: employees who are working from home are more likely to overloaded and overworked. When private life and professional life are both at home, it's harder to shift. There is a common misconception in Bangladeshi organizations that if employees are working from home they are available 24/7 and have to work whenever needed which is definitely not a healthy work schedule. Many of the employees actually complain that the biggest challenge of working from home is extensive working hours and sometimes their supervisors knock them at any hour of the day also at night.

Managing own timetable

Working from home means being your own manager at home which gets hectic over times. Managing own schedule and time actually is quite hard than it said. At physical offices, employees are away from home and also have a fixe timetable for everything starting from going to office and leaving for home. But working from home employees need to be driven a by self-motivated at time super vision because they don't have people around them continuously supervising their work or handling time like physical office. Handling own work is tough at the first place. Then there's the continuous bait to watch TV or browse social medias, organize the home when you're delaying working on a task, or basically everything becomes a distraction.

Unstable internet connection and Technical Challenges

The biggest fear that makes a work from home employee shake in fear is an internet problem or problem in laptop or desktop computers. Disconnected internet service, slow internet speed or unstable internet connection is one of the biggest challenges employee has to face while work from home because basically we all are connected via internet so if it does not work than the whole situation gets out of hand. As we are still a developing country, our personal use internet connections are not always top notch like physical offices which actually hinders work from a lot. Employees can be at their most productivity level but this one thing can just make all their effort go in vein. Imagine employee getting disconnected and their computer shuts down in between a very important work meetings or project submission, how scary even the situation is for both the employee and employer.

Communication and Organization Issues

While employees can be connected to their work and employees but still can have communication issues because they will communicate only via cell phones and over mails or messages. Face to face conversation can never be replicated via all the communication channels so it is very easy to have issues regarding communication and organization. Also, employers can have a pre assumption that the employees will not be as productive while working from home.

‘In their book, REMOTE: Office Not Required, Basecamp founders Jason Fried and David Heinemeier explain why communication is paramount for working from home team —and why it's such a challenge:

When the majority of your communication happens via email and the like, it doesn't take much for bad blood to develop unless everyone is making their best effort to the contrary. Small misunderstandings that could have been nipped in the bud with the wink of an eye or a certain tone of voice can quickly snowball into drama.’ (2)

While employees are doing work from home, as they are always working alone or working being dependable on the communication channels rather than being able to do physical communication it is evident that there will be problems with information overload, anxiety regarding communication, unethical workload, lack of detail, inadequate material, insignificant response, unsuccessful communication, and even have lack of concern or dispiritedness.

Increasing health hazard and electricity usage

In Bangladesh, the coronavirus situation kind of forced us to introduce work from home but it comes with some negative health hazard as well. Working from home means we all are depending on working solely computers for a longer amount of time. In physical offices, employees get to take a break from the screen when it is time for meetings or other important works outside the technological equipment but when the whole work from home is based on computers and mobile phones, it is increasing the health hazard which is really alarming. Long term usage of these led lights coming out of all this equipment actually having a frightening increase of eye problem, frequent headache etc. and also we work by sitting a long time so it is having a negative impact in employees' overall health.

Alongside with health hazard, the increase in electricity is very much increased while people are working from home. As we all are using our personal computers and air conditioner at home individually, it is increasing the usage of electricity in comparison to working in office spaces. This is harmful for both economically and environmentally.

I have tried my best to compactly describe all the common challenges faced by employees in Bangladesh while doing work from home from my survey. Working distantly can appear like a fantasy becoming reality for various employees' but it comes with its fair share of challenges. Being on your own, time managing difficulties, and digital miscommunication are just some of the problems one may face if they work from home or have another distant arrangement. There are many challenges employees have to face while doing work from home in Bangladesh which is hindering to make the most out of this strategy. My survey has given me a very good insight of the real picture about the problems but when there are challenges there are solution to overcome them too which is what we are going to describe

in our next section of where discuss about the opportunities we can retrieve from this work from home situation which can be excellent addition to our traditional workplace and help to increase in our productivity.

4.2: Opportunities of Working from Home

As we have seen all the challenges regarding working from home in Bangladesh in the previous chapter, it also comes with several opportunities that we can grab and make the most use out of it. Home working unlocks a new variety of potentials for the technique that businesses can remodel their work structures for maximizing their workforce productivity. With the massive outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, home working has given many employers the flexibility they need to continue their business operations while prioritizing workforces and client well-being and safety as part of their community health concern. Also they have practically seen that working from home can be a lot benefits if used properly. Providing opportunities to the workforces lets the employees value their work even more and helps the origination to retain them. Some of the opportunities that I've discovered while doing my survey and research via various online materials.

Reduced travel stress and time

In Bangladesh, one of the most everyday problem for office workers is traffic jam and elongated commute time to work. A 15 minutes' travel can be stretched to 2 hours because of the mishandling of traffic and can just increase stress. Imagine if an employee has a meeting at 10 am and even if he or she started at 8 am for office, there is still tension about reaching office in time because one just cannot predict the traffic.

“A 2017 study from the University of the West of England found that "every extra minute of commute time reduces job satisfaction, leisure time satisfaction, and mental health.””

Also,

“A 2019 study of Australian commuters found that people with longer commutes take more unplanned absences than those with shorter commutes. Additionally, people with shorter commutes are more "relaxed, calm, enthusiastic, and productive.” (3)

Various studies and researches about employee behavior shows that employees feel more deleterious feelings about their long morning travels and its effects to any other activity they involve in during their office work. So, working from home definitely brings opportunity to lessen down the stress of travelling to workplaces. While working from home, an employee can be well rested, not in hurry and be more mentally and also physically attentive towards his or her work when there will be no tension about reaching office at time.

Work from anywhere

This is actually related to my previous opportunity which is about less travel stress. Working from home gives location independency and it gives employee the freedom of not having a fixed located office space for their organization but they can work effectively without the individual's physical attendance in the workplace.

There can be some inevitable incidents which can stop employee and also employer to be physically present in the office but working from home actually gives the freedom to work from anywhere as long as they are connected to their workplace. Imagine, an employee has an extremely sick family member for whom they need to be in their home but the employee

used all of their leaves. So, working from home will give them the freedom to manage their work without leaving their home to attend office. It also gives the business to expand locally and globally and have employee not only from originated place but also from all around the country and world. Also, as more and more woman are joining our workforces, working from home while being on their period can be very useful because that time of the month can be very troublesome to commute to work.

More family time and saving cost

Working from home actually increases the time employees can spend with their family. Even if we have discussed about overworking while doing office from home, we cannot deny the fact that it also allows the employee to have more scope to have more family time. They can use their reduced time to travel to work to spend quality time with their near and dear ones. The time they have between getting home from work to bedtime is short if they commute to work. Work from home can make evenings less chaotic and permit to have added time for their private life. Without the travel, that period can be instantly used to make dinner with family, help the kids with homework, or go out for a walk.

Also working from home allows the employee to save various costs such as transportation, lunch and snacks also the miscellaneous costs that occurs when one steps out of home. These savings add up and put more money back into their pockets.

“According to Global Workplace Analytics, almost 6 out of 10 employers identify cost savings as a major benefit of telecommuting.” (4)

Covid 19 is actually being hard for everyone so every little bit of saving is a lot and money saving is always helpful for any future calamities or problems. Working from home actually helps employee save money in many different ways.

Not only for employees but for organizations working from home brings some saving as well. Allowing employees to work from home helps employers reduce their overhead expenditures such as utility bills, office goods and minutiae like lunch room expenses.

More employee retention and increased Productivity

One of the very fundamental elements that directs the progress of any industry is its labor force. Having constant, dependable and experienced employees is the long term vision of every establishment. In this era of chances, and individuals are wide-open to so many equipment and technologies, organizations and companies to retain their best employees is definitely a challenge because employees are always exposed to better opportunities that can lure them into leaving their previous workplace. But, if organizations have a flexible strategy of working from home, many employees will retain to their workplace and the company's employee retention rate will be higher.

Although many organizations were earlier cynical about permitting their workforces to work from home, this pandemic has stimulated them to take the leap of faith to keep their companies function. The companies have realized the good sides of working from home and businesses trusted their employee's with dependency and confidence. And as long as the exertion is being completed as per schedule, organizations can have zero worries.

Also working from home can increase productivity if it used correctly. As employees will be working at their own abode while having lesser tension about commuting and missing important meetings to be present, they definitely can work with more concentration and work more to increase their productivity. Also, working from home can lessen the need for taking sick days' leave which eventually is good for the organization overall productivity rate. When individuals are working from home, there are basically smaller amount of distraction elements. And if organizations can make jam-packed consumption of the technology, they can emphasis on increased productivity. After all, coming in first and leaving work after everyone may have the "appearance" of putting more effort, but genuine performance is a considerably more enhanced pointer of productivity.

4.3: Suggested Policies

The sole purpose of forming a Work from Home Policy ought to be to increase the benefits and opportunities while controlling the hazards and challenges, eventually making employees to be as effective in both working from home and in office. While there are still numerous challenges that make these new strategies feel riskier than customary engagements, the benefits, most of the times, compensate for the potential drawbacks while looking at it from the standpoint of the forthcoming trends of workplaces. The work from home trend is only rising and it is here to stay so a suitable policy will be only adding positive things to its effectiveness. As most companies are now working with millennials who always look out for flexible workplaces, having an option to work from home can be an excellent addition to company strategy to recruit best employees and retain them.

After discussing with the survey participants and evaluating the challenges and opportunities of working from home in Bangladesh, here's what a suggested policy should consist of to make working from home an alternative to work when it is needed.

Defining eligibility and scope to work from home

By stating which designations are available for work from home within the business by bearing in mind the client serving tasks, software restrictions, and cybersecurity threats. Not all occupations can be directed by working from home. Companies should openly define the eligibility and scope of getting WFH opportunities. It will advantage in decreasing unnecessary or excessive work from home applications. Also, state examples of standard “whys” and “wherefores” for a work from home application. Also mention it that the reasons listed by the organizations do not guarantee consent; employees need to submit a proper application. Also the issues and solution related to any compensation given to employees while working from home should also be included here.

Have an application process

Similarly, once companies form the eligibility standards, clearly plan the procedure and responsible employee for authorization of WFH. This process should be well designed and executed and also be simple so that the employees can easily be familiar with request procedure of work from home option, approving authority, and the required timing to apply and approve. It will also help the organization to have a proper way of designing for working from home employees and there will not be any communication gap.

Attendance and accessibility criteria

Working from home should be an alternate or simultaneous option along with traditional workplace so there should be clear mention of when employees must be present in the office and cannot have the WFH option. Such as an employee can take 40% of work from home days in a month but the rest 60% of the days should be done at the office. Also, while an employee is working from home, the accessibility to that employee should also be mentioned in the policy. The policy should define whether or not the working from home employees are anticipated to report back to the supervisor or a coworker instantly. Also, it should restructure and define the communication channels, encouraging to have a strong relationship between employees and managers.

Set systematic at work periods

Work from Home Policy must undoubtedly state the expected working hours, and when employees are off work. If organizations significant flexibility, this might have inferred as setting a total number of working hours (i.e., employees are anticipated to work a total of 8 hours per day). More specifically establish a range of working hours (i.e., employees are expected have office hours from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.). Also, the work from policy must state the lunch breaks for the employees even if they are working from home (i.e., one team can be given 1-1.30 pm and another team on 1.30-2 pm) for lunch breaks). And while being on lunch breaks, the employee should not be disturbed to have meetings or works.

Specify meeting times and numbers

There is always a significant complain, that if employees are working from home they are supposed forced to attend indefinite meetings all day long, which should not be the case.

Also, setting up a meeting at 11 PM is not a healthy working habit because neither will this increase productivity of the employees nor will it be much fruitful. A policy should be formed that if an employee is working from home, he or she should be allowed to have a specific number of meetings and also have limited and specified working hours as mentioned in the previous point. This will help both the employee and the supervisor to work on the same page without being burnt out from attending unlimited meetings and having sudden and odd timing meetups which is not favorable to anyone.

Arrange for proper IT support

While working from home, employees will depend on technology equipment more than anything else because that is basically their office at home. Carrying out the most basic communication and job functions require functioning IT gear. Giving proper IT support is both more vital and logistically more challenging for a distributed workforce. But if this is given successfully, employee productivity will increase. By having someone while having a problem related to IT while working from home will give the employee mental satisfaction also employer can solve many IT related failed to meet deadline for work excuses if they provide proper IT support. If the organizations expect employees to use their personal computers, for example, it must clearly be stated in the policy so that there will not be any misunderstanding.

Criteria for measuring productivity

While allowing employees to do work from home, employers also have to keep in mind the productivity measure so that they can see the value that the employee is partaking in while being able to enjoy the benefit of working from home. The policy should clearly

mention how employees will be measured for productivity. This can include the period spent on the assignment, number of jobs completed, amount of client dealings, and more. This will eventually help in maintaining the culture of working from home and also bring positive results to the company.

Confidentiality

Every organization have its own confidential matters which is very sensitive and exclusive to the company only. So the policy regarding working from home must clearly mention the statement of confidentiality and also the specific requirements regarding official security and client privacy. For example, if the organization don't want the employee working from home to use a shared network or an open Wi-Fi as the security can be breached, then this should be clearly stated for employees to be careful while working from home. Also, if the organization is trusting the employees with valuable hardware and software, there should be an agreement regarding maintenance of those, so that there should not be any issues concerning them and also employees have the sense of responsibility towards the provided facility.

Dress code and environment

Working from home may seem to be working in the comfort of house cloths and being messy but this does not mean employees are allowed to attend meetings in their loungewear. While working from home, employees still have to be in constant communication with coworkers, customers, or professional partners via Video conferencing. To avoid any miscommunication and unfortunate event related to dress code, a message about the appropriate dress code while working from home will be rational.

Same goes for the surrounding working environment while carrying out work from home. Employers should mention any required setting they need the employees to be in while working from home. For example, just like office meetings be held in a specific meeting room, while working from home, employees need to have a distraction free workplace to finish their meetings and work.

Lawful Termination

Many employers feel negative emotions regarding to provide work from home chances because of the absence of face to face physical communications. Also many employees feel that they will be burdened with more work if they opted for the work from home option. Employees sometime also sense that maybe they will be terminated from their positions because of working from home. Nonetheless, the work from home policy ought to cover the point that no employee will be dismissed on the grounds of working from home unless they constantly lack in their productivity or other breach of contract.

Suggested policies are just the foundation of how a policy should be. Every organization has its own preferred way of operating things which will deduct or add on all these proposed policies but these are the main points companies should focus on while forming a policy regarding working from home. This will help both the employers and the employee to have a mutual understanding regarding working from home and minimize the scope of having misunderstanding. As working from home basically means employees will be working while not attending office, a proper policy is definitely a must to frame and apply to get the best results.

Points to consider to make the work from home policy successful and effective -

- Make communication strategy a main concern while working from home.
- Train all the employees about the policy and answer their queries.
- Query the employees for their feedback and use it to improve the policy.
- Make the policy flexible so that it can be changed under different circumstances.
- Assess the policy and employee performance on a regular basis.
- Have a healthy trusted relationship between organizations and employees.
- Morally boost the employees while they work from home.
- Not to make the employees overwork and take consideration of their health and safety while they are working from home.
- Give opinion and properly communicate if there is any problem or confusion.
- If there is any need of an urgent meeting at odd hours, make sure to communicate with the employee beforehand and do not pressure or burden him or her.
- Prioritize employee health and safety so that they feel valuable and have respect for their organization.
- Making sure that the work ethics and payment schedule is being followed properly even if the employees are working from home.
- Make an effort to connect beyond work so that the employee who is working from home does not feel isolated and detached from their office community.
- Properly communicate the vision and objectives regarding working from home and how to make the most out of this working strategy.
- Give proper support and care so that this working strategy and policy can function suitably for a long time.

A work-from-home policy is extremely eye-catching to employees which organizations needs to take advantage of. Not only does it strengthen work-life stability, it also expresses to employees that they're really appreciated as individuals in the organizations. It establishes flexibility and compassion on behalf of the employer and organization and helps to retain the talents working for the company for longer periods of time. Work from home policy will also help the organization to have a flexible work structure which will help them to survive amidst of various unwanted situations. Just as Covid 19 forced many organizations to opt for this strategy of working and evaluating both the positive and undesirable side to it, a policy is a necessity now. The organizations can gain a lot of benefits if there are proper usage of the policy because in upcoming workforces, the main concern of the employees will be how flexible the working facilities of their chosen organizations are. The mixture of both traditional office and working from home will give them the independency and trustworthiness which will eventually benefit both the employees and the employers.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

In this chapter I pointed out the main discoveries and the hypothetical involvement of this study and categorize areas for upcoming study. First, I reconsider the research queries and assess the efficiency of the theoretic coordination in addressing these queries. Next, I repeated the fundamental inquiry outcomes in correlation to the literature and the assistances the study makes to the concept. Lastly, I discuss the boundaries and observe the suggestions of this study for future exploration and run-through. Some of the major findings are mentioned below -

- In Bangladesh, working at traditional offices are always been the norm and regular thing. Whereas, working from home is a very regularly practiced working strategy around the world,
- In our country it is a fairly new thing that we have experienced in this quarantine days due to Covid 19. In the beginning of this pandemic in our country, when complete lockdown was announced suddenly, it was essential to let the employees to work from home.
- Also by experiencing it practically, there are various challenges that the employee and the employer came across which was not known to many before working from home.
- The biggest reason why most of the survey participants prefers working from home is because of the travel stress and time. They can actually have more time in hand to do their work while doing it from home.

- But there are some challenges faced regarding working from home to such as the work life balance is somehow lessened, fear of isolation and also the absence of a proper work from home policy.
- By having a work from home policy can help employees work without doubt as expectations and duties are clearly well-defined and there is something concrete to refer to as a solution when there is an issue.
- I hope this will give the organization a vision on framing and executing an operational work from home policy during the COVID-19 situation and also for the future.
- The limitations of my study are that I could not personally interview the participants due to the pandemic precautions. Also, as this is a vast area to explore to, I could not comprehend all the topics regarding work from home in my study.
- Work from home is not only a temporary solution for this pandemic. If it is used properly alongside with traditional office, it will bring great result for the organization because the employees will know that their workplace working strategy gives them the flexibility to work from home when needed and also have a policy regarding that.
- The suggested policy will help the organizations to have some fundamental points to start forming their own work from home policy. But as every organization and their work policy and circumstances are different, many points can be added and deducted from the suggested policy which will satisfy the need of the concerned organization.

5.2: Conclusion

By rushing towards into a sudden work-from-home situation with the correct attitude—knowing that employees may have to actually put in more effort than in the past—employers can frame a great working from home policy to maximize the benefits to work from home. This strategy of working should be encouraged because the opportunities overcome the challenges and it shows how effective it can be to increase productivity of the employees if executed properly and by implementing a proper work from home policy. Attending physical offices have no longer been the only option to work since many organizations are now seeing the positive sides of working from home. With working from home becoming familiar and public, it is high time for all establishments to come up with a comprehensible work from home policy that meets the administrative necessities regarding the organization as well as fulfills the desires of the employees who will be working from home. With fast developments in communication channels and artificial technologies, the personal attendance in the workplace would soon become an issue while assessing together with the urge to save money and energy from not go back and forth to workplace. Latest studies have found that if used properly, working from home is repeatedly more fruitful than working in the office workspace but can be mistreated at times. Therefore, the need for an effective and reasonable work from home policy is a definite need for every organization. An operational Work from Home Policy pushes employees aiming for accomplishment by clearly cooperating about opportunities, accountabilities, and manner. It should be go together with strategic instructions to support employees to enhance their work from home surroundings.

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Appendix

Sample of the Survey questionnaire

Title - Challenges and Opportunities of WFH

Full Name –

Company Name and Designation –

Gender –

Biggest Challenges regarding work from home –

- Managing Your Own Schedule & Time
- Getting distracted by everything
- Blurred Line Between Personal & Professional Life
- Reduced Supervision & Direction
- Communication & Coordination Challenges
- Unclear about Performance Metrics Staying motivated
- Social Isolation & Feeling isolated
- Overworking without break
- No fixed timing of work
- Unstable internet connection
- Technological challenges
- Building trust and commitment
- Lack of productivity and time mishandling
- Not all jobs suit home working

Opportunities of Work from Home -

- Less Commute/travel Stress
- Location Independence
- Save money of office lunch
- Offices can save some utility costs
- Positive Environmental Impact
- Impact on Sustainability
- Mix ways to work can increase productivity (Traditional office + WFH)
- Female worker can WFH in that time of the month
- Improved employee retention
- Improved staff health and wellbeing
- Technology makes it easier
- Less sickness absences
- More family time

Please share your thoughts regarding WFH.