Impact of Pandemic on Work-Life of Employees in IT Industry

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Abstract

Pandemic is the widespread infectious disease all across a nation or globe. The main victims of any pandemic are the working community as they work for the well-being of their families and themselves. The objective of this study is about how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the work environment, performance, and stress level of employees. The population for the study is 500 IT employees of H&R Block, Trivandrum. The sample size is 218 employees. To find the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees, regression analysis is done, so the 'p' value will show the degree of impact of the factors. From the result of the analysis, it is clear that all three objectives i.e. work environment, stress level, and performance of the employees is directly affected, i.e. the p-value being less than the required significance level for each of the three objectives. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has frozen the global economy as well as disturbed the work of employees. The pandemic has affected IT sector in a disrupted way. Everyone is forced to sit at their houses and do their work. This has increased the workload and stress level for the employees. The change of work environment has also lead to many changes in working style and reduces the efficiency of the working force. Since working from home cause more disturbances and reduce the concentration of the employees. The result of the study specifies that pandemic COVID-19 has a huge impact on employee work-life and personal life.

Keywords – COVID-19, Employee Performance, IT Industry, Pandemic, Stress, Work Environment

Introduction

Pandemic is an outbreak that identifies a great spread of diseases across the globe. It includes the distribution of infectious diseases to many nations around the world or perhaps continents, typically influencing numerous folks. Even though the phrases may well advise that there is a certain limit where a conference will be reported a great break out, pandemic, or perhaps outbreak, the particular big difference is frequently fuzzy, also between epidemiologists.

One cause for this is the increasing prevalence or lethalness of particular diseases throughout time, while others become less, forcing the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) to regularly adjust their statistical models. The CDC also admits that certain terms can incite undue panic. One such example is the 2016 Zika outbreak, which alarmed us when locally acquired sickness struck 218 people in Florida and 6 persons in Texas. An additional 46 were infected by sexual or laboratory transmission and one person was infected by an unknown route from person to person.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first recognized in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, leading to the continued 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. Common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms may include muscle pain, sputum production, diarrhea, sore throat, loss of smell, and abdominal pain. While the majority of cases conclude with modest symptoms, some progress to viral infection and multi-organ failure. As of March 28, 2020, the general rate of deaths per number of identified cases is 4.7 percent, ranging from 0.2 percent to 15% depending on age group and other health conditions.

As compared, the death rate of the 1918 flu pandemic was approximately 3% to 5%. Close contact and respiratory droplets formed when people cough or sneeze are the major ways the virus spreads. Although respiratory droplets may be formed during breathing, the virus is not often airborne. However, a recent study

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by the National Institute of Health and therefore the New England Journal of Medicine indicates that the virus remains viable in aerosols for up to 3 hours. The CDC recommends that healthcare professionals caring for patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection or suspected COVID-19 infection place the patient in an Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR) in addition to standard precautions, contact precautions, and airborne precautions. COVID-19 can also be contracted by touching a contaminated surface. It is most contagious when individuals are ill, though transmission may occur before symptoms develop.

The virus can persist for up to 72 hours on surfaces. The time between exposure and the beginning of symptoms is typically between two and fourteen days, with a mean of five days. The reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab is a quality procedure for diagnosis. A combination of symptoms, risk factors, and a chest CT scan revealing indications of pneumonia can also be used to identify the infection. To prevent infection, experts recommend frequent hand washing, social distancing, concealing coughs and sneezes with a tissue or inner elbow, and keeping unclean hands away from the face. Masks are recommended for persons who fear they have the virus, as well as their caretakers. The general public's recommendations for mask use differ, with some authority advising against it, others supporting it, and still others requiring it.

Currently, there's no vaccine or specific antiviral medication for COVID-19. Management involves the treatment of symptoms, supportive care, isolation, and experimental measures. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the 2019–20 coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and an epidemic on 11 March 2020. Local transmission of the disease recorded in many countries across all six WHO regions.

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is not only beneficial to one's health and relationships, but it may also boost one's productivity and, ultimately, performance. Simply put, if your staff don't see the work as a duty, they will work harder, make less mistakes, and become supporters of your business.

Based on the fact that it is very difficult nowadays to attract and retain younger staff, businesses with a reputation for supporting work/life balance have become very attractive. Concentrating on the balance between work and life can allow you to create a valuable talent pool for new hires. It saves time and money while guaranteeing a high degree of personal skill. Increased involvement, less burnouts and attention in less health concerns.

Organizations must guarantee that their employees have a healthy work-life balance in order for them to contribute more to the organization. To achieve this all firms, need to encourage time off so employees may relax with their families or go on holiday, take small breaks all day, seek for assistance from employees and each management will set an example to his colleagues to motivate them. When your staff is not in the office, it is critical to maintain their balance and privacy. This means you should avoid contacting them outside of business hours to give them time to switch off and recover from the stresses of ordinary job.

The majority of us will spend a significant portion of our time at work. We let it take over and pervade every area of our existence. Keeping this in mind, it is critical to strike the proper balance and put it into practise in your workplace. This will allow you and your team to disconnect from work and devote equal amounts of time to your personal lives. You will make significant strides in building an engaged and productive team by loosening the reins on your employees' work-life balance.

Literature Review

Importance of Work-life Balance

A Pandu (2019) employed structural equation modelling to create a model based on depending variables, like work-family disputes (WFC), family-work conflicts (FWC), working conditions (WE) and work-life balance (WLB), job satisfaction (JS), labor-survey intentions and independent variables (work-life balance) (LTI). The study was conducted in Chennai, with 173 personnel, 104 of them IT staff and 69 educators. This study showed that thoughts about work strongly predict the balance between work, life and life at 0.45, and the balance between work and life predicts work satisfaction at 0.99, which further influences the intentions for labour turnover at 0.81.

Dr. Rashida Banu, Dr. K. Duraipandian, I. Tajuddin (2015) studied the WLB (work-life balance) initiatives offered by the IT companies in Chennai to its employees. The initiatives were identified under the four heads of WLB. The study was conducted in terms of presence or absence, the importance is given by the respondents, and the gap between the actual and expected values. The survey data was collected from 387 IT employees of top IT industries in Chennai. The initiatives studied were ranked based on the presence and the amount of 'importance' given to each of the initiatives by the respondents.

K V L Manasa and M Showry (2018) studied that the growing importance of performance, pressure for productivity, the lure of attractive salaries and a

promise of ambitious careers in the IT sector give rise to work-life balance problems as it results in a grueling work schedule of 24/7. An investigation was conducted to find the relationship between work-life balance coping strategies in the IT firms and work-life balance among the women employees working in the IT industry in Hyderabad. The following observations were recorded: i) organizational practices have a significant impact on the work-life balance among female IT employees. Ii) Leadership plays an important role in implementing work-life balance strategies. Iii) Welfare programs and job sharing gives a higher level of satisfaction to the employees. The study was able to highlight the importance of work-life balance among employees and organizations.

Quality of Work Life

Godina Krishna Mohan and Kota Neela Mani Kanta (2013) evaluated the characteristics that influence the quality of work life in Andhra Pradesh state industrial organizations. The study included: working conditions, interpersonal relations, employee trust, autonomy and freedom, decision making participation, professional progress, education, superior support, safety conditions, high management support, conflict management, services, pay system linked to performance, communication, the execution of organizational policies, participatory administration. The results of the survey showed that workplaces, groups, personal growth and growth, motivation and the organisational atmosphere are major elements impacting the quality of life.

Nasl Saraji and Dargahi (2006) The quality of the parameters of work-life were discovered: fair pay and self-employment, occupational safety, safety and health standards in work, awards, acceptance of efforts, training and opportunities of profession progress, participation in decision-making, appeals and work satisfaction, confidence of management, balance between work, family, friends, and level of stress.

Work-life Balance In IT Industry

Magdalene Peter & Dr. S. Fabiyola Kavitha (2020) in their research stated that work and life are the two most important areas in the life of employed individuals. The topic of work-life balance not only concern the employee but also the organization. Through their study, they reached the conclusion that studied that a powerful balance among work and family life takes after a triumph win situation for agents and administrators. Work-Life Balance has twofold edged augmentations where the right evening out is basic to be kept up. Work-life balance practices if used truthfully and given to employees that cover their concerns helps to reduce work-life conflict and helps the employees build their career. And this will, in turn, increase the productivity of the organization.

Sharma Neeti & Nayak Parameswar (2018) Work-life balance is the balance between flow and time, time management flow through technology, and life preferences. The goal of this study is to assess the influence on the work and family in IT businesses in Noida of organizational policies on work-life balance. Results suggest a higher level of work stress for women than for men who work in organizations. Secondly, women are faced with more difficulties in keeping the balance between work and life than men in the IT industry.

Recent Pandemic

Amitabh Kant (2020), It was the shift of the way we are working that was the largest change in the epidemic COVID-19 brought into our life. The scenario prompted us to investigate new ways of carrying out our work leading to a global homework experiment. Technological innovations mould lives a few years ago in a way that is inconceivable. The idea of working in a post-COVID-19 office with defined times could well be irrelevant. This new approach was successfully supported by the availability of high-speed, low-cost internet and enhanced data-sharing and communications apps that could guarantee intact communication streams and managerial cooperation.

Bick, Raphael, and Yu, Tianwen (2020), According to one top fashion firm, in order to mitigate the effects of closed retail outlets, it established a strategic control room and redeployed workers into four cross-functional squads to support its front-line. WeSure, a subsidiary of the world's largest internet business Tencent, formed a COVID-19 response team at the start of the year to provide free insurance coverage to front-line medical personnel. One major bank directed its relationship managers to communicate with small-business customers via WeChat and video calls in order to better understand their condition and assist them in weathering the crisis. The adoption of a five-star rating system allows team members to vote on the usefulness of the meeting, providing rapid feedback

Causes of Pandemic on Work-life of Employees

Chandra and Siddharth (2013) conducted studies on the mortality rate from the influenza pandemic of 1918-19. They stated that it was the single most lethal short-term epidemic of the twentieth century. The most widely used estimation of mortality rate in Indonesia during the influenza pandemic is 1.5 million. They re-estimated the mortality from the influenza pandemic in Java and Madura, using panel data methods and data from multiple five-year population counts and two ten-year censuses. According to the

study conducted, the new estimates recommend that, in Java alone, population loss was in the range of 4.26-4.37 million, which is more than twice the established estimate for mortality for all of Indonesia. They concluded that the standing estimates of mortality from influenza in Java and Indonesia need to be revised upward significantly.

Knotts, RoseJohnson, J Lynn (1993) specified about the current corporate mentality appears to consider that employing a person with AIDS is a "malady." AIDS issues that were formerly ignored or concealed are finally being dealt with by a few pioneers in progressive organizations. Even when the workplace is free of AIDS, it is likely to influence HR management, organizational decisions, and policies. An active firm will create a responsible AIDS policy, enforce a comprehensive educational program, and change attitudes about the disease. Concerning health care coverage, a written statement that AIDS is part of the company's catastrophic benefit package, and affiliation with a health insurance company that does not discriminate is recommended. Encouraging employees to discuss their fears and feelings about the disease is beneficial for organizations. Employees should also be kept informed about AIDS. This should include information about places, sources, and locations for help for those who might have questions or require assistance.

Thomas K. Dasaklis n, Costas P. Pappis, Nikolaos P. Rachaniotis, (2010) in their work provided an overview on epidemics control and logistics operations aiming at stimulating further interest in the area of epidemics control supply chain management. It states about that recent outbreaks of epidemics account for a great number of deaths. Communicable or infectious diseases are the major cause of mortality rate after natural or man-made disasters. Rapid response in times of outbreak is necessary for effective control of the epidemic. To stop the epidemic from becoming disastrous, medical supplies and well-trained people to be deployed as soon as the outbreak starts and should be managed according to the available information. Therefore, the establishment and management of an emergency supply chain during the containment effort is very important. This study focuses on defining the role of logistics operations and their management that may assist the control of epidemic outbreaks through a critical review of existing literature and pinpointing gaps. Through the analysis of the selected literature, a series of insights are derived and several future research directions are proposed.

Research Methodology

Objectives

- To find out how the epidemic/pandemic affects the work environment/ organizational performance in the IT sector.
- To find out how the epidemic/pandemic affects the stress level of employees in the IT sector.
- To find out how the epidemic/pandemic affects the performance of employees in the IT sector.

Hypothesis

To set out our research, we have formulated the following hypotheses:-

Hypotheses (i)

There exists an association between COVID-19 pandemic and the work environment/ organizational performance in the IT sector.

Analysis: Correlation can be done to determine if there exists an association between the factors.

Hypotheses (ii)

There exists an association between COVID-19 pandemic and the stress level of employees in the IT sector.

Analysis: Correlation can be done to determine if there exists an association between the factors.

Hypotheses (iii)

There exists an association between COVID-19 pandemic and performance of employees in the IT sector.

Analysis: Correlation can be done to determine if there exists an association between the factors.

Research Design

Research design is characterized by some system from options not to mention ways decided by using a specialist to mix several different parts of researching in any practically practical mode so your researching concern might be economically worked on. The learning hires some correlational researching to develop the spot where the association relating to Pandemics/Epidemics and then the work-life from workers' might be certified. Some correlational solution is believed to create the learning

Primary and Secondary Data

The primary data will be collected from the circulation of the questionnaire to 218 employees of H&R Block an IT company in Technopark.The secondary data for this research was sourced from several articles, research works, internet, web portals, blogs, journals, and the details are given in the reference.

The total employees at that company was almost 500. From the working 500 employees, the population taken for the present study is 218.

Sample Size

The sample size is defined as a statistical concept that involves determining the number of observations that should be included in a statistical sample. It is an important aspect of any empirical study which requires inferences to be made about a population based on the given set of sample. Essentially, sample sizes are used to show parts of a population chosen for any survey or experiment. To accomplish this calculation, set the margin of error, ε, or the maximum distance desired for the sample estimate to deviate from the true value. To do this, use the confidence interval equation below, but set the term to the right of the ± sign equal to the margin of error, and solve for the resulting equation for sample size, n. The equation for calculating the sample size is shown below.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times N \times p \times q}{N \times \varepsilon^2 + z^2 \times p \times q}$$

Where,

z is the z score or the confidence level

ε is the margin of error

N is the population size

Probability of variable, p=q=50%

Assuming that the sample size necessary to estimate the proportion of IT employees in H&R Block with almost 500 employees, with 95% confidence, and a margin of error of 5%. Assume a population proportion of 0.5, and the population size is 500. Remember that z for a 95% confidence level is 1.96.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times N \times p \times q}{N \times \varepsilon^2 + z^2 \times p \times q}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96 \times 450 \times 50\% \times 50\%}{500 \times 5\% + 1.96 \times 50\% \times 50\%} = 218$$

This means 218 or more measurements/surveys are needed to have a confidence level of 95% that the real value is within ±5% of the measured/surveyed value.

Sampling Design

A systematic random sampling method is used for collecting the sample data which results in randomness. Systematic sampling is a type of probability sampling method in which sample members from a larger population are selected according to a random starting point but with a specific, periodic interval. This interval, is called the sampling interval, and it is calculated by dividing the population size by the desired sample size. Although the sample population is selected in advance, systematic sampling is still thought of as being random if the periodic interval is determined beforehand and the starting point is random. In this study, every third employee is selected for a sample from the database of 500 employees.

How Systematic Sampling Works

Since simple random sampling of a population can be inefficient and time-consuming, statisticians turn to other methods, such as systematic sampling. Choosing a sample size through a systematic approach can be done quickly. Once a fixed starting point has been identified, a constant interval is selected to facilitate participant selection.

Systematic sampling is preferable to simple random sampling when there is a low risk of data manipulation. If such a risk is high when a researcher can manipulate the interval length to obtain desired results, a simple random sampling technique would be more appropriate.

Systematic sampling is popular with researchers and analysts because of its simplicity. Researchers generally assume the results are representative of most normal population unless a random characteristic disproportionately exists with every "nth" data sample. In other words, a population needs to exhibit a natural degree of randomness along with the chosen metric. If the population has a type of standardized pattern, the risk of accidentally choosing very common cases is more apparent.

Within systematic sampling, as with other sampling methods, a target population must be selected before selecting participants. A population can be identified based on any number of desired characteristics that suit the purpose of the study being conducted. Some selection criteria may include age, gender, race, location, education level, and/or profession.

Data Collection

A descriptive study design was adapted to study pandemics/epidemics influence on the work-life of employees in an IT company in Technopark. Quantitative data collection methods are used to gather primary data. Questionnaires are distributed to employees through emails, WhatsApp, and messenger as Google forms and asked them to complete the same.

Data analysis

Table 1: Correlations Matrix for Impact of COVID-19 on work environment, overall stress level of employees and employee performance

	Impact of COVID-19 on Work Environment	Impact of COVID-19 on the Stress level of Employees	Impact of COVID-19 on Employee Performance
Hypothesis	There is no association between COVID-19 pandemic and the work environment/ organizational performance in the IT sector.	There is no association between COVID-19 pandemic and the stress level of employees in the IT sector.	There is no association between COVID-19 pandemic and performance of employees in the IT sector.
Pearson Correlation	-.283 (Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed))	.600 (Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).)	-.379 (Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).)
Inference	The r-value for the correlation is -0.283, this shows that there exists a negative correlation between the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and work.	The r-value for the correlation is 0.600, this shows that there exists a positive correlation between COVID-19 pandemic and the stress levels of employees	The r-value for the correlation is -0.379, this shows that there exists a negative correlation between COVID-19 pandemic and performances of employees in the IT sector.

Hypothesis Testing- Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis Testing- Regression Analysis

Regression Equation

A regression equation is a statistical model that decides the exact relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable. Model regression equations allow to predict the outcome with a relatively small amount of error.

$$Y_i = b_0 + b_1 X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

In this model, Yi represents an outcome variable and Xi represents its equivalent predictor variable. The equation also contains numerical relationships between the predictor and the outcome. The term b0 represents an intercept for the model if the predictor is a zero value. It is considered as a baseline or control point. The term bi represents the numerical relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome for the ith term. These are called regression coefficients.

Impact of Change In Work-Related Variables Post COVID-19 Outbreak on Work Environment, Overall Stress level of Employees and Employee Performance

The outcome of the regression analysis is as follows:-

(i) The analysis of independent variables work-life (WL), organizational performance (OP), Work-Related Stress (WRS), Effective Task completion (ETC) and Monitoring and proper control (MC), and dependent variable work environment (WE) is carried out here.

(ii) The analysis of independent variables Work-life(WL), Organizational Performance(OP), Work-Related Stress(WRS), Effective Task Completion (ETC), and Monitoring and proper control(MC) and dependent variable Overall Stress Levels(OS) is carried out here.

(iii) The analysis of independent variables Work-life(WL), Organizational Performance(OP), Work-Related Stress(WRS), Effective Task Completion (ETC), and Monitoring and proper control(MC) and dependent variable Employee performance (EP) is carried out here.

Table 2: Coefficient table for the impact of change in work-related variables post COVID-19 outbreak on work environment, overall stress level of employees and employee performance

Results

1. This study reveals that COVID –19 affects the work environment/organizational performance in the IT sector as the r-value is -0.28. As the work environment changes the concentration of the employees also changes and also the involvement towards work also reduces.
2. This study reveals that COVID –19 affects the stress level of employees in the IT sector as the r-value is 0.600. The pandemic also increased the stress level of employees. They have fear that there is a recession awaiting the world and they might lose their jobs or their financial position gets challenged.

3. This study reveals that COVID –19 affect the performance of employees in the IT sector as the r-value is -0.379. As most of the IT employees are working from home, there is a chance of work-life conflict and this will certainly reflect in the performance of the employees.
4. The factors WL, OP, WRS, and MC have a positive correlation on the work environment (WE) and the factor ETC has a negative correlation on the work environment (WE).
5. The factors WL, OP, and WRS have a positive correlation on the Overall Stress Levels (OS) and the factors ETC and MC have a negative correlation on the Overall Stress Levels (OS) of employees.
6. The factors OP and MC have a positive correlation on the Employee Performance (EP) and the factor WL, WRS and, ETC have a negative correlation on the Employee Performance (EP).
7. Every organization is supporting work from home facility to keep up with social distancing and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Findings and Discussions

COVID-19 pandemic is surely an unprecedented dilemma that leads the whole world to a shocking end. From considering it as an ordinary virus to emerging as a deadly virus that killed many people across the world. The wild spread of the virus affected people in every profession.

As the business has an enormous contribution to the world economy. The work from home facility make the IT industry working. It was considered so interesting and IT workers got more time to spend with their family which they often missed. But in a later period, the home routine became so bored and they started to miss their workplace. But soon they started to face many problems. The organizations started to make them work for long hours. This will surely benefit the organization, but it caused some bad impacts on employees.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effect of COVID-19 on some of the factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees. H&R Block an IT company in Trivandrum is taken for the research purpose. The company consists of almost 500 employees. From a total of 500 employees, 218 or more measurements/surveys were taken to have a confidence level of 95%.

When correlation analysis was conducted for the 218 samples, the results showed that there exists an association between COVID-19 and the other factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees. The results show positive and negative correlation which ensures the existence of the association.

When the regression analysis was conducted for the 218 samples, the results showed that there exists an association or a relationship between the impact of COVID-19 such as quality of Work-life (WL), Organizational Performance (OP), Work-Related Stress (WRS) Effective Task Completion (ETC) and Effective Monitoring and Control (EMC) and the other factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees.

The factors WL, OP, WRS, and MC have a positive correlation on the work environment (WE) and the factor ETC has a negative correlation on the work environment (WE). The factors WL, OP, and WRS have a positive correlation on the Overall Stress Levels (OS) and the factors ETC and MC have a negative correlation on the Overall Stress Levels (OS) of employees. The factors OP and MC have a positive correlation on the Employee Performance (EP) and the factor WL, WRS and, ETC have a negative correlation on the Employee Performance (EP).

So as a result in the analysis, clearly states that the null hypothesis is rejected i.e., there is no association or relationship between COVID-19 and the other factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees and accepted the alternative hypothesis i.e., there is an association or a relationship between COVID-19 and the other factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees.

Thus there is a connection between COVID-19 and other factors such as work environment, employee stress, and performance of the employees. And employees seem to be affected by this. This may not be a serious problem now. But later on, this can backfires to the organization. As employees are considered as the backbone of an organization, any factor that affects the employee's state of work or mind will surely affect the existence of the organization

Future Scope

- As every organization is supporting work from the home facility it should be continued till the COVID-19 is completely resolved.
- Organizations can conduct some creative programs for entertainment that will help employees to fight their stress. This can incorporate the employees' family members also so that they get the feeling of togetherness.
- Organizations can provide counseling sections to employees to relieve their stress at work and family.
- Encourage employees to do experiments in arts and creativity to enhance mental health and performance.

- Creativity can be incorporated into the presentation or the meetings.
- Managers should ensure that there are no meetings or work after regular working hours and also reducing the number of meetings on Fridays.

Conflict of Interest Nil

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