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**WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND MENTAL HEALTH: REMOTE
WORKING A CHALLENGE FOR WORKFORCE IN INDIA
DURING COVID-19**

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Abstract

The workforce in India faced the test of finding the right balance between work and life activities during COVID 19. Throughout this period of the crisis, many individuals all over the planet faced a sudden working transition, had to work from a remote location, i.e., work from home likewise happened in India. COVID-19 catastrophe situation appeared to be more distressing as people invested more time and energy in online meetings, courses, pieces of training, webinars, and gatherings. They likewise needed "talking in person" with partners or colleagues that went missing. The difference between family time and professional time was so pronounced that they discovered it was difficult to adapt to and manage with. Furthermore, the uncertainty regarding work and the future exacerbated the problem. All of this revealed negative tendencies, as workers were only a call, summons, or message away from the employer or firm, helplessness to answer frequently generated discomfort, and therefore relaxation time with family regularly added strain and evident stress. The study shows and proves that the remote workforce in India significantly faced higher work-life imbalance in the form of raised work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict while in comparison to the regular workers with minimal change in their daily lives. Furthermore, the increased conflicts were more significant for the female population than the male population. Lastly, noticed the negative consequences of these raised conflict levels on the mental health strata of the population.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Remote Working, Work-Life Balance, COVID-19, Well-Being, Work-to-Family Conflict, Family-to-Work Conflict*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about broad tension and plenty of dramatic changes in the working environment, including huge areas of employees who started remote working or working from home. Work-life balance has consistently been an issue once people started to work out of the home, without the typical degree of command throughout their functioning hours or the obligations dispensed to them at work. With the continuous coronavirus 2019 pandemic, which has caused high joblessness rates in numerous nations worldwide, it may appear to be engrossing to discuss the balance between work and family activities. Nonetheless, regardless of how squeezing the requirement for business, it is fundamental to see how best people can encounter fulfillment inside and outside working hours. Many at-home are relied upon to be on the web or accessible for far longer than previously. Women might be verifiably expected to deal with homegrown issues after to working hours. Likewise, the consideration of kids and old family members might be an implicit or acknowledged commitment of one working member.

Progressively phase I in India, the COVID-19 pandemic has enormously impacted the everyday schedules of the vast majority in the focal part of 2020. Lockdown and impediment restrictions have isolated people, harmed the global economy, and limited introduction to physical and mental clinical benefits. While these activities are necessary to limit the spread of infection, the negative physical, psychological, mental, and social consequences are obvious. The second wave of COVID-19 in India, Phase II, brought tremendous catastrophes and misfortunes. Furthermore, practical considerations particular to the pandemic, such as conformity to government directives, quarantine, school closure concerns, and governments' perceived efficiency—already seen inefficiency of the ability of the Indian government to provide appropriate oxygen to its inhabitants, employment security, financial ramifications, and the capacity of the health care system – witnessed a big disaster during the second wave of COVID 19, and infection concern, inflated prices of medicines and other life-saving instruments such as oximeter, while they are disturbing

themselves, they may also contribute to a decline in mental health and well-being. While there are certain advantages to working from home, the transition can be troublesome and observing equilibrium inside your life can become more confounded. Regardless COVID-19 has left you feeling wore out, exhausted, overworked, and stressed.

Despite the fact that mental health is under stress during an emergency, the issue and its economic repercussions have begun to gain attention. Moreover, bosses have begun to become mindful that working environments that advance psychological well-being, promote mental health, and support individuals with mental prosperity are bound to reduce absenteeism, increase efficiency, and benefit from related economic gains. As a result, whereas mental health was previously "on the agenda," it now warrants further consideration. What is so concerning about the COVID-19 dilemma is that it affects everyone's mental health: individuals with past mental health difficulties are more powerless since they have "little reserve" to deal with the added stress. Furthermore, for those who have never had a mental health problem, the rapid and repeated massive large-scale changes brought about by COVID-19 increase the likelihood of having psychological wellbeing and mental health problems. Overall, everyone is dealing not only with changes and concomitant stress in their day-to-day professional routines, but also in their personal life. These progressions range from unexpectedly being at home with other relatives, family members, or coping with even taking care of sick family members, debilitated relatives while being relied on to finish employment. Furthermore, many people will be concerned about high-risk loved ones, such as parents and grandparents.

Quite possibly, the quickest, most critical, and most significant effect for most people was that the individuals who had the option were needed to start and were expected to commence working from home. While some fundamental and crucial workers (for example, medical care, basic food item, postal/conveyance, sanitation, and sterilization) and those whose jobs needed them to be there (for example, manufacturing, police) were never able to entirely transit to remote work. However, many people had the option and were able to shift some or all of their job duty to their homes

(Rigotti *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we should see the apparent quick change to remote working during COVID - 19 as a continuous verifiable shift, supported by innovation, has permitted numerous workers to finish critical segments of their work devoid of entering a common office area (Bell, 2012; Olson, 1983). It is hardly surprising that a worldwide pandemic would increase most people's stress levels, anxiety, unfavorable employee emotions, and burnout. The WHO has effectively cautioned that the abrupt and close steady stream of information and news reports about this episode can make anybody worry. Past examinations of catastrophic events additionally highlight how such pressure, negative sentiments (assumptions) and burnout, prompts a resulting expansion in mental health disorders. Whereas going to work daily can provide some distraction and thus stress relief, many employees will feel the strain cannot be easily averted, especially if they are placed in a "lockdown" where they cannot leave their homes.

Therefore, considering the urgency of the situation this paper is intended to investigate the significance of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on the workforce's mental health in India, during COVID 19. Work-life balance has been examined in the context of for-profit businesses (Blair-Loy, 2003; English, 2003). Work-life balance is gaining ground for both employers and employees in most organisations today. As a result, initiatives such as alternative work arrangements, leave policies, flexible working hours, rewards in place of family care obligations, and employee assistance programmes have become integral components of the majority of business benefit programmes and compensation packages (Mukhtar, 2012).

Literature Review

Exploration of the past literature was done to identify the variables impacting work-life balance and mental health of the workforce.

1. Work-life balance (WLB): refers to an individual's capacity to meet work and family obligations, as well as other non-work responsibilities and interests.
2. The conflict: Work-family conflict is an inter-role job struggle emerging from incongruent tensions between work and family jobs. Exploration has repeatedly

confirmed the adverse consequences of work-family struggle on employees' conduct, feelings, mental health, and psychological well-being (Frone, 2003). First and foremost, there are two types of conflicts that develop as a result of work interfering with family (work-to-family conflict) and family interfering with work (family-to-work conflict) (Frone *et al.*, 1992).

3. **Mental Health:** A condition of well-being wherein an individual uses his/her own capacities to adapt to life's ordinary burdens.

In case a legitimate plan is given to work and non-work personal existence with a minimum struggle between dual roles an individual plays, then, at that point, such a running routine is the one with a balance between work and life activities. Work-life balance entails devotion to work and non-work existence with a negligible conflict between the two jobs. A good work-life balance promotes strong hierarchical performance, increased occupation satisfaction, organisational performance, and more grounded authoritative commitment. It likewise assumes a significant part in people's mental health, wellbeing, family, and, by and large, overall satisfaction.

The emphasis on work and family is critical since family and work are viewed as the most significant aspects of everyone's life, and any competing demands from work and family life cause friction and negatively damage workers' well-being (Clark, 2000; Frone, 2000). As a result, when there is no role conflict and people are content with their job and family duties, good WLB and wellbeing can be obtained (Clark, 2000). According to the literature, common repercussions of poor WLB include depression and distress, which contribute to reduced productivity, poorer job quality, more absenteeism, and employee turnover (Seligman, 2011; Hill, 2005).

Mass layoffs and short-staffing in some organizations will undoubtedly increase job burdens (workloads) and working hours, which can be exacerbated by the necessity to cover debilitated or weak partners. More significant adaptability is also required during the pandemic, as personnel may be required to learn new skills fast and extend their accessibility to make the organization more competitive

(competitive). These variables will enhance the risk of work-life imbalance, i.e., workplace conflict, much as developing experiences (emerging phenomena) of chronic stress, pressure, and burnout might increase the possibility of future health problems. Employees who work from home frequently encounter overlap between work and personal life, such as difficulty identifying limits, taking daily breaks, and dealing with some "gap" between work and personal life. An investigation conducted in 2017 by the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO), which included data from more than 15 countries, revealed that people were useful (productive) while working from home (Charlesworth & Malone, 2017). Longer working hours, more work (volume/quantity/extent/intensity), and work-home encroachment (interference/meddling) were additional dangers. Remote workers reported higher degrees of stress and strain, as well as higher levels of sleep deprivation (42 percent versus 29 percent of office workers). Prior investigations have exhibited the adverse consequences of the work-family struggle. There is an acknowledged degree of proof demonstrating that work-family struggle has a significant impact on employees' prosperity, affecting physical, behavioral, just as cognitive-affective parts of their lives (Allen *et al.*, 2000). Adverse outcomes incorporate raised occupation stress (Frone *et al.*, 1992), lower work fulfillment, everyday life fulfillment, and family life satisfaction. Greenglass (1985) secured that interference between a job and day-to-day life is identified with despair, bothering, and uneasiness amongst female employees.

Working from home has a detrimental impact on psychological well-being and leads to burnout in the workplace (Khanna *et al.*, 2020), and burnout is negatively associated with psychological well-being (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). WLB is a perfect predictor of mental happiness and well-being at workplace. (Lunau *et al.*, 2014) in their study across European countries established a negative relationship between health issues and work life balance. (Zheng *et al.*, 2015) investigated individual work-life balance coping methods and employee perceptions of work-life balance. Individuals with a good attitude and some skills for dealing with work-life balance reported outstanding

well-being, according to the findings. Work-life balance is a predictor of eudaimonic well-being (Soni & Bakhru, 2019).

Research gap- Existing research focuses on the relationship between WLB and mental health and other related factors but no study has attempted to do a comparative analysis of these variables between genders and employees working from home and working from an office. Prior research used all of these variables while working in an office, however current research is more focused on the work-from-home lifestyle. The paradigm shift to a hybrid model of working mental health and work life balance will act as catalysts for employee performance. These variables have not been studied together before in the educational and telecom sectors in India.

Aim- A sense of balance in the work-life among professionals is the way to improve effectiveness and was significantly impacted through the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown because of abrupt, surprising changes. As a result, this study was led to comprehend the progressions they went through both at home and on the professional front, with speculation that people working from home are more negatively affected by the pandemic, resulting in significant levels of conflict and negative relationship status with their mental health, in comparison to workers who regularly attend their onsite location.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Hypothesis

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought about an incredibly significant degree of stress, altered (WLB) work-life balance, and (MH) mental health bleakness. The majority of the workers feel the warmth of the emergency crisis and potentially encounter uneasiness, wretchedness and struggle to manage their day-to-day work and family activities. In order to keep a propelled, valuable and motivated workforce, experts need to track down the best strategies to accumulate and decode employees' input, including from working from home individuals, and make changes in like manner, what is deemed significant and need of the dire circumstance.

Objective: To recognize the significance of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on the workforce's mental health in India, during COVID 19.

Research Questions

Q1. How does work to family (WF) conflict relate to the mental health of the workforce in India, during COVID 19, moreover monitoring and contending that individuals working regularly (going to the office) are better dealing with WF conflict and thus better mental health compared to the individuals working from home?

Assertion: It was hypothesized that workers regularly going to the office will better deal with work-family conflict and, in turn, reveal better mental health than individuals working from home. Additionally, it is expected that higher work-family conflict will negatively relate (negative correlation coefficient) to the mental health of the individuals.

Q2. How does family to work (FW) conflict relate to the mental health of the workforce in India, during COVID 19, moreover monitoring and contending that individuals working regularly (going to the office) are better dealing with FW conflict and thus better mental health compared to the individuals working from home?

Assertion: It was hypothesized that workers regularly going to the office will better deal with family-work conflict and, in turn, reveal better mental health than individuals working from home. Additionally, it is expected that higher family-work conflict will negatively relate (negative correlation coefficient) to the mental health of the individuals.

Q3. Is there any influence of gender on work to family and family to work conflict on workforce in India, during COVID 19.

Assertion: It was hypothesized that gender will not play any role in determining conflict among working professionals in India during COVID 19.

Hypotheses:

Based on a rigorous review of literature and objectives identified for the study following two hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a negative correlation between work-to-family conflict and the mental health of the workforce in India.

H2: There is a negative correlation between family-to-work conflict and the mental health of the workforce in India.

H3: There is no significant difference in work to family conflict between male and female employees in India.

H4: There is no significant difference in family to work conflict between male and female employees in India.

Sample Population and Procedure

The study examined the profile of 400 working employees employed in India's educational and communication sector on parameters of prime importance currently vis. Work-Life Balance and the Mental Health. Estimating the assessment was coordinated considering the present economic slump confronting nations around the world, which has been brought about by pitched well-being and mental health concerns (COVID-19). The study members analyzed in their workplaces pertain to individuals working across India, from four major organizations: Amity University, Manav Rachna University, Jio and Airtel. The participants were approached purposively for this study, comprised of (n= 184, 46%) females and (n= 216, 54%) males. The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum age of the workforce were noticed (M=39.33, SD=11.13, Min =22, Max =65). Of the people sampled, the majority worked from home, for instance, remote working (n=290, 72.5%) vs. office location (n=110, 27.5%). In general, the study ensured that participation depends on the respondent's availability and the sole interest of him/her to participate. All the participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study and were enrolled after obtaining informed consent. The instruments were administered using an online survey procedure.

Phase I

In the first phase, the examiner introduced herself to the participants, warmly oriented them to the purpose of the study, sought informed permission from them to conduct her research and data collection procedure. After orientation representatives gave their permissions to the examiner,

participants matching the selection criterion for voluntary investigation were assessed.

Phase II

The participants (n=400) were described and asked to respond subjectively on all dimensions of self-report scaling questions assessing the levels of work-life balance and mental health. They were encouraged and allowed to discuss. They were duly informed that there is no right or wrong answer to questions while measuring such a self-assessment program.

Phase III

Efficacy of the exploratory research theory – The self-assessments made by the participants were properly evaluated and systematically scrutinized utilizing optimal investigation research design and analytical techniques. The following results section give an evident explanation of the efficiency of the exploratory research theory to be adopted by organizations or interested parties for the studied working employees, describing and representing the population.

Research Instruments

Work-family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) -Work-life balance was assessed using a 10-item WAFCS scale with two subdimensions: work-to-family conflict (5 items) and family-to-work conflict (5 items). The scale was developed by Haslam et al., 2015 wherein the conflict levels can be self-assessed on a range of 5 to 35; additionally, higher scores indicate higher levels of conflict. The Likert score ranges from 1 very strongly disagree to 7 very strongly agree.

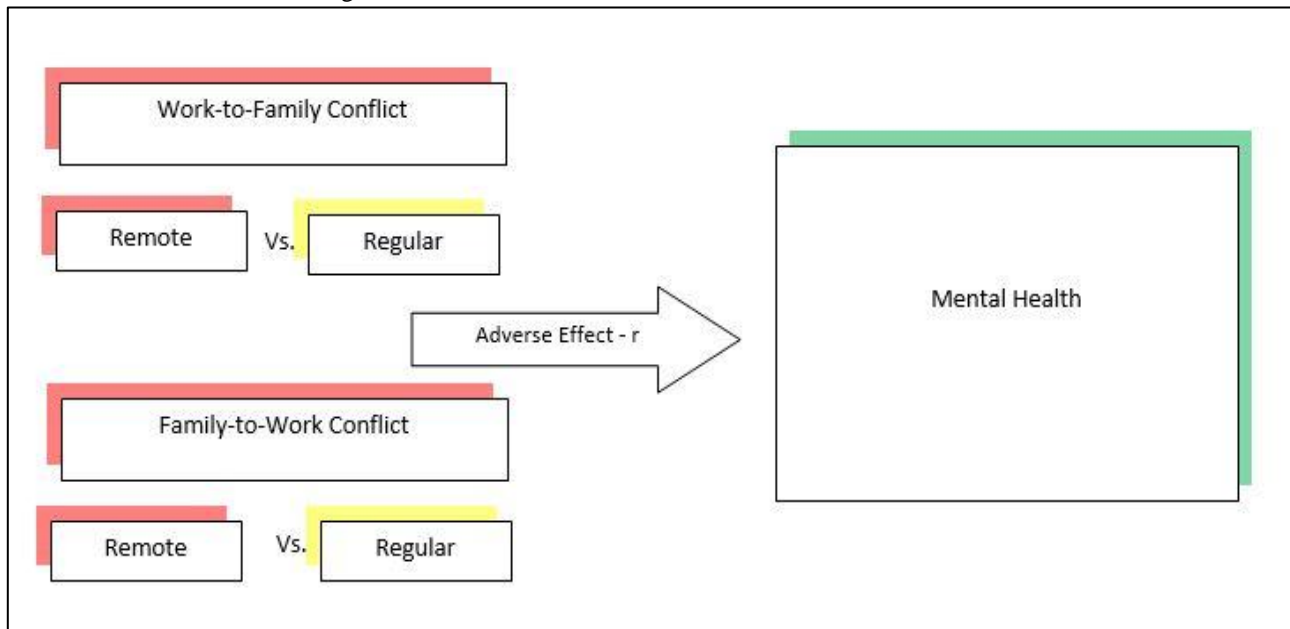
Mental Health - The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), 14 items, people who complete the test must check the scenario that best depicts their experience with each assertion (statement) in recent weeks using a 5-point Likert scale (none of the time, once in a while, i.e., rarely, some of the time, often, all of the time).

The Likert scale assigns a score from 1 to 5 to each item, yielding a base score of 14 and a maximum score of 70. All of the items received high marks. The overall score for the WEMWBS is calculated by adding the scores for all items with equivalent loads. A higher WEMWBS score indicates a higher level of mental well-being. The final measure had 14 items that addressed both libertine and eudaemonic aspects of psychological well-being, namely, mental health including the good impact (feelings of hopefulness, happiness, and relaxation), rewarding relational connections, and positive working relationships (energy, clear thinking, self-acknowledgment, self-awareness, skill, personal development, and self-sufficiency). Mental prosperity was surveyed (current - in recent weeks) through the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale [WEMWBS (Tennant *et al.*, 2007)]. The WEMWBS has been utilized in examinations across the world [e.g., (Smith *et al.*, 2017)]. It has solid positive connections to different proportions of positive psychological well-being, i.e., mental health (Tennant *et al.*, 2007; Stewart-Brown *et al.*, 2011). The WEMWBS contained 14 items covering issues like positive effect/affect, levels of working, and connections in recent weeks. The internal consistency of the WEMWBS was high in the 2020 sample tested then (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.94$).

Research Design

The present prospective study measures two broad constructs relevant to the Indian workforce, especially during the COVID 19 period. The two constructs are work life balance and mental health. To investigate the states objective statistical mean difference between remote workers and regular employees, reliability testing and correlation analysis has been done. The objective variable (described as Y mathematically) is the workforce's mental health as measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale. At the same time, the explanatory variable (defined as X mathematically) is the workforce's work-life balance perceived by working professionals, which was measured using the Work-family Conflict Scale.

Figure 1 Depicts The Conceptual Framework Developed Based On The Literature Review. Work-Family Conflict Scale Measures Work To Family And Family To Work Conflict. The Scale Is Administered On Two Groups Of Employees- Regular And Remote To See Its Effect On Their Mental Health.



Source: Conceptual Framework

Statistics

Workforce group and Sex differences were reported utilizing the independent sample t-test. Systematic variations were assessed using investigational condition comparison, mean (\bar{x}), and corresponding difference evaluated at a 1% significance. Further to support the significance of such comparisons, the effect size is duly reported for every experimental phase evaluation using r (Rosenthal, 1991; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2008). The relationship investigated, established between the work-life balance and mental health, was analyzed using the Pearson Correlation examination. Also supported by internal consistencies for each group of participants to get dependable assessments and generalize the findings.

RESULTS

The people working from home showed a significant higher work-to-family conflict with scores being ($M = 24.99$, $SD = 5.93$) while in comparison to the regular people to work showed a significant lesser work-to-family conflict ($M =$

15.22 , $SD = 6.48$), $t(398) = -14.32$, $p < .01$, effect size $r = 58.31\%$. High scores for the remote working group suggest that people at home experience more pressure, stress, burnout, sleep deprivation, and obvious conflicts that transfer (work interference with family) from their work to their respective families. Hence it can be concluded that work to family conflict negatively impacts mental health, thus supporting our first hypothesis H1. To test hypotheses H1 and H2 we conducted t-test to see mean difference between two groups (remote workers and regular workers), which is shown in table 1.

Likewise, the people working from home showed a significant higher family-to-work conflict with scores being ($M = 24.25$, $SD = 7.85$) while in comparison to the regular people to work showed a significant lesser family-to-work conflict ($M = 16.75$, $SD = 9.30$), $t(398) = -8.09$, $p < .01$, effect size $r = 37.57\%$. The magnitude of the experimental effect is quantified as effect size. The greater the association between two variables, the larger the effect size. High scores for the remote working group suggest that people at home

experience more pressure, stress, burnout, sleep deprivation, and obvious conflicts that transfer (family interference with work) from their families to their respective work outcomes. The findings support our second hypothesis H2 (refer table 4)

In accordance, the group of people working from home showed a significantly lower mental health status, with scores being (M = 33.24, SD = 12.10). In contrast, the regular group of the working population who were far better off in their mental health status with scores being (M = 46.49, SD = 15.79), $t(398) = 8.95, p < .01$, effect size $r = 40.93\%$.

Table 1: Assessment of Work-To-Family Conflict, Family-To-Work Conflict, The Mental Health Of The Workforce Working In India During COVID 19

Workforce Group	Parameter	N	M (SD)	t (df)	p-value	Effect Size r
Regular	Work-to-Family Conflict	110	15.22 (6.48)	-14.32 (398)	.000	58.31%
Work From Home		290	24.99 (5.93)			
Regular	Family-to-Work Conflict	110	16.75 (9.30)	- 8.09 (398)	.000	37.57%
Work From Home		290	24.25 (7.85)			
Regular	Mental Health	110	46.49 (15.79)	8.95 (398)	.000	40.93%
Work From Home		290	33.24 (12.10)			

Source: Authors' Compilation

To test hypotheses H3 and H4 we conducted t-test to see mean difference between two groups (male and female employees), which is shown in table 2.

The female group of working employees in India experienced a significantly higher conflict in their work-life balance for both conflicts. The respective scores are noted to be work-to-family conflict (M = 24.33, SD = 6.15) while in comparison to male (M = 20.58, SD = 8.09), $t(398) = 5.13, p < .01$, effect size $r = 24.90\%$; likewise, family-to-

work conflict (M = 27.30, SD = 6.18) while in comparison to male (M = 17.83, SD = 8.58), $t(398) = 12.46, p < .01$, effect size $r = 52.97\%$. Accordingly, they experienced a significantly lower mental health status with scores being (M = 33.96, SD = 12.23) while the men sample population in India experienced a significantly higher mental health strata with scores noticed (M = 39.38, SD = 15.73), $t(398) = -3.79, p < .01$, effect size $r = 18.67\%$. Hence rejecting H3 and H4 (refer table 4).

Table 2: Assessment of sex differences for the parameters work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, the mental health of the workforce working in India during COVID 19

Sex	Parameter	N	M (SD)	t (df)	p-value	Effect Size r
Female	Work-to-Family Conflict	184	24.33 (6.15)	5.13 (398)	.000	24.90%
Male		216	20.58 (8.09)			
Female	Family-to-Work Conflict	184	27.30 (6.18)	12.46 (398)	.000	52.97%
Male		216	17.83 (8.58)			
Female	Mental Health	184	33.96 (12.23)	-3.79 (398)	.000	18.67%
Male		216	39.38 (15.73)			

Source: Authors' Compilation

The relationship, correlation coefficient established between Work-to-Family Conflict and the Mental Health, amongst the Indian workforce during the COVID 19 was found to be negative with $r = -.523^{**}$, $p < .01$ (refer table 3). Since the relationship is noteworthy and negative by default, if the work interference with the family goes up, this will lead to adverse mental health outcomes. In turn, negative consequences for individuals' prosperity and well-being would prompt hostile circumstances when the work-life imbalance increases. In a similar manner, the relationship correlation coefficient established between Family-to-Work Conflict and the Mental Health amongst the Indian workforce during the COVID 19 was found to be negative with $r = -.428^{**}$, $p < .01$. Since the relationship is noteworthy

and negative by default, if the family interference with work goes up, this will lead to adverse mental health outcomes. This way, adverse results for people's flourishing and prosperity would provoke unfriendly conditions when the work-life discomfort increments.

Table 3 represents the respective Internal Consistency assessed through Cronbach's Alpha wherein the value of the mental health was realized as $\alpha = 0.958$, $n=14$ items, for Work-family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) $\alpha = 0.892$, $n=10$ items. Further for Work-to-Family Conflict was evaluated as $\alpha = .864$, $n=5$ items & Family-to-Work Conflict, $\alpha = .923$, $n = 5$ items. All such values indicate an excellent scenario that assessed data will reproduce consistent findings.

Table 3: Assessment of reliability and correlation between work-life balance and the mental health

	N Items	Reliability	Work-to-Family Conflict	Family-to-Work Conflict
Mental Health	14	$\alpha = .958$		
Work-family Conflict Scale (WAFCS)	10	$\alpha = .892$		
N Items			5	5
Reliability			$\alpha = .864$	$\alpha = .923$
Pearson Correlation			$r = -.523^{**}$	$r = -.428^{**}$

Note: ** indicates significance at 5 percent significance level.

Source: Authors' Compilation

Table 4: Results of hypotheses testing

Sr. No	Hypothesis	Accepted	Rejected
H1	There is a negative correlation between work to family conflict and mental health of workforce in India.	Yes	
H2	There is a negative correlation between family to work conflict and mental health of workforce in India.	Yes	
H3	There is no significant difference in work to family conflict between male and female employees in India.		Yes
H4	There is no significant difference in family to work conflict between male and female employees in India.		Yes

Source: Authors' Compilation

DISCUSSION

The current study's findings revealed a disparity in the work-life balance and mental health in terms of remote working during the lockdown, indicating a lack of readiness. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis assists policymakers in providing good and strategic preparation for future disaster breakouts. Policymakers should prioritise their preparedness plans in terms of financial implications and employee attrition during a pandemic (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Employees who are unable to maintain a healthy work-life balance will not perform as well as the organisation expects. In the presence of mental well-being, this link may shift.

The researcher discovered a link between mental health and work-life balance. Employees' mental well-being will suffer if they are unable to establish a work-life balance. Employees are unable to preserve work-life balance and mental well-being due to increased stress during these challenging epidemic times.

The current findings suggest that employees working from home experience higher work to family and family to work conflict as compared to the employees who are working from home. The expectations while working from home also revolve around personal responsibilities and duties that an employee is devoid of while working from office premises. Similarly the level of work life imbalance reported in female employees is higher as compared to male employees working from home. In the Indian scenario, women are treated as pillars of household setup. Even if the women are working as effectively and as hard as men to support the livelihood of their families, the expectations from women as far exceed the reality. They are expected to excel at workplace as well as take care of everything back at home. This expectation myriad leads to complete imbalance and loss of mental peace. Gender parity and inclusiveness is still a budding concept as the mental frame of the majority of people have preconceived expectations from women which greatly differ from men. Women can never be treated as men in reality.

Every Indian worker was put to the test of finding the correct balance between work and personal life. The workforce's

ability to effectively consolidate official, family commitments and individual-private life is significant for both firms and workers' families. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis circumstance, many individuals all through the planet had to work from a remote location, i.e., work from home likewise happened in India. At first, there were noticed some specific assumptions regarding the chance of telecommuting or homeworking as a positive component that will advance balance between work and life activities such as by saving travel time. Notwithstanding, over the long run, likewise uncovered negative inclinations, as the workers were just a call, message or summon away from the business or employer, helplessness to answer often created uneasiness and thus accordingly relaxation time with family regularly made more pressure and obvious stress. Research studies concentrated worldwide show that the vast majority of people deteriorated their balance between work and life activities during the crisis circumstance and faced mental health issues, although they had the option to devote more time and energy to their families. For the vast majority, the time of COVID-19 crisis circumstance appeared to be more distressing as they invested more time and energy in online meetings, courses, pieces of training, webinars, and gatherings. They likewise needed "talking in person" with partners or colleagues that went missing.

Ongoing investigations show that regular women households work in homes and families has expanded drastically, i.e., their heap of work, because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The adverse consequences on ladies and families are probably going to keep going for a few additional years. What we, for the most part, call the "economy" would not have the option to work without the frequently unnoticed work guaranteed by the consideration (the women performing household work) economy: giving day by day living, cooking, raising kids, and so forth (Power, 2020; Ramakrishnan, 2020 a, b). Likewise, our research study in India showed a drastic increase in women's workloads, raising work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts more frequently than men. They likewise experienced greater mental health issues while in comparison to men.

The disparity between family time and professional time was so pronounced that they realized it was not easy to adapt to and manage with. Furthermore, the ever-increasing uncertainty regarding work and the future intensified the problem. The transition to remote working during COVID 19 was far more challenging than anyone would have assumed because all lines of working hours and availability of manpower were blurred. Being available always almost became mandatory as some organisation considered that allowing employees to work from home is a privilege being bestowed on them. The fundamental issue that employees working from home face during the epidemic is a conflict or disagreement between personal and professional lives. Defining the frontiers between business and private life is a perennially relevant topic in the era of remote working, but it is especially dangerous amid a pandemic (ILO, 2020). The recent developments in the work culture have shattered the notion that vocation and avocation are two entirely separate realms. There appeared to be a myth that employees could and should always be available to the company to carry out their job-related responsibilities and capacities (ILO, 2020). The frontiers between work and private time become more convoluted, murky, and hazy when working remotely, making it problematic to distinguish between working and rest intervals (Eurofound, 2021). All of this hurts mental health (imbalance or increased conflict between work and life) because telecommuters or home workers are required to work longer hours and extra time, have reduced rest intervals, and have fewer surprise and unpredictable itineraries (with an additional load on night work). The explanations behind this are weighty responsibility, intense workloads leading to burnouts, openness, availability, and accessibility outside ordinary working hours, and incessant interferences, despite somewhat levels of autonomy (Eurofound, 2019).

The gap between work and personal life is a test that the vast majority of people in the labour market confront. Burnout is a condition of physical and mental exhaustion that occurs when an individual's capacity to work is

depleted. Previously discovered that the negative impact of work on the balance of work and family activities is often concentrated in the early stages of nurturing when workers in the family have children, i.e., pre-schoolers (Eurofound, 2017). The considerable changes to day-by-day life because of lockdown limitations have added pressure and burnout to numerous people's work and family lives (for example, school terminations compelling parents and guardians to self-teach their kids while working from home - themselves). Such interruption to ordinary everyday practice exercises, jobs and livelihoods may prompt expansions in hopelessness, depression, self-hurting, loneliness, and self-destructive conduct such as suicidal behaviour and unsafe liquor and medication (drug abuse) use (WHO, 2020). At long last, earlier encompassed the job of media utilization in enhancing trouble; this was later featured as a mental health and psychological wellness research priority (Holmes *et al.*, 2020).

The sense of balance between life and work activities is framed when an individual has a similar degree of needs compared to the prerequisites of their occupation along with the necessities of individual life. The commonly recognised explanation for the incompatibility between the two faces of life-i.e personal and professional domains include heightened liability for work responsibilities, longer working hours, and overall liability for housework, mostly for personnel with infants. Thus, an encouraging balance between life and work activities diminishes stress, lessens the signs of burnout, and makes more noteworthy prosperity. This idea has a strong influence on an employee as well as the business (Sanfilippo, 2020). WLB (Work-life balance) can be seen more largely when taking into account its favourable impact on social, friendly, and monetary supportability. Further the improvement of work-life balance is linked to higher objectives, such as ensuring equal opportunities for women and men, increasing work commitments in the competitive labour market, , and dealing with demographic challenges (Parent-Thirion, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The current investigation demonstrated employers lack of readiness. As a result, an evolutionary phase in every profession is required, with improved working protocols, solid mental health assistance, and a focus on techniques to deal with future such situations. The recent research will assist HR managers in developing practises that will assure working women's work-life balance. Women are often the breadwinners in many households. In that circumstance, it is critical that their work-life balance does not become unbalanced. The current study also provides some insights into methods that might be followed to help working women achieve a work-life balance.

Vulnerability and investing more time and energy with loved ones regularly caused additional pressure and stress. As employers and people were not prepared for this unexpected change, many mistakes were made, which further raised the problem of balance between life and work activities. Simultaneously, the COVID-19 crisis circumstance has given important illustrations. General society is offered the chance to ponder what participation implies in actuality and how it can further develop coordinated effort among organizations and workers. Businesses are confronting new difficulties; it is fundamental to guarantee the financial development of organizations in the future and to make praxis supporting the balance between work and life activities of workers. The balance between work and life activities, particularly for an endless time frame, for example, brought about by COVID-19, is fundamental for worker development, individual joy, happiness, subjective well-being, and the company's retention. When the workforce gets backing to find a affirmative balance between personal and professional activities, they are more stirred to do the job subjectively.

Managerial Implications

Bosses, management, administrations, and managers should focus on having a constructive outcome in individuals' lives by showing mindfulness, awareness, and compassion (empathy - affect).

Strike the right harmony (balance between work and life), genuineness about the difficulties ahead and confidence and certainty that the association and its working professionals will discover its way through the emergency crisis. Advance and develop a positive workspace with positive assumptions, timely routine, and sentiments.

Should urge employees to take their yearly leave and examine any worries about their job or responsibility, workload, or emotional feelings with their line chief or manager. Numerous organizations and individuals throughout the planet have reacted to the pandemic through innovation, volunteerism and inclining toward one another to bridge detachment and improve mental health (psychological and physical).

Sustaining trust and recognizing worker endeavors are basic to employee commitment, prosperity, and adequacy. Associations that have been building social capital during prior periods of the emergency, i.e., phases of the crisis, will be in preferred situations over others as the workforce transits to the bring back / come back /resume stage (return phase).

LIMITATION AND FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is specific to India hence results cannot be generalized to other countries. Therefore, it is suggested that cross cultural studies can be done for far reaching results. The review of literature was mostly of foreign authors hence its applicability on Indian sample is questionable. The sample size is limited 400 participants from Education and Telecom sector. So, a separate study can be taken up in future to see the trends in different sectors on the variables of the present study. This study was done during COVID 19, as a result the mental wellbeing was already disturbed because of the fear of contacting the virus and losing lived ones. A pre and post study on the sample to validate the research findings is also suggested.

Novelty

The curiosity of the exploration and novelty is identified with the way that global and public emergencies regularly

feature disparities in the work market that disproportionately impact people. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent societal changes because of social separating measures have exhibited imbalances and inequalities. In admittance to reasonable work and encounters of segregation and imbalance raised due to a disturbance arising from work and life activities, large

numbers of the fragile and helpless populaces in India encounter a lot more extreme effect. On their intense workloads leading to burnout, openness, availability, and accessibility outside ordinary working hours, constant interferences, pressure and stress, improper sleeping patterns, and above all, this work-life imbalance on the mental health of the workforce in India.

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