IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON IT WORK CULTURE: INSIGHTS OF REMOTE WORKING

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Abstract:
The pandemic of COVID 19 has transformed new normal life including social, economic, and organizational cultures with restrictions of behavioural changes. Sudden change in working practices enforced the population to accept new trends and affected the mindset and productivity. The purpose of the paper is to analyze changes in IT work culture and the acceptance of transformation by employees. The researcher aimed to focus on both positive and negative impacts of COVID 19 on IT work culture in terms of benefits, issues, and implications. The researcher studied various surveys and reviews for changes in organizational cultures and their impact on employees. The study shows that the values and assumptions of many organizations seem to have shifted from exploration and creativity towards safety and resilience. Work from home culture is widely accepted in the IT sector encountering several technical and social issues and shifting to creative ways through online interaction. The study also highlights the work-life balance in new emerging trends of working from home. The insights of remote working are discussed in this paper in terms of opportunities and threats arising from the pandemic.
Keywords: *Impact of COVID-19,IT work culture, organizational changes, work from home, insights of remote working*

Introduction:

A worldwide pandemic COVID-19 has a tremendous impact on social and work culture. An IT industry has undergone through huge transformation of work practices, economical and socio-psychological crises affecting employees, teams, and work organizations. Impact of COVID 19 also introduced emerging rapid shift to remote work that upended their existing practices and will have long-term implications on behalf of how work gets done in the future.[1] Theresearcher examines the effects and benefits of technology on different factors. This study focuses on the impact of COVID 19 on IT work culture in terms of technological, social, and cultural disruption.

The pandemic not only affected public health but also shifted the work culture towards remote working as well as adopted hybrid models involving a combination of working from the office and working remotely. Illustrating the benefits of transformation in work culture, the broad overview helps in identifying issues for future research and insights to inform solutions.[2]The hybrid model helps to improve remote support for a range of work practices and improve in-office and hybrid practices by using that learned through remote work.

Emerging IT work culture:

Impact of COVID 19 is studied in terms of organization management to present severe impact on health services, restriction policies, and the halting of economic activities in most industrialized countries that led to an economic crisis. The lockdown has an evident impact on the IT sector changing the new normal working culture of several millions of people to Work from Home. Tata Consultancy Services, India's largest IT employer switched to work from home for nearly ninety percentof employees and only 25 percent for in-office work for a hundred percent productive. Today's trend is to hire resources working at home using their own computers and arrangements to save cost.

There are plenty of tools available for an IT professional to work from home and make regular interaction much easier by using Google Docs, MS Teams, Hangouts, Zoom, and Skype. Although the industries might be technically ready for the sudden change, the potential gains are counterbalanced by social and cultural challenges. Therefore it is more important to be emotionally

and culturally ready for the emerging work culture while the challenges are associated with massive scale inclination towards enforced teleworking.[3]

The survey on changes made by IT organizations during COVID 19 crisis encountered the most common issues including poor internet performance, lack of appropriate technology or equipment while decision-making was affected by major tech issues of network and connectivity with enabling devices for remote use. IT admins reported remote working issues of unavailability of necessary tools to work effectively. Adoption of tools raised as another issue in remote worker settings and adjusting to different types of work environments. Most individuals faced technical issues like dual monitors in the office replaced by a single laptop at home and remote connectivity or home network provider bandwidth.[4]

Research Review:

The research on the impact of COVID 19 explained the social and behavioral changes in IT work culture. Whereas to control the spread of the virus health authorities suggested several precautionary measures like physical distancing, wearing masks, frequent hand washing, and avoiding a visit to theatres, school/colleges, workplaces, malls, religious places that became an integral part of life. Adapting to the changed scenario in cultural, social, and day-to-day ways of living behaviors has a huge impact on working culture. The study revealed that changes in new ways of living are momentarily disrupting the work, home, and travel schedules, but have a very high impact. The fear in many employees for job losses due to the 'new normal' demands of new tactics for managing with an ambiguous future. Suddenly working from home started and expected that will become the norm. It is anticipated to witness significant changes in the way people work, shop, lives, play, communicate, and work across every organization.[5]

Remote working:

According to a study, during COVID 19 pandemic, organizational values are shaping the cultures and steering workplaces, and guiding working individuals to improve the work culture. Professionals noticed the strengthening of organizational values and at the same time, significant workplace challenges remain.The study highlighted that it has been difficult to establish organizational values and maintain workplace culture and report thatexhaustion emerged as a common theme in recent months. It's especially true for those heavily involved with implementing workplace culture and they leave work or are more likely to leave work, while many employees shifted to remote work. Those who work in person are most exhausted as compared to remote workers and hybrid workers. The study also revealed the fact that regardless of race, female employees tend to feel more exhausted than men. For women, workplace culture makes them irritable at home while exhaustion and irritation are inextricably linked.[6]

On the other side, some studies opened up the opportunities in remote working like enabling organizations and hiring the best talent from anywhere reducing the cost of office space and administration. Whereas employees are empowered to work conveniently with flexible working hours. Work from home best practices to help gig workers with generating and maintaining connections, focusing and inspiring their work, explicit routines. Boundaries between a workplace where the work is performed and home an underlying purpose for the work become challenging to enable and inspire productivity.[7]

Organizational culture:

The study on organizational culture during COVID 19 pandemic highlighted some significant challenges for managers while profound dislocation, stating that it also offers some significant opportunities for researchers. Organizational cultures are the signs and symbols, including their shared practices and underlying assumptions.An organization's culture is to be readjusted during jolts in an economic crisis or pandemic environments with wider societal level cultures. However, changes in macro-level cultures in new environmental realities can create the problem of hysteresis.

The impact on resilient organizational cultures changing with wide-scale societal jolt is the opportunity to study the transformation. A physical space such as an office changes into the immaterial world of virtual working affecting organizational culture. There is an impact on symbolic rituals of corporate life as the immaterial world of virtual working has physically separated people raising the need for study on transformation at the workplace or virtual ethnographies.[8]

The worldwide lockdown during COVID 19 with effect on international economics implemented and mandated businesses and industries to curb the spread of the virus generating a wide range of unique and fundamental challenges for employees as well as employers across the globe. The sudden change in the work culture affected a large population including work-from-home employees, essential or life-sustaining workers, and furloughed or laid-off employees. However, emergency room medical personnel and supermarket staff, and laid-off employees seeking the nation-specific equivalent of unemployment benefits were affected largely due to fundamental changes and trends that happened during COVID 19 pandemic. In addition, uncertainty and shock highlighted the need for current knowledge while developing and applying solutions.[9]

Effects innew IT work culture
Recent studies show that the impact of COVID 19 on IT work culture led to positive as well as negative outcomes on the organization and employees.Perhaps the most obvious change that information workers experienced was the meetings in-person shifted to being remote, resulting in many new kinds of 'meetings' with other collaborative practices attempted without social interaction. Remote work affected inclusion and collaborative connections while increased meeting and instant message load stretching workdays. A physical workplace pre-planned and spontaneous interaction supporting collaboration, productivity, and connection moved to online platforms witha higher meeting load during the pandemic than pre-COVID. Impact on achieving creative ideas and productive collaboration made it harder for creative work, thinking big, and decision-making. Remote meetings increased fatiguing and were challenging to coordinate with technical tools and parallel chats.[10]

Some studies are focused on the impact on organizational culture indicating the relationship between managers and employees to contribute to positive work culture.When people managers take the time to strengthen the culture at workplace, employees recognize and appreciate their efforts for morale, care, and compassion with a direct impact on workplace culture.People managers play a pivotal role in managing and shaping workplace culture, ensuring employees'satisfaction and motivation at work. While putting communication into practice, people managers are at the forefront but often face disadvantages due to a lack of training for further leadership. SHRM research states that organizations think it is not necessary to job performance. Despite this, according to HR professionals, managers, and executives, workplace culture improved since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic due to trust, transparency, and a shift to remote work. However, workplace culture worsened during the pandemic, citing a lack of communication highlighting changes to employee workloads.[11]

During COVID 19 period, the impact on IT culture was studied for productivity in terms of changes implemented by the organizations and better employee relation and engagement. The factors promoting the highest productivity also include the best technology used effectively by the qualified engaged human resources. Culture steered by purpose and values can be an enabler or a hindrance validated during the time of crisis like COVID 19.According to the study, profitable companies exhibited value driven strong culture including people centricity, accountability, collaboration, agility, integrity, innovation, and ambition to recognize the significance of promoting and incorporating patience, trust and collaboration. In difficult times of pandemic, it is supported by a robust technological system that guarantees stability and development.The research shows that productivity increased due to a decrease in sick days, social break time, and a relaxed work environment at home, and employees are more productive and able to manage work-life balance while working from home. However, employees often find it challenging to maintain boundaries between work and non-work. At the same time, long-term remote working may also increase

psychological stress, diluted work-life boundaries, communication gap among team members, lack of interpersonal relationships, concern over job security, and diminishing organizational culture.[12] Work from home culture in IT might sound appealing while it offers a safe harbor during the COVID 19-pandemic. The forced confinement of workers can become a burden, too, further complicating this issue due to the absence of separation and the lack of commutes to provide a transition between work and home. Influence and identities of work and non-work domains and their importance arise in short-term jobs and working from anywhere. Reflective of the economy's expansion, at least, 20% of the current workforce are freelance workers in the US.[13]

Methodology:
The researcher found that the COVID 19 pandemic has influenced working culture in the IT field with the severe crisis with a huge transformation in working practices. The purpose of the study includes exploring such impacts and emerging new working trends like work from home and hybrid working practices. The surveys conducted among IT professionals are studied for this transformation in working practices, during the pandemic period. It analyzes the impact of working from home, physical distancing, online education, and virtual meetings on work and organizational culture to increase productivity and save cost. However, the need to engage, monitor, and promote an inclusive, collaborative growth culture for employees is supported by a robust digital infrastructure to enable work from anywhere.

The researcher found that the new work from home practices have an impact on productivity as well as on employees. Although remote working hasopened up opportunities to the best talent from anywhere, reducing administration and office space costs, the flip side introduced several impacts which should be considered while taking the influence into account. The purpose of the research is to discuss such drawbacks with advantages and technical issues encountered by employees while remote working. The researcher considered related studies to analyzethe overall impact on workspaces and work culture including their long-term effects on productivity and willingness.[14]

Findings:
Impact of COVID 19 on IT work culture:
The researcher studied several studies available on the adaptation of new work culture and their impact on different factors during the COVID 19 pandemic period. The researcher studied issues encountered by professionals as well as remote workers with work satisfaction and productivity of the workers. It is found thatsome studies have worked on economic crises during pandemics that have affected the social and work culture with tremendous change in work practices. Organizations have a sudden change in the workplace and instructed their employees to work remotely. The researcher also found that the impact of these transitions worldwide has affected both people and organizations. COVID 19 enforced the IT professionals to work from home in available settings and tools with their employees.Other findings in the review of work culture have highlighted the impact on reactions and behavioral changes in workers due to issues encountered during working from home including technical issues like tools, technology, and the internet affecting the connectivity and decision making. Impact on work culture in terms of organizational values and rituals studied to analyze how they are affected.
Impact on employees
Other findings of emerging trends of work from home indicated that the new culture is gaining more acceptance as an emerging trend due to COVID 19 pandemic. Employees prefer the new trend as compared to working from the office with increasing productivity. Several studies highlighted the benefits and acceptance of trending work cultures including work-life balance, less stress, saving unproductive commuting time to the office, less distraction, and more productivity with the flexibility of working time while working from home. However, it is found to be difficult for brainstorming and decision-making discussions due to the use of technology like chatbox suggestions, attendance, idea sharing, and other issues.[15]

It is found that the pandemic has created uncertainty and confusion about the risks to employees, measures and best practices to adopt, stakeholder pressures, shutdown, and recovery plans. These uncertainties with new waves of contamination, and lasting changes, are all the more difficult to manage due to the lack of studies and information. However, newspapers and magazines articles appear to be one of the main sources of information.The study discusses the work culture transform necessity with the importance of properly identifying the economic and health risks associated with the organization's activities. Remote working in IT organizations haveaccepted to deal with a high risk of contamination and approaches in environments of social distancing in order to safeguard the health of the most susceptible individuals.[16]

Impact on work culture

Various studies discussed impacts on health issues, economic crises, and unemployment during a pandemic. However, IT sectors also have a large impact on economics, employment, remote working, and related consequences. The study by Microsoft is focused on the impact of COVID 19 on work practices stating that the current massive transition helps to achieve more in challenging times and to stronger and more resilient to empower the person as well as the organization. It is fundamental to understanding and supporting evolving the socio-technical work practices for giant, natural, uncontrolled remote work. Research to understand the impact of remote work and identify opportunities to support new working practices, including disciplines of engineering, research, marketing, human resources, and facilities and divisions of Microsoft Research, Office, Windows, Azure, Xbox, GitHub, and LinkedIn conducted by teams.[17]

According to the study, although environmental jolts create pressure for cultural change, they can make organizations defensive when organizational members simply deny or avoid transformations that may be needed. They may find change deeply troubling and threatening and a culture of anger and fear may pervade the firm. This happens due to rigidly aligned to a failing course of action leaving deeper aspects untouched when external pressure leads organizations to change highly visible aspects of their culture.[18]

Impact on organization values

The research also considered opportunities and threats arising from the crisis during COVID 19. It is found that news widely covered the negative economic impacts of the pandemic, while many organizations have also experienced some positive effects and benefited from economic opportunities. It is highlighted that the importance of the ability of businesses to turn a threat during pandemics into an opportunity was often stressed, such as that of certain companies managed to significantly increase their revenue by developing new work culture and online meetings in order to take advantage of the restrictions. Some reviews also highlighted positive effects related to sustainable development, in terms of awareness of paying more attention to the physical health and mental well-being of their employees. Organizations were reported to have been more resilient to socially responsible investments in times of crisis, taking into account sustainable development and social issues including health, stakeholder expectations, and community commitments.[19]

Insights of remote working

The researcher studied the impact of COVID 19 on IT workers and found that employees spend more time working from home compared to the office reporting higher productivity. The results also indicate that work-life balance is maintained but prolonged work from home feel alienated and disengaged without informal meetings and socialization. Many employees suffered from Job insecurity due to the economic situation during lockdown while many organizations started to cut their salaries or at the verge of closing. The era of prolonged work from home has an apparent impact on organizational culture specifying a critical need to protect and maintain it. While increasing the communication gap among colleagues, working from home is leading to psychological stress due to sudden change and a lot of ambiguity regarding job security. It is found that employees recommended video calls and team meetings to stay connected with colleagues.

The researcher found that remote working is missing professional bonds and work atmosphere at the office with no face-to-face interaction, collaboration, teamwork as well as separate professional and personal life with dedicated working hours and meeting people. At the same time, employees expect

more frequent communication, better clarity of tasks, pay for internet connections, and flexibility to choose work from home or office. The study also mentioned that forced work culture lowers the adoption rate while employees want to meet colleagues at the office while working from home.[20]

Conclusion:
The change in IT culture has a great impact of COVID 19 that has emerged as a new global culture. The safety and health views have transformed the social behavioral culture affecting the organizations' work culture, values, interactions, and challenges while working from home. Primarily the IT work culture was focused on work from home while it has increased the opportunity to work with the best talent from anywhere. Employees work remotely with convenience, flexibility, and relaxed environments with increased productivity and job satisfaction. While some organizations creatively implemented their hybrid methods of working from home and office by investing in cutting-edge technology and efforts to enhance the outcomes. On the other side, technical issues, overloads of online meetings, stress, and lack of social touch also burdened employees working from home and those maintaining organizational culture. Considering these positive and negative impacts on work culture, new global remote working culture has developed and is widely accepted by organizations to save investment costs and convenience of workers. However, several studies highlighted that long-term remote working can be challenging though organizations are investing in training and sensitization for employees. It can be said that the new IT culture has a future in the transformed era after COVID 19.

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