



Sustainable Health in the Era of Work from Anywhere

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Abstract

Purpose: COVID- 19 paved the way for a hybrid work model; wherein employees can work from the office or work from home, or work from anywhere. The model of working from anywhere offers flexibility and autonomy to employees to a great extent. However, its ramifications and consequences pertaining to the health of the employees are yet to be fully explored. This study tries to understand the impact of work from anywhere on employees' health.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: Data was collected from 112 people who have worked in both work from office and work from home models. The analytic Hierarchy Process was used for data analysis.

Findings: AHP analysis of mental health data considering stress, anxiety, and worry shows that mental health is better during work from anywhere than working from the office. Analysis of emotional health using AHP shows that emotional health is better during work from anywhere than during work from the office, based on employee relationships. It is evident from spiritual health data that spiritual health did improve during work from anywhere as compared to working from office. It is also clear that financial health is better during work from anywhere when compared with working from the office, which depends on employees' savings and expenditures.

Originality/ Value: The research contributes significantly to organizations that are adopting a hybrid work model.

JEL classification: I39, L86, M19, M59

Keywords: Sustainable health, SDG goal, Hybrid work model, Work from anywhere

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Introduction:

In the pre-COVID-19 era, significant accomplishments were made towards the general welfare of people. Progress was made in extending life expectancy and decreasing some leading causes of infant and maternal death. However, much more needs to be done in order to eliminate various diseases and empower the civilisation to deal with various ongoing as well as new health concerns/diseases. Considerable advancements can be made in saving the lives of billions of people by concentrating on improving sanitary conditions and hygiene, financing healthcare systems more effectively, and expanding access to doctors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced a majority of the world's population's daily lives and continues to pose problems to our way of life. Lockdown and social-distancing measures have been used as part of the policy response to the pandemic. While these precautions have helped to curb the virus's transmission (Anderson et al., 2020; Hsiang et al., 2020), they have also had significant economic and personal consequences. Brodeur et al. (2021b) present a summary of a number of COVID-19 outcomes, and Layard et al. (2021c) seek to combine many of the costs and benefits of the lockdown (2020). The population's well-being is one of the most critical factors in calculating these costs and benefits. Sustainable development depends on encouraging the well-being of all generations and maintaining healthier lifestyles. Sustainable development goal 3 (SDG 3) strives to achieve universal health coverage, protect everyone's health and well-being, and give everyone access to reliable and safe medications and immunizations. The new global aim for good health encourages everybody to lead healthy lives, take preventative actions, and get contemporary, effective treatment.

The latest Covid 19 pandemic has altered the face of work, leading to a lasting transition into work from home that would need modifications in organizational processes and regulations. (Hern, 2020). Though not all companies enable their employees to work from home, research shows that it benefits most companies and individuals since it increases employee productivity and health by allowing them greater freedom to make decisions (Bathini and Kandathil, 2019; Bloom, 2014; Rupiatta & Beckmann, 2018; Wood, S., Daniels, K., and Ogbonnaya; C., 2018).

At this juncture, 'work from anywhere' is a novel work structure that allows individuals to stay anywhere and operate from a random location. It eliminates premise-based criteria like proximity and office environment. Employees work more freely when they can work remotely since it considers aspects outside of the office, such as location and setting. (Mariani, M.M. and Castaldo, S. 2020)

Nevertheless, this working environment has altered the Human Resource processes, which are critical for a firm's growth (Choudhury, P., Larson, B.Z. and Foroughi, C. 2019). Organizations with such altered working practices must reorganize their hierarchies and reframe and rearticulate their HR procedures and programs in order to increase their sensitivity and flexibility in this changing environment (Harsch, K. and Festing, M. 2019; Kwon, M. and Jeon, S.H. (2020); Buallay, 2020; Dimitropoulos, 2020). This notion is also backed by the dynamic capability view (DCV) theory (Teece, D.J., Pisano, G., and Shuen, A. (1997)). Organizations must modernize their HR policies and technology to prevent obstructing employees' ability to work remotely and seamlessly from any location (Khatri, N., Gupta, V., and Varma, A., 2017). The flexible firm theory backs up this claim (Rodgers, 1992).

Additionally, this setting should support staff members' health and well-being, as these factors impact how contented they are with their professions (Dickens, 2005). To this end, HR leadership support (HLS) plays a crucial role in implementing the new HRP and enhancing organizational infrastructure. Allowing the employees to work remotely and with flexibility (Van Knippenberg, D. (2013)). The role of technology in enhancing the flexibility of remote work has been studied in

great detail. However, lesser or minimal consideration has been given to studying leadership support and unprecedented occurrences (like the COVID-19 pandemic) and their adverse effect on employees' health and safety. Also, no in-depth study in this direction has looked at how remote work could considerably improve these employees' health variables, which might result in furthering the cause of corporate performance (FP). In this sense, the following research question is intended to be answered by this study (RQs).

Research question: What could be the health concerns of employees working from anywhere, and what could be the consequences for the workforce?

Literature Review:

Managers can use the Sustainability Development Goals framework to examine their organizations' results and determine how they can assist in creating a just and sustainable future. The Sustainability Development Goals offer a practical chance to involve staff members and draw in potential. Organizations have been forced to adopt remote working techniques due to the convergence of two forces: the rapid development of digital technology and lockdown measures during the COVID-19 epidemic (Choudhury et al., 2019). This shift in business practices from working on-site to working remotely has prompted HR managers to develop new, appropriate policies and modernize their facilities (Chatterjee, S.2019; Kwon, M. and Jeon, S.H. 2020; Piccolo, R., Chatterjee, S., Chaudhuri, R., and Vrontis; D. 2021). One of the key components for such a fundamental change in business practices to take shape is the competency to provide an efficient and flexible HR system that enables businesses to respond to the rapidly dynamic environment. (Khatri, N., Gupta, V. and Varma, A.2017). Businesses must implement solid HR procedures and work-from-anywhere regulations to give remote workers the required facilities, specifically to enable them to engage with clients (Wood, S., Daniels, K. and Ogbonnaya, C. 2018, Gardner, D.G., Pierce, J.L. and Peng, H. 2021). Even though human resource management will create a well-suited strategy for the work-from-anywhere culture, concerns about freedom, physical safety, well-being, and employee happiness are indeed the crucial factors that must be taken into account (Melian-Gonzalez, S., Bulchand-Gidumal, J. and Gonzalez Lopez-Valcarcel, B. 2015; Donnelly & Johns, 2020; Obrenovic, B., Jianguo, D., Khudaykulov, A. and Khan, M.A.S. 2020; Nimmi, P.M., Binoy, A.K., Joseph, G., and Suma; R., 2022). As not every objective will be generally relevant to every firm, becoming a responsible corporation results from various individual activities and projects. Even though we can all contribute in some manner, it is important to pinpoint the areas where we can have the biggest impact. The workplace should have a positive psychological climate since it can assist employees in feeling safe and well. When workers are happy and safe, they will work harder to improve the success of the company (Frazier et al., 2017; Tamilmaniet al., 2021). Additionally, in the unfavourable COVID-19 pandemic, employees with good physical and mental health could perform easily and cheerfully, which is thought to increase their level of satisfaction (Obrenovic, B., Jianguo, D., Khudaykulov, A., and Khan; MAS, 2020). It is believed that working remotely will reduce conflict resulting from an imbalance in work and personal life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Adisa, T.A., Gbadamosi, G. and Osabutey, E.L.C. 2017; Siachou, 2021; Ghosh, 2021; Pomerance, 2021). Employee dissatisfaction, job strain, pressure at work, role ambiguity, long workdays, physiologically dangerous working circumstances, and other variables can cause work-family problems (Ford, M.T., Heinen, B.A. and Langkamer, K.L. 2007; Ganster & Perrewe, 2011; Baeriswyl, 2016; Gardner, D.G., Pierce, J.L. and Peng, H. 2021). Work-from-home practices enhance employee health and well-being, job satisfaction, performance, and productivity. "Happier employees," as perceived as being more efficient, may be a result of working from home. (Fitzpatrick, T., Janzen, B., Abonyi, S. and Kelly, I. 2012; Nimmi, P.M., Binoy, A.K., Joseph, G. and Suma, R. 2022). The idea behind the flexible firm theory is that employees who work in other locations must be capable of working under any circumstance (Rodgers, 1992). To quickly

transition to WFH practices to meet the COVID-19 scenario, organizations have had to cope with concerns, including how their facilities could combine with the tech-embedded virtual work system. (Chaudhuri R, 2021b; Stich, 2021). With less HR leadership assistance, a company will have trouble establishing remote work rules in response to lockdown measures brought on by the COVID epidemic (Turner, J.R. and Muller; R., 2005). The dynamic change brought on by the crisis is thought to be addressed by this remote work paradigm. Additionally, the idea does support the dynamic capability view (DCV) theory (Teece, D.J., Pisano, G., and Shuen, A. (1997)). Employees were compelled to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with lockdown procedures, enabling businesses to maintain operational activity. The idea of flexible business theory complements the ability of the employees to work from any place (Rodgers, 1992). Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, businesses were compelled to use remote working methods, and employees were required to understand how to deal with such a challenging situation. According to the dynamic capability view (DCV) theory, this is accurate (Teece, D.J., Pisano, G., and Shuen, A. (1997)). People had to abide by lockdown procedures during the COVID-19 crisis. In such circumstances, businesses were required to create an appropriate policy to ensure that staff members did not experience barriers to working remotely, utilizing the company's infrastructure (Sridher & Bhattacharya, 2020). In order to enable the workforce to work remotely in a healthy manner, businesses must develop appropriate and implementable policies. In this regard, HR leadership is essential for the effective execution of policies (Van Knippenberg, 2013).

Methodology:

Responses to the survey were evaluated using the "five-point Likert scale" with strongly disagree, denoted 1, and strongly agree, denoted 5. The five-point Likert scale was employed in this study because it is straightforward and allows respondents to express neutrality by selecting "neither disagree nor agree."

Measurement instrument

After being modified for this study, a series of questions have been developed from the existing literature to ensure content validity. The survey questions were written in English because the people considered as potential participants work for several multinational corporations. A tiny sample of 25 people who had worked remotely for various companies was used to pre-test these questions. The readability of the questions was improved on the basis of the pre-test findings.

After that, a pilot test was instituted, which assessed the accuracy and precision of this questionnaire. The respondents were not included in the sample of the primary poll, and the sample was small. The outputs of the results assisted in improving the question recitals so that the respondents were not required to react. Statements were used to generate the questions. Some questions that needed to explain the appropriate structures were removed based on the pilot test results. The questions were then refined with input from subject matter experts in the area of this study. In the end, 34 questions were created in this manner.

Instruments:

Physical Health Scale: This scale shows how an employee has been doing physically during Work from Anywhere (WFA), considering variables like Diet, Fitness, Sleep, Physical illness

Mental Health Scale: This scale shows how an employee has been doing mentally during Work from Anywhere (WFA), considering variables like Depression, Anxiety, Stress

Emotional Health Scale: This scale shows how an employee has been doing emotionally during Work from Anywhere (WFA), considering variables like Relationships.

Spiritual Health Scale: This scale shows how an employee has been doing spiritually during Work from Anywhere (WFA), considering variables like Inner peace, devotion

Financial Health Scale: This scale shows how an employee has been doing financially during Work from Anywhere (WFA), considering variables like Income, Expenditure, Investments

Data Collection:

The current study aims to investigate the effects of remote work on employees' performance and health during emergencies. Therefore, to complete the survey, potential responders should have had prior experience tackling the COVID-19 pandemic in other settings. So, to specifically target the respondent, the researchers used a straightforward random sample. It was practical to discover respondents from multinational companies in this region, given that the study's writers are primarily situated in India. Consequently, we employed convenience sampling (Garg, 2019).

Some workers come from service companies, while others come from manufacturing companies. They were founded in different years, and they have varying revenue quantities. All of the staff members were made aware that the study's purpose was solely academic and that the participants' identities and confidentiality, as well as the names of the companies, would be rigorously maintained.

Criteria of inclusion: The respondents had to be employed, and they should have spent some time in both the work modes - from the office and from anywhere. The employees who did not work in both modes were excluded as this research is entirely based on changes in the impact of health during both modes.

Because of the risk of contracting the virus, the participants were not consulted in person. Around 230 employed people were given the survey, and 155 replied. Forty-three replies were discarded from the study because they did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Because it was vital to regulating the additional elements, a substantial number of replies had to be eliminated. The study attempted to examine the health concerns and consequences of employees working from anywhere amid the pandemic. If the study had included the employees who worked only in work-from-anywhere mode, then that would have warranted more efforts to understand the changes in employees' health due to the pandemic. Moreover, the people who took voluntary retirement before the onset of the work-from-anywhere mode were excluded for the same reason. A total of 112 valid responses were used for analysis.

Data Analysis and Results:

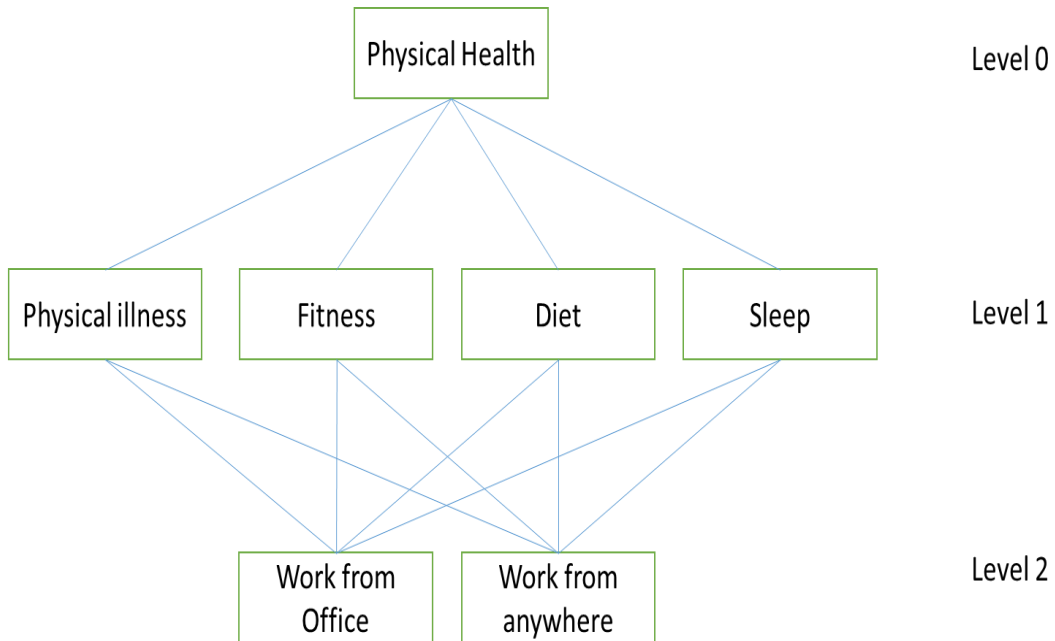
We used Analytic Hierarchy Process, as it provides a rational framework for a needed decision by quantifying its criteria and alternative options and relating those elements to the overall goal.

The model consists of three parts:

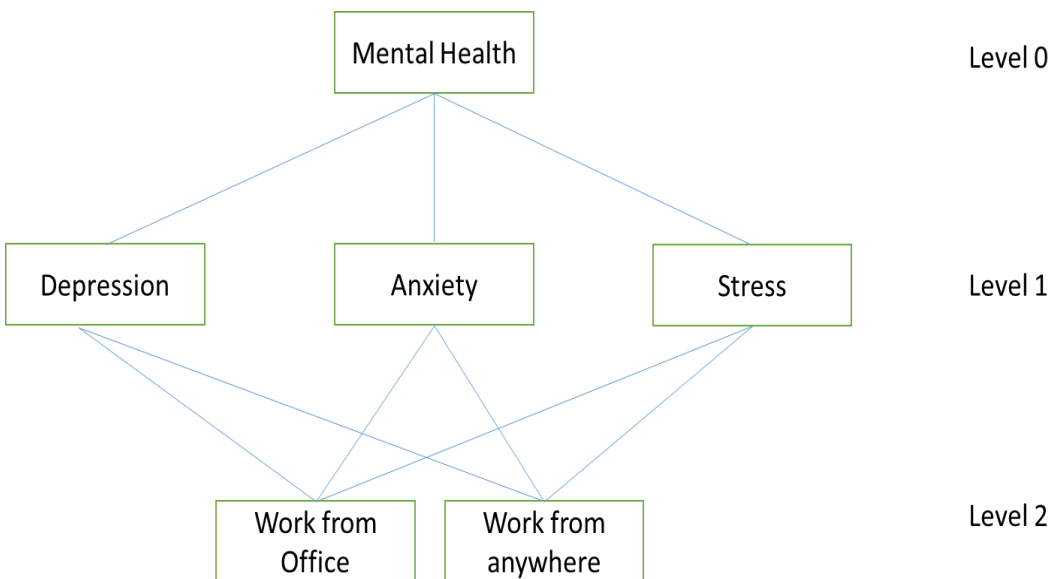
- The overall goal, challenge, or choice
- Possible alternatives and solutions
- Criteria with which to measure solutions

The structure of hierarchy in our research analysis is as follows:

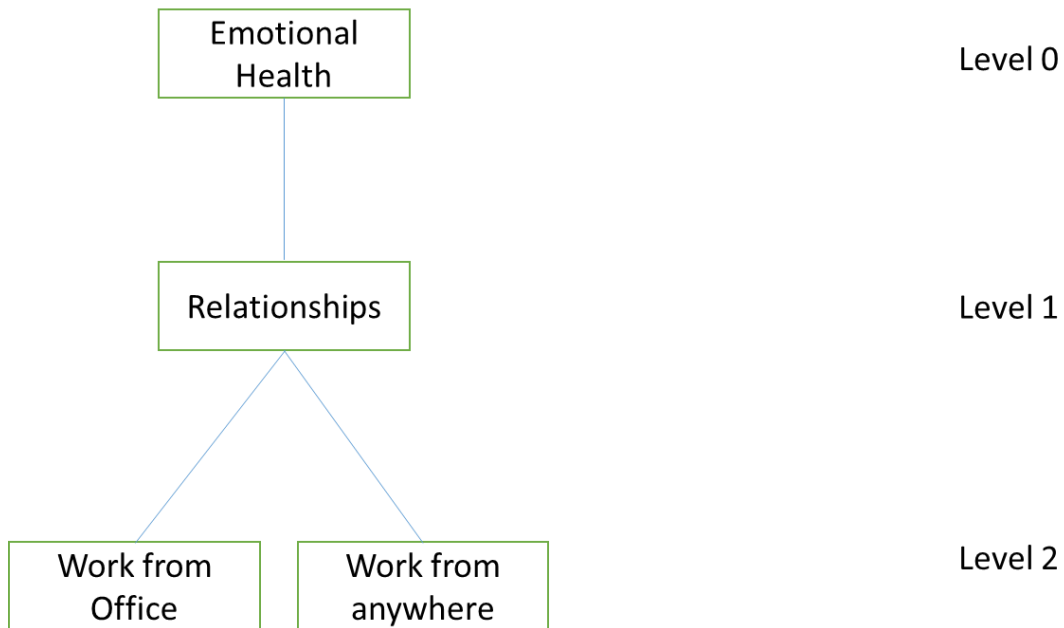
Physical Health:



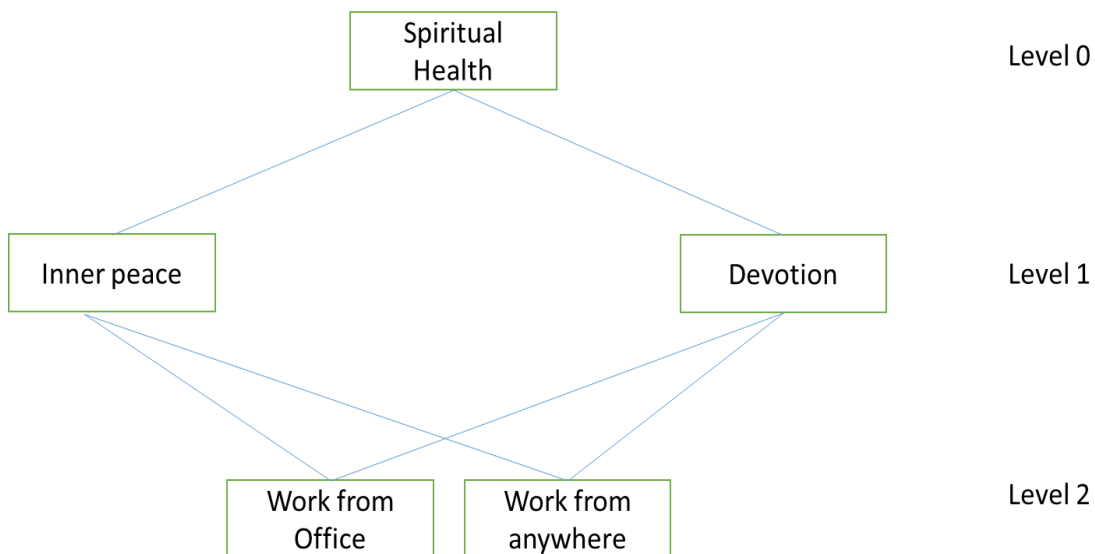
Mental Health:



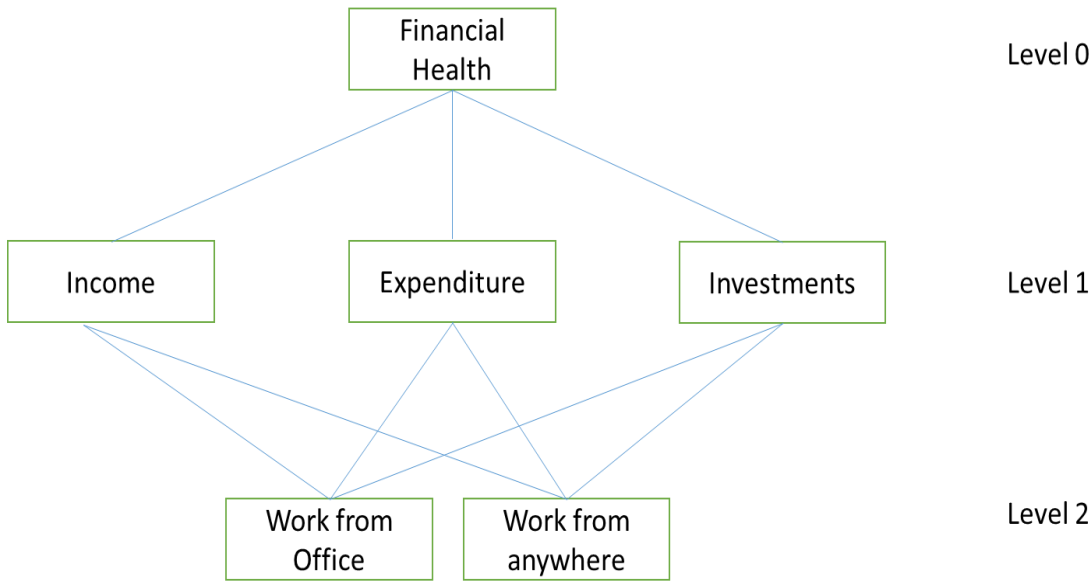
Emotional Health:



Spiritual Health:



Financial Health:



Defining goals and alternatives:

Level 0 is the goal of the analysis, where we have to find the changes in the physical health of employees in both work-from-office and work-from-anywhere modes.

Defining the decision criteria:

In the above figures, level 1 is the multi-criteria that consists of several factors like physical illness, fitness, diet, and sleep for physical health. Depression, anxiety, and stress for mental health. Criteria like relationships for emotional health. Inner peace and devotion for spiritual health. Income, expenditure, and investments for financial health.

Available alternatives:

Level 2 in the above figures depicts the available research alternatives: work from the office and work from anywhere. We analyze how different criteria are affected in both alternatives.

The lines between levels indicate the relationship between factors, choices, and goals.

In level 1, we have a comparison matrix corresponding to pairwise comparisons between factors for the goal.

If we look at physical health, the comparison matrix for physical health is as follows:

Criteria	Physical illness	Fitness	Diet	Sleep
Physical illness	1.000	0.333	0.200	0.143
Fitness	3.000	1.000	0.500	0.250
Diet	5.000	2.000	1.000	0.500
Sleep	7.000	4.000	2.000	1.000

Using the above comparison matrix, we obtain the lamda_max value as 4.028269, CI as 0.009423, and CR as 0.010588.

The following table shows the adjusted weights and normalized values for various physical health factors to estimate the final value for ranking.

	Physical illness	Fitness	Diet	Sleep
Weights	0.058656177	0.146933	0.280771862	0.513639
Work from Office	1	0.925926	1	1
Work from Anywhere	0.932038835	1	0.981481481	0.911504

Table 1

	Final Value	Ranking
Work from Office	0.989116085	1
Work from Anywhere	0.94535939	2

Table 2

Table 2 provides us with the final values from the AHP analysis. It's 0.989 for work from the office and 0.945 for work from anywhere. Thus, the data analysis indicates that physical health was better before covid while one was working from the office than working from anywhere.

In a similar way, we analyzed the final values for mental, emotional, spiritual, and financial health. The values are as follows:

Mental Health		
	Final Value	Ranking
Work from Office	0.9456832	1
Work from Anywhere	0.9053672	2
Emotional Health		
	Final Value	Ranking
Work from Office	0.8564729	2
Work from Anywhere	0.9456245	1
Spiritual Health		
	Final Value	Ranking
Work from Office	0.8367929	2
Work from Anywhere	0.9147374	1
Financial Health		
	Final Value	Ranking
Work from Office	0.8863829	2
Work from Anywhere	0.9236578	1

AHP analysis of mental health data considering stress, anxiety, and worry shows that mental health is better while working from anywhere than working from the office. Analysis of emotional health using AHP shows that emotional health is better while working from anywhere than working from the office based on employee relationships. It is evident from spiritual health data that spiritual health improved during work from anywhere compared to work from the office. It is also clear that financial health is better while working from anywhere as compared to work from the office, which depends on employees' savings and expenditures.

Discussion:

The Covid outbreak has hindered international attempts to accomplish the Sustainability Development Goals. Most global efforts to relieve hunger, alleviate poverty, and reduce inequality have been halted or even reversed by the crisis. For the very first instance after 1990, this has resulted in the Index for Human Development lagging. Additionally, it jeopardizes years of advancement in the field of world health. According to the United Nations sustainable development goals report 2021, the epidemic has significantly lowered life span, citing data from nations that consistently and accurately collect statistics.

Employees are the foundation of every business; thus, if they are not engaged or informed of how to implement a sustainable plan, it will not mean anything. The covid-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects of our lives and work. In accordance with national and local pandemic containment strategies, businesses, companies, and institutions urged their employees to work remotely from home or anywhere. With convenient videoconferencing technology, individuals could work from anywhere with reduced travel requirements, flexibility in scheduling and improved work-life balance. Many employees were required to work from home full-time during the COVID-19 pandemic, redefining the traditional concept of work from home, which had previously only been employed for specific types of work on a need-to-know basis, or in peculiar conditions of employees. We discovered that many of us could perform our jobs without being on the same premises as our coworkers. Work can be successfully done by individuals, teams, legal teams, and entire workforce systems when they are dispersed in all directions.

This also led to changes in the health conditions of employees in various possible ways. Some were able to manage their physical health but not mental health, while others managed their financial health but not emotional health. Based on the physical health results, many employees are satisfied with their diet during work from anywhere; similarly, many employees are not physically ill during work from anywhere. However, most employees are unsatisfied with their sleep patterns and need to focus on fitness in this work-from-anywhere mode.

While looking into mental health data, we can observe that employees are more worried in the work-from-anywhere mode but are less anxious in the same mode. Moreover, employees can manage their professional and personal commitments better during the work-from-anywhere mode. Whereas stress levels are more during work from the office when compared with work from anywhere.

Further, emotional health data reveals that employees are more satisfied with work relationships during work-from-office mode as it involves physical interactions, which is an essential aspect for an employee. At the same time, it can be observed that personal relationships are well maintained during the work-from-anywhere mode, mainly influenced by the time spent with family for an employee. Data also shows that employees are more emotionally exhausted during work-from-anywhere mode because of various issues like the loss of loved ones and health issues of loved ones.

Spiritual health data revealed that employees pray more often during work from anywhere. Studies showed that people from many parts of the world, especially India, become more religious during hardships or crises. During this pandemic, the inner peace of employees also deteriorated with the fear of contracting the virus.

Monthly expenditure patterns improved during work from anywhere under the financial health data of employees. People were reluctant to spend more on non-essential items and focused their expenditures on essential things. While people who retained their jobs could save their income, people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic faced financial hardships. Also, many employees started to invest in stocks, mutual funds, properties, and gold during work from anywhere due to

the reduction in costs of travel and spending on non-essential items. The overall financial health of employees improved during work from anywhere.

The covid pandemic, despite the numerous disasters it has brought about, has also highlighted the significance of Sustainable development goal 3 for global public health, i.e., resilient and robust healthcare mechanisms, emergency planning, and a higher need to attain Universal Health Coverage (UHC). It has also demonstrated that altering international agreements and placing healthcare at the front of the agenda is necessary for sustainable growth. Health is a measure of sustainable communities and both the product and the driver of socioeconomic success. Increased health spending promotes economic growth since it saves lives, even during recessions. The building blocks for a prosperous tomorrow, maintaining and encouraging public health, and making sure a better response to potential future emergencies also include investing in the operations of the healthcare system and removing cash flow obstacles of health systems.

Implications

The current study has offered some practical implications. It has been demonstrated that employees cannot maintain their physical health due to working from anywhere; they cannot draw a line between their professional and personal issues, leading to the deterioration of physical health. This suggests that company managers must make sure their Human resource policies are adequate.

Employees' physical and mental health is significantly impacted by working remotely, which affects employee satisfaction. This suggests that a company's executives and managers should promote a positive, healthy, and welcoming work atmosphere. Employees will be encouraged by this to exert all of their potential and energy in order to improve their work output and job performance.

Notwithstanding COVID-19, the globe has made considerable advancements toward achieving this sustainable development objective. Nevertheless, organizations could still fill the space to assist some regions of the world in advancing more quickly. Through Corporate social responsibility activities, businesses may demonstrate their dedication to a healthy lifestyle and well-being.

Additionally, leaders and managers of firms should make a concerted effort to reduce work-family conflict, which could cause employees to lose productivity and lower their level of satisfaction. The performance of the employees has a significant impact on the success and achievement of a company, which leaders and managers should bear in mind. As a result, even when workers work remotely, they must create a positive work atmosphere. They might do this by encouraging the person to utilize all the facilities offered by the business to reach the deadline. Business leaders and managers should be aware of problems such as work-life conflict, remote job strain, and other difficult situations that affect employees' physical and mental well-being to protect their health.

Being exciting and relevant to the company, neighborhood, and coworkers is essential irrespective of the firm's size or the aims and priorities. Staff members must receive this training. A sustainable plan is worth very little if people are not interested or conscious of how to accomplish it because they are the foundation of any firm. Companies can have a more significant impact by matching employee gifts, which boosts work engagement, fosters trust, and demonstrates a commitment to society.

Organizations should take an extra step in promoting the physical health of employees; they should provide benefits and incentives to employees who can achieve their physical fitness goals.

Managers should Check in regularly with employees about their work and outlook, encourage them to reach out when challenges arise and urge employees to take regular breaks and move away from their workstations.

Spreading awareness regarding mental health is essential. Organizations must know about the problems employees face regarding mental health, and conducting well-being sessions and webinars can improve mental health.

Significantly boost health spending as well as the hiring, nurturing, educating, and retaining of medical personnel in emerging nations, particularly in the least developed nations.

Limitations

The current study contains several drawbacks. The current study's findings are based on cross-sectional data. This leads to endogeneity bias, which welcomes the causality flaw in the connections between the constructs. To address these issues, future scholars should conduct a longitudinal study.

The results of the current study were obtained by examining the responses from respondents who worked for Indian businesses. Therefore, there is a problem with external validity. Future researchers should gather feedback from respondents spread out globally. Then the results might indicate a result that can be extrapolated. The usefulness and validity of the proposed theoretical model may have been demonstrated by comparison with an alternative model, which was not examined in this work. Future researchers might concentrate on this aspect because it could have improved the quality of this article.

One major limitation of this study is that it focused little on women-related health problems in work-from-anywhere medium. Future researchers can try to analyze the changes in women's health-related problems, specifically during work from anywhere. Pregnant or baby mother problems can also be looked into with particular focus. Another limitation is that this research did not consider the differences in health impacts based on age difference, which future researchers can work on further.

Despite the Sustainable Development Goals' ambitious nature and widespread promises to achieve them, more needs to be accomplished. The covid outbreak has further delayed this process. In order to reimagine and invigorate healthcare systems and take advantage of covid as a chance to enhance accessibility, effectiveness, and safety of the medical system while also promoting elements that encourage healthy lives, governments will need to spend more money.

Conclusion

As a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of a healthy society and business, wellness is becoming more recognized. Although a danger to generations of advancement in promoting health, covid may be a chance to show how committed governments are to delivering healthcare and achieving sustainable development.

The workforce and way of life are just two areas where covid continues to make a difference. Working remotely is among them. For those who can do that, working from anywhere during an epidemic like covid can provide tremendous flexibility and possibility. Additionally, keeping the bulk of individuals at home to practice physical seclusion helps to stop the transmission of disease. There are many advantages to working from anywhere but also disadvantages.

The study analyzed the health concerns and consequences of employee workforce who are currently working from anywhere amid the pandemic. The sample size of 110 depicted changes in the health practices of employees in work from anywhere compared to those working from the

office. The physical health of employees has deteriorated along with mental health, but emotional, spiritual, and financial health has improved during work from anywhere.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most employees could not attend work and must work from home or anywhere. In such circumstances, developing and implementing best practices for working from anywhere is critical to maintaining a high level of productivity, striking the correct work-life balance, and preserving excellent physical and mental health. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of a good infrastructure for remote work. Preventive studies will also be needed to address any issues that may occur in cybersecurity, dependability, or digitalization due to the pandemic.

One of the Seventeen Global Targets that form the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is promoting health and well-being. Advancement toward the various objectives requires an integrated strategy.

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