MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS ON WORK-FROM-HOME IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary worldwide disaster COVID-19 encountered by people seemed to be widely spread like a fire in the jungle. This surge impacted the lives of many, even caused fatalities. Staying at home and not to go outside is one of the hot topics of the moment. The population around the world found a major lapse when it was noticed that the epidemic COVID-19 is infecting both Muslims and non-Muslims. Meanwhile, due to this worldwide disaster, countries facing the issue altered their work status into work from home. This study was conducted by collecting the readily available secondary data from previous studies and recently published articles on the several worldwide pandemics. This study discussed the effects of COVID-19 on the population especially, organizations with the practice of work from home. It also discussed the effectiveness of social distancing to avoid the spread of this virus. Moreover, this study discussed the benefits of work from home along with enlightening the Islamic perspectives to strengthen the study.

Keywords: COVID-19, Work from home, Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Several contagious diseases infected a lot of people in past and continuing their effect in future such as AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), plague, influenza, cholera, Ebola and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) (Cutsem et al., 2016; Kupferschmidt, 2016). Among these knowing diseases, in the late 2019 another disease was introduced named as, COVID-19. According to (WHO, 2020) Coronavirus was early named as, `2019 novel coronavirus` now officially named COVID-19. The virus is just like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in which the respiratory infection takes the form of pneumonia but it is actually COVID-19.

Investigated to be an infectious disease that transfers through saliva excretions or droplets of sneezing or coughing from the affected to the normal people. Until now, no devised vaccine or specified medicine investigated to prevent its dispersion more effectively among the public. However, the vaccine helps to lessen the effect of the virus if an individual is infected (ElBagoury et al., 2021). Thereby, according to the situation, less physical contact as well as to keep oneself as clean as possible is also a remedy to avoid its widespread.

During these circumstances, it is thereby challenging for people to work while being at their workplace (Haleem et al., 2020). Organizations cannot stop working while waiting for the unknown period of the continuity of this disease. They need to manage their work from a place with less physical interaction just for the sake of everyone's safety. Therefore, the possibility to work from outside the work territory entailed the significance of work from home. Although work from home is an appropriate facilitation to employees in their workplace due to some of the circumstances. In this arrangement, employees can dedicate their duty hours outside the boundaries of the organization. It provides a balance between employee work and family life (Christensen et al., 2013). Employees can work in any mobile place, either home or can be any place (Venkataraman et al., 2018). It is for the well-being of the employee and therefore, work from home facility helps to retain the employees (Rodwell & Martin, 2013). Moreover, it is beneficial for organizations to strategize their policies more effectively. Therefore, efficiency is also increased (Jansen & Hlongwane, 2019).

Working in a safe and sound environment enables the employees to augment their productivity Christensen et al., (2013) and this enhancement plays significance in employee personal and professional life. According to Taamneh et al. (2018), internal satisfaction of employees from work leads them towards organization well-being. The debate about those practices which are employee friendly and that help to balance employee work and family life (Shakir, 2019). With these facilitations, employees found themselves more empowered to work, hence these relaxations at work increase their loyalty. Sometimes negating the idea to facilitate the employee to work out of the boundaries of work results in lack of loyalty (Kim & Lee, 2019). On the other hand, increase in efficiency and effectiveness of employees are also identified (Jansen & Hlongwane, 2019).

This study involved a situation in which the virus is infectious and influencing many of the population worldwide (Haleem et al., 2020). While, giving importance to the individuals who need to go out either to work or for pray, is one of the main points of discussion nowadays. With the help of game theory, it has been made easy and understandable that to avoid circumstances, we need to strategize our plans and routines (Begley et al., 2020). Such as it is a zero-sum theory for rational decision making in which every participant of the game or the situation has the same benefit and loss as compared to the others. Referring to the game theory, individuals change their behaviours according to situations, to avoid the worst circumstances. For example, in this COVID-19, the only solution is social distancing to avoid oneself in contact with the infected ones. Some of them, who are not understanding the situation same time, will soon change their behaviour after observing those who are taking precautionary measures and

are staying safe from the pandemic. Social distancing is one of the solutions to save oneself in a situation like infectious or viral diseases.

Therefore, from the above discussion, the following points and questions are raised that are entailed to be discussed in this study:

1. Effects of COVID-19 in the organizational context on how it is affecting the employers and employees.
2. Does social distancing is effective to avoid the infectious disease?
3. What is the Islamic perspective behind this?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effect of Coronavirus on the Population

COVID-19, a pandemic disease, escalated like fire in the jungle. Its effectiveness is increasing day by day (Asrani et al., 2021). According to WHO (2020), the pandemic started on 31st December 2019 and it is continued with its second wave (Xu & Li, 2020). The pandemic with a sudden push infected around 428 million population worldwide and the latest number of deaths reached up to 5.19 million WHO (2021). The affected countries from different territories across the border were infected by this disease. This coronavirus named COVID-19 caused disruptions in the social life of the individuals living in that specified affected territories. With the effectiveness of the virus, it caused an effect on 1/3 of the world population (Begley et al., 2020). Asserting the influence on the population, quarantine was suggested that is, a state of being isolated at a place due to hygienic reasons and to avoid contact to several epidemics and infectious diseases (Altinoz et al., 2012). The prevention to spread the disease is the best remedy for infectious and viral diseases (WHO, 2020). Thereby, to provide safety from the affected ones to the unaffected, self-isolation is the best remedy.

Among the seven continents of the world, Asia is the largest continent with a huge figure of the population (Moen et al., 2017). Discovered as an initiator of the COVID-19 due to the number of population and tourism. North America, although ranked fourth in the populated country's list, recent surveys found the maximum number of cases in the United States (WHO, 2020). Europe being on the third level in the most populated continent (Moen et al., 2017) and is the majority of countries facing the maximum number of cases (WHO, 2020). The United States to date is the most effected territory with the highest number of cases 104,671, while Italy is on the second number of positive cases 86,498 has the highest number of fatalities 9,134. China, who initiated the virus now is at the highest recovery rate of 74,971 patients. Other countries like, Spain, Germany, France are also with the high rate of positive cases. Iran found to be with the highest rate of fatalities and continuing with the positive cases among the Muslim countries.

Social Distancing

Distancing is the isolation and hostility, and social distancing is to make a specified distance in view to disassociate oneself with others. Individual's level of closeness within the same or different groups in their social association (Arenas et al., 2004) due to differences in age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or maybe gender-based (Elaine, 2008). The tenderness and warmth felt by them within a similar group or with those who are the intruders (Bogardus, 1947). According to Robert E. Park (1924), social distancing is the diminution in the understanding, involvement or intimacy that is present in an individual or collective relationship.

Globally Infected Muslims

Among all, Muslim ummah is also suffering from this chronic disease. Several countries having a huge spread of the disease, with the lack of knowledge, precautions, and resources. A major spread was on the Friday prayer, where most the Muslim were gathered, took the hype of the disease, Countries included who were affected after those gatherings are, Malaysia, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia (Dwyer, 2020).

Iran, found to be the highest and most effected country among Muslims, with 21638 to date cases and several deaths (WHO, 2020). Other countries with Muslim majority affected by viral diseases such as, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait and also the United Arab Emirates. The widespread of this among Muslims was due to religious gatherings (Emont & Shah, 2020). These gatherings caused a severe dispersion of the virus and the migrants of the other countries spread the virus to those host countries. Workplaces, offices, shops and every kind of business were suspended, even the air service was also disconnected by the affected countries to avoid the circumstances from getting worse.

Globally, organizations are pursuing to work from home facilitations to their employees just to avoid the country level situation COVID-19. People were required to stay at home and to do their work from the home (Lufkin, 2020). Even though the major worship holly places like, the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the Prophet's (SAW) Mosque of Medina were closed for the public to minimize their contact (AFP, 2020).

Theory of Maqasid Al-Syariah

This study relates to the theory in the perspective of taking care of oneself and others by preventing the disease through getting vaccine and other precautionary measures. Theory of Maqasid Al-Syariah focuses on the betterment of society, it explains that the purpose of Shariah is happiness and security (Bahri et al., 2019). It shows the *Maslahat* of humanity where only the social benefit is important. It ascertains the individuals gain economic and social benefit with no harm to others, thus creates a balanced environment (Amaroh & Masturin, 2018). The theory also ensures that the followers are protected from each side, i.e. their health, money, property and community are protected to ensure welfare of the society (Nordin et al., 2017).

Islamic Perspective on Health Safety

There are some verses from the Quran teaching the sense of self-caring and safety.

- "Everything good that happens to you (O Man) is from God, everything bad that happens to you is from your own actions". (Quran 4:79).

It is an assessment from Allah, so people who will save themselves, take precautionary measures will be saved from the COVID-19 disease. Those who ignore the safety measures and keep socializing themselves will be the suffered ones without any doubt.

- "O mankind: Eat of what is lawful and good on earth" (Quran 2: 168).

This verse of the Quran defends the prohibition of eating non-halal food, which can be dangerous for health. The non-halal food impedes several kinds of germs which are dangerous and somehow poisonous to the human body. COVID-19 found to be originated in the non-halal food market (Jewell, 2020) and propagated to others who are not in consumption to that.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the paper explains the summary of research design. Data has been gathered by collecting the information from the recently published research articles. Researchers collected those specific articles with the content related to global pandemic and its effect on the community. Along with that, the online published articles were considered with up-to-date effects of pandemic COVID-globally. The researchers searched the secondary data form the different journals with the help of google scholar, that helped to find the most recent and relevant articles from Elsevier, science direct, MDPI, WHO and research gate. The researchers also gathered the information for recent statistics from world health organization and bureau of statistics.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Benefits of Work from Home

Thus, work from home incorporates benefits to both parties i.e., employers and employees.

Benefits to Employers

There are several studies which have discussed the work from home facility to the employees (Agus & Selvaraj, 2020; Beauregard, 2011; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Germeys et al., 2019; Hytter, 2007; Judge & Ilies, 2004; Ke & Deng, 2018; Mauno & Ruokolainen, 2017; Mayo et al., 2016; McNall et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2009). Researchers identified some of the benefits to the organizations by the practice work from home.

a. *Operating Cost*. Offices, normally catering to several people working as employees. They used to work normally for 9 hours, accommodating themselves under these working hours. Utilization of office stationery, lots of documents, electricity and other utilities

somehow make a huge expense towards the organization. Moreover, the rental incurred by the office place. Working from home, helps to reduce the cost of this work operating cost.

b. *Productivity.* Increase in productivity when employees feel more relaxed while working because of a sense of autonomy and change in the working environment. Employees feel more comfortable and work more proficiently, hence, lessening their work anxiety and stress. Thereby, increasing workability and productivity.

c. *Turnover.* Reduced turnover from several studies was investigated if the employees are satisfied with their jobs. This satisfaction leads them towards staying with their jobs. Flexibility at the workplace helps to intensify their mode of happiness and joy, removing stress, lessen the number of leaves. Turnover is itself a huge cost for the employers, if employees are leaving so frequently it will cause, bad word-of-mouth for the prospective employees, also the time and money cost associated with hiring, the overall recruitment activity will be incurred by the employers.

d. *Behavioural Positivity.* Leading towards the feeling of freedom of workplace, employee freedom of workplace, employers take benefit in the form of a positive attitude of employees.

e. *Impact on the Environment.* Reducing transport to travel, reduces the fuel cost and the associated environmental cost therewith. Communicating via electronic media, the employees need no traveling, hence, the environmental benefit is also on the employer's side.

Benefits to Employees

According to previous studies on work from home (Allen et al., 2016; Amorim & Santos, 2017; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Mansour & Tremblay, 2018; Sharma & Yadav, 2019), employees also benefit if they are allowed to work from their place such as the following:

a. *Work-life Balance.* It creates a balance between employee work and family life. When employees are provided with deadlines, they schedule their work timing accordingly to complete their tasks on the deadline. It makes an easy for them to take care of their dependents as well as to do their work.

b. *Productivity.* Increases as the employee are working under less pressure of the workplace environment.

c. *Stress.* Lessening of stress by the variance of tasks associated with work and life. Employees as family members take care of the family, as well as working for the job. This balance of life makes him or her mentally relaxed and therefore, reduces stress.

d. *Less Cost.* Staying at home, not traveling every day to the workplace, sometimes more far from home, reduces the time and money costs associated with traveling.

e. *Satisfaction.* More if an individual is working in a family environment and flexible hours. This job autonomy gives the person more satisfaction with the job and family life.

f. *Less Health Hazard.* If someone at the workplace is suffering from an infectious disease, it will be transmitted to the persons working in the surroundings. Work from home can reduce this effect.

Limitations of Work from Home

Work from home seems like a perfect and ideal situation (Madell, 2019) in which an employee will not be having any trouble getting ready, work in an office environment, working under supervision, and fuel-saving (Bussing, 2019). But, along with the benefits associated with both employers and employees, it also has some limitations as described below.

a. *Lack of Productivity.* Without supervision, sometimes it becomes difficult to manage work-related tasks (Michelle Kiss, 2019). It is thereby, investigated that while sitting out of the boundaries of the workplace, it is difficult for the employees to work efficiently and effectively.

b. *Absence of concentration.* A balance between work and family life disturbs if an employee is somehow not very compatible to create a balance between both. This time mismanagement may thereby trigger a lack of concentration (Madell, 2019).

c. *Telecom cost.* Being online and connected with the colleagues and subordinates may also cause the telecom cost to the employees and the employer. This stays connected practice can cause a huge amount of bills to the parties involved (Michael Hurd).

d. *Less incorporation.* Coordination can also be subordinated if the employees do not face to face connected. Sometimes some issues cannot be handed over without the presence of the relevant staff, causes disruptions in the services (Michael Hurd).

CONCLUSION

COVID-19, a global catastrophe, calamity started from a wet market of Wuhan, China (Citroner, 2020) affected up to 100 countries worldwide (WHO, 2020). Including among the Muslim

community, which are those infected individuals who had direct contact with the infected ones in religious gatherings. Muslim worship places with restricted time before but now suspended their operations until the situation gets better (Soumaré & Crétois, 2020). Thousands of Muslim migrants who were there for worship in Iran were infected by this virus (Emont & Shah, 2020). Regarding the situation, there are many controversies by religious bodies. Such as, the worships especially, the Mosque of Makkah and the Prophet's (SAW) Mosque of Madinah should be always operational until the day of judgment. Taking the point towards practicality and avoiding the current scenario to get it to the worst situation, it became mandatory to avoid those places in which people are gathered and are in direct contact with each other.

Work from home, practice intended for employees to work from home or remote place. This facilitation is nowadays implemented due to chronic disease and infectious nature triggered many casualties. To avoid the circumstances to get more miserable, it is thereby executed by most of the companies worldwide, Microsoft, Google, Twitter, Spotify, Hitachi, Apple, Amazon and Chevron (Lufkin, 2020). Thereby, less probability or occurrence of getting infected. It can be elaborated as if an employee suffering, others can also be transmitted by casual contact while working together. Covid-19, also specified as a precaution to stay at home, intensifying the possibility of work by staying at home.

Considering all the facts, COVID-19 propagating its effects day by day, from one to several individuals who are in contact. It can only be avoided by making the distance in a social aspect. Islam also taught to save oneself and others from loss of health. Theory of Maqasid Al-Syariah also intends towards the safety of health and life of individuals. This can only be possible when they avoid the circumstances to get infected by the virus. In the social circumstance, to get vaccinated, maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands are some of the ways to avoid the situation to get worse. In the organization perspective, flexible work practices are the other way to avoid the spread of this virus. Flexible work practices facilitate people working in the organizations by providing flexibilities in working hours, working day etc. Hence, there is a possibility to work and to pray from home to avoid and control the situation. Although, these are not permanent solutions but also the situation will not sustain for a prolonged time. So, for the betterment of the individuals is to keep distance, keep connected, keep working and keep praying at home.

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