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AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF TELEWORK READINESS ON INDIAN INDUSTRIES

Jainam Ashwinbhai Shah*, Illiya Manna**

Abstract *Telework, more popularly known as remote working or Work from Home, is being talked about more and more in the past few years. Although teleworking is not a very new concept, very few organizations have openly adopted the practice in India until recently. This study is aimed to propose a Telework Readiness Model based on different factors including management, culture, communication, technology, employee satisfaction and training. The survey was conducted during the first four months of 2020. The sample comprises 313 professionals working in various organizations across different industries in India. The study model consists of two parts including questionnaire and the evaluation rules, which are scored by the scores obtained from the responses of various employees of different organizations. The study demonstrates the pre-evaluation model in the Indian context before designing and launching telework in the organizations at a larger scale (The terms telework, work from home, remote working have been used interchangeably in this study but essentially mean the same).*

Keywords: *Telecommute, Telework, Work from Home, Telework Model, Telework Readiness*

INTRODUCTION

The term 'telecommuting' was first coined by Jack Niles in 1972. At that time, he was working remotely on a complex NASA communications system and he told people that what he was doing is 'Telecommuting', and thus the phrase was born. Telecommuting refers to a work arrangement allowing an employee to perform required tasks from his/her choice of location, usually home or a satellite centre, by using telecommunications equipment. Terms such as telework, work-at-home, flexi place, teleconferencing and remote office work are also used to refer to telecommuting (Khalifa & Etezadi, 1997).

Telework is almost four decades old. In this very time, its ability for redrawing the geographical and organizational boundaries of the traditional setups is amply demonstrated. It can be operationalized by the combination of technical and communication advances that mankind has achieved. The positive consequences of the decentralization and increased worker autonomy and mobility brought through telework can be seen in higher levels of increased productivity, working time improvements and new employment opportunities without any geopolitical boundaries (Huws, Korte & Robinson, 1990). Telecommuting was born in a response to oil crisis, with the notion that it could mitigate the risk of oil consumption, traffic congestion and commuting (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). However, telework did not become popular until the last decade of 19th century (Caillier, 2011). Even though, information communication technologies and infrastructure were able to support telework, the widespread expectation is that telecommuting has not evolved as per expectations and possibilities (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2009).

Telework is advantageous to both the sides, employees as well as employers. Employees want to work from home because of need for flexibility, desire for autonomy, commuting hassles, limited alternative work options, lifestyle demands, etc. On the other side, organizations want to enable telework to retain talent in this war of talent world, productivity improvement, organizational interest, saving on indirect cost such as canteen services, office space, parking, etc. (Olson, 1989). Also, advantages of telecommuting include an increased level of employee loyalty, better retention of high performer (Hi-Po), increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and the potential to quickly recover from natural disaster (Algrari, 2017). However, the blurring of boundaries between advantages and disadvantages may create ambiguity. Disadvantages from the perspective of teleworker have been identified by several authors such as blurred boundaries between work and home and overwork,

* Student, MBA HR, Indian Institute of Management Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. Email: jainam.shah19@iimranchi.ac.in

** Student, MBA HR, Indian Institute of Management Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. Email: illiya.manna19@iimranchi.ac.in

presenteeism, social isolation, lack of support and inadequate equipment, career progression or promotion, resentment from colleagues, etc. (Tavares, 2017). The empirical finding from several research reveals that telework can not only benefit environment (e.g., oil consumption reduction) but employers and teleworkers as well. Telework can help organizations to increase productivity of their employees (Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2007). Tele homeworking can also enhance work-life balance and job satisfaction. A study provides substantial support for each of the propositions regarding teleworker (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Enabling telework in organizations can be achieved through change management. But no widespread accepted telework frameworks exist for organizations to put telework into practice. This research was conducted in India across different organizations from various sectors. The target audience was white-collar workers and professionals. The survey was attended by 324 respondents from 30 industry sectors and 199 organizations from India. Importantly, the survey was primarily targeted to the jobs which could be reimagined as telework. The research also considered external factor COVID-19 and identified individuals who were forced to opt for telework for business continuity during this pandemic.

The review synthesized, analysed and collated the literature written around the world on the general topic of telework. The researchers gathered data focused specifically for more recent research on the topic. It is imperative to acknowledge COVID-19 due to which the field of telework has evolved quickly. The literature was gathered for this paper between January 2020 and April 2020 to incorporate telework during the pandemic.

Age Group Behaviors: Millennial, Gen-z and Baby Boomers

In India, telework and other alternative practices have been met with great resistance and circumspection leading to delay in adoption of telework. This resistance is also due to influx of millennials and Gen Z employees along with the time of retirement of baby boomers. COVID-19 worked as a catalyst to the adoption of telework and other methods.

Managing employees who are teleworking requires a different skill set than managing any other organizations. The diverse workplace (age, gender, education, status, etc.) requires a customized incentive method to motivate employees. It is impossible to motivate them with the same incentive methods. Age is commonly used to predict behaviour and attitude. Utilizing age as a reference parameter allows researchers to analyse differences among various generations to enhance understanding of behaviours of various age groups (Tsaur & Yen, 2018).

Through inclination towards cognizance of conduct, employers can be more receptive towards satisfaction level of employees, implement changes in case any negative reaction results (Bishka, 2015).

There are generational impacts that happen during the human development process which effectively add to how the key needs of an individual are framed. By taking a gander at the hour of youth improvement, researchers can foresee how people will respond to new thoughts (Leistritz & Murdock, 2019).

Telework: The Changing Organizational Ecosystem

This proposition argues that advancement of adaptable work plans that incorporate telecommuting as an adaptable work mode is transformative as the motivating force upgrades their job roles and individual performance becomes accountable.

Telework practices are currently being used worldwide due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since 1990, there were speculations about telework commanding strategic fronts of various businesses. Though conventional office settings have remained the most significant (Torten, Reaiche & Caraballo, 2016), COVID 19 has turned traditional work modes upside down and telework has become the new normal.

The Traditional corporate culture has always been a point of debate about being unsupportive to the progress and adopting to new methods of operations. Researches have specifically pointed out that decision of telework can be positively affected by attitude of management and business leaders. (Forgacs, 2010). However, due to COVID-19, it has been made clear that organizations can create telework ecosystem and use telework to achieve business objectives. In fact, it has been demonstrated that 56% jobs of the workforce can be executed and compatible with remote work. There are also predictions that a 25-30% increase in telework will be observed by the end of 2021 due to reduced travel hours, awareness of cost-saving opportunities, reduced fear about working from home and work-life balance (GWA, 2020).

What is currently observed is that in the last decade, many Indian organizations have crossed the traditional barriers to become more flexible, agile and diverse. Worldwide, significant rise in telework mode across industries were observed between 2010 and 2013 due to increase in new workplace technologies, and new benchmarked reforms were brought in the industry such as social networking, online messaging, etc. (Wise, 2016).

Enhancing Motivation & Workplace Productivity

This proposition confirms that offering telework to employees can increase motivation and productivity

levels. Employees are inspired and motivated by the expectation of getting benefit or rewards, either tangible or intangible, intrinsic or extrinsic. Be it a higher salary to support their family, a thank you from customer, an acknowledgement from senior management or vacation time to spend quality time with the family, these rewards and incentives are highly required to maintain productive and impactful manpower (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). In this way, human resource managers, in order to be compelling, must conduct compensation benchmarking with industry standards and performance management system for subconsciously directing employee actions towards the completion if assignments (Faisal Ahammad, Mook Lee, Malul & Shoham, 2015). Because of a continuously changing working environment structure, past techniques of motivation and inspiration are not responsive by millennial and gen-z workforce.

Again, it is perceived that a gigantic rush of baby boomers is expected to retire in the coming ten years. Analysing the generation of workers that will fill their shoes is necessary to be predictive with business intelligence; the work motivation theory highlights the need to constantly receive employees' feedback in order to ace the war of talent (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010).

Telework: A Sustainable Option

Telework can work as a strong motivational factor such as meeting an individual employee needs, childcare requirements, remote work options or flexible work hours. Telework can help boost the concept of flexi hours which can decrease traffic congestion during rush hour and decrease carbon footprints. Telework also allows employees to work from home, reducing childcare need and save cost on commuting to office. These factors contribute to increased employee motivation and satisfaction (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009). Moreover, employee autonomy contributes to increased self-efficacy, job satisfaction and decreased personnel turnover. In addition, autonomy given to the employees increases self-efficacy, job satisfaction and decreases attrition rate of an organization. These parameters directly provide a secure professional workforce, which is an important asset to the human resource department of an organization and management teams (Hart, 2016).

In addition to the autonomy, productivity of an individual is one of the most prominent gain of telework (Dubrin, 1991). To be specific, flexible work hours directly affect productivity of an individual. Time flexibility enables employee to work in the hours they are most productive (Eversole, Venneberg, & Crowder, 2012). The job pattern is (late night, early morning, afternoon etc.), flexible working hours will allow employees with high efficacy produce faster and high-quality work. Individual performance is directly linked to the business outcomes; therefore, HR managers must pursue actions that can improve employee productivity and performance. Telework will assist HR managers to achieve these objectives.

Telework: A Prosperous Way

It is important to understand not all jobs can be transformed into telework, first an employer should identify the jobs that can be transformed and the jobs that cannot be (Fujii, 2020). Once an organization identifies the jobs that can use telework, next task for the organization is to create a telework policy. The policy should be formulated by taking inputs from employees and management. It also can be benchmarked with the organizations who have telework policy in place. Telework policy should consider all the aspects such as technology support, teamwork, virtual presence, communication techniques, customer service needs and office space options (Fujii, 2020). The next step is to train employees on various aspects related to telework. Fourth step is to enable telework for the employees, and last step is to measure and capture results. This paper does not present detailed task of the telework implementation, but this research considers all parameters and asses the readiness of an industry to implement telework.

The research study designed to assess the accessibility and acceptability of the telework on Indian organizations had the following general and specific objectives:

General Objective: To assess Indian industries on the telework readiness.

Specific Objectives:

- To study factors and variables influencing organizations and teleworker.
- To study correlation between telework and organizational variables, telework and teleworker variables.

Research Model

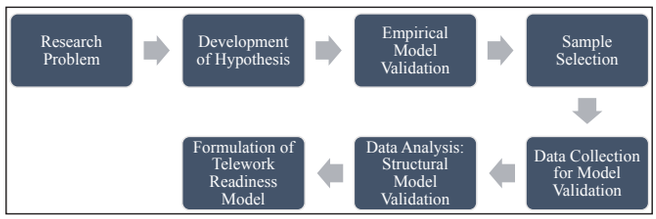

Fig. 1: Research Model

To address the key research objectives, this research used a quantitative method and combination of primary and secondary sources. Then, study area, data sources and sampling techniques were identified. The population of the research was determined based on random sampling system.

This data collection was conducted from January 2020 to April 2020 from all possible industries operating in Indian geography. The samples were selected such as either they are already teleworking, or their jobs can be reimagined as telework.

Primary data was obtained from the original source of information. The primary data was highly reliable and has more confidence level of decision-making with the trusted analysis having direct intact with telework context. Google Scholar and ResearchGate were used to search for articles, publication, using the keywords related to "telework", "telecommute", "tele homeworking", etc. The selection of the articles was based on the principal that the reference should be an empirical analysis, specialised report or a review.

METHODOLOGY

Of the 324 respondents who filled the survey questionnaire, 11 responses were eliminated after primary data screening. Participants were from different Indian sectors and all 313 screened data belonged to white-collar, professional whose jobs can be transformed to telework. Total 30 sectors were considered, and each sector has received at least one response. Out of 313 participants, 164 (i.e. 52.40%) belonged to the IT/ITES industry, financial sector recorded 14 (i.e. 4.5%), manufacturing sector received 16 (i.e. 5.1%) followed by other industries with minimum one response from ports sector. Research was carried out in the first four months of 2020. Thus, to identify individuals who started working from home due to COVID-19 crisis, the duration of work option was added. 15.7% participants were teleworking for more than two months and remaining were enabled to work from home for business continuity by organizations.

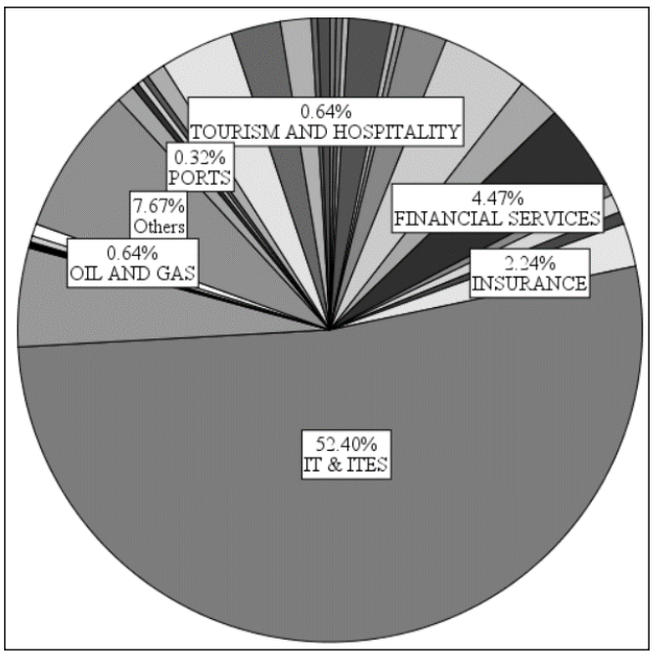

Fig. 2: Industry wise Respondents Breakup

In total, 51.1% participants were mid-level employees, and 31% were junior level followed by senior level 17.9%. Employees from 194 unique organizations participated in this survey.

This research was exclusively based on the data received from respondents from various industries. Although, majority of the data covered was from IT industry, which may have weakened the findings. Also, there is no data available on telework readiness of other countries to benchmark, so comparison with the other countries is not possible as of now.

Measures

The web-based questionnaire was floated using electronic survey tool, which consisted of 18 questions with drop-down industry categories. After considering all technical aspects and the internet as a research tool, it was imperative to keep the survey questionnaire as short as possible. This survey was floated to 975 individuals, out of which 324 individuals took the survey putting the total response rate at 33.23%. Participants was presented with a statement and they indicated how accurately each statement described them using a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree". Additionally, statements on training were presented with four-type Likert scale, where 1 = "No Training" to 4 = "Extensive". Data on respondent's background such as industry, gender, role, telework decision and written agreement was captured through predefined values. In this research, two perspectives, which are organization and employee, were taken into consideration to assess readiness of sectors for telework. The questionnaire was inspired from other telework research and redesigned and developed according to the need (Baker & Crawford, 2007). Reliability test was conducted on the survey questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha of 0.645, which is a little below the generally accepted value 0.7.

Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in the scale and generally tends to underestimate the internal consistency reliability. Composite reliability values of 0.60 to 0. 70 are acceptable in exploratory research, while in more advanced stages of research, values between 0. 70 and 0.90 can be regarded as satisfactory (Considine, Botti, & Thomas, 2005).

Evaluation of the Questionnaire

Functional Proposal

The data collected through the questionnaire demonstrated an overview of the strong and weak points of an organization. It also elucidated how the same organization has created an environment to effectively implement telework, and its ability to implement it fruitfully.

The questionnaire consisted of total nine parameters. Two factors have been considered to assess the telework readiness of Indian Industries: Organizational factor and Employee factor. Both factors consist of various parameters that influence the outcome of telework. A total of nine parameters were identified. Among organizational factors, organization culture, resources, training and management support were identified as important parameters. Productivity, motivation, stress, retention and increased workdays were identified as the parameters associated with employee factors.

Each parameter is assigned a weightage based on assumptions and intuition. After evaluating them, the answer characterizing the affairs in the organization was ticked off. As for functional forms, the estimate function was postulated as:

$$Telework\ Final\ Score = \Sigma\, xi\ yi$$

Equation 1: Final Score Calculation Formula

Where, xi: Individual score of the parameters (Organization Culture, Resources, Training etc.), yi: Weightage assigned to every parameter and final score is on 0 to 10 point scale after calculating composite score of each factor with assigned weightage.

RESEARCH VARIABLES

Organizational Factors

Four organizational factor variables that literature suggests influence work from home have been included in this research. The factor variables include Organization culture, Training needed for telework, Resources (i.e. Technical infrastructure, System setup at home location etc.) and Management support. The hypothesis tested in this study tests the positive outcome regarding contribution of the factors to enable telework.

Organization Culture

This variable demonstrates the influence of management culture on work from home setup. It entails characteristics of an employing organization. More generally, the debate is along the lines of whether the management culture of an organization is traditional (that is rule bound, bureaucratic and hierarchical) or more supportive (open and power sharing), and how these broad classifications affect performance (Baker & Crawford, 2007). At any organization, culture plays a crucial role in enabling telework. Indian industries are perceived as more hierarchical and traditional, which could be a major roadblock for telework.

Organizational and national culture is set of creeds, standards and values that share a specific social group, and that decisively influence behaviour of the members (Wojčák & Baráth, 2017). It is evident that the organization itself is a culture for countries that reacts, changes and develops to changes (Denison, 1996). This directly leads to the build that culture of an organization is directly linked to any organizational change including telework.

Resources

The common sense leads to believe that an organization which provides infrastructural support to set up an office at home will have a positive impact on the initiation of telework. This variable covers all aspects of resources that are needed to enable telework such as internet connectivity, costs incurred to transform home space into office, technical support, software and advanced application. India has undergone a digital transformation from the last couple of years. This has increased connectivity across the nation. However, employees have this notion that if an associate starts working from home, the organization will not reimburse costs that are utilized to enable and run the workplace. Providing more resources increases the employee satisfaction but not productivity (Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1991). Since, additional evidence supports that lack of technical support adds to reported teleworker stress (Mann, Varey & Button, 2000), this variable is very important while assessing telework readiness.

Training for Telework

For fruitful utilization of teleworking, several types of trainings are recommended to overcome the cultural barriers that may arise from a change in management style and techniques (Ursula Huws, Werner & Simon, 1990) and to increase proficiency of the manager on the better utilization of telework and its potential benefits, such as increased productivity.

Similarly, training of teleworker is also considered to be a driving factor of telework productivity. Most researchers suggest that telecommuters should be trained on any new work settings. It is likewise prescribed that teleworkers should be able to separate their work life from personal life while teleworking. Associates who are trained are more likely to be able to telework more frequently (Ruppel & Howard, 1998). Training for teleworking employees involves training on health and safety hazards at home while teleworking, running home office, communication training, technical training, etc. The efficient running of an office can be directly related to the training provided to the telework associate.

Management Support

The literature has consistently considered management support as an important factor in change management of

an organization (Prescott & Conger, 1995). This variable is likewise accepted to be identified with the appropriation and dispersion of telecommuting given its solid help across advancement contemplates.

This factor includes support from Human Resource Manager, Supervisor, and senior management. HR Manager, and Supervisor play an important role into socialization of an employee into organizational culture. Also, HR policies regarding performance management, clocking system, leave management and all other HR functions should be in place for the smooth functioning of the telework.

Teleworker Factors

The Employee Factor focuses on the receptive side of telework for employees who work from home. It consists of five dimensions which are Productivity, Motivation, Stress, Retention, and Increased Work Hours.

Employee satisfaction is always considered an important indicator of business outcomes. This build was further developed as satisfaction is an effective and evaluating response towards telework (Anderson & Carol, 1984). Productivity plays a crucial role in teleworking, as organizations will always want to improve or maintain same productivity level as working from offices.

Telework came into spotlight during 1970s oil crisis, which gave rise to concerns of fuel consumption, traffic congestion and long work commutes. This motivated naturally a lot of firms to enable telework based on transportation factors. Also, family duties are a second suspected motivation to telework. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation shown by teleworker leads to higher productivity, performance and positive outcomes (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Motivation also includes the need for extended period of concentrations and avoiding interruption at telework place, which prevents people from being productive. The presence of other family members at home might distract the teleworker from their duties (Baker & Crawford, 2007).

Often employees are expected to and often need to stretch their working hours owing to negligible travel time and the general belief that telework is a privilege. This dimension tests whether the employees are keen to go extend their working hours when they are working remotely.

These two factors, organizational factor and teleworker factor, consist of nine variables and are considered for the final score assessment of each response. The industry score is calculated then by considering the specific industry that each of these respondents belongs to using a proposed functional formula. Finally, each industry score is submerged to the single score which shows overall Indian Industry score for telework readiness.

Hypothesis

H0: Indian Industries are ready to bring telework as a permanent arrangement into the organizational context.

RESULTS

Fig. 2 gives sectoral differentiation for the sample. It is to be noted that IT/ITES comprised 52.4% of our sample, which is very high. The nature of jobs in this case is highly telework transformable. It supports the fact that the largest telework share came from information technology and information technology-enabled services (Noronha & Cruz, 2019). The results confirmed that 15.7% of our respondents are working from home for more than two months, suggesting that they are experienced with this mode of work. Telework for most of the respondents were initiated by organizations, which suggests that organization influences the most in enablement of remote working. It is to be also noted that 75.4% confirmed telework was initiated for less than two months which is due to COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it also indicates these jobs could be transformed into telework, but organizations are reluctant to allow employees for work from home.

Table 1: Respondents Descriptive Statistics

				Role:		
				Junior	Mid-Level	Senior
				Count	Count	Count
Formal Agreement	No	How long have you been working from home for this organisation?	Between two to twelve months	5	3	1
			Greater than 12 months	3	7	6
			Less than two months	37	40	21
			NA	6	10	3
	Not sure	How long have you been working from home for this organisation?	Between two to twelve months	1	0	0
			Greater than 12 months	0	1	1
			Less than two months	5	12	2
			NA	2	2	1
	Under development	How long have you been working from home for this organisation?	Between two to twelve months	0	0	2
			Greater than 12 months	0	0	1
			Less than two months	3	4	1
			NA	1	0	0
	Yes	How long have you been working from home for this organisation?	Between two to twelve months	1	1	1
			Greater than 12 months	4	7	4
			Less than two months	29	70	12
			NA	0	3	0

53.67% respondents were male, while 46.32% were female. 51.1% of the total respondents belonged to mid-level positions at various organizations, followed by junior-level. It is also noteworthy to point out that of all the respondents, only 42.2% individuals have undergone a formal agreement or contract regarding work from home. Only 3.8% survey takers responded that agreement was under development. 38.3% respondents have staff directly reporting to them and remaining respondents have reporting status. 93.3% were involved in teamwork and 6.7% respondents did not require to engage with team. 75.4% respondents have started teleworking in last two months, whereas 10.9% respondents were already tele homeworking from at least one year. In this sample, 93.3% respondents were dependent on teamwork at their workplace, which supports the fact about cohesiveness as a process that reflects a group's tendency to stick together and remain united to reach a common goal (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Also, only 38.3% respondents had subordinates directly reporting to them.

Table 2: Correlation between Final Score, Organizational and Employees Variables

Correlations				
		Organizational Factors	**Employee Factors**	**Telework Final Score**
Organizational Factors	**Pearson Correlation**	1	0.204**	0.980**
	N	313	313	313
Employee Factors	**Pearson Correlation**	0.204**	1	0.393**
	N	313	313	313
Telework Final Score	**Pearson Correlation**	0.980**	0.393**	1
	N	313	313	313

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

According to the correlations Table 2, organizational factors contribute more to the enablement of the telework compared to employee factors. This illustrates that organizations which have a need to enable telework, need to work on the organizational factors. Correlation between telework and organizational factors indicates a perfect ascending linear relation.

As far as training required to telework is considered, only 13% of the total sample size were trained to manage members of the families while teleworking and only 22.8% were trained to run office from home. According to findings, technological trainings seems to be given utmost priority as 65.1% respondents answered that they are trained on technological aspects.

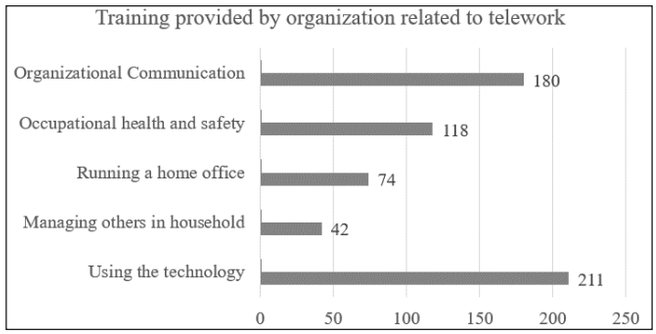

Fig. 4: Training Descriptive

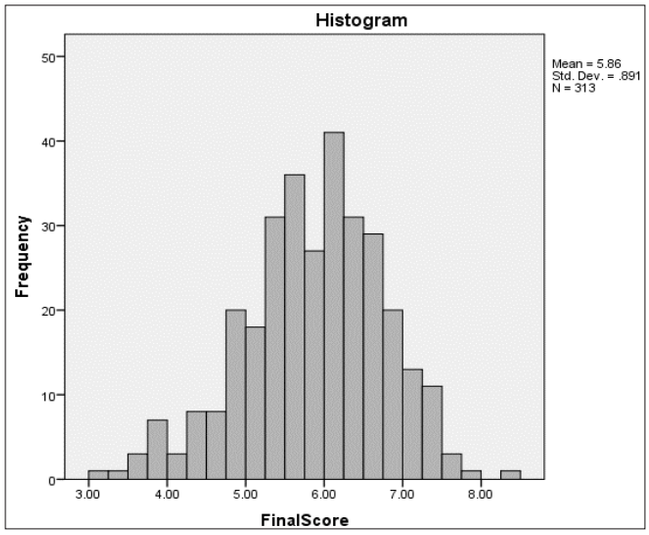

Fig. 5: Telework Overall Score from Respondents Data

According to the proposed model, final scores were calculated based on the data collected. Final score is based on a 10-point scale considering factors mentioned in the Equation I. As a general belief, IT/ITES sector is better equipped to enable telework than any other industries in India. This hypothesis does not stand with research findings. Pharma sector scored highest among all the industries. Here, it must be noted that these samples only contain those jobs which can be transformed to telework. IT/ITES sector scored 5.94 due to various parameters such as lack of training, costs uncovered, lack of management support, etc., compared to other industries.

Table 3: Industry wise Final Score

Industry Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	Industry Type	Mean	Standard Deviation
AVIATION	3.53	0	PHARMACEUTICALS	6.43	0.94
AUTOMOBILES	3.88	0	ECOMMERCE	6.38	1.5
INFRASTRUCTURE	5.15	2.71	TEXTILES	6.37	0
FMCG	5.31	1.34	OIL AND GAS	6.35	1.05
RENEWABLE ENERGY	5.35	0	MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT	6.22	0
POWER	5.36	0	SERVICES	6.18	1.25
TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY	5.45	1.48	CONSUMER DURABLES	6.08	0
RETAIL	5.47	0.24	ENGINEERING AND CAPITAL GOODS	6	0.15
HEALTHCARE	5.5	1.37	INSURANCE	5.99	0.61
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	5.5	0.79	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	5.99	0.53
DESIGNERS	5.54	0	BANKING	5.96	0.13
MANUFACTURING	5.56	0.74	PORTS	5.95	0
OTHERS	5.65	1.27	IT & ITES	5.94	0.8

If the consolidated final score of all industries in Indian context is considered, mean is 5.8616, which is 58.61% score of the total score. This implies Indian industries must work on a lot of parameters to enable efficient telework. Range of the final score varies from 3.03 to 8.32. After considering 95% confidence level for the mean, lower bound was at 5.7625 and upper bound at 5.9607. Range of the final score observed was 5.29, which is more than 50% of the total score. Kurtosis is observed to be 0.034 with 0.235 standard error, which is the measure of a combined weight of a distribution's tails relative to centra of distribution.

DISCUSSIONS

Productivity and motivation are primary drivers of the organization and workplace success (Fujii, 2020). Across the research, it was evident that productivity during telework is closely linked to the adequate technology (Rachelle et al., 2012). But, results of this research observed that 129 responses out of 313 feel neutral when they were asked about productivity compared to working on office location. Only 50 respondents feel more productive while teleworking. Productivity improvement can be directly attributed to increased work motivation due to them teleworking (Hoornweg et al., 2016). Our results strongly support this finding. When respondents were presented with the statement about feeling motivated while teleworking, 125 respondents responded with neutral tone and 57 surveyors did not feel motivated while tele homeworking.

To implement telework at organization, top management and organization must build a culture of trust through creating a shared vision (Berube Kowalski & Swanson, 2005). 268 respondents agreed that organization has initiated the telework. Also, correlation between culture and final score supports the fact as culture plays a crucial role in successful telework. Organizations are encouraged to focus on telework culture which strongly influence telework at any organization.

Technology can facilitate detachment of work from office place and plays an important role for enabling telework (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). For individual employees, the additional cost required to equip a mobile or home office setup is considered as a disadvantage to the telework concept. Decision makers need to consider the cost associated with setting up and maintaining virtual workplaces (Cascio, 2000). This research further strengthens this point. Almost 85% of the respondents were provided systems to work from home. But it is important to reiterate the fact that, cost reimbursement for the resources utilised such as electricity, internet bill, etc., was not happening for 148 respondents by their respective organizations. Only 73 respondents were getting the cost reimbursed.

Telework training influences work-life boundaries of telecommuters which are intended to benefit teleworker by reducing the conflict and strain experienced in juggling work and family roles (Lautsch & Kossek, 2011). The most successful companies will be those who invest in the training and knowledge of their workers. This investment leads to productive, quality employees and successful industry innovation. Research has also been done on successful companies that invest in the training and knowledge of their workers leading to productive, quality employees and successful industry innovation (Fujii, 2020). Finding from this research suggest that only 214 respondents were provided with the training on how to use the technology, only 42 respondents were provided with the training on how to manage others in household, and only 183 respondents were provided with the training about organizational

communication. This directly leads us to the fact that feeling less productive can be directly linked to the training given to those individuals. Telework policies should be in place at organizations seeking to enable telework including cost reimbursement policies for employees who telework. Training should be provided to maintain or increase productivity from the limited amount of training reported from the sample, training programs should be designed which covers different aspects of telework.

There is a preconceived notion of IT being the suitable industry for the telework because employees in this sector are all computer literate, have access to technology and IT workers need flexible work conditions (Mungly & Maniraj Singh, 2010). Results break this notion as it scores less than other eight industries. Findings suggest that pharmaceutical industry is most equipped to enable telework, though we have to reiterate the fact that this study only covers jobs which can be transformed into telework, of course most IT jobs can be transformed into telework. Data suggests that suitable jobs in the Oil & Gas industry can also be transformed for teleworking. But, almost half of the industries need to rigorously implement training plans which are directly linked to the productivity of an individual and thus achieving business objectives.

To improve overall telework experience and productivity of teleworkers, organizations should focus on the various parameters mentioned in the model.

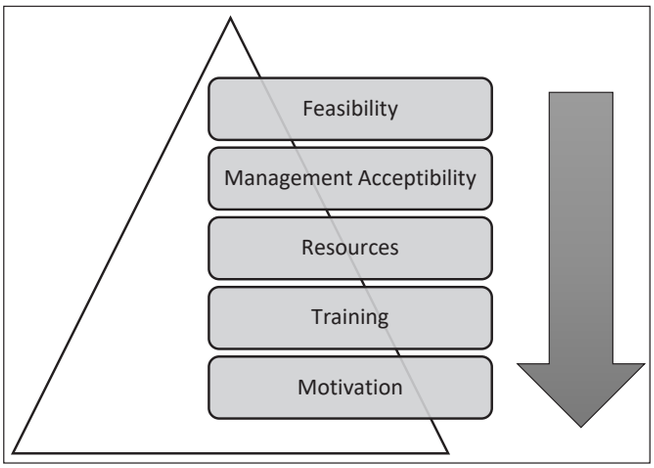

Fig. 6: Telework Readiness Model

This model comprises of five important factors. First is the feasibility of the job to transform into telework. This is the crucial step for organizations because non-transformable telework jobs consume most resources and decrease productivity of the organization. Other four parameters are management acceptability, resources, training and increased motivation of an employee to execute jobs in a different environment. As one moves from top to bottom, productivity of an individual increases, thus directly contributing to business objectives.

CONCLUSION

The following inferences can be drawn from the research outcomes and above discussion. This study examined the readiness of Indian industry considering various organizational and employee variables of a sample of professional employees already teleworking or whose job can be transformed into teleworking. Organizational factors were most related to the final score of telework readiness, while individual variables were less strongly related. For professionals, this is fortuitous because organizational variable can be influenced by HR policies and procedures than individual variables. Assessment shows that Indian industries are not completely ready to bring telework into the system. From the findings, organizations lack in feasibility, management acceptability, culture, training, resources, etc. Though lot of organizations have started practicing telework as a new normal due to COVID-19 pandemic, this is forced telework implementation and cannot be the new normal. It was found from the research that organizations need to bring major changes in the processes and procedures, technical infrastructure to adapt to this change and bring telework into the practice.

For future research, benchmarking with the foreign industries can be done to get better idea of where Indian industries stand in the context of telework. Also, further research can be conducted to explore why organizational factors contribute more towards the success of a telework arrangement. This will be beneficial as organizations would be encouraged and convinced to develop their capabilities.

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