



# POST COVID CO-WORK SPACES: CO-WORK SPACES AT NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL CAN ACT AS A MID SUPPORT FOR WORK FROM HOME AND REMOTE WORKERS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Neetika<sup>1</sup>, Dr Ravi Vaish<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Faculty in Architecture in Haryana State Board of Technical Education, Haryana

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Dr. Ravi Vaish,DCRUST Murthal

## Abstract

The aim of this review paper to study and analyze impact of pandemic on mode of working. A sudden change in working style i.e. WFH or Remote working got a popularity now a days and seems that technology based services in future are going to continue with this mode even post pandemic.

Main focus is on a midway of working i.e. co working at neighborhood level after considering all the pros and cons of WFH. Co-work spaces at local level can be the best solution to the challenges employees facing WFH. It is going to contribute towards the sustainability as well by cutting the unnecessary resource consumption, can contribute towards a good physical and mental health of workers with less travel time and by breaking social isolation in case of prolonged WFH. It will cut the rush at CBDs, pressure on public transport etc.

“Co-work spaces may be the future” and there will be an up gradation in terms of purposes of using Co-work spaces.

## Introduction

In COVID lockdown maximum of the working sectors are running in this mode (**WFH or Remote Working**). However, it was very much possible for workers, employers to adopt this mode of working much earlier with the increase in use of ICT, Cloud computing etc. and is actually happening in most the countries but this situation of lockdown became a favorable situation in a way for employees to achieve work-life balance and for environment as well as it will definitely going to cut down the running cost.

Over the past 10-15 years, use of ICT & Mobile Technology is increasing at a fast pace and attitude of workers is changing towards the way of working and making it possible to work from anywhere.

## Different modes of working for employees

Traditional way of working in offices

Working from home/ Remote working

Working at co-work spaces

## Literature review

### Occupational perspective on working from home

The most effective (in any way) change occurred during covid-19 is the way of working. An observable shift of employees from various sectors shifts to work from home mode.

Employees from no. of various occupations are there with different outlook and opinion towards the concept of work from home or remote working. There would be occupations where one needs to work at work place only so that productivity does not get decrease. Occupation's nature, individual's perspectives, employer and employee's attitude towards a particular mode of working will act as determinants and will have great impact on productivity. (Kramer and Kramer 2020)

The current pandemic is affecting almost all occupational groups in terms of productivity but there are occupational groups where it is having most negative impacts such as low wage workers working in various industries, on construction and manufacturing sites. Simultaneously there are occupations which are totally depend on ICT or digital support and work could be done fully/partially in WFH/Remote working mode much earlier before covid-19.

So, there is a need to clearly identify those sectors where partially or fully, this mode of remote working can be adopted without delay and compromise with the productivity.

### Impact of work from home concept

There are different impacts on two different sectors. First one **Technology enabled service sector** and second one is **manufacturing and construction industry**. So, there are two different sectors to explore the impacts of WFH mode. Various service sectors where works in office based system and can function 100% digitally.

Work from Home is a concept which is now going to be a permanent feature in the corporate world. (Jaiswal and Arun 2020) The current situation is showing that WFH is an effective way to proceed with the business in technology based services and if it is well managed then it can become more effective for employees to enhance their **work-life-balance**, The share of U.S. households with children in which all parents were working has increased from 40% in 1970 to 62% by 2012 (Council of Economic Advisors 2014) (Liang et al. 2015), increase the productivity (Goel and Monika 2016) contribute towards cut down the air pollution because of traffic on peak hours, decrease the consumption of resources, Reduce the attrition rate (Liang et al. 2015), bring to less pressure on public infrastructure i.e. public transport, commercial buildings etc.

In the present pandemic situation, individuals spark with creativity to cope up with different issues related to work, related to technical infrastructure and found no. of different ways to tackle a problem their own. In South Asia, female employees found it convenient to WFH as responsibilities can be combined with work with less pressure on family and community norms. (Goel and Monika 2016)

A study in China shows that by switching from work from office to home has lead to 13% increase in productivity of workers. The output generated by workers was increased which was observed in 9months study. And this improvement came just with 9% increase in the time they working in a shift. (Liang et al. 2015)

The U.S. Patent and Trademark office (PTO) introduced telecommuting in 1997 with 18 attorneys. It now has around 6,500 attorneys. PTO was also successful in providing its workers with all the technologies-computer, faxes, access to agency systems and online research to replicate the office environment in their homes. (Joshi et al. 2015)

According to a study of Felstead et al. the option of working at home should be available in working sector where each individual is responsible for his or her own work or productivity. (Suresh and Gopakumar 2021)

Some of the article's headlines are suggesting that lot of offices are rendered redundant (Chapman, 2020; Thomas et al., 2020; Wells, 2020) in this lockdown due to covid-19 and researches shows that a portion of workers keen to go to offices post covid 19 (Melin and Egkolfopoulou, 2021; O'Connor, 2021; Segal, 2021; Islam 2022)

### Challenges in WFH mode of working

Despite of lots the researches and studies in favor of WFH mode for Technology based Services across the world and studies are showing it with all its advantages but then also it is having lots of challenges and hurdles as well.

It is very much challenging especially for women workers however; some of the studies from other countries are advocating it advantageous for women workers to attain a work-life balance but simultaneously it is not that easy for women in a developing country like India due to gender norms constraints although situation is not that pity now a days (Policies and Policies 2011) as social norms are getting change over the time but for very few no. of peoples. It depends on the type of families or on no. of family member in a family working from home. People may face difficulty due to poverty, less space, poor habitat, lack of facilities at home for doing office work. In case of WFH mode, female workers might feel less freedom due to household work demands. (Joshi et al. 2015) For women if it is in 100% WFH mode then there are chances of clashes in office work and domestic work and will affect her quality of life on a whole. If a company keeps work from home as a choice then the employee who opt for the WFH mode might face receiving of lower quality of feedback from superiors as compared to the employees who work face to face with them. It results in lack of communication and meetings with colleagues, managers, workers which leads to less coordination. (Joshi et al. 2015)

In India, this pandemic situation is the first time when all of a sudden due to lock down most of the technology based jobs comes in WFH mode. However, many MNCs already giving this facility but they give it as a facility/need to the employee and that too not 100% and for the sake of environment or employee's work life balance or recourse conservation or timesaving of employee or to motivate one's creative mind or boost employee's morale by giving flexibility. Before pandemic, it was like extra perks given by a MNC to the employee.

As per a survey Employees starts to feel isolation and disengaged (Singh and Kumar 2020) due to a long period of work from home mode. In starting of 1st lockdown, all were like enjoying the new way of working, having enough of family time, eating, cooking etc. With time one feel socially isolated, rooms became workstations and it seems like this is going to affect lifestyle and a regular disciplined routine as well of individuals. This quantitative survey also reflecting that this long period of work from home is leading to psychological stress as well as people somewhere having a fear of losing their job and unable to adopt this sudden change in Mode of work. The same is being highlighted by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in a media interview. (Islam 2022)

The NSS in India shared the information that the workers who got WFH due to covid-19 working in their dwelling units, structure attached with dwelling unit, on terraces, in adjacent open areas (Samantroy,2019; Islam 2022) which is indicating that no proper work environment is there. Sometimes one needs a calm and free from disturbance place to work. It is also possible that in a house there is more than one person doing WFH so it might be difficult to manage the infrastructure and resources.

There can be a positive effect of both works on family life and family life on work with WFH mode of working. (Mann and Holdsworth 2018) And it is more challenging for female workers comparatively as they have more domestic responsibilities, more kid's studies responsibility.

So, no. of researches making it clear that there is a possibility of continuing with WFH/Remote Working mode with proper management of resources and sectors which are ICT based may be run with the same mode as it is contributing positively towards employee's work life balance, timesaving, travel cost saving, employer's production and conservation of resources and environment but it's challenges are also not deniable and ignorable as it may change/effect someone's personnel life, may lead to tensions in families as well. So, some middle support may be created for smooth functioning of work-life and work of life of workers.

The middle support may be **“co-work spaces.”**

### **What is “co-working” and “coworking”?**

**“Co-working”** is when more than one person working together on the same project and when people from same/different professions work in the same space along with the sharing of space, infrastructure and resources, it's called **“coworking”**. And coworking seems third way working or one can say mid way of working i.e. between work in office/site and work from home/remote working. (Gandini 2015)

A space where work can be done **“individually/alone together”**.

### **Coworking scenario worldwide**

**As per 2020 coworking growth study**, US is the largest coworking market with statistics of 3700 shared flexible workspaces followed by India with 2197 such spaces and UK with 1044 spaces. (Meunier 2020)

No. of coworking spaces are expected to grow by 116% till 2024. It is expected to reach to 41,975 such spaces. (“32 Surprising Coworking Space Statistics in 2021 - What's Changed? - Ergonomic Trends” n.d.)

Situation is much uncertain due to the covid-19 and due to this, employees are experiencing WFH/remote working and that has become normal in few months and various studies showing its positive output in terms of productivity, less pollution, balanced work home life of employees etc. Some of the studies focused light on challenges as well like difficulty to manage due to lack of separate space at home, due to lack of infrastructure facility at home for work, feeling socially isolated etc. Positive effects are overpowering the challenges and seems that challenges can be managed with a midway. Both the modes i.e. WFH/Remote Working and office work may be blend and can evolve in the form of local coworking hubs. (Motamed and Shirvanimoghaddam 2021)

According to some stastical studies, New York peoples have the longest travel times towards their offices. (Motamed and Shirvanimoghaddam 2021)

In Sydney and Melbourne cities, workers spend an hour in up and down for their work every day. (Ma and Ye 2019)

**Not just because of covid-19** rather since long there is pressure to adopt green techniques/practices wherever possible in industries, incorporate offices. Every individual can contribute towards this noble cause to save the environment from degradation and can opt for sharing economy. Spaces may be shared, technical infrastructure may be shared among individuals, organizations, industries in cities. (Bouncken and Reuschl 2018)

### **Coworking at local level/neighborhoods level**

Some of the studies show that longer travelling time negatively affects a person's work efficiency, physical and mental health, creates stress. At the time of extreme weathers it's difficult to travel much. In travelling, one exhausts a lot of energy which can be use for some innovative and creative work and could enhance the productivity as well. (Stutzer and Frey 2008)

In a report published recently prepared through a survey, multiple data had collected and assessed for flexible work environment across UK and globally as well in sub urban areas of settlements. These statistics shows the findings as follows:

57% employee wants workplace near to their home. 77% employees looking for offices located nearby for their next job. Every London can save a good amount by cutting their commuting cost in a year. This study is about suburbs only. (“32 Surprising Coworking Space

**Coworking and community** can be collaborated. Lot of detailed researches has been done so far regarding the collaboration of coworking within the community and have claimed to achieve sustainability. (Spinuzzi et al. 2019)

Few of the recent studies done by researches are showing that coworking will be new normal for the world post covid19, by **Cecilia Amador de San José**. At the starting of this concept long back, it was like these spaces will fade away and will not be working for long but in pandemic these spaces became preferable spaces to use by workers (Cecilia Amador de 2019) and people prefer to use more flexibility environment to work where one can share his ideas, can work as per own, not like someone is having eye on him all the time and he/she is working with a hesitation or irritation. Most of the corporate are shifting to 100% remote working or hybrid models are providing workplace solutions to the workers who are from different cities or countries. (Cecilia Amador de 2019)

### Data Collection and Research Methods

A basic knowledge gathering and identification of the issue was done with the help of news articles related to the current situation of covid-19, its impacts on people being an employee, an entrepreneur, a worker, a house maker, a student, a child, an elder person, a hawker, someone working for essential services etc.

Data referred for writing of review of the above mentioned topic is collected from secondary sources. As per the topic, the study of three subdivided categories was carried out.

First, to analyze the impact of covid-19 on mode of working of employees as lockdowns happened were of long periods and work was need to be done for maximum possible smooth functioning of organizations (public or private) and livelihood of peoples and definitely to sustain the economy of country as well.

Second, the concept of WORK FROM HOME/REMOTE WORKING, its background and now when all of a sudden maximum technology based services comes in this mode due to lockdown. Then finding its impact on employees, employers and family members.

And how it is going with time i.e. from last 2 years of continuous covid-19 situation and with lot of uncertainties.

Third, another mode of working i.e. Co-working. What are co-working, co-work spaces, and users of these spaces, what can be the future possibilities of these spaces?

Scientific researches done in past one decade or so are referred, surveys done by researchers and various companies are used as reference.

Google scholar, Sci-hub, z-library, pub-med etc. is used as search platforms with the keywords both individually and in combination.

Key words and phrases used for research are: "Work from Home", "Remote Working", "Covid -19 impact on employees", "WFH impact on productivity", "sectors where WFH fully/partially possible", "co-working", "Co-work Spaces", "WFH as a new normal post Covid", "future possibilities of co-working" etc.

### Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a significant shift in the way people work, with many employees transitioning to remote work or working from home. This change has had both positive and negative impacts on various occupational groups. While some sectors can fully embrace remote work and experience increased productivity, others, such as low-wage workers in industries like construction and manufacturing, face challenges. The benefits of remote work include improved work-life balance, reduced pollution, resource conservation, and decreased pressure on public infrastructure. However, challenges such as gender norms, lack of suitable work environments, isolation, and decreased communication and coordination exist. Co-working spaces have emerged as a potential middle ground, allowing individuals from different professions to share resources and work together. The growth of co-working spaces globally indicates the demand for flexible work environments. Local co-working hubs can alleviate long commutes, enhance productivity, and promote sustainability. Overall, while remote work has proven effective, it is crucial to address its challenges and explore solutions like co-working to create a harmonious work-life balance for employees in the post-pandemic world.

After studying all the negative and positive aspects of WFH/Remote Working, coworking, impact of covid19 on all these modes of working, effect of all modes of working on employees (men & women) individually, co-work spaces are found a best mid way to work "alone together" and further studies can be carried out with statistical surveys and analysis of all the aspects in further details for technology based services. Apart from survey of employees, employers and experts point of views may also be taken into consideration to identify the sectors where 100% remote work can be done and where there is a need for hybrid mode.

### References:-

1. "32 Surprising Coworking Space Statistics in 2021 - What's Changed? - Ergonomic Trends." n.d. Accessed January 8, 2022. <https://ergonomicstrends.com/coworking-space-statistics/>.
2. Bouncken, Ricarda B., and Andreas J. Reuschl. 2018. "Coworking-Spaces: How a Phenomenon of the Sharing Economy Builds a Novel Trend for the Workplace and for Entrepreneurship." *Review of Managerial Science* 12 (1): 317–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-016-0215-y>.
3. Cecilia Amador de. 2019. "Coworking Is The New Normal, And These Stats Prove It | AllWork.Space." Allwork. 2019.

- <https://allwork.space/2021/03/coworking-is-the-new-normal-and-these-stats-prove-itt/>.
4. Gandini, Alessandro. 2015. "The Rise of Coworking Spaces: A Literature Review." *Ephemera : Theory and Politics in Organization* 15 (1): 193–205.
  5. Goel, Shweta, and Monika. 2016. "Work From Home- a Success or Failure in Developing Country Like India." *International Journal of Research -GRANTHAALAYAH* 4 (3): 176–81. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v4.i3.2016.2800>.
  6. Islam, Asiya. 2022. "Work-from/at/for-Home: CoVID-19 and the Future of Work – A Critical Review." *Geoforum* 128 (October 2021): 33–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.11.018>.
  7. Jaiswal, Akanksha, and C. Joe Arun. 2020. "Unlocking the COVID-19 Lockdown: Work from Home and Its Impact on Employees," 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-34556/v1>.
  8. Joshi, Sujata, Roy Arindom, Thakkar Dikshit, Banik Anish, Arora Gagan Deep, and Parashar Pallav. 2015. "Conceptual Paper on Factors Affecting the Attitude of Senior Citizens towards Purchase of Smartphones." *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 8 (12): 83–89. <https://doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2015/v8i>.
  9. Kramer, Amit, and Karen Z. Kramer. 2020. "The Potential Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Occupational Status, Work from Home, and Occupational Mobility." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 119 (May): 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103442>.
  10. Liang, James, John Roberts, Zhichun Jenny Ying, Jennifer Cao, Mimi Qi, and Maria Sun. 2015. "DOES WORKING FROM HOME WORK ? EVIDENCE FROM A CHINESE EXPERIMENT \* Nicholas Bloom I . Introduction Working from Home ( WFH ; Also Called Telecommuting or Tel- Ework ) Is Becoming an Increasingly Common Practice . In the United States , the Proportion of E." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130 (1): 165–218. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qju032>. Advance.
  11. Ma, Liang, and Runing Ye. 2019. "Australian City Workers' Average Commute Has Blown out to 66 Minutes a Day. How Does Yours Compare?" *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/australian-city-workers-average-commute-has-blown-out-to-66-minutes-a-day-how-does-yours-compare-120598>.
  12. Mann, Sandi, and Lynn Holdsworth. 2018. "The Psychological Impact of Teleworking : Stress , Emotions and Health \*," no. October 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-005X.00121>.
  13. Meunier, Jo. 2020. "Number of Coworking Spaces Worldwide to Double within the next 4 Years." 2020. <https://allwork.space/2020/07/number-of-coworking-spaces-worldwide-to-double-within-the-next-4-years/>.
  14. Motamed, Bahareh, and Kamyar Shirvanimoghaddam. 2021. "The Local Co-Working Hub: A Merging Solution." *Urban Science* 5 (1): 15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci5010015>.
  15. Policies, Urban, and Wiego Urban Policies. 2011. *Women in Informal Employment : Making Home-Based Work Visible : A Review of Evidence from South Asia*.
  16. Singh, Mithilesh Kumar, and Vijay Kumar. 2020. "Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Working Culture: An Exploratory Research Among Information Technology (IT) Professionals in Bengaluru, Karnataka (India)." *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology* XII (V): 3176–84.
  17. Spinuzzi, Clay, Zlatko Bodrožić, Giuseppe Scaratti, and Silvia Ivaldi. 2019. "'Coworking Is About Community': But What Is 'Community' in Coworking?" *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 33 (2): 112–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651918816357>.
  18. Stutzer, Alois, and Bruno S. Frey. 2008. "Stress That Doesn't Pay: The Commuting Paradox." *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 110 (2): 339–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9442.2008.00542.x>.
  19. Suresh, M., and Kavya Gopakumar. 2021. "Multi-Grade Fuzzy Assessment Framework for Software Professionals in Work-from-Home Mode during and Post-COVID-19 Era." *Future Business Journal* 7 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-021-00057-w>.