



## WORK FROM HOME APPLICABILITY AND EFFICIENCY: A CHALLENGE TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2020

Received in revised form 25<sup>th</sup>  
February, 2020

Accepted 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020

Published online 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2020

#### Key words:

Home-Based Jobs, Healthcare,  
Hospitals, Teleworking, Human  
Resources

### ABSTRACT

The drastic and constant advances in technology have lead employees, nowadays, to develop new working conditions and concepts, of which is working outside the office or home-based jobs. This study investigates the advantages and disadvantages of home-based jobs in Lebanese hospitals from the perspective of administrative staff and HR managers, and provides a unique support to the absence of observed studies on home-based jobs in Lebanon. Two questionnaires were designed for the sake of this study. One questionnaire was distributed to 500 administrative staff (quality, finance, patient safety, infection control, accounting, IT, research, human resources) and the second questionnaire was distributed to 50 HR managers. The response rate was 60% for both questionnaires. All subjects are employed in hospitals in different regions of Lebanon. The use of frequency graphs indicated the attitudes of staff and HR managers toward the cons and pros of working from home. Home-based jobs presented a positive impact on employee health, traffic, and the work/family balance. However, concerning productivity, home-based jobs had only a minimal positive effect. Also as shown in our study, HR managers reflected negative attitudes towards home-based jobs. Our results suggest that implementing the home-based strategy in Lebanon is still debatable, primarily because of the absence of a remote working culture, and the challenges that encounter HR managers when controlling the work of their staff.

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### INTRODUCTION

Technology has become the main wheel of our daily lives; its progress causes a lot of changes in people's lives. It also affects the way people work at their jobs. It really helps staff do their jobs at the office, outside the office, or at their homes. This provides a lot of people the privilege to work from their homes or what is known as online marketing. Teleworking is a way of doing your job outside the office away from the entire stressful office environment. According to articles, there are many different definitions of teleworking that have been modified over the years.

Much of the studies piloted on telework have emphasized on personnel who telecommute part-time, however several institutes, including healthcare, are relocating positions to full-time telework. Telecommuting full-time meaningfully influences accessible communication stations and could strengthen staff worries of loneliness, job flexibility, and work-home balance[1].

Working at home has developed to expressively change the nature of administrative work surroundings and social

networks. Studies on teleworker job fulfillment and staff retention has recommended that teleworkers face negative work experiences [2]. Altering work demands, enlarged globalization, and organizational rearrangement in the 21st century have caused to better frequency of telework in many businesses, including healthcare [1].

Some research endorsed that institution leaders in Nigeria should distinguish the application of the malleable working arrangement from a wider perception as employee centered and gives staff the chance to make decision on the flexible working arrangement available to them towards improving the efficiency of the working system [3]. Here is where the research comes into play flaking light on a subject that is almost unexploited in developing countries —not least in the MENA region— in the context of healthcare. This is an answer to the callings in the literature to further inspect WLB and organizational consequences, particularly in the setting of developing countries (Roberts, 2007). It could be contended that it's important to study WLB in the healthcare context for the hypothetical and practical effects given the stressful context that the field applies on its employees (Yildirim and Aycan, 2008). Local research studies showed in the healthcare

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area in Jordan have also highlighted the job stressors medical-staff face in Jordan[4].

Studies show that working from home has several advantages on health. These benefits are generated from reduced stress levels of commuting daily from home to office and due to better schedule flexibility and work life balance [5]. It's effortless to work from home when it comes to managing your meals time, working from home leads to a healthier lifestyle since you manage your eating hours more freely. When you are eating healthier and spending more time with your family, this can assist you to feel comfortable and experience less stress and anxiety. When a person is psychologically fine with no pressures on him/her, this leads to a productive and successful day. One study done in 2011 from Staples showed that workers working from home face 25% less stress than office-based employees [6].

According to organizational level, working from home gives chances to enhance workplace productivity. This productivity is due to the higher flexibility in schedules, employees decide when are the most appropriate times for them to work which increases productivity of the task done. Moreover, well-known press accounts of triumphant home-based jobs programs shows that employees working from home take less sick leaves, decrease absent days, have greater job motivation and fulfillment, and have excessive performance levels. These components will affect productivity in a positive manner. It also contributes to an environment with fewer distractions because whoever comes around to chat with you, you know that you have a lot of time left to continue working on your task, you're not limited by an office timing and regulations [7]. As mentioned earlier about the positive impacts of working from home in reducing stress for employees, some studies show the opposite and explains that working at home is adding more working hours on the staff schedule, which leads to more stress levels and higher anxiety rates since there are same deadlines but with extra working hours. In addition, working from home is eliminating an essential factor that leads to the success of the corporation which is teamwork. When co-workers are away from each other, this leads to miscommunication and employees are not able to participate in synchronized communication unless they use technological devices to be connected. It removes the potential of personnel interactions together and office visits in their breaks to chat and get engaged in a friendly conversations which adds sociability to the overall organization's environment [8]. Work-life balance is fundamentally the positive association between work and other equally significant activities in life which contain family, leisure, personal growth and community development matters. The association cannot be obviously defined and differs from person to person according to their life stresses. Work life balance is envisioned to permit workforces more flexibility in their working forms so that they can equilibrate what they do at work with the accountabilities and interests they have outside work [9].

Up to now, subjective and qualitative revisions have shown to the significance of belief in this managerial process (e.g., Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Peters et al., 2010). Put simply, supervisors frequently do not rely their workforces to execute successfully. Nevertheless, quantifiable valuations of the role of trust are vague. This misunderstanding is possibly specifically given that researchers also have proposed numerous other hypothetically significant deliberations that may stimulate this manager resistance (see Peters et al., 2010).

In reality, managers possibly require to consider a diversity of aspects, harmonizing quite a few potential worries about telework with the potential advantages to staff and the institute that allows it. Above all, researchers have debated that directors weigh fears over (1) an absence of trust in teleworking workers, (2) reduced communication and management with teleworking employees, and (3) apparent unfairness in permitting telework for only some staff against a craving to put up employees' requirements, and, maybe, subsequent improvements in performance, fulfillment, and preservation from doing so[10].

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

*The research design consists of a quantitative study; two types of anonymous survey questionnaires were distributed*

1<sup>st</sup> questionnaire: The study is a survey that uses nine questions, two pages, and anonymous self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire was written based on what was searched in the literature review. This questionnaire targets HR manager's point of view regarding the advantages and disadvantages of home-based jobs.

**Productivity/Satisfaction:** This is related to the response of supervisor's perception about the effect of home-based jobs on the productivity of staff and the level of satisfaction they reach if they change their mode of work from office based jobs to home-based jobs.

**Control:** This survey also focused on the HR manager's perspective on how much HR managers can control their staff even if their personnel are performing their tasks away from the office (from their home).

**Checklist:** This inspection also observed if there should be a checklist to identify the days in which an employee wants to telework.

**Job opportunities:** knowing that working from home increase the job opportunities, it was essential to check the perspectives of supervisors regarding this subject and what do they think about the increase of jobs when home based jobs are implemented.

**Survey Sample:** The target population is HR managers both in private and governmental hospitals in Lebanon. According to a report done by in Lebanon [11], there is a total 163 hospitals contracting with the MOPH, therefore, there are 163 HR managers all over Lebanon. A sample of 50 HR managers were chosen randomly from 50 hospitals.

**Survey administration:** A letter from the "Lebanese University" and "Gates" is delivered to the HR managers of hospitals in Lebanon, requesting approval from the organization to distribute the questionnaires

The target population is the administrative staff at hospitals around Lebanon, specifically staff working at their office; we targeted the Quality Department senior officers, Finance Department staff, IT department staff who works from their offices, Research assistants, HR personnel, Infection control and patient safety departments. The sample was collected randomly from 50 different hospitals all over Lebanon. The questionnaire is designed to elicit the general points of view, opinions and perspectives of the administrative staff of the advantages and disadvantages of working from home. The questions were based on the level of agreement of the

participants by either choosing A, SA, D, SD, or N. The anonymous surveys were delivered personally to the HR departments of hospitals, and the HR department replied when they are done to come and get them filled. Applicants were confirmed that their data will be treated confidentially and that the study had no agenda other than the research objectives.

The staff survey constitutes of demographic information and twenty different questions, made of three pages, with the last page open for any additional feedback and comments from staff. This questionnaire was designed to help us understand the benefits and challenges which encounter home-based jobs and how to tackle them from personnel’s point of view.

**Questionnaires distribution and collection**

Data collection process took place personally where questionnaires were distributed to HR departments in hospitals, and the HR department distributed the questionnaires to its staff.

Statistical analysis was performed using statistical software package SPSS. The differences in the participants’ responses to survey were analyzed using the chi-square test.

**RESULTS**

**Demographics**

The “Staff Questionnaire” consisted of demographic questions at the beginning to learn more about the participants’ background. Most of the respondents are females (212, 70.7%), where males are only (88, 29.3%). Concerning education 58.7% of the respondents have a BS degree, where 34.7% have a Master’s Degree, and only 6.7% are PhD holders.

Of all the respondents 158 (52.7%) are married staff, 117 (39%) are single, 24 (8%) are divorced, and only 1 participant is separated (0.3%). From all marital status except the single 80 (76.2%) participants reported having children where 25 (23.8%) had no children.

The majority of the respondents worked as a full-time job in hospitals, it was a very high percentage which is 93.7%, whereas the part-timers constituted only 6.3%.

**Table 1** Demographics

		N	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	88	29.3%
	Female	212	70.7%
<b>Education</b>	BS	176	58.7%
	MS	104	34.7%
	PhD	20	6.7%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	117	39.0%
	Married	158	52.7%
	Divorced	24	8.0%
	Separated	1	0.3%
<b>Children</b>	Yes	80	76.2%
	No	25	23.8%
<b>Employment</b>	Part-time	19	6.30%
	Full-time	281	93.70%

**Attitudes of staff**

About 68.3% of staff stated that if they are working from home their job will become less stressful and only 13% disagreed with this statement. Moreover, 59% of the staff reported that

an employee has less health problems when he/she works from home. Hence, concerning isolation the percentages were very close, 108 (36%) respondents disagreed that home-based jobs lead to isolation, 98 (32.7%) were neutral, and 94 (31.3%) agreed that working from home will lead to isolation. These results are presented in (Figure 1).

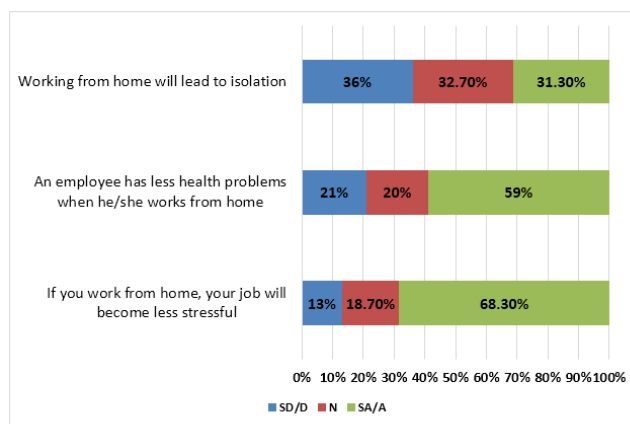


Figure 1: Attitudes on health effects

On the other hand, studying how home-based jobs affect productivity and the overall environment that should be available in order for the work to be productive was reflected by 8 questions in the questionnaire which was distributed. As for the first question, the majority of staff agreed that working from home will lead to fewer interactions with co-workers (233, 77.7%), however, (55, 18.3%) of them disagreed. The second question tackled the problems that are generated in teams because of home-based jobs and we noticed that (186, 62%) of the respondents agreed that working from home leads to conflicts in teams.

A total of 139 (46.3%) of the respondents agreed that employees working from home are usually considered not committed to their jobs and 123 (41%) disagree about this idea. Around two thirds (65.3%) of the staff agreed that it’s very hard to solve urgent problems when someone is working from home and 88 (29.3%) of them disagreed. Many of staff (N=181, 60.3%) agreed that when working from home, a person experience less interruptions but there were (77, 25.7%) of them who disagreed on this issue. On the other hand, 164 (54.7%) of personnel disagreed that working conditions (lightning, heating, space) at home are similar to office work conditions, and 239 (79.7%) agreed that well-grounded internet access should be available at home for a successful home-based job. Also, 138 (46%) agreed that working from home will increase productivity. However, we studied how home-based jobs affect the family/work life balance. 209 (69.7%) agreed that an employee can assist with family responsibilities more comfortably when working from home and 70 (23.3%) disagreed on this issue. Almost two thirds of respondents (58%) agreed that it’s hard to cut off personal distractions when you’re working at home and 80 (26.7%) of them disagreed. More than three-quarters (78.7%) agreed that when working from home an employee can manage his/her time in a more flexible way and 48 (16%) opposed this opinion. Moreover, 184 (61.3%) agreed that working from home makes you feel more in control. A total of 220 (73.3%) respondents agreed on the idea that working from home will solve traffic issue and 41 (13.7%) were neutral.

A total of 218 (72.7%) of the respondents agreed that working from home employees need more motivation and need to be

organized, whereas 250 (83.3%) of the staff concur that home based workers should have a trusty relationship with their direct managers. However, 175 (58.3%) disagreed that if they want to change their work from office based to home-based their manager will agree.

There was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) as shown in Table 3 between males and females with regard to the ability to handle family responsibilities more easily whereby females were significantly more likely to agree than their male counterparts. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was also clear between genders concerning the effect of home-based jobs on teamwork.

There was a significant difference between single staff and married staff concerning the fact that working from home makes you feel more in control ( $p < 0.05$ ) according to Table 5. 62% of married staff agreed that it makes you feel more in control, while 57.3% of single staff agreed.

Regarding health, there was a significance difference between married personnel and single staff ( $p = 0.007$ ) according to Table 2. Married staff agreed more that working from home will make your job less stressful. 72.8% of married people agreed, whereas 59.8% of the single agreed.

According to chi-square test, there was a significance difference between married and single staff that when working from home an employee experiences less interruptions that from working from an office according to Table 6.

**Attitudes of HR managers**

According to the second questionnaire which addressed the HR Managers, 86.7% of them disagreed that home based jobs will increase productivity. However, 76.7% of the HR supervisors agreed that staff will be more satisfied if they work from their home and 66.7% agreed that there will be lack of control on staff if they did their tasks from home. All of the HR managers agreed that face to face communication is better than telecommunication (100%). 83.3% of the managers agreed that working remotely reduces workplace interruptions, and 76.7% also agreed that a checklist to identify the day an employee wants to telework should be available. Furthermore, 56.7% disagreed that staff needs continuous supervision and frequent feedback. 76.7% agreed that working from home will increase job opportunities, and 80% agreed that there are potential frictions at home due to caring of children or spouse.

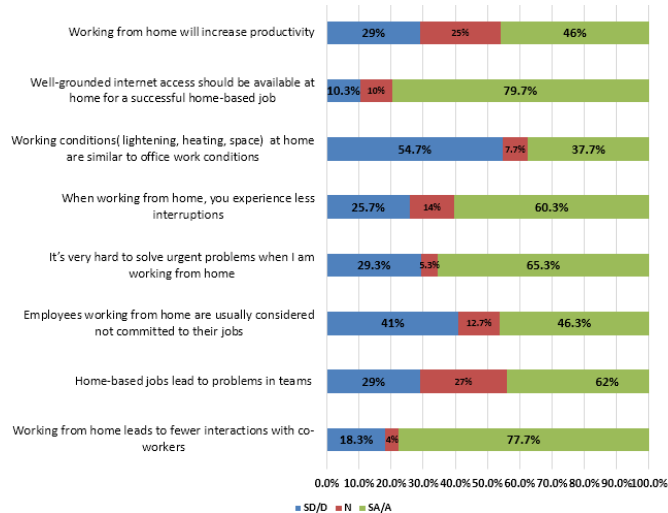


Figure 2: Attitudes on productivity, conditions, and teamwork

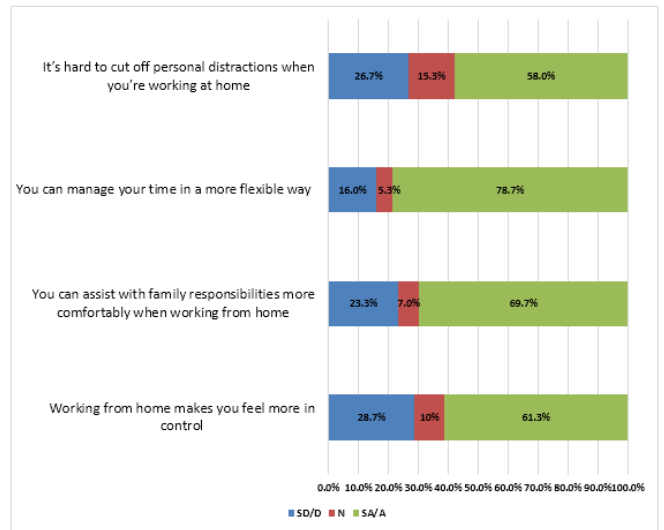


Figure 3: Attitudes towards life/work balance

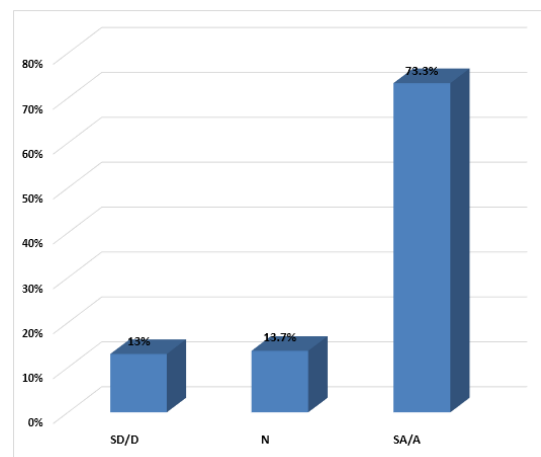


Figure 4: Attitudes on traffic

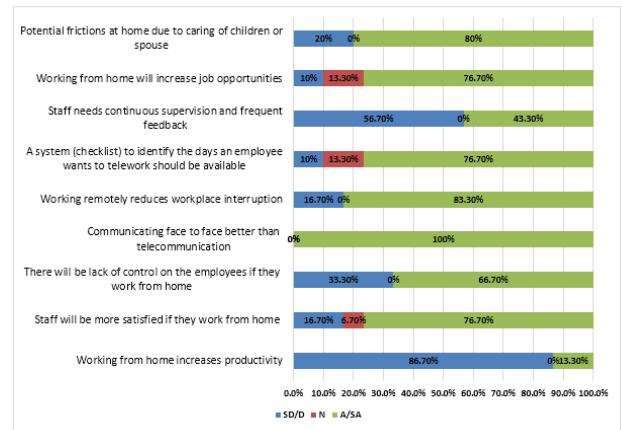


Figure 5: HR Managers perspective

**Table 2** If you work from home, your job will become less stressful

Demographics	If you work from home, your job will become less stressful						p-value:
	SD/D		N		A/SA		
Marital Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Single	15	12.80%	32	27.40%	70	59.80%	0.007
Married	21	13.30%	22	13.90%	115	72.80%	
Divorced	2	8.30%	2	8.30%	20	83.30%	
Separated	1	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
Total	39	13.00%	56	18.70%	205	68.30%	

**Table 3** Employees working from home can assist with family responsibilities

Employees working from home can assist with family responsibilities						
		SD/D		N		A/SA
Demographics	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	29	33%	13	14.8%	46	52.3%
Female	41	19.3%	8	3.8%	163	76.9%
Total	70	23.3%	21	7%	209	69.7%

p-value: **≤0.001**

**Table 4** Working from home leads to fewer interactions with co-workers

Working from home leads to fewer interactions with co-workers						
		SD/D		N		A/SA
Demographics	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	11	13%	8	9.1%	69	78.4%
Female	44	20.8%	4	1.9%	164	77.4%
Total	55	33.3%	12	11.0%	233	155.8%

p-value: **0.006**

**Table 5** When working from home, you can experience less interruptions

When working from home, you experience less interruptions						
		SD/D		N		A/SA
Demographics	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Single	22	18.80%	32	27.40%	63	53.80%
Married	44	27.80%	8	5.10%	106	67.10%
Divorced	10	41.70%	2	8.30%	12	50.00%
Separated	1	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	77	25.70%	42	14.00%	181	60.30%

p-value: **≤0.001**

## DISCUSSION

This chapter of my thesis discusses the main findings and implications of the results written in chapter 4. We will also compare our findings with different research done on similar aspects of our topic, knowing that our topic is a pilot and new study in the field of healthcare.

In our research demographics we focused on the correlations between gender attitudes towards working from home to see how genders can relate to home-based jobs.

An important aspect that we highlighted on in the results is the significant difference between males and females with regard to the ability of handling family responsibilities more easily. In our research, we found out that females agree more and favors working from home, however; comparing our results with different studies, we found out that there's a research which shows the opposite and states that man favors teleworking more than women [2]. We should keep in mind that our study is being conducted in Lebanon (Middle East Area), whereas the study we compared it with it's done in Europe. In Lebanon, females agreed more and favored more working from home, since women in Arab countries contribute hugely to the gender role in families. In general, in the Arab world, it's expected from men to work for their families; women, to tolerate and take care of children (Family and Gender Roles, 2018). Hence, it's essential for women to work from home in order to be able to stay and take care of their children and continue the tasks of their jobs at the same time. The work/life balance is very crucial when we're discussing working from home. When staff is doing their jobs away from the office, it has a huge impact on their personal family life. In this study, we found out that female staff specifically support working from home, this is

due to the big responsibilities women face when it comes to family. Working from home can help employees learn how to succeed in coordinating their own lives, they can assign additional time for their children and spouses by finishing their job early or maybe they decide to finish it at night when their children are asleep. This explains that the flexibility home-based jobs achieve is very helpful specially to married mothers. On the other hand, it's beneficial in general to all staff when it comes to time flexibility. Some people are mostly productive at morning, others are more productive at night. A primary point is that it's the way we are born genetically. For some reason, even opposing to the superiority of our attitude, we can successfully produce more throughout some parts of the day, and not feel much like it during others, therefore it depends on each and every one of us when he/she is productive the most.

The second important issue that we noticed in our results is the fact that home-based jobs have a huge positive impact on health. Home-based jobs decrease the level of stress that is imposed on employees, this plays a major role on the psychological aspect in staff's lives. Working from home gives you more control over the way you're working, you are the decision maker, you decide when to work and where to work, this strategy makes an employee more satisfied and helps staff to be less stressed out, because in other words they are setting the plan of their day, instead of being obliged to work by a strict daily schedule, from 8 am to 5 pm for example, which is really overwhelming. Working from home will lead to autonomy, and when a person reaches this level of autonomy he/she will feel less stressed and controlled and will lead to more productivity in his/her work. Moreover, when your job is based at home, transportation burdens will be forgotten, the stress that Lebanese citizens face each day because of the traffic crisis that hit the highways and streets of Lebanon every single day is very hectic and lead to serious health problems for individuals. Therefore, this is another crucial problem that can be solved or minimized if home-based jobs are implemented properly. Our results show that working from home affects health in a positive way. In another study done in Portugal, it is shown that telework or working from a distance has positive impact on health as well. The yields of this study display that in general, a positive relation between working from a distance and worker health. Nevertheless, there are negative effects on health like stress and depression. The general deduction is that working from home is expected to give more good than bad for individual health. We measured how people responded to employee's isolation when working from home, surprisingly staff disagreed that working from home lead to isolation. This explained since social interactions are still available outside work and even when meetings are scheduled. Therefore, it is not necessary that working from home will to isolation.

Concerning the effect of home-based jobs on productivity, our results didn't reflect a complete positive impact; it was a little bit debatable. Many staff considered that while working from home you can't solve urgent issues and many agreed that it leads to problems in teams, therefore, it will affect communication and cooperation between staff negatively, since employees will have fewer interactions between each other. This leads to misunderstanding of some concepts at work, and it leads to wrong interpretation of problems that occur at work. Some studies showed that workers finish their work faster when they're at home because of fewer

interruptions such as meetings and conversations with co-workers; hence it increases their productivity more (Alton, 2017). Results showed that home-based jobs will affect teamwork and has a negative impact on it. This means the higher people tend to do their jobs from home, the fewer interactions between co-workers is achieved, so this affects teamwork.

According to HR manager's perceptions to working from home, the general outcome was that supervisors were somehow against implementing home-based jobs. They didn't support that home-based jobs have a positive aspect to work. However, some studies showed that bosses were supportive to home-based jobs. In Lebanon, this disagreement might be explained because in our culture autonomy is still not attained, we need to improve our culture knowledge about taking responsibilities alone and work hard to achieve the success of the organization, not just do that for reward. Moreover, our internet connection in Lebanon is still weak, we need to enhance and develop it, in order to be able to work from home efficiently. The problem in Lebanon in connectivity is due to the fact that houses are linked to street cabinets that are in turn connected to Ogero central offices all through copper wires while only a minor quantity of organizations like colleges, hospitals, and huge institutions are connected to the internet using the faster fiber optic technology. The spread of data over copper wires restricts Internet speed, which worsens as the households become more distant to Ogero central offices (Jamaledine, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

In this study the purpose is to check the advantages and disadvantages of home-based jobs from the perspective of Hospital staff and hospital HR managers. Healthcare is a big demanding sector all over Lebanon, it encompasses a huge number of staff, and hence it is crucial to study how home-based jobs affect their work life. Our study showed that home-based jobs have a positive and negative impact on staff simultaneously. However, HR managers believed that it's hard to implement such a strategy now in Lebanon for staff still didn't reach the highest level of autonomy and our internet connection is still weak. They believed that it increases the job opportunities though. Nothing is impossible when things are worked properly and studied well. Home-based jobs can increase productivity and lead to a balanced work life. It can help women specifically by giving them more space to spend with their children.

### How to cite this article:

Ruba Abed El Karim1 *et al* (2020) 'Work from Home Applicability and Efficiency: A Challenge To Human Resources Management', *International Journal of Current Medical and Pharmaceutical Research*, 06(04), pp 5110-5115.

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