

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the topic under study. The chapter will discuss Virtual connectivity relevance, the brief history of virtual connectivity, basic concepts of health and wellbeing, Virtual Work, and Digital Wellbeing.

1.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION:

“The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don’t even notice it, so it’s part of everyday life.” – Bill Gates

In this era of technology, there is a transformation in the workplace in several ways. New and innovative technologies have been an aid to the workplace for its connectivity. Every organization needs to connect for its functioning. The Internet has opened up new opportunities for companies to communicate within and outside the organization. It is no longer sufficient to have annual general meetings to build connectivity with the stakeholders. *Virtual communication favors the ability to see and hear one another in real time, simulating the experience of a physical visit.* In today's dynamic world, stakeholders may be geographically dispersed, necessitating virtual connections. Even when stakeholders are located in the same area, city, or country, virtual presence remains essential due to the demands of the modern era.

The current development in Human Resource Management has changed its periphery. The effect of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a new normal to the world. It has changed the working style of every organization in a significant way. Remote Working, working from home, and flexible timings were considered to be suitable for very few jobs and concepts that were relevant only to the West. This pandemic has widely highlighted that all these concepts have relevance beyond the limited sectors/industries/jobs. These current developments are to stay beyond the pandemic and play a huge importance in changing the role of Human resource management.

These new concepts in work settings require unique management tactics and new ways to address the concerns that tag along. Team leaders must grasp how virtual connectivity can enhance employees' communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. They need to simultaneously also acknowledge its potential drawbacks.

1.2 VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY

Virtual Connectivity is the way of connectivity with the use of virtual mediums with the aid of technology. Virtual connectivity or Virtual Communication allows a person to connect with anyone at any time without any geographical, physical, or time boundaries. Around the globe, there is a huge demand for Virtual Connectivity in the workplace post-Covid-19.

Virtual Connectivity has introduced an ease to communicate and to stay connected around the clock. In the work setting, Virtual Connectivity has changed the way we communicate. It has changed how organizations engage with their stakeholders.

Virtual connectivity is a critical component of modern work environments that enables individuals to collaborate and work together, regardless of their physical locations. Virtual Communication has expanded the level of international connectivity. It offers opportunities for employers to tap into a global talent pool, build relationships, and complete projects as a team. This all can be done while providing employees with the flexibility to work from a location of their choice. To be successful in virtual communication, organizations must invest in the right technology and establish clear communication protocols. They also need to adapt their management strategies to the unique dynamics of virtual teams.

There are different Virtual Platforms, mediums, and tools for connecting with the world. Communication can be broadly categorized into two parts: **synchronous and asynchronous**.

When respondents can directly respond to the communication, it is called **synchronous communication**. Examples of synchronous communication include telephone, teleconferencing, internet chat, and videoconferencing. Synchronous communication, which happens in real time, is highly advantageous in time-sensitive scenarios, emergencies, and when conveying complex information. It helps prevent misunderstandings and supports quicker decision-making. However, it can be time-consuming, especially in long meetings or calls. The scheduling of these calls or meetings can be challenging, particularly when participants are in different time zones.

Asynchronous communication allows respondents to take significant time delay for the subsequent response. Examples of asynchronous communication include e-mail and electronic discussion. Asynchronous communication allows information exchange at any time and is beneficial for teams across time zones. It accommodates varying schedules and priorities, making it crucial for remote collaboration on shared projects. However, it can lead to feelings

of isolation due to the absence of face-to-face interactions and may result in slower response times.

In virtual environments, connecting with stakeholders poses unique challenges. Proactively identifying and managing risks associated with virtual mediums can mitigate potential issues. Utilizing various communication channels is essential for effective connectivity, allowing companies to engage stakeholders directly in planning and decision-making processes. Virtual connectivity facilitates valuable feedback from stakeholders, offering insights that can enhance competitiveness by understanding their perspectives, suggestions, and concerns.

1.2 (i) Advantages & Challenges of Virtual connectivity:

To effectively utilize virtual communication, one must carefully evaluate its benefits and limitations, as well as develop tactics to minimize any potential negatives.

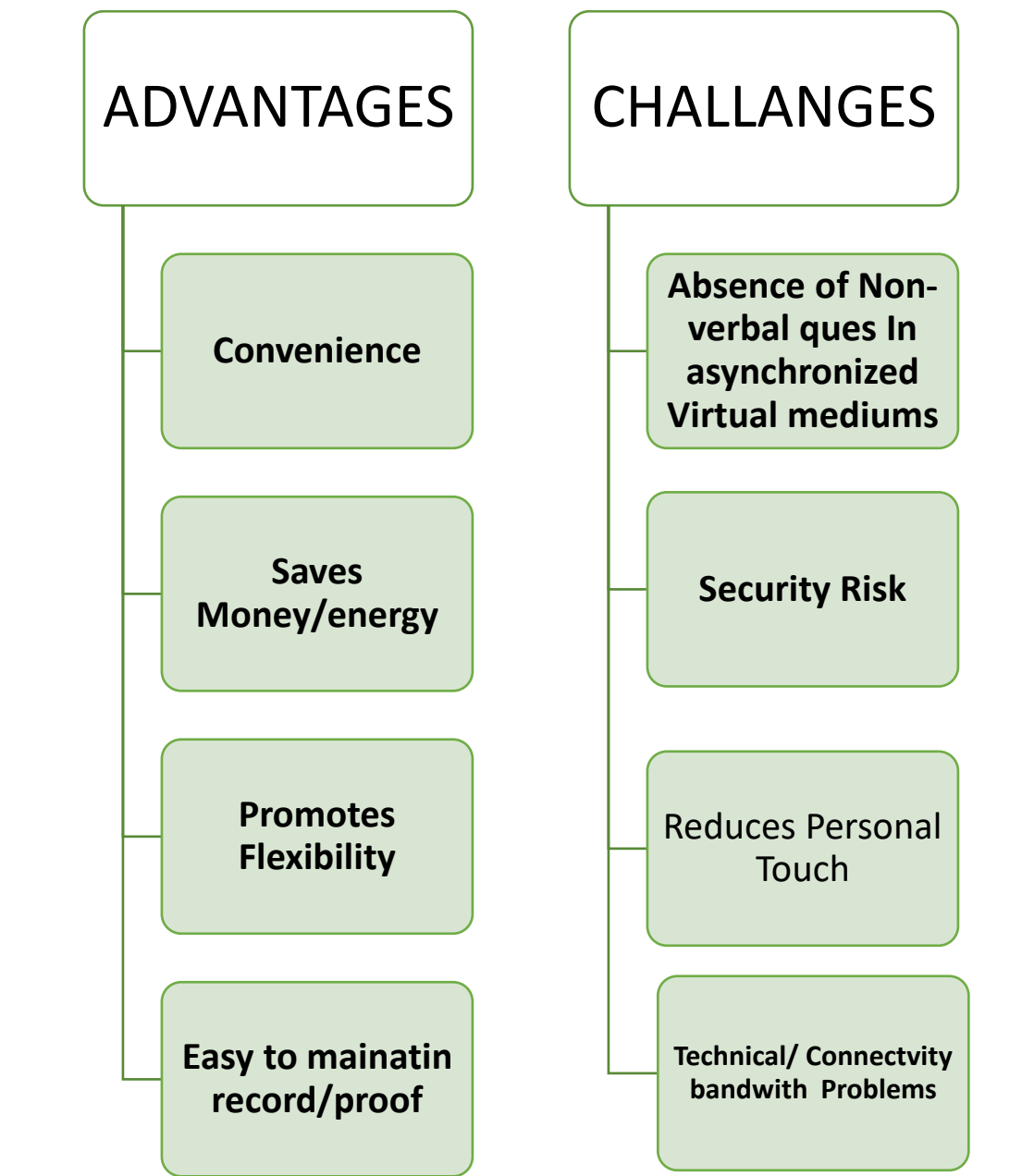


Fig-1.1 Advantages & Challenges of Virtual Connectivity

Without geographical boundaries, virtual communication lets people collaborate from anywhere with an internet connection. Travel and infrastructure costs are reduced, saving businesses and consumers money. Virtual communication solutions provide for flexible meeting scheduling across time zones and work preferences.

Real-time cooperation and information exchange across remote teams promotes innovation. Communication and coordination are faster with virtual communication tools, improving productivity. Through social media and webinars, organizations may reach more people and communicate with stakeholders worldwide.

Technical concerns, such as inadequate internet connectivity, software errors, or compatibility problems, might hinder virtual communication. Interpreting tone, body language, and facial emotions effectively in virtual communication can be difficult, which might result in misunderstandings or miscommunications. Virtual communication can be devoid of the personal touch and social connection seen in face-to-face conversations, which can result in feelings of isolation or disengagement.

Virtual communication systems are susceptible to security breaches, data leaks, or cyberattacks, which might jeopardize sensitive information and privacy. Over-reliance on virtual communication platforms might impede the development of interpersonal skills and reduce the importance of in-person encounters. Virtual communication erases the distinctions between work and home life, posing difficulties for individuals to detach and uphold a good work-life equilibrium

1.3 Evolution of Virtual Connectivity/ Communication over towards virtual collaboration:

Technological advancements have transformed the ways people interact and connect, leading to both benefits and challenges. Technological innovations such as social media platforms, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence have an impact on various aspects of communication, including business, education, and social interactions.

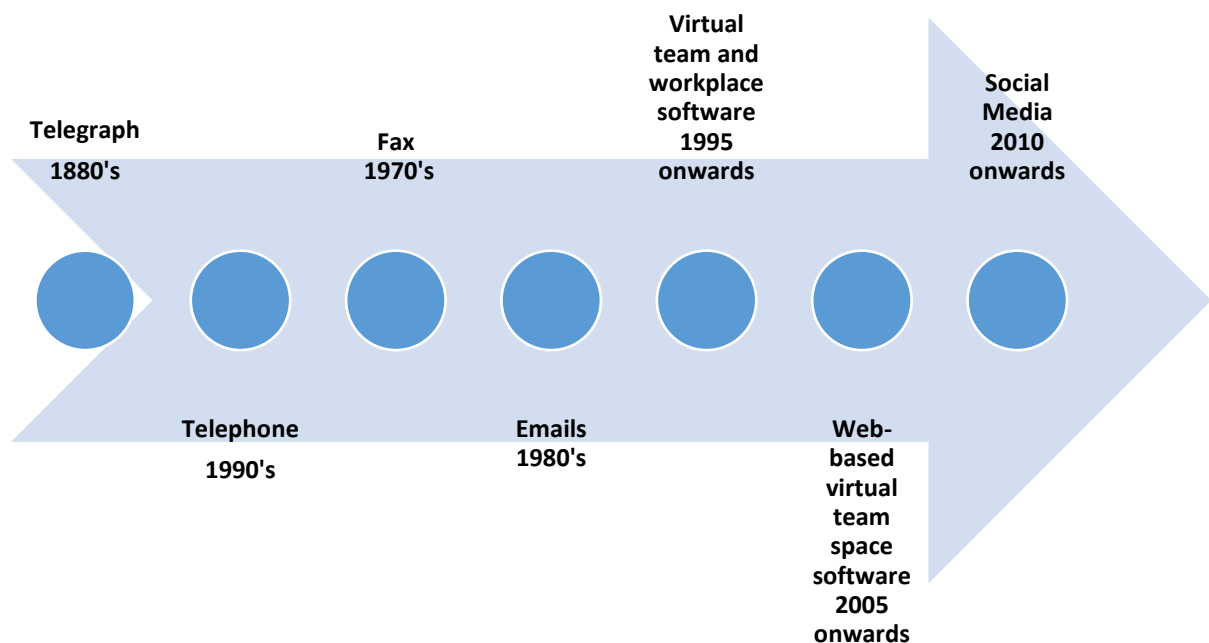


Fig 1.2. Development of technology towards virtual collaboration

The above figure describes how Technology has developed communication channels.

- ❖ **Telegraph (1880's)** - It was a one-to-one communication & Asynchronous.
- ❖ **Telephone (1990's)** - one-to-one communication, conference calls, Synchronous.
- ❖ **Fax (1970's)** - one-to-one, one-to-many, fast delivery of written communication, Asynchronous.
- ❖ **Emails (1980's)** - one-to-one, one-to-many, very fast delivery of digital files, Asynchronous.
- ❖ **Virtual team and workplace software (1995 onwards)** - many-to-many, shared access to secure virtual file structure and communication, usually asynchronous.
- ❖ **Web-based virtual team space software (2005 onwards)** - many-to-many, shared access to virtual workspace, can be synchronous or asynchronous.

Technology has enabled the shift from analogy to digital communication methods in business. This encompasses the implementation of email, digital chat platforms, and digital documentation systems, leading to speedy and more effective communication.

1.4 Virtual Communication in Business:

The Impact of Technology on Business Communication

Communication over the world has been transformed and altered with the Digital Revolution. Business communication is evolving due to globalization, new media, and cultural shifts, requiring companies to adapt to remain competitive. The digital transformation of business communication has accelerated during the pandemic. The tools like video conferencing and collaboration platforms becoming essential for remote work. This trend was already emerging, but the pandemic rapidly increased remote work adoption.

In the past decade, technology has significantly transformed business connectivity. Traditional methods like phone calls, emails, and in-person meetings have given way to digital communication tools, enhancing decision-making and productivity. The widespread adoption of smartphones and mobile devices has altered company communication by enabling employees to remain connected while on the move. Mobile applications, voice conversations, and messaging platforms facilitate instantaneous communication and decision-making, hence improving productivity and responsiveness.

Enterprises are implementing unified communication systems that merge diverse communication channels, including audio, video, messaging, and conferencing, onto a solitary platform. This optimizes communication procedures, diminishes intricacy, and enhances collaboration among teams.

Businesses are leveraging technology to analyze communication data and derive insights that inform decision-making and improve performance. Data analytics tools can track communication metrics, identify trends, and optimize communication strategies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

These Virtual tools have also fuelled the growth of the gig economy and remote work, especially in a post-pandemic world. Virtual connectivity offers numerous benefits, including remote collaboration, global connectivity, and reduced environmental impact. However, challenges such as the absence of nonverbal cues and feelings of isolation may arise.

Advancement in the present & future of Virtual Communication in Business:

The future of business communication is set to undergo significant changes driven by advancements in technology. Technology has revolutionized business communication by fostering more productivity, adaptability, and teamwork while allowing businesses to adjust to shifting consumer demands and market conditions.

Video chat, remote collaboration, screen sharing, and cloud storage are now integral for effective communication. Companies need to incorporate these tools into their communication strategies and keep pace with the rapidly evolving business communication landscape. The future of business communication is heavily influenced by technology and recent trends. Despite these advancements, the core principles of creativity, personalization, and honesty remain critical. In the evolving landscape of business communication, organizations and managers embracing these principles will sustain and grow.

Utilizing digital platforms for assigning tasks, monitoring progress, and managing deadlines, this form of digital cooperation guarantees transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the execution of projects. It also Facilitates the development of creativity and visual thinking, allowing remote teams to efficiently generate and structure ideas, thoughts, and plans, even when they are not physically present in the same room.

Artificial intelligence (AI), Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) will be the driving forces of business communication.

Artificial intelligence (AI) technology, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and language processing algorithms, is becoming more commonly utilized to automate repetitive communication chores, deliver customized consumer experiences, and enhance the effectiveness of commercial communication operations.

Businesses are employing AR and VR technologies to optimize operations, enhance consumer experiences, and foster creativity. Augmented reality (AR) enriches the real world by superimposing digital content onto it, whereas virtual reality (VR) produces completely immersive virtual environments that users can explore and interact with.

Blockchain technology is also poised to revolutionize communication by enhancing security and transparency, particularly in data exchange and contract management. This will help businesses build trust with the stakeholders while ensuring the integrity of their communications. As businesses are operating on a global scale, language translation tools will

become increasingly important in bridging communication gaps. These tools will facilitate cross-cultural communication and enable businesses to reach a wider audience effortlessly.

To drive success in this digital age, it is very important to harness the technology and address ethical concerns. It will lead businesses to foster more efficient, meaningful sustainable business communication. The future of Virtual communication is bright and holds great promise, offering the potential to overcome geographical barriers and connect people worldwide. By embracing its capabilities while acknowledging and addressing its challenges it can pave the way for a more interconnected world.

1.5. VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

There are different ways in which an organization functions. With Virtual Connectivity there is the opportunity for all the organizations to adapt to the possibility of changing the traditional way of working. Virtual connectivity has enabled employees to perform their job duties from a location outside of the traditional office.

Traditionally in a work setting the employees visit the office and do their respective jobs. This conventional approach of Working from the office is even now prevalent across various sectors and industries. In this setting, the employees are given designated office space. They operate within a designated office space, engaging in daily physical contact and social interactions.

In this traditional setup generally, the office features distinct workspaces, meeting rooms, and common areas, reflecting the established norms of organizational operation.

Employees need to typically commute to these physical office locations to do their tasks and fulfill the responsibilities for which they are hired. This work setting fosters direct interactions with co-workers, supervisors, and team leaders. It is shaping a work culture focusing on physical presence and interpersonal relationships. Supervision and feedback occur in person. This setting enables immediate and direct communication. Collaboration and communication predominantly occur through face-to-face interactions, facilitating seamless meetings, discussions, and teamwork within a physical setting.

Across the world, organizations have dealt with the pandemic Covid-19 by mandating or encouraging employees to work from home for safety measures. As the spread has increased all over the globe working from home.

Work from home (WFH) is a work arrangement where an employee's primary work location is their residence. In this setup, employees have the flexibility to perform their job duties from the comfort of their home. This concept has become the new normal for a lot of employees. The employees working from home typically create a designated workspace within their residence. They carry out their daily work-related tasks from this location. Occasionally they may work from other locations but the main focus remains on working from home i.e. their Primary location is their residence/ home.

From the organization and employer's perspective, WFH offers economic benefits. It reduces expenses related to office space, utilities, and other resources that are typically required to accommodate staff in a physical workplace. For employees, it can lead to increased employee

satisfaction, flexibility, and productivity. Employees working from home have more control over their work environment and schedule. On the other hand, WFH also poses some challenges related to communication, collaboration, and maintaining work-life balance. These challenges need to be effectively managed to ensure the success of the arrangement.

Remote work refers to any form of work conducted outside the confines of a traditional office environment. Remote work is now considered to be the modern working style. The primary advantage of remote work for employees lies in its flexibility, allowing employees to choose where they work. This flexibility enables individuals to select a work environment that best suits their preferences and needs.

Employees under remote work have different work modalities. They can be either working in the comfort of their home, co-working spaces, cafes, working while traveling, or working from alternative physical locations or any other remote setting.

From the employer or organization's perspective, remote work offers access to a wider pool of potential talent. The organization can hire talents according to their needs. Remote work arrangements can be temporary, such as for a specific project, or they can be permanent, where employees work remotely on an ongoing basis. It can be on a full-time or part-time basis. Remote work gives employees the flexibility to recruit individuals remotely from their local community, their country, or even globally.

Virtual work refers to the utilization of digital tools and platforms to perform tasks or carry out job responsibilities. Here the emphasis is placed on leveraging technology or digital mediums to facilitate communication, collaboration, and workflow management.

The focus in virtual work is on the use of technology and not on the geographical or physical location. The point of difference is that virtual work may or may not include remote work. While remote work specifically refers to the location i.e. its independent aspect of working away from a traditional office setting. Virtual work emphasizes the utilization of technology and digital mediums regardless of the geographical or physical location of the individuals involved. Therefore, virtual work can encompass scenarios where individuals work together in a physical office but rely heavily on virtual tools and platforms for communication and collaboration.

The Virtual work relies on various virtual communication tools which can be synchronous or asynchronous. It can be instant messaging, video conferencing, emails, and any other

collaborative platforms, to enable employees to interact, share information, and coordinate activities effectively and seamlessly. These tools play a significant role in creating and maintaining the work environment and work culture of the organization. These virtual tools allow the employees to collaborate regardless of the physical locations. There is great dependence on these virtual tools for seamless collaboration as they streamline workflow processes and manage tasks efficiently. There is a high use of cloud-based tools & other management software for data workflow and safety.

Virtual work is broader and can encompass Work from home, work from the office, remote work, or hybrid work.

A hybrid work setting is a model of work that represents a blend of remote work and in-office work practices. This model offers employees the flexibility to split their time between working from a traditional office setting and working remotely. Employees typically spend a portion of their workweek or month at the office, while the remaining days are spent working remotely, often from home or another location of their choice. This Remote work can be occasional, such as a few days a month, or it can be frequent, where employees are mostly remote with occasional office visits.

Virtual connectivity plays a crucial role in enabling collaboration within the hybrid model. Through various communication tools and platforms, employees can stay connected and engaged regardless of their physical location. Virtual connectivity ensures seamless communication, information sharing, and teamwork among employees whether they are working in offices or remotely.

Hybrid mode is now becoming the new working style for many MNCs. The primary objective of the hybrid model is to leverage the advantages of both remote work and traditional office-based work. Organizations allowing employees to work in hybrid mode offer flexibility in scheduling and location and at the same time maintain some level of in-person collaboration and engagement. This model of work lets the organization acknowledge the evolving needs and preferences of employees. The hybrid model recognizes that not all tasks or individuals may thrive in a purely remote or in-office environment. Organizations can create a more adaptable and resilient work environment that accommodates diverse work styles and preferences.

The hybrid model promotes a healthier work-life balance by reducing commuting time and offering more flexibility in managing personal and professional responsibilities. A lot of organizations and individuals prefer to work in the hybrid model.

Individuals enjoy the benefits of both remote work and in-office work. There is increased flexibility and autonomy on the days while working remotely. They also enjoy the benefits of face-to-face interaction and access to resources and support while working from an office. The organization prefers this model as it's a strategic approach to work that combines the best elements of remote work and traditional office-based work.

Benefits Associated with Virtual Work

Flexi timings:

Virtual work offers employees flexibility in terms of their work environment and schedule. It allows them to choose when and where they work, provided they meet their job responsibilities. It is one of the initiatives that was initially taken by the organization for work-life balance but now is a demand for an hour. Almost every sector is happy to offer so as it has become not just a motivation tool for the employees but also an attraction for potential employees and clients. The HR team needs to manage the flexible schedule of all the employees to ensure proper functioning and vigilance.

Work-life balance:

Virtual work offers employees flexibility in terms of their work environment and schedule. It allows them to choose when and where they work, provided they meet their job responsibilities.

Enables Organizations to Harness Talent from Anywhere:

Remote work can provide access to job opportunities that might not be available locally. This is also beneficial to organizations that can find the required talented potential employees. This can be advantageous for employees and employers who are looking to work for organizations in different geographic locations and for employers who are seeking talented employees beyond some geographical boundaries.

Reduced Commuting Costs and Time:

Employees can save time and money by avoiding long commutes to the office. This can lead to reduced stress and expenses associated with daily travel. The commuting traveling time can also be used for some other useful task or recreation or to relax.

Time spent in traffic or crowded public transportation can also be completely avoided or reduced. Employees may experience increased disposable income. This will directly or indirectly reflect on their improved work-life balance, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates.

Cost Savings:

Companies can save money on office space, utilities, and other physical resources when employees work remotely. This can be particularly beneficial for smaller or growing organizations. There is either elimination or reduction of expenses associated with leasing or maintaining office space. There is a lot of money that is spent on electricity, water, heating, and air conditioning in offices. Companies also save on maintenance, repairs, and office supplies. Companies can reallocate funds allocated towards office expenses and utilities and utilize or invest more feasibly.

Productivity & Satisfaction:

Many organizations find their employees are more productive when working virtually. Employees often value the flexibility and work-life balance remote work provides. Virtual workers often shift their focus from hours worked to results achieved leading to better achievement of work. The desired outcome is the main focus of the employees. The employees can choose when and where they work in virtual work which can lead to increased motivation and focus.

Working from home or remote work may create comfortable and personalized workspace. Minimum distractions and interruptions enhance their concentration. Distractions arising such as interruptions from colleagues, or impromptu meetings are also avoided. This can contribute to increased focus, creativity, and productivity leading to satisfaction.

Higher retention rate:

Offering remote work options can enhance employee retention rates. Remote workers are more satisfied and more inclined to not leave the organization. Individuals are inclined to the autonomy and flexibility that virtual work gives. This leads to higher satisfaction and lower attrition.

Major Challenges for the organization of Virtual Work:

❖ Cyber loafing:

Employees who use work time to engage in non-work-related activities on the Internet. With the increasing availability of internet access at work, cyberloafing has become a significant concern for organizations. Cyberloafing poses challenges for organizations. It can lead to a strain on computing resources, resulting in bandwidth congestion and reduced system performance. Productivity is also impacted, creating security issues and an increased risk of computer viruses. Moreover, cyberloafing exposes organizations to legal liabilities, including harassment, copyright infringement, defamation, and negligent hiring. As a result, companies need to address and manage this issue effectively to maintain a productive and secure work environment.

❖ Managing Workplace diversity:

Workplace diversity means employees coming together to work from different diversity regardless of race, religion, and culture. Nationalization and globalization have led to an increase in workplace diversity. Virtual connectivity reduces geographical boundaries and increases the organization's diversity by bringing diverse groups of employees across the world together. Diversity within a workplace encompasses race, gender, ethnic groups, age, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship status, and mental and physical conditions, as well as other distinct differences between people.

❖ Social Isolation:

The most common challenge faced by employees who are working remotely or working from home is the feeling of social isolation. This feeling of isolation can be because of many reasons. It may be because of physical distance from colleagues, lack of face-to-face communication, or missing or lacking the Office camaraderie. Social isolation due to work setup can also affect the quality of work produced by employees. Individuals who feel socially isolated are more likely to experience decreased job performance, lower creativity,

and reduced engagement in their work tasks. When an employee is Working from the office there are daily interactions, shared experiences, and informal gatherings, such as coffee breaks, team lunches, or after-work activities. These experiences are generally missing when the employees are working outside the workspace. This can generate feelings of loneliness or disconnection. Employees may also struggle with clear communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. This is due to a lack of opportunities for spontaneous interactions and idea-sharing with colleagues.

❖ **Privacy Invasion:**

There is a concern about privacy invasion while working in virtual or remote work settings. Employees may feel anxious or stressed knowing that their every action or activity is being monitored. The employees may perceive a lack of autonomy at work. Excess monitoring can create a negative culture. The employees' creativity, innovation, and camaraderie with other employees should not be harmed while being monitored. Employers need to be careful while keeping a tap on employees who are working virtually. Employers and organizations need to ensure that employees do not feel they are micromanaged. As this may negatively impact their job satisfaction, morale, and overall well-being. This will ultimately affect their engagement and loyalty to the organization.

From the organization's point of there is another concern related to data invasion. The organization always faces a risk of sensitive information being compromised or breached. It can be intentionally or unintentionally. Robust data security, cybersecurity measures, and privacy protocols should be implemented.

❖ **Management and supervision:**

Monitoring employees while working in virtual or remote work settings is a major concern. There is a need to ensure productivity, and accountability, and to check employees' adherence to company policies and procedures. Team leaders should also need to be careful while managing and supervising ensuring the employees do not feel distrust or resentment towards management.

❖ **Work culture and work environment :**

One set of challenges the organization faces in virtual work is establishing and maintaining a work culture and work environment. A clear boundary between work and personal life is to be defined in the work culture. Proper hassle-free communication and collaboration are to be maintained to create a good work environment. Employees may feel disconnected from their colleagues and the organization as a whole. These feelings can be minimized and improved by improving the comradery. Various interpersonal techniques can be used.

The major challenge that all the above challenges also contribute to is the Health and wellbeing of the employees working virtually. The effect of Virtual connectivity on employees' Health and wellbeing is discussed in detail further in this chapter.

1.6 WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITH VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is defined by Kirchmeyer (2000) as the achievement of fulfilling experiences in the different aspects of life that require various resources, like energy, time, and commitment, and these resources are spread across all the domains.

Work-life balance is not just a new trend but also a new way of living a healthy life. It's a lifestyle that the new millenniums aspire to. Balancing one's time and focus between working and family or leisure activities is a new habit that every generation desires. A good work-life balance leads to employee motivation, decreases employee turnover, reduces absence, attracts new talent, and reduces employee stress.

People in general want to work for organizations that allow them to maintain a good work-life balance. The employees need to manage the stress or anxiety caused by juggling with managing the work, family, and personal time for self-care activities.

Certain initiatives taken by the HR team for the employees to manage work-life balance are job sharing, flexible working schedules, counseling, sabbaticals, and many more amenities. Many organizations provide holiday or recreational activities with family at fixed intervals. To maintain a healthy work-life balance it is required to prioritize and allocate time and energy to various aspects of life, including work, family, relationships, leisure, and self-care.

Virtual connectivity plays a very important role as it can be an aid for people struggling with work-life balance. Virtual connectivity offers flexibility and the opportunity to Work from home and remote work. Virtual connectivity opens a new arena for a lot of segments of society. New parents, people with disabilities, and others who struggle with traditional office setups can utilize virtual setups.

Virtual connectivity also has a flip side where the employees suffer work-life imbalance because of constant virtual connectivity. The demands of individuals' careers are continuously growing. With technological advancements and global connectivity, the boundaries between work & personal life are blurring.

Neglecting personal relationships due to work commitments can strain relationships with family, friends, and significant other. It can be dealt with flexible work hours, encouraging breaks and time off, and providing resources for managing stress, burnout, and mental health issues. Taking small breaks and engaging in non-work-related activities can be beneficial. It can enhance productivity, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

Having a work-life balance is essential for overall happiness and satisfaction in living a life. In today's fast-paced world, everyone struggles to create this balance and is always after achieving it.

1.7 VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY – SUPPORTING EMERGING TRENDS OF MANAGEMENT

- **Dual career couple/dual career management**

Dual-career couples are families in which both partners pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family life together.

In every family, various household tasks need to be completed, such as grocery shopping, meal preparation, transportation for children, and car maintenance, and the list doesn't end. In traditional couples, the partner not focused on a career typically handles most of these responsibilities. In dual-career couples, managing both work and household tasks can be a constant and challenging balancing act, even if they have the means to hire help. The increasing participation of women in the workforce, economic necessity, and the prevalence of demanding jobs have all contributed. Additionally, millennial men show a greater desire to be involved in domestic responsibilities, allowing women to pursue their careers.

While some companies might view family responsibilities as a matter outside their purview, these responsibilities significantly impact employee engagement and productivity. Balancing family duties with work can lead to employees struggling to fully focus on their jobs. It becomes a big challenge not just for the employees but at times even for the organization. It's not just a women's issue; it's a workforce issue. Companies should shift their focus from "women in leadership" to "leaders in leadership, both women and men, from dual-career households. Each employee comes as a whole to an organization. i.e. with the personal baggage.

We cannot ignore his/her personal life. An employer needs to allow them to manage it. Fostering a work environment that supports employees in managing family responsibilities will enhance engagement and productivity, making the company more attractive to current and potential employees, and thereby improving recruitment and retention of the workforce.

Example: Some organizations give employment opportunities to the spouse in the same organization or sister concern during a transfer. It ensures that the employee doesn't leave the opportunity or feel homesick in another state/country.

Flexible work arrangements, work from home and other forms of virtual work are helping the dual career couple a scope to manage their livelihood. Providing work from home on the day when the child is sick, virtual meetings, etc are some of the reasons why virtual connectivity.

- **Green HR:** Green HR, or Green Human Resource Management, involves using HR policies to promote the sustainable use of resources and protect the environment through employee awareness and commitment. It emphasizes activities that engage employees in supporting and committing to sustainability goals. When companies fail to implement such objectives, it can lead to challenges, hindering the development of an environmentally conscious culture and a deeper understanding of environmental issues among employees.

Demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility can enhance a company's reputation and appeal to customers, investors, and partners. Organizations that adopt Green HR practices may be more attractive to environmentally conscious job seekers and may better retain talent seeking flexible, sustainable work environments.

Virtual connectivity helps the organization take Green HR initiatives Green HR involves reducing carbon footprint via less printing of paper, video conferencing interviews, etc.

❖ **Reducing Paper Usage and Reduced Power Consumption:**

One of the most straightforward and effective ways to reduce an organization's environmental impact is by cutting down on paper usage. This involves minimizing the printing of documents, reports, and other materials, as well as encouraging digital alternatives. By doing so, companies can conserve trees, reduce waste, and decrease energy consumption associated with paper production and disposal. Green HR practices often lead to cost savings. For example, reduced paper usage lowers printing and supply costs, while decreased travel can lead to savings in transportation, accommodation, and related expenses.

❖ **Video Conferencing:**

Video conferencing is a key tool in Green HR for minimizing the need for business travel. Instead of employees and stakeholders traveling to physical meetings, video conferencing allows them to connect remotely. This not only reduces the carbon emissions associated with travel but also saves time and resources.

❖ **Fewer Greenhouse Gas Emissions:**

Virtual work reduces the need for commuting. Commuting to and from work often involves the use of cars, buses, or trains, which emit greenhouse gases. By allowing employees to work from home or nearby locations, remote work can significantly decrease the number of vehicles on the road. This leads to a reduction in transportation-related emissions, contributing to lower greenhouse gas levels.

❖ **Decreased Consumption of Fossil Fuels:**

Fewer commutes lead to a reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Since many commutes involve personal vehicles or public transportation running on gasoline or diesel, remote work decreases the demand for these fuels.

❖ **Increased Air Quality:**

A significant reduction in the number of vehicles on the road and in traffic congestion results in improved air quality. Fewer cars and buses on the streets mean a decrease in the emission of pollutants.

- **Gig Economy:**

The term 'gig economy' refers to an employment market where individuals take on temporary or freelance work on a project-to-project basis, with payment received upon task completion. A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The gig economy provides flexibility that a regular employee doesn't have in a traditional job, you have the flexibility to choose assignments locations, and areas i.e. work as per your schedule managing a gig economy workforce is not easy. It

encompasses a wide range of sectors, from information technology to creative fields. The gig economy is not a new concept, with part-time and independent contracting work being prevalent in Europe and the USA.

The growth of the gig economy can be attributed to the digital age, with internet-based platforms facilitating gig work. Workers in the gig economy have the flexibility to choose their hours, workdays, and preferred organizations, but they face drawbacks such as job instability, uncertain pay schedules, variable workloads, and a lack of social benefits or statutory protections. Freelancers may need to diversify their skill sets to remain competitive.

One significant downside of the gig economy is the absence of social benefits, including insurance, medical coverage, provident funds, and employment-related rights. Unlike traditional employment, gig workers do not have legal entitlement to these benefits due to their classification as independent workers or contractors. Currently, Indian laws lack codification in this area, leaving gig workers without statutory protection.

- **Demand for transparency –**

With awareness in the stakeholders for the transparency, HR needs to ensure there is no data discrepancy or malpractice. Ensure proper disclosure of financial information, such as a company's audited financial reports. Virtual Connectivity supports the organization to provide transparency.

1.8 INFLUENCE OF VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY ON HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Companies with the futuristic approach are consumed by automation, changing workforce demographics & all the other developmental opportunities. All of these are important, but worker well-being has to be prioritized to meet any ends meet. The Internet has changed the way businesses operate by enhancing global communication and information dissemination. Virtual Connectivity has significantly influenced the work environment for most of the industries across the globe. There is a huge increase in the concern of mental health & wellbeing because of virtual media. It is highly important to emphasize employee well-being as it becoming a major concern for HR.

Good health and wellbeing is also one of the Sustainable goals of the United Nations for sustainable development

1.8 (i) Effect of covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new environment for each life on this earth. The Kids, youth, working class, and older generation all have been hit by the pandemic at different Levels. There has been an uncertainty attached to the pandemic, the fear of the unknown. None of us knew when or how it could hit us or our family or near or dear ones. The uncertainty isn't limited to catching the viral, there is uncertainty about the overall way of living life. There is a new way of doing work, a new way of schooling, a new way of socializing, etc. Uncertainty is an integral part of Change. This Change can bring a lot of anxiety and stress to individuals. The mental health of individuals may be affected in an unknown way.

Human beings a social animals and a lack of socializing might hit a few individuals in a very hard way. Especially the extroverts as they derive their energy from others. In the Covid-19 situation, for safety precautions, social distancing was encouraged. Some people felt isolated and lonely because of their anti-social life. Working from home has become the new normal but so has deteriorated sleeping cycle, eating pattern, and exercise schedule.

Many are still dealing with health issues post-pandemic. Many are still grieving the lives of their loved ones and many are still adjusting themselves to the new work settings. The pandemic has only and only highlighted how much health can affect not just a being but society and the world at large and how important is to take care of one's health.

1.8 (ii) WHO Take on Health and Wellbeing during Virtual Work

Dr. Maria Neira, the Director of the World Health Organization's Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Health, highlighted the transformative impact of teleworking on the nature of work during the pandemic. Teleworking can bring both health benefits and negative consequences, depending on how governments, employers, and workers collaborate to establish effective policies and practices. To promote the well-being of Virtual Workers, employers should provide the necessary equipment, offer guidance and training to mitigate psychosocial and mental health issues, educate managers in risk management and distance leadership, and establish the "right to disconnect" and adequate rest days. Occupational health services should utilize digital telehealth technologies to support teleworkers. The Director of the ILO Governance and Tripartism Department, Vera Paquete-Perdigão, emphasized that teleworking, including hybrid models, will continue to be part of the future of work. The transition to this new normal presents an opportunity to implement supportive policies and norms for the well-being and productivity of teleworkers.

1.8 (iii) Virtual Connectivity and Mental Health

Mental health is equally important as physical health. Living in the competitive world use of Virtual Media cannot be ignored. So, it is highly important to understand the Mental Health issues faced by employees through virtual connectivity

1.9 Health

According to the World Health Organization, Health is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.”

Physical Health

When we say employees' health, it includes energy levels, physical activity, sleep patterns, diet, and exercise routine. Physical health in an organization's context is majorly affected by their workload and work environment.

Mental health

“Mental disorders are most neglected of the global health problems,” says Vikram Patel, MBBS, PhD, a psychiatrist and professor of global health and social medicine at Harvard Medical School. Mental Health is an integral part of an individual’s overall health. When we say an individual is healthy it shall include, the individual being in a good state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. An Individual can contribute better towards their work, family, and community better if they have strong mental health.

The Government of India took the historical initiative towards mental health formalizing the launch of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982. This program was launched as there was no adequate infrastructure for mental health care. Since its adoption, the NMHP has been the guiding document for the development of the mental health program in India. The District Mental Health Program was added to the Program in 1996 which spread from four states to many in consecutive years. The tenth five-year plan had Five strategies to redefine the NMHP. Another historical notable moment was when the Mental Health Care Act 2017 came into force on 7 July 2018. The act effectively decriminalized attempted suicide which was punishable under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. It emphasized community-based care and established a Mental Health Review Board to oversee the protection of patient's rights.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), only a quarter of the people who need mental health services get them.

1.9 (i) Workplace Mental Health

In India, there has been a significant historical development of workplace mental health. It signifies a significant transformation in attitudes and practices. From limited recognition and stigmatization, it has evolved into a proactive approach aimed at creating mentally healthy work environments.

Organizations are focusing on holistic mental health initiatives that address various aspects of well-being, including work-life balance & psychological safety. Workplaces are taking proactive steps to identify and mitigate factors contributing to workplace stress, burnout, and mental health issues.

1.9(ii) Emerging Trends Regarding Health

❖ Normalizing Mental Health Issues:

There have been many initiatives taken by many celebrities and the government to normalize mental health issues. There have been many mental health initiative campaigns around the world. 10th October is celebrated as World Mental Health Day. Organizations are also taking initiatives to normalize mental health issues. Organizations now have in-house counseling facilities. Mental well-being education and programs help to create awareness.

❖ Yoga facilities:

Yoga Improve their quality of life benefiting both physical and mental Health. It becomes easy for people to manage anxiety or depressive symptoms. It helps individuals who have anger issues to channel their energy in the right way. Yoga rooms and online yoga classes are a must for today's workforce.

❖ Meditation:

Mediation is generally used to calm oneself by becoming more aware of self.

❖ Gym Facility:

Workplace gym or gym membership by the organization or Gym Reimbursements. It allows employees to save money on gym memberships and also has the convenience of quick and easy access to an exercise facility.

❖ Sports Activities & Physical Activities:

Exercise and sports activities are very important components of physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Engaging in physical activities is also a good distraction from stress and reduces anxiety and additional benefits to physical health. Organizations are organizing workplace sports days and camps to encourage physical activities.

❖ Diet/ Nutrition:

Taking a healthy diet and nutritious food is as important as exerting or yoga. Organizations in their canteen n in house mess are now providing a healthy balanced diet for their employees at a very reasonable cost.

❖ In-house counselor:

To create a safe place for the employees to share any issue.

❖ Mental health care:

With the help of Virtual media, it has become very easy to connect with social workers or healthcare facilitators to keep a check on mental health issues.

❖ **Mental health apps:**

The awareness of the health benefits of being physically and mentally fit has created so many health apps available in India and around the world. There are apps available for counting calories, water intake, yoga practice, meditation, and most importantly support groups. E.g.: There is an app CALM, which helps you meditate, calm your anxiety, reduce stress, and help you sleep.

1.9(iii) McKinsey Report on Mental health in the workplace: The coming revolution (2020)

By- Jeffrey Pfeffer and Leanne Williams

The report gave insight to ensure that mental health benefits benefit both a company and its employees, consider the following six strategies:

- **Measure Behavioural Health:**
Implement methods to assess and track the mental well-being of employees regularly.
- **Make Behavioural Health a Transparent Priority:**
Communicate the company's commitment to mental health support and create a culture that values it.
- **Hold Leaders Accountable for Progress:**
Encourage company leaders to take responsibility for advancing employee mental health and incorporate it into their performance evaluations.
- **Explore New Services:**
Investigate and offer a variety of mental health services, including online interventions, to cater to different needs and preferences.
- **Collaborate with Health-Benefits Administrators:**
Work closely with your health benefits administrator to ensure that employees have sufficient coverage for behavioral health services.
- **Consider On-Site Mental Health Services:** Explore the possibility of providing on-site mental health services to make support more accessible and convenient for employees.

1.10. Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond the mere absence of disease or illness. It encompasses various facets of a person's overall health, including their physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Wellbeing can be described as how a person feels about themselves and their life as a whole. It's not limited to physical health but encompasses a holistic

There are different dimensions of wellbeing which include the following:

1. Emotional Well-Being:

Stress Management:

Emotional well-being involves the ability to effectively manage and cope with stressors in life. This includes developing strategies to handle challenging situations and emotions without becoming overwhelmed.

Resilience:

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back from adversity and adapt positively to difficult life events. It's about maintaining mental and emotional strength in the face of challenges.

Self-Love:

Self-love encompasses self-acceptance, self-compassion, and a positive self-image. It involves being kind and nurturing to oneself, recognizing one's worth, and practicing self-care.

Generating Positive Emotions:

Emotional well-being includes the ability to experience and cultivate positive emotions like joy, gratitude, love, and contentment. These emotions contribute to a sense of happiness and overall well-being.

2. Physical Well-Being:

Healthy Living:

Physical well-being is closely tied to adopting a healthy lifestyle. This includes making choices related to nutrition, sleep, and habits that promote physical health.

Exercise Habits:

Regular physical activity is a fundamental aspect of physical well-being. Exercise contributes to physical fitness, cardiovascular health, strength, and overall vitality.

3. Social Well-Being:**Communication:**

Social well-being involves effective communication with others. It includes the ability to express oneself, listen actively, and navigate interpersonal relationships.

Meaningful Relationships:

Building and maintaining meaningful relationships with family, friends, and a broader social network are essential for social well-being. These relationships provide support, connection, and a sense of belonging.

Overcoming Loneliness:

Social well-being includes having a support network that can help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. It's about feeling connected and valued by others.

4. Workplace Well-Being:**Pursuing Interests:**

Workplace well-being is achieved by pursuing work that aligns with one's interests, values, and passions. When work is meaningful, it contributes to a sense of fulfillment and happiness.

Professional Enrichment:

This dimension involves seeking opportunities for growth and development in one's career. It can include skill-building, seeking challenges, and continuously evolving in the professional sphere.

Life Purpose: Workplace well-being is closely tied to finding purpose in one's work. This sense of purpose can lead to increased motivation and satisfaction in a professional context.

5. Societal Well-Being:

Active Participation:

Societal well-being encompasses actively participating in one's community, culture, and environment. It involves engaging with the broader society to create a positive impact.

Thrive in Community:

Contributing to the thriving of one's community is essential for societal well-being. This may include involvement in social and environmental causes that benefit the community at large. View of one's health and life satisfaction.

1.10 (i) Workplace wellbeing

Workplace wellbeing encompasses various aspects of the work environment, including physical safety, employee satisfaction, work culture, and organizational structure. Workplace wellbeing has become one of the most essential functions of HR. The importance of Wellbeing in the workplace is because it is directly or indirectly linked with Productivity.

The main reason to promote workplace wellbeing is to complement and enhance safety and health measures, ensuring that employees are not only safe but also healthy, content, and engaged in their work. There is a growing trend and need to develop comprehensive health promotion policies that encompass various lifestyle factors like smoking, diet, exercise, and mental wellbeing in addition to substance abuse.

Mental health and wellbeing:

With the awareness of employees' importance to the Organization. The Organization has always initiated wellness programs and provided employees with security, health benefits, and flexibility to help them overcome their health issues. The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the employees' mental health issues in the front seat.

1.11 Digital Wellbeing

Digital wellness is a crucial concept in the modern workplace, as it has a significant impact on employee engagement, productivity, and overall well-being.

Digital wellbeing is an individual's subjective experience of finding the right balance between the benefits and drawbacks of mobile connectivity. This balance involves a mix of emotional and cognitive assessments regarding how digital technology integrates into everyday life. People attain digital wellbeing when they feel maximum controlled pleasure and functional support while minimizing loss of control and functional impairment. The goal is to make technology enhance life rather than distract from it, and tools are provided to help individuals find their sense of digital wellbeing, keeping life at the forefront.

“A state of satisfaction that people achieve when digital technology supports their intentions” (Google)

“The enhancement and improvement of human well-being, in the intermediate and long term, through the use of digital media” (UNESCO)

It is a need of an hour for adopting strategies and habits to ensure that technology and digital devices are used in a balanced and mindful way.

1.11 (i)Importance of digital wellbeing:

Digital wellness is required in the workplace as it not only enhances productivity and engagement but also supports the overall well-being of employees. By adopting mindful technology practices and using tools designed to promote digital wellness, individuals can strike a healthier balance between their work and personal lives, reduce stress, and prevent burnout. Companies that invest in digital wellness initiatives can expect more satisfied and productive employees.

Enhanced Engagement and Productivity:

Digital wellbeing enables employees to be more engaged and productive at work. When individuals are mindful of their technology use, they can focus better on their tasks, leading to higher productivity. Distractions caused by constant notifications and digital interruptions can be minimized, allowing employees to dedicate more time and attention to their work.

Reduced Exhaustion and Distraction:

Excessive use of technology, especially smartphones and constant connectivity, can lead to mental exhaustion and distraction. Employees who are constantly checking their devices may experience cognitive fatigue and decreased concentration. By adopting digital wellness practices, employees can reduce these negative effects and maintain a higher level of concentration throughout the workday.

Mitigating Anxiety and Stress:

Overuse of technology can contribute to increased anxiety and stress levels among employees. The constant pressure to stay connected and respond to messages can lead to burnout. Practices for digital wellbeing ensure the management of technology use in a way that reduces stressors and promotes mental wellbeing.

1.11 (ii) Initiatives by Organization:

Organizations can promote digital wellness by establishing rules and practices that encourage employees to disconnect during non-working hours, limit non-essential communications, reduce the frequency of online meetings, address eye strain, and be mindful of the potential mental health impacts of digital technology. These efforts contribute to a healthier and more balanced work environment.

Digital Awareness:

Employers should be aware of the potential adverse mental and Physical health impacts of digital technology. Features like the endless scroll on social media platforms can contribute to internet addiction and are associated with anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, poor time management, and impulsiveness. Employers can support their employees' mental health by promoting awareness and providing resources for digital wellness.

Digital Solutions:

Some companies are recognizing the need for Digital wellbeing and are responding by developing features and applications that are less disruptive. This includes the ability to turn off distracting notifications and features that track screen time and app usage. These tools help users make more deliberate and mindful choices about how they use technology.

Optimal Usage Patterns:

Studies have shown that employees who check their mobile devices a few times a day are more productive than those who constantly check their smartphones.

- **Reduce Online Meetings-**

While online meetings are essential for collaboration, they can lead to video calls.

- **Address Eye Strain-**

Frequent usage may lead to eye strain, which can affect their well-being. Employers can consider providing solutions like dark panels for screens or special lenses to reduce glare.

- **Mental Health Awareness-**

Employers should be aware of the potential adverse mental health impacts of digital technology. Features like the endless scroll on social media platforms can contribute to internet addiction and are associated with anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, poor time management, and impulsiveness. Employers can support their employees' mental health by promoting awareness and providing resources for digital wellness.

- Employers can **set specific hours** during which employees are not expected to be available, allowing them to switch off and have dedicated personal time. It's important to urge co-workers to refrain from contacting each other for work-related matters outside of these hours, except for urgent issues.