



**Sleepy Classes**

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**MAD- 2020**  
**Day - 33**  
**SOCIAL ISSUES**

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### Question:

Discuss how Work-from-home impacts women.

### Answer:

- Work from home (WFH) puts working women in a unique situation.
- With lack of domestic help and gender norms deeply entrenched in the society, many working women felt the personal and professional boundaries blurring, and as a result felt stretched and stressed.
- Additionally, various academics found out that women were grappling with possible biases in the organization that leaned towards a belief that during WFH, women would be less productive.
- Usually preferred by working mothers WFH has sometimes been stigmatized and labelled as the “**mummy track**” (a path corporate women might desire to take after having children).
- Today, women and men, chief executives and personal assistants, husbands and wives, all are forced to WFH and more importantly to “make it work”.
- Gendered implications of WFH vary by income class and/or by nature of work, as well as by the degree of formality/informality of work.

### Work from Home and the Challenges faced by women:

- **Increased dual burden:** With increased time spent at home, there is an exponential increase in the care burden and household duties fallen almost exclusively on working professional women.
- **Disruptions:** Evidence suggests that a woman faces many disruptions like taking care of kids, elderly, preparing food for them while WFH.
- **Learn from Home along with Work from Home:** Homeschooling is a new task added due to school closures. Homeschooling is a new task which has been added to the usual childcare responsibilities due to school closures. Now the women are increasingly tasked with making sure that learning outcomes of kids do not suffer when they study at home.
- **Work “at” Home and Work “from” Home:** Homeschooling is a new task added due to school closures.
- **Issue of rights while working at home** (such as working hours, compulsory off days, over-time work hours)
- **Social and physical distancing:** A crucial feature of the pandemic is the need for social and physical distancing, and this means that the usual support structures that parents could count on – neighbors, nannies/babysitters/childminders, playdates with peers, and visits to grandparents – are unavailable, which makes the pressure on the parents that much more severe.
- Evidence suggests that as their **childcare burden increased, women’s labor force participation fell**, either in the form of reduced hours or withdrawal from paid labor altogether.
- There are also **evidences that the impact of pandemic driven recession on job losses and wage cuts is gendered.**

- Front-line health workers in India (Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Anganwadi workers) are exclusively women. They are **poorly paid with very exacting work requirements**. In addition to the glaring **lack of personal protective equipment**, there are reports about attacks on them as they go on their daily household survey to assess the spread of the disease

### Way forward

- While there is no empirical evidence on the sharing of domestic work from India yet it's time not only for improvement, but also improvisation.
- For instance, no meetings to be scheduled between 1 and 2 pm, no calls post 6 pm unless an emergency.
- Work can also be shared between all family members. New reality will make us think differently, do differently, and definitely question gender norms.
- 3 tips for women who are juggling between office and home, using the acronym HER.
  - **H** = help- Don't hesitate to offer and ask for help. Wherever possible, extend help to your family, co-workers, teams. Don't shy away from asking for help.
  - **E** = Energy and Energies- Look after your own health and well-being. Eat healthy and nutritious food. Energies others be positive and spread positivity.
  - **R** = Resilience-It is natural to feel low at time but don't allow yourself to remain in that zone for long. Bounce back.
- There is a greater need for adequate compensation, equitable sharing of domestic chores and care work, creating favorable opportunities for work and livelihoods within a conscious anti-discriminatory policy framework.
- This crisis can also pave the way for shifting gender norms within the home towards greater equality.
- At the same time, it is a good opportunity to also consider about the women who are engaged in unpaid productive work (that is, work routinely recognised as work, distinct from domestic chores and care responsibilities) such as working on family enterprises, family farms, in rearing livestock or poultry, in making commodities for sale in the market, in family-owned shops or workshops, on fruit orchards, and so forth.
- These are economic livelihood-generating activities for the family, which women participate in and contribute to, but are not paid or even recognised as workers. One useful way to think about this is if someone from outside the family was hired for this work, they would be paid.