Original Research Article

Work from home and changing dynamics

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 08-05-2021
Accepted 12-05-2021
Available online 17-06-2021

Keywords:
WFH (Work from Home)
COVID-19
Hybrid
WFO (Work From Office)
Future of Work
Remote
Travel time
Relocation
Pay cut

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has been the biggest crisis of our times. Never before has been the entire world and each and every individual been impacted at this scale but when impacts are large, changes are too. The fear of infection forced all of us to work remotely from our home. It was the test of our technology and a mass experiment of Work From Home (WFH). Our research study aims to explore the changing behavior and mentality towards WFH and gauge it’s various physical, mental and social impacts. The research aims to study the differences in perception of WFH by different gender, income levels, education levels and age groups. We intend to explore if there is any relationship between travel time and WFH and reverse migration and WFH and further, if there is any room for the option of taking a pay cut. This research paper is based on extensive primary research survey on 100 participants conducted through Google Forms and the further analysis done through cross tabulation and graphical methods. The research sample was adequately representative of varied socioeconomic strata and had significant people from both gender, different income and education levels.

The research brought forward some interesting insights. More than 75% of workers want to continue with remote work at least some of the time. Youth dislikes hybrid and wants either completely remote or work from office. People in age group 25-40 are least willing to resort to only work from office and 41-60 are least willing to resort to remote work. Males prefer working from home more than females. Increase in income strongly increases the preference for hybrid work. Those who spend large amount of time in traveling strongly prefer work from home. Relocation is a favorable decision for most but pay cut isn’t an option. Work from home has improved productivity, relations, sleep and body but with a pinch of loneliness.

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 has been a major cause of concern not just because of the absence of an effective treatment or vaccine but also due to its highly contagious nature. This had been the reason that, in 2020, most of the economies in the world preferred a nationwide lockdown to reduce its transmission. Although this measure helped in preventing the spread of the disease but it adversely affected the economic health of the countries. Global demand and supply chains were affected and there was a halt in the production units.

In India, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on 30th January 2020. On 24th March 2020, Prime Minister of India announced 21 days complete lockdown for 1.3 billion Indians immediately from midnight as a way to contain the spread of the disease. But since it was not feasible to shut down the economy and all sorts of production units and service sector, WFH came as a rescuer. Although, production work of the factories was impacted, the service sector had an advantage due to this. Now, the employees have been able to work sitting in their homes with all the comforts.

COVID-19 has led to a new era of transformation and digitalisation. Not just the working sector but also the educational sector has shifted towards WFH. Different online teaching platforms have emerged assisting in teacher-student interaction. Within a year, WFH has become a
major part of people’s life. This transformation has a huge impact on the lifestyle and behavior of general public. Some companies are now even planning to make WFH mandatory for some of its workforce. Keeping this objective in mind, we aim to analyse the impact of WFH and how the general public perceives it.

1.1. Literature review

Since the last year there have been a number of studies highlighting the impact of WFH on the employees personal and professional life.

A paper by Ramos, J.P., & Prasetyo, Y.T. (September 27-29, 2020). The Impact of Work-Home Arrangement on the Productivity of Employees during COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach have analysed the changes in productivity of employees under the WFH arrangement. The study talks about the interrelationship between job satisfaction, job performance, commuting satisfaction, job stress and productivity using Structural Equation Modeling. They concluded by saying that ‘Job performance’ decreases ‘Productivity’ while ‘Job Satisfaction’ increases it and ‘Job Satisfaction’ and ‘Job Performance’ are inversely related.

The research paper by Raju, S. & Kumar, V.K. (September 2020). Quality of life of women working from home in COVID-19 lockdown: a questionnaire survey showed the impact on physical and psychological health and social relationships done by cross-sectional, structured closed questionnaire survey. They concluded by saying that lockdown made women more active, mobile and that they balanced their official work along with family setup.

Another Italian research paper by Renzo, L.D.; Gualtieri, P.; Pivari, F.; Soldati, L.; Attina, A.; Cinelli, G.; Leggeri, C.; Caparello, G.; Barrea, L.; Scerbo, F.; Esposito, E.; & Lorenzo, A.D. (08 June 2020). Eating Habits and lifestyle changes during COVID-19 lockdown: An Italian Survey, with a total of 3533 respondents found that the perception of weight gain was observed in 48.6% of the population; 3.3% of smokers decided to quit smoking; a slight increased physical activity has been reported in 38.3% of respondents; the population group aged 18–30 years resulted in having a higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet when compared to the younger and the elderly population; 15% of respondents turned to purchasing organic fruits and vegetables, especially in the North and Centre of Italy, where BMI values were lower.

The research paper ‘Impact of work from home on employee well-being during pandemic’ by Dr. Benita. S. Monica and Ms. Ghayathri N focused on the impact on employee well-being due to WFH for the IT industry using the Multiple Linear Regression Equation concluded that the work demand has more influence on well-being of employees than home demand, work interfere family, family interfere work. The company can reduce the workload for their employees and that the work demand has a greater influence on the well-being of the employees.

Working from home has increased the burden on the working women significantly according to Bhattacharjee, in her research paperwork from home as an alternative to daily commuting for working women and in the research paper by Dubey, A. & Tripathi, S. (28 April 2020). Analysing the Sentiments towards Work-From-Home Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic, around 73% had a positive sentiment towards WFH.

2. Materials and Methods

This research paper used primary research surveys/questionnaire through Google Forms for data collection. It was a web-based survey with total number of respondents as 110, out of which only 100 were valid participants and were the ones considered in this study. The Questionnaire was sent via mail or WhatsApp to the respondents and was divided into two parts, the first one consisting of the basic demographic information and the second part relating to the objectives of the study. The privacy of the respondents was ensured, and they were provided with the option to know the results if they were interested in it. The survey was carried out from February 20, 2021 to March 15, 2021. The responses received were then analysed through Cross Tabulations and Graphical Methods. The descriptive statistics of the respondents is given in Table 1 where 58% of the respondents were male and 42% were female.

1. Table 2 and Figure 1 summarizes the Demographic statistics of the respondents received through the survey showing the count of the respondents belonging to different gender with a subdivision of age; and with different qualifications with a subdivision of income levels.
2. It is a representative sample.
3. Preferences have been analysed with respect to various socioeconomic indicators and other attributes through cross tabulations and graphical methods. The results of which are given below.

3. Results

3.1. How do people wish to continue?

More than 75% of people wish to continue with remote work at least some of the time.

3.2. How different age groups perceive work from home?

1. 18-25 does not prefer hybrid in comparison to others
2. 26-40 are least willing to resort to only work from office.
Fig. 1: Summary of demographic statistics

Fig. 2: Wish to continue work

Fig. 3: Preference for work from home

Fig. 4: Differences in perception towards WFH by different age groups

Fig. 5: Differences in perception towards WFH by different gender

Fig. 6: Differences in perception towards WFH with different income levels
Fig. 7: Relation between travel time and work from home

Fig. 8: Productivity and preference of work

Fig. 9: Do you wish to relocate from metros to small towns/scenic destination? (Work from anywhere instead of work from home)

Fig. 10: Will you take a pay cut for the option of work from anywhere?

Fig. 11: Gender specific preferences Towards relocation

Fig. 12: Relocation and age groups
3.41-60 are least willing to resort to only work from home

3.3. How different gender perceive work from home?
Males are more likely to prefer work from home than females.

3.4. How people with different income levels perceive work from home?
The preference for hybrid mode goes up phenomenally with increase in income. It’s clearly visible from Figure 6 that as we move from the income level of less than 5 lakhs to income level of 25 lakhs and above there is a substantial increase in the preference towards the hybrid model i.e., the percentage of people preferring the blended mode of predominantly WFH and predominantly WFO increases.
3.5. What is the relationship between travel time and preference for work from home?

1. Extremely strong relation of preference for Work from Home and travel time
2. Increase in travel time increases inclination for work from home
3. More than 75% of people who travel for more than 2 hours a day want to either work completely from home or predominantly.

3.6. Those who believe work from home increased productivity want to continue with it

Around 76% of respondents who believe that work from home has increased productivity wants to continue with it while around 73% of respondents who believe that WFH has not increased productivity wants to continue with WFO. Thus, there is no clash of opinions shown by the respondents.

3.7. Response towards relocation and pay cut

In this part of the questionnaire a clash in the opinions of the respondents was seen. 57% of the respondents wished to relocate from metros and accept the option of Work from Anywhere instead of WFH, but they were not ready to take a Pay Cut for that. 75% of the respondents are unwilling to take a pay cut while 57% responded with a yes for the option of work from anywhere.

3.8. Relocation and gender specific preferences

Women are more willing to relocate as compared to men.

3.9. Relocation and age groups

Majority of all age groups are willing to relocate.

3.10. Relocation and income levels

The people belonging to the income slabs of less than 5 lakhs and above 25 lakhs are most willing to relocate. In short, the people with low income and the ultra-rich are the most willing to relocate while the mediocrats with the income level of 5-10 lakhs and 10-25 lakhs are less willing to relocate.

3.11. Pay cut and income levels

The poor and ultra-rich are most willing to shell out for the flexibility of work from anywhere and relocation

3.12. Pay cut and age groups

Majority of the respondents irrespective of the age groups are unwilling to take a pay cut. However, the youth is most willing out of the other age groups to take pay cut for work from home flexibility, that is about 29%.

3.13. Pay cut and gender

Females are more willing to take a pay cut as compared to men for the option of work from anywhere. Overall, both the genders are reluctant for this option.

3.14. Psycho-social impacts

1. Every 2 out of 3 people believe WFH improved their Family Relations.
2. 54% of the respondents believe that WFH improved their Productivity.
3. 58% believe that WFH increased their sleep.
4. 59% believe they were able to exercise more with WFH.
5. 68% say that they experienced Loneliness due to WFH.

4. Conclusion

This research study talks about the employee’s perception towards WFH considering their different age groups, income levels, qualification, gender, commuting time before COVID. It also talks about the relation between relocation and WFH and the psycho-social impacts of WFH.

1. The final analysis states that males and the middle age group from 26-40 have showed preference towards work from home, exclusive or blended, as compared to their other counterparts.
2. Also, as the income level goes up the preference for hybrid model increases with 75% of people wanting the blended mode under the income group of 25 lakhs and above.
3. An extremely strong relationship has been observed for the travel time and preference towards WFH. Those who took more commuting time to their offices before COVID want to continue with WFH or the blended mode, while those who took less commuting time want to continue either with the blended mode or WFO. There is one more important thing in this context that those who took more commuting time preferred the blended mode with predominantly WFH while there is not much difference for the blended mode for the ones who took less than an hour.
4. Further, those who believed that WFH increased productivity want to continue with it while the others want to continue with WFO.
5. We have found through our analysis that women are more willing to relocate as compared to men. Also, people with low income (below 5 lakhs) and the ultra-rich (25 lakhs+) are the most willing to relocate. Although 57% of the respondents are willing
Table 1: Summary of responses

| Questions                          | Options                          | N  | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----|------------|
| Gender                             | Male                             | 58 | 58         |
|                                    | Female                           | 42 | 42         |
| Age                                | 18-25                            | 28 | 28         |
|                                    | 26-40                            | 54 | 54         |
|                                    | 41-60                            | 18 | 18         |
|                                    | 60yrs.+                          | 0  | 0          |
| Qualification                      | Graduate                         | 52 | 52         |
|                                    | Post graduate                    | 43 | 43         |
|                                    | PHD/Doctorate                    | 5  | 5          |
| Annual Family Income               | Less than 5 Lakhs                | 22 | 22         |
|                                    | 5-10 Lakhs                       | 31 | 31         |
|                                    | 10-25 Lakhs                      | 31 | 31         |
|                                    | 25 Lakhs+                        | 16 | 16         |
| Frequency of work from home before covid | No work from Home              | 70 | 70         |
|                                    | Once/Twice a week                | 16 | 16         |
|                                    | More than twice a week           | 4  | 4          |
|                                    | Only Work from home              | 10 | 10         |
| Still working from home            | At all time                      | 54 | 54         |
|                                    | Sometimes                        | 32 | 32         |
|                                    | Completely back to office        | 14 | 14         |
| Frequency of working from home right now | No Work from Home              | 19 | 19         |
|                                    | Once/Twice a week                | 14 | 14         |
|                                    | More than twice a week           | 15 | 15         |
|                                    | Only Work from home              | 52 | 52         |
| Wish to continue                   | Work from home                   | 28 | 28         |
|                                    | Work from office                 | 23 | 23         |
|                                    | Blended with predominantly work  | 28 | 28         |
|                                    | Blended with predominantly work  | 21 | 21         |
|                                    | from home                        | from office                      | |
| Time spent daily on travelling to work before covid | Less than 1 hour               | 44 | 44         |
|                                    | 1-2 hour                         | 26 | 26         |
|                                    | more than 2 hours                | 23 | 23         |
|                                    | Not Applicable                   | 7  | 7          |
| Work from home improved family relations | Yes                          | 66 | 66         |
|                                    | No                               | 14 | 14         |
|                                    | Cant say                         | 20 | 20         |
| Increased productivity due to work from home | Yes                          | 54 | 54         |
|                                    | No                               | 33 | 33         |
|                                    | Cant say                         | 13 | 13         |
| Able to sleep more with work from home | Yes                          | 58 | 58         |
|                                    | No                               | 32 | 32         |
|                                    | Cant say                         | 10 | 10         |
| Able to do more physical activity / exercise | Yes                          | 59 | 59         |
Work from home increased loneliness and missing social gathering, meetings

|                  | No | Cant say | Yes |
|------------------|----|----------|-----|
|                  | 36 | 5        | 68  |

Impact on savings

|                  | Increased | Decreased | No Change |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
|                  | 63         | 11        | 26        |

Relocation from metros to small towns/scenic destinations (Work from anywhere instead of work from home)

|                  | Yes | No |
|------------------|-----|----|
|                  | 57  | 43 |

Will you take a pay cut for the option of work from anywhere

|                  | Yes | No |
|------------------|-----|----|
|                  | 25  | 75 |

Table 2: Demographic statistics

| Age groups       | 18-25 | 26-40 | 41-60 | Male 18-25 | Male 26-40 | Male 41-60 | Grand Total |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Graduate         | 8     | 9     | 14    | 19         | 2          |            |             |
| Less than 5 lakhs| 3     | 4     | 4     | 2          |            |            |             |
| 5-10 lakhs       | 4     | 4     | 7     | 6          | 1          |            |             |
| 10-25 lakhs      | 1     |       | 3     | 8          |            |            |             |
| 25 lakhs+        |       | 1     |       |            | 3          | 1          | 5           |
| Postgraduate     | 5     | 9     | 8     | 1          | 15         | 5          |             |
| Less than 5 lakhs|       | 1     | 2     | 1          | 3          | 2          | 9           |
| 5-10 lakhs       |       | 2     | 2     | 3          | 1          | 8          |             |
| 10-25 lakhs      |       | 4     | 4     | 3          | 4          | 1          | 16          |
| 25 lakhs+        |       | 1     | 2     | 1          | 5          | 1          | 10          |
| Phd/Doctorate    |       | 2     |       | 2          |            |            |             |
| 5-10 lakhs       |       | 1     |       |            |            |            |             |
| 10-25 lakhs      |       |       | 1     | 2          |            | 3          |             |
| 25 lakhs+        |       |       | 1     |            | 1          |             |             |
| (blank)          |       |       |       |            |            |            |             |
| Grand Total      | 13    | 20    | 9     | 15         | 34         | 9          |             |

Table 3: Different age groups and preference for work from home

| Age groups | Work from home | Blended with predominantly work from home | Blended with predominantly work from office | Work from office | Total |
|------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 18-25      | 35.71%         | 14.29%                                   | 21.43%                                     | 28.57%          | 100%  |
| 26-40      | 25.93%         | 37.04%                                   | 18.52%                                     | 18.52%          | 100%  |
| 41-60      | 22.22%         | 22.22%                                   | 27.78%                                     | 27.78%          | 100%  |
| Grand Total| 28.00%         | 28.00%                                   | 21.00%                                     | 23.00%          | 100%  |

Table 4: Gender and preference for work from home

| Gender | Work from home | Blended with predominantly work from home | Blended with predominantly work from office | Work from office | Total |
|--------|----------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Female | 26.19%         | 26.19%                                   | 21.43%                                     | 26.19%          | 100%  |
| Male   | 29.31%         | 29.31%                                   | 20.69%                                     | 20.69%          | 100%  |
Table 5: Income levels and preference for work from home

| Income levels | Work from home | Blended with predominantly work from home | Blended with predominantly work from office | Work from office | Grand Total |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Less than 5 lakhs | 31.82%         | 18.18%                                   | 9.09%                                     | 40.91%          | 100.00%     |
| 5-10 lakhs    | 32.26%         | 35.48%                                   | 9.68%                                     | 22.58%          | 100.00%     |
| 10-25 lakhs   | 29.03%         | 19.35%                                   | 35.48%                                   | 16.13%          | 100.00%     |
| 25 lakhs+     | 12.50%         | 43.75%                                   | 31.25%                                   | 12.50%          | 100.00%     |
| Grand Total   | 28.00%         | 28.00%                                   | 21.00%                                   | 23.00%          | 100.00%     |

Table 6: Travel time and preference for work from home

| Travel Time     | Work from home | Blended with predominantly work from home | Blended with predominantly work from office | Work from office | Grand Total |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Less than 1 hour | 20.45%         | 25.00%                                   | 27.27%                                   | 27.27%          | 100.00%     |
| 1-2 hour        | 19.23%         | 34.62%                                   | 26.92%                                   | 19.23%          | 100.00%     |
| More than 2 hours | 47.83%       | 30.43%                                   | 8.70%                                    | 13.04%          | 100.00%     |
| Grand Total     | 28.00%         | 28.00%                                   | 21.00%                                   | 23.00%          | 100.00%     |

Table 7: Productivity and preference for work from home

| Work from home | Blended with predominantly work from home | Blended with predominantly work from office | Work from office | Grand Total |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| No            | 9.09%                                    | 18.18%                                   | 24.24%          | 48.48%      | 100.00%     |
| Yes           | 42.59%                                   | 33.33%                                   | 14.81%          | 9.26%       | 100.00%     |
| Grand Total   | 28.00%                                   | 28.00%                                   | 21.00%          | 23.00%      | 100.00%     |

Table 8: Gender and relocation

| Gender | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|--------|----|-----|-------------|
| Female | 38.10% | 61.90% | 100.00% |
| Male   | 46.55% | 53.45% | 100.00% |
| Grand Total | 43.00% | 57.00% | 100.00% |

Table 9: Age and relocation

| Age groups | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|------------|----|-----|-------------|
| 18-25 Yrs. | 42.86% | 57.14% | 100.00% |
| 26-40 Yrs. | 42.59% | 57.41% | 100.00% |
| 41-60 Yrs. | 41.94% | 58.06% | 100.00% |
| Grand Total | 44.44% | 55.56% | 100.00% |

Table 10: Income and relocation

| Income levels | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---------------|----|-----|-------------|
| Less than 5 lakhs | 36.36% | 63.64% | 100.00% |
| 5-10 lakhs    | 51.61% | 48.39% | 100.00% |
| 10-25 lakhs   | 41.94% | 58.06% | 100.00% |
| 25 lakhs+     | 37.50% | 62.50% | 100.00% |
| Grand Total   | 43.00% | 57.00% | 100.00% |

Table 11: Pay cut and income levels

| Income levels | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---------------|----|-----|-------------|
| 10-25 lakhs   | 83.87% | 16.13% | 100.00% |
| 25 lakhs+     | 75.00% | 25.00% | 100.00% |
| 5-10 lakhs    | 70.97% | 29.03% | 100.00% |
| Less than 5 lakhs | 68.18% | 31.82% | 100.00% |
| Grand Total   | 75.00% | 25.00% | 100.00% |
Table 12: Pay cut and age groups

| Age groups | No       | Yes      | Grand Total |
|------------|----------|----------|-------------|
| 18-25 Yrs. | 71.43%   | 28.57%   | 100.00%     |
| 26-40 Yrs. | 75.93%   | 24.07%   | 100.00%     |
| 41-60 Yrs. | 77.78%   | 22.22%   | 100.00%     |
| Grand Total| 75.00%   | 25.00%   | 100.00%     |

Table 13: Paycut and gender

| Gender | No       | Yes      | Grand Total |
|--------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Female | 73.81%   | 26.19%   | 100.00%     |
| Male   | 75.86%   | 24.14%   | 100.00%     |
| Grand Total | 75.00%   | 25.00%   | 100.00%     |

Table 14: Work from home and psycho-social indicators

| Psycho-social indicators | Yes | No | Can’t say |
|--------------------------|-----|----|----------|
| Better Family Relations  | 66  | 14 | 20       |
| More Productivity        | 54  | 33 | 13       |
| Better Sleep             | 58  | 32 | 10       |
| More Exercise            | 59  | 36 | 5        |
| Loneliness               | 68  | 27 | 5        |

to relocate to their hometowns or scenic destinations but only 25% are ready to take a pay cut for that. From this 25% the people with low income and the ultra-rich are most willing to shell out for the flexibility of work from anywhere and relocation. Almost all the age groups, and both the genders are unwilling to take a pay cut for the option of Work from Anywhere.

6. For the psycho-social impacts, every 2 out of 3 people believe WFH improved their family relations. 54%, 58%, 59% of the respondents believe it improved productivity, increased sleep and increased exercise respectively. However, 68% of the respondents experienced loneliness due to WFH.

Thus, we can conclude by saying that One Size Does Not Fit All. Productivity increases the most when the one who wants to work from office gets to work from office and the one who wants to work from home gets to work from home. Another way could be that the firms consider the blended mode and can fix some number of days when the person can or cannot choose to work from home.

4.1. Limitations

Service sector had an advantage over the production sector due to WFH. WFH catered mainly to the service sector. Thus, this study does not include all the sectors. People from all the sectors cannot work from home given the different inputs used in the production process. For instance, Industrial sector cannot produce anything with its labor sitting at home. Thus, this study excludes potential workers and students as they are not doing WFH. Moreover, this study is limited to the perspectives of workers and hence, does not include the perspectives of the firms.

4.2. Future prospects

This study shows how there are varied preferences among the employees towards WFH. Some are more comfortable with WFH, some are comfortable with WFO while some want a blended work culture. Thus, further studies can be conducted to choose Online, Offline, Hybrid work culture in organization and to understand the causes of varied preferences as shown by the respondents in the research conducted above. Along with that further study can be conducted on the possibility of pay cut and cost-cutting measures with WFH. This study is limited to the perspectives of the workers; thus, the further studies can involve the other side and the perspectives of the firm. It could also talk about the potential of co-working spaces.

5. Source of Funding

None.

6. Conflict of Interest

None.

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**Cite this article**: Banga A, Mahajan F. Work from home and changing dynamics. *J Manag Res Anal* 2021;8(2):79-89.