



Employee Perspective on Work from Home

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1. Abstract

Sudden unprecedented times like the COVID-19 pandemic often force corporate lives to adopt new changes. Advancement in technology has made it easier to switch to a much safer option like working from home in order to ensure the functioning of businesses. Many studies have been conducted to understand the output of this phenomenon. This paper aims to understand perspectives of service sector employees on different aspects of work from home during this pandemic. Data has been analyzed using the information collected from 240 employees of the service sector in India. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents consider themselves to be moderately effective during WFH but also around 57% of the employees will not prefer continuing working from home if given a choice.

Key words- covid-19, pandemic, work from home, employee, service sector, WFH

2. Introduction

Traditionally, a business functions in a physical office workspace and the work-related tasks are completed at the office itself. But many organizations transitioned their employees from the office to a work from home model during the corona virus global pandemic. This forced transformation has enabled businesses to rely on work from home or telecommuting as employees couldn't travel to office premises. This leads us to the question of whether employees find WFH effective or challenging under the present circumstances.

3. Literature Review

(Agus Purwanto, 2020) underlined the advantages and disadvantages to WFH program. During WFH the advantages are - more flexibility in completing work, no transportation expenses or traffic stress. The disadvantage of WFH was found to be - losing work motivation to bear electricity and internet costs and data security problems.

(Amit Kramera Karen, 2020) researched specific occupationally-related domains which are impacted by pandemic-occupational status, occupational perspectives on working from home and the increased segmentation of the labour market.

(Ellen Baker, 2007) conducted a study to find the influence of four factors on work from home. Out of the four factors - organisational, job, individual and household factors, organisational and job-related factors affect WFH employees' satisfaction and perceived productivity than work styles and the household characteristics.

(Nicholas Bloom, 2014) conducted an experiment at a Chinese travel agency, Ctrip which has 16,000 employees. Employees who volunteered for WFH were randomly assigned either to work from home or in the office for nine months. Home working resulted in a 13% performance increase, improved work satisfaction, and the attrition rate halved. At the same time their promotion rate conditional on performance fell. After the experiment half of the experimental employees continued to work from home which highlights the benefits of leaning towards working from home.

(Tanja van der Lippe, 2020) studied the influence of co workers working from home on individual and team performance. For the purpose data from nine European countries was taken to highlight the impact of working from home by co-workers on performance is significant. It was demonstrated that co-workers working from home negatively impact employee performance and worsens the team performance.

(Fadinger & Schymik, 2020) in study brought out how the current pandemic situation, working from home is very effective in reducing the infection. The study noted that in regions where industry structure allows for a larger fraction of work to be done from home experienced much fewer Covid-19 cases and fatalities.

(Westfall, 2020) analysed advantages and the disadvantages of work from home practices and studied a California based company where 47% increase in the worker productivity was recorded during the new normal- by working from home.

(Zhiyu Feng, 2020) through a study found out that before Covid-19 pandemic there were no gender differences in self-rated work productivity and job satisfaction but during the lockdown, women reported lower work productivity and job satisfaction than men.

(Luca Bonacini, 2020) studied how a positive shift in WFH feasibility would result in an increase in average labour income, but turned out this benefit would not be equally distributed among employees. An increase in the opportunity to WFH would favour male, older, high-educated, and high-paid employees and because of this, policies aimed at alleviating inequality should play a more important compensating role in the future.

(Platt & Page, 2001) analysed and mentioned about adjusting to work from home by learning more about 1) how the organization functions, 2) how to use new technology productively, and 3) how to manage and promote effective management. Study laid emphasis on teams, networks, fewer levels of management, improved communications technologies, wider spans of control, and effective delegation and empowerment techniques.

(Ettore Bolisani Ettore Bolisani, 2020) pointed out potential impact on socialization among colleagues, and the consequent implications for knowledge sharing and knowledge management while working from home. The responses portrayed a numerically similar group of people- the ones who were not satisfied at all with the experience and those who were very satisfied, and also those who were "undecided". Study also provided practical suggestions about how to successfully implement work from home.

(Hern, 2020) wrote regarding the choice of working from home in future. As the conditions forced employees to work from home, it made people think about the need to go back to work in offices. It is expected that the majority of employees would want to continue working from home. Startups like Zoom and giants like Google have leveraged this need and introduced platforms that can be used in future too.

4. Research Objective

The objective of this paper is to understand and conclude findings on work from home during the current pandemic and how it has affected the working professionals. The study covers perspectives of service sector employees about (i) adherence to deadlines and distinguishing between personal and professional time during WFH, (ii) efficiency of work at home and (iii) continuing work from home.

5. Research Methodology

This research was conducted by collecting primary data. A simple digital questionnaire was circulated among service sector employees of India. For the purpose of analysing cross tabulation was done to find relationships between social demographics like gender and perspectives on different aspects of work from home. The questionnaire was filled in by 267 respondents however only 240 responses could be used for analysis. This represents a valid response rate of 89.89.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretations

6.1 Respondents Demographics

Gender	Age				Grand Total	Percent
	18-25	25-35	35-45	45 and above		
Female	50	18	8	4	80	33.33
Male	48	46	32	34	160	66.67
Grand Total	98	64	40	38	240	100

Figure 1: Table showing demographics of respondents

Majority of the respondents were male (66.66%) between the age group of 18 to 25 years. The female respondent majority (50) was also between the age of 18 to 25 years. All of the respondents belonged to the service sector and had experienced work from home during the pandemic.

6.2 Data Analysis

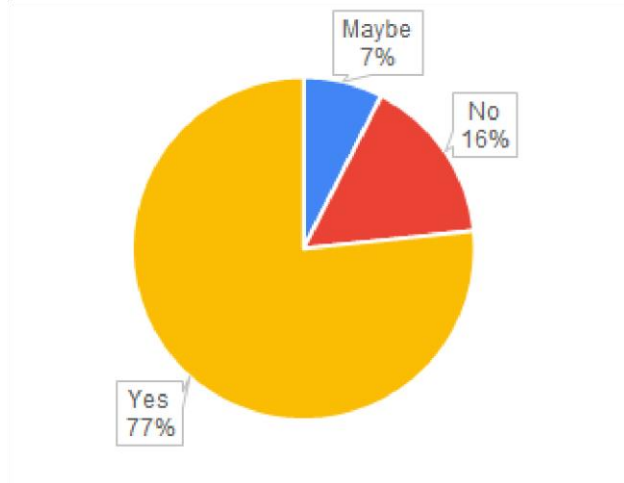


Figure 2.1: Pie chart showcasing whether the employees obtained required technical support from respective organizations

Greater part of the respondents (77%) obtained the required technical support (eg-laptop, digital platform to work) from their organizations.

Adherence to deadlines	Gender		Grand Total	Percentage
	Female	Male		
Maybe	8	20	28	11.67
No	10	38	48	20
Yes	62	102	164	68.33
Grand Total	80	160	240	240

Figure 2.2: Table depicting frequency of male and female employees who could adhere to deadlines during WFH

More than 68% of respondents believe that they were able to adhere to their work deadlines and deliver responsibilities as per schedule. Interestingly, out of all the respondents who couldn't complete work on time or meet their deadlines was the male majority. Based on the comments provided by the employees there are multiple reasons for non-adherence.

"It's not too coordinative but we are trying to manage well and wfh should be limited because we cannot get the feel of working." Employees are trying to manage their way with this distance working method but inclination is towards limiting wfh because of the need of the habitual work environment and office space. Respondents said *"The deadlines were met with difficulties and sometimes even missed"* and *"too hectic"* to point out the difficulties faced while completing work.

On the other hand, the female majority of respondents had much different comments like, *"zero travel time, that gives me plenty of time for my family!"*, *"really good experience"* to highlight that female employees are found to be more comfortable working from home as they get to spend more time with their families which was otherwise a trouble.

Efficiency as perceived	Female	Percent (of total female)	Male	Percentage (of total male)	Grand Total	Percentage (of total respondents)
Less Efficient (2)	10	12.5	32	20	42	17.5
Neutral (3)	18	22.5	32	20	50	20.83
Moderately Efficient (4)	20	25	72	45	92	38.33
Highly Efficient (5)	32	40	24	15	56	23.34
Grand Total	80	100	160	100	240	100

Figure 2.3: Table portraying efficiency of male and female employees during WFH as perceived by them

Smaller part of the population, that is 17.5% (42) respondents suppose that WFH has proven to be less efficient for them. A comment provided by one of the respondents speaks as to why productivity can deteriorate. The comment read *“I have a job which requires me to visit my clients personally and interact with them but work from home is definitely a constraint to such activities. Virtual meets are kinda not everybody's cup of tea as most of them are oblivious to the latest technologies.”* The response shows how the nature of the job greatly affects the efficiency while working from home.

The majority of the total respondents were found to be moderately efficient (38.33%) which included 25% (20) of the total female respondents and 45% (72) of total male respondents. Employees who think they are moderately efficient commented *“It was refreshing to work from home but there are a lot of disturbances due to which justice isn't done to the job role”, “Tough to justify work”* which explains how disturbances occurring at home can create problems and somewhat lower the efficiency because of the surroundings of few employees.

The highest efficiency was observed by 23.3% (56) respondents out of which 32 were females and 24 were males. Employees who perceive themselves to be highly efficient had comments like *“one has to adapt to changing situations”, “I would love to wfh forever”* that shows the positive mentality of the employees towards this change.

Distinguishing between professional and personal time at home	Gender			
	Female	Male	Grand Total	Percent
Maybe	14	18	32	13.33
No	42	100	142	59.17
Yes	24	42	66	27.5
Grand Total	80	160	240	100

Figure 2.4: Table depicting whether the male and female employees could distinguish between their professional and personal time during WFH

Majority of respondents 59.17% (142) which had 42 females and 100 males expressed that they weren't able to distinguish between their personal and professional lives. *“All time engaged in office work it is very difficult to do my personal work”, “The work timings increased by 1.5 times”* were some of the comments made by these

individuals which show how WFH affected the personal time of people. 27% (66) respondents which had 24 females and 42 males specified that they were able to distinguish between their personal and professional time at home.

Continuing work from home	Gender				Grand Total	Percent
	Female	Percent	Male	Percent		
No	40	50	96	60	136	56.67
Yes	40	50	64	40	104	43.33
Grand Total	80	100	160	100	240	100

Figure 2.5: Table indicating preference of female and male employees regarding continuing WFH

Majority of the total respondents 56.6% (136) which included 40 females and 96 males denied the choice of continuing work from home if given a choice. The comments “*Work from home is good for a few days but it is not good for long duration. Mental health issues may occur for long duration wfh*”, “*It’s really traumatizing change*” by the employees who would not continue to WFH. It highlights that there are employees whose mental health has been poorly affected during pandemic.

7. Conclusions and Suggestions

Organizations have been providing employees with all the technical support like laptops which are needed to deliver responsibilities. Seeing as WFH can turn into a long term activity this support will be constantly required. A less number of employees feel they have become less efficient which is mainly due to their surroundings or disturbances at home. Therefore, if a company chooses to make people work from home even after things get under control, they should take into consideration the opinion of employees regarding the environment of their home. Also people who suppose they have high efficiency have a positive perspective toward WFH which implies that the attitude and adaptability towards this change is affecting perceived efficiency of employees. Some employees also report themselves as less efficient because the nature of their job makes WFH difficult and dissatisfaction of the clients troubles the employees.

Another issue is mental health. Although seen in a few respondents the loss of social interaction and mental health issues are a concern. Informal group discussions and virtual calls could be made as once in a month activity to avoid such issues.

8. Scope for future research and limitations

This research’s sample comprises 240 respondents including a majority of male population, future researchers may use a larger sample size and equal number of male and female respondents to derive a deeper understanding. The sample of this study includes a majority of young employees, further research may include an older population. Due to prior academic commitments, the authors couldn’t devote more time towards this study; future researchers can explore and derive in-depth understanding of the various factors that tend to affect the productivity of employees working from home.

This study focuses on the service sector exclusively, future study may include other sectors and detailed sector wise comparison to gain an in-depth understanding.

9. References

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