

Impact Of Pandemic On The IT Industry And Beyond

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ABSTRACT

The COVID pandemic was declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30th, 2020.

It later went on to be declared a pandemic on March 11th, 2020. A pandemic is a spread of a disease that has affected many people in different countries and continents. Post 11th March unexpected things happened like a complete shutdown of regular activities such as schools, colleges, offices. During this time, a lot of industries had to re-examine their working norms, they faced major difficulties for just staying put. Considering the post pandemic world, things have changed dramatically. If we compare it to the pre-pandemic world, especially in reference to the IT industry, the working norms have changed

in a humongous manner. This is primarily due to the fact that working from home is easier in this industry than in any other. Many companies have claimed a significant

increase in revenue when people started working from home.

In this situation, when a lot of things change, the functioning of the management and employee expectations also change. There must be a common ground where both employee and employer can work in harmony to increase productivity and provide an amicable working environment for all.

The focus of the recovery is not only the revenue generation, but it's also important to analyse the impact it had. Many things have improved for the better, including employee behaviour, working norms, and a focus on health.

This research study focuses on understanding the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement, the issues and challenges faced by the employees and the companies because of sudden and prolonged work from home. The study suggests ways to improve employee retention and new management techniques incorporated in IT industry post pandemic.

The findings show the impact of sudden work from home. It was most amicably accepted and adapted by folks working in the IT industry. The companies were able to accommodate the work from home policies. Initially, it enhanced the performance, deliveries, and productivity. Later, when people got used to working from home, companies had to revamp the policies to accommodate more flexibility. The study highlights that virtual engagements, investing in employee growth, giving growth opportunities, and incorporating frequent check-ins are likely to help employee retention and create a healthier working environment specially post pandemic. Mid approach between work from office and work from home is “hybrid” mode of working which is preferred by both employees and employers as per the results. This creates better working norms for both employees and employers working in the IT sector.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In 2019, a virus called COVID-19 infected people in Wuhan, China. Soon after it spread to other countries through human-to-human transmission as people infected with the virus travelled and carried the virus because it was unknown at that time. The situation started getting worse as the virus started reaching many countries mainly through international travel. After the

declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11th, 2020, many things changed. The governments of many countries decided to take appropriate actions to stop the spread. International and National travel was banned or restricted. Many countries, including India, imposed a total lockdown. Schools, colleges, Industries, construction work and even non-essential government offices were closed. It had a significant impact on the economies of almost every country on the planet. Every sector got majorly hit. According to Business Today (2021)¹, an overall total of 10,113 companies were crossed-out under Section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013, in the current financial year till February. By June 2021, 6.2 million people had lost their jobs as their employers either closed their business or scaled it down due to the pandemic (Economics Daily, 2021)².

The situation was getting worse for all the sectors, except majorly for the IT industry. The IT companies had started with work from home; in addition to that, they started giving trainings on various functional features of online platforms, facilitated resources and provided funds to help employees setup the work desk at home. This step had a huge impact on the IT industry. After the initial fall, the industry recovered fast, with several companies claiming an exponential increase in revenue within one financial year as compared to the last few years. The employees witnessed new flexible work regime, where they could spend more time with their families, as the

travel time was completely removed. This has led to the motivation for starting this study to understand the various aspects of management in IT during and after the pandemic. The pandemic brought out an unprecedented and unexpected turn of events for every person on this planet as nobody was prepared for it. Many employees faced several varied work-related issues even as the companies were not able to propose any solutions for them. Since the pandemic was not anticipated, several limitations in the work ethics of the industry were also discovered. The pandemic changed everyone on many levels. This study focuses on changes specific to management in IT industry.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the management techniques and various norms in IT industry and to propose a strategy for better management in IT industry post Pandemic.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives for the research study are as follows:

- ✓ To study the impact of pandemic on employee engagement, the issues that employees and companies faced due to pandemic
- ✓ To study the ways in which a company can retain employees, reverse engineer the exit interviews of employees to make things better in the organisation. What improvement methods can be incorporated based on the limitations that were discovered.

- ✓ To understand the changes in IT industry post pandemic, new working norms, new thought process, and new management techniques.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study includes an analysis of the perspectives of employees and employers in the IT industry on the impact of the pandemic on performance, engagement, project deliveries, health and morale. The primary data for the research study has been collected from 99 employees and 49 employers (working professionals) in the IT industry, who have been working and managing organizations since pre-pandemic time. The pandemic has changed many things, everything became virtual due to work from home. From managing, working, hiring to team collaboration, deliveries, everything was managed online. Even in post pandemic time, new working style called 'Hybrid' has been incorporated, which is a mix of work from home and work from office. This study focuses on both employee and employers side of view on the defined objectives.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to gain insights on various ways to improve employee retention, to create a healthy working environment for employees specifically in this post pandemic working environment. This also helps in understanding what went well and what can be improved for both employees and employers in a coexisting world. The

significance is in accordance with the defined objectives of the research study. The intention of this study is to help organizations to deeply understand the impact of pandemic on employees based on various factors in order to incorporate new and suitable policies for their employees.

1.6 Structure of the Study

The study is divided based on the objectives defined. Firstly, the research methodology is defined. The research is accomplished based on both primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data includes demographic analysis followed by objective-wise analysis backed by secondary data source which includes journals, articles and books. The analysis is followed by result and discussions. The result is backed by the personal interviews with employees and employers working in the IT industry. Post result and discussions, conclusion and recommendations are added as part of the objectives.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

For any research study to be successful, it is essential to analyse the existing studies related to the topic. This helps to understand the gap and to consider the outcomes so that they are not repeated in the study. The topic of this research revolves around the

COVID-19 pandemic, which is a recent event, however, the key topics of this study have been researched before; work from home, virtual team engagement, and experiment on different employee retention strategies, to name a few. The literature review has been done based on the objectives of this research study.

2.2 Work from home and its impact

Many researchers have been studying the effects/impact of WFH way before the pandemic of

2019 came along. According to Bloomberg, the very first “work from home” was coined by Jack Nilles in 1973 (Vicky Gyan, 2015)³, after which people started studying about it and started witnessing the shift from factories and cubicles to Wi-Fi and online tools to understand the future of remote working and how it became what we know it today (Hazel Butler)⁴. This blog highlights a very vital difference between remote-first and remote friendly businesses. remote-first promote a company culture that holds employee wellness at its core, intentionally created to be as flexible as possible. Teams are able to work from anywhere and everywhere and still deliver the high standards required by customers, managers, and colleagues. From concept to launch to success, the remote-first company is built around remote workers. On the other hand, remote-friendly companies are more traditional businesses with offices in fixed locations and teams that commute. What they've done is shifted to accommodate their staff to work remotely, either on a full-time or part-time basis. This type of

company strikes a delicate balance between expecting workers to be in the office at their desks and trusting them to deliver from anywhere they choose. Many companies began with remote-friendly policies and have since shifted (or are now shifting) to structures that allow teams to work remotely on a permanent basis.

Another related study involves analysing human behaviour when working in teams vs. working in isolation. Many companies have been trying and experimenting with different working conditions for employees to increase their productivity. Authors Adisa, T.A., Ogbonnaya, C., and Adekoya (2021)⁵ investigated employee engagement during the pandemic. Their findings include a few innovative ways for the employees to cope up with remote working. The findings suggest a negative impact of remote working on employees and ways to cope with it. Another study talks about work-life balance post COVID-19 (Dr. Ramakrishnan, 2020)⁶. This study includes the perception and meaning of work life balance since 1930s. The author referred to the historical norm of working from home; internally, he referred to a journal titled "Why worklife balance now?" (Steve Fleetwood, 2007)⁷, which illustrates the shift in human behaviour to lean towards a healthy work-life balance. The findings include different flexible working practices to help people maintain a good work-life balance.

As per a study held in 2020, around 28.8% of the workforce in the IT industry consists of women (David Needle, 2021)⁸. It has

been more difficult for women during the pandemic to maintain a healthy work-life balance since everyone worked from home, and there was so much to handle. S. Gaikwad, L. Swaminathan and S. George (2021)⁹ examined the work-life balance, job performance, mental well-being, work engagement among women working in IT sector, and found a significant relationship between work-life balance and job performance, and a similar relationship between job performance and work engagement. They also found a significant and positive relationship between mental well-being and work engagement. This study suggests that one can determine that a healthy work-life balance leads to a high performing working individual. This can be taken up as a benchmark to determine how pandemic impacted the work engagements, work-life balance, and mental well-being and hence the performance.

2.3 Impact of remote work on employee engagement

Investigating about the long-term effects of the pandemic on working professionals, R. E. de Souza Santos and P. Ralph (2022)¹⁰ studied the challenges that organisations and software teams faced with new remote working and hybrid working models. The theory of coordination they came up with, with respect to remote-first and hybrid software teams is based on participant observation and depicts the altered coordination within the team. The shift from in office to remote working is leading to lower job satisfaction, increased

misunderstanding and ultimately impacting the projects' success. Employee engagement can be increased by changing policies to support employees with family responsibilities. Coming to the point of enhancing the organizational performance D. Sudrajat et al. (2021)¹¹ suggested on enhancing organizational performance through digital employee engagement during COVID-19 pandemic. They used primary data collected from 196 respondents, and the study found that digital engagement had a significant and positive impact, as well as a prominent relationship between organisational performance and employee empowerment. The pandemic has changed many things around the world. If we talk about the IT industry, the main thing that got changed is the perspective of employees, they are more inclined towards their mental health and hence a healthy work-life balance. In this kind of situation, organisations need to be more careful with developing their policies towards employee benefits and the employee retention. G. Kannabiran, P. D. D. Dominic, and A. V. Sarata (2014)¹² conducted an empirical study on employee retention in the Indian information technology industry in 2014. The study discovered nine anchors that influence an employee's intention to stay in a company, which are identity, variety, creativity, service, autonomy, geographic security (having high influence) and technical competence, managerial competence, organizational stability (having negligible to no influence at all).

2.4 Brief about employee retention

The term "Agile process" is very trending in the IT industry. Agile methodology supports continuous improvement. It gives a competitive challenge to the workforce, which keeps the employee motivated and hence increases the productivity. According to the findings of a study done by L. Issa, M. Alkhatib, A. Al-badarneh and A. Qusef (2019)¹³ on retention of employees, the outcome suggests the implicit impact of Agile Project Management in employee retention. The process itself increases job satisfaction without the involvement or extra efforts by HR department. Another study done on agile working during COVID-19 pandemic, by M. Schmidtner, C. Doering and H. Timinger (2021)¹⁴ with the help of 270 respondent showed that though the pandemic changed the way of working significantly, people have started valuing the digital ways to work and collaborate through distant working environments. G. F. Farris (2000)¹⁵, investigated how rewards and recognition aid in employee retention. According to the study, most companies divide their rewards and recognition events into seven types, which are: nonfinancial company recognition, promotions, individual financial awards, group financial rewards, professional recognition, salary, and intrinsic rewards. The results suggested that a one-time award isn't enough to retain employees, there should be a fair amount of small, divided rewards and recognitions given to employees over the course of their careers.

2.5 Changes in working norms due to pandemic

This research also focuses on the shift in human desire to have different working norms, how companies now have eased the working norms specially post pandemic. Pandemic has, in a way forced companies to shift their ways of working to accommodate more benefits for employee, thus enabling a healthy and progressive work environment. The study will also help to understand the impact COVID on the management sector in the IT industry. One thing worth noting here is that officially we are in post pandemic world now, so it is very crucial to distinguish between the three eras, the first one being pre-pandemic, when everything was normal, and no one could anticipate such a thing to ever happen. The second era is the time during the pandemic. The entire world was impacted, many emergency policies got incorporated. Talking specifically about the IT industry, how the corporates, the start-ups and all the employees and employers got impacted. Though none of this was anticipated, many companies responded quickly in terms of incorporating health benefits, working from home policies, helping employees to setup the environment to work from home.

It's undeniable that the things are not the same in the third era which is the current postpandemic period. The offices are open, the employees are expected to work from office. Overall, the pandemic had a

significant impact on organizations, employees, and employers.

Post pandemic, people call the situation to be the "new normal" which clearly indicates the difference between pre and post pandemic worlds. This study is specific to the changes in the IT industry. Management techniques based on employee engagement, new thought processes, new working norms are the key focus areas of this study. Justifying the statement mentioned above, this study is based on both primary and secondary data. A few established theories are referred to understand the employee's mindset before framing the questionnaire for primary research. According to Herzberg's Motivation Two-Factor Theory (Mohammed Alshmemri, Lina Shahwan-Akl and Phillip Maude, 2017)¹⁶, also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory, states that there are different sets of mutually exclusive factors in any workplace that are capable of causing either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. According to this theory there are a total of fourteen factors that constitute job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This theory clearly directs a few points that any organisation should consider when developing retention policies and creating a healthier work environment.

2.6 Summary

The research is completed based on both primary and secondary data followed by the PIs to validate the analysis. The secondary research helped to support the primary

research conclusions. Analysis based on the primary data source fills the existing gaps in the related research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the method followed for the research. For any study it is very important to understand the method to be used to analyse the data and draw conclusions. The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of pandemic on IT industry, to find out ways to retain employees and new working norms, management technique post pandemic. Based on the objectives and target respondents, the method here is descriptive analysis. The method used for this research minimises the risk of internal bias and interference. This research is a qualitative study based on both primary and secondary data with structured objective measures. A qualitative study is done based on the information collected from primary sources or secondary sources (both in this study). The secondary research is based on professional journals, books, articles, and recorded interviews. The primary data was collected from 99 employees and 49 employers with work experience from all three eras, i.e., pre-pandemic, pandemic, and postpandemic periods. Two surveys were created: one for employees in the IT industry, with 17 questions, and another for employers in the IT industry who hire,

manage, and make important organisational decisions, with 16 questions. Both the surveys were divided into four main parts, first was the personal information to understand the years of experience, hometown, and other demographic information. The next three parts were divided based on the three objectives of this study. The survey was shared via WhatsApp, LinkedIn, telegram, and emails. The data collection through the e-form helped with contactless data collection and Eco-friendliness. The collection of data in digital format helped in reduce the errors that might occur in data conversion for analysis.

The results were verified via personal interviews with five employees and employers each from the IT industry. The result is based on objectives defined in the studies.

3.2 Data set

The objectives of this study are specific to the IT industry therefore, the data set for the study is collected from people working in the IT industry. Previous study references are also based on research done specifically for the IT sector. Data for the study is gathered from both primary and secondary sources, which are listed below.

3.2.1 Primary data

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the opinions of the respondents. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions which were based on the objectives. The objective of the study

focuses on the impact of pandemic on various factors. Since pandemic is a recent event, getting the opinions of the people who experienced the change was essential. The opinions were collected via e-forms shared with over 180 employees and 80 employers. The response rate is 55 percent for employees and 61 percent for employers. There are many benefits of collecting the response online, top of all is getting unbiased data, the subject of the research was not discussed in detail with the respondents which is why there was no influence on them. The interview method was also used to collect the responses from the employees and employers who are working at different levels to validate the findings.

3.2.2 Secondary data

Key topics of this study are work from home, pandemic, working norms in IT industry, employee retention, management techniques to name a few. Work from home is not new and did not arrive just with this pandemic. Many IT companies have been practicing WFH from so long, there are different employee retention strategies incorporated way before pandemic and experiments have been going on ever since. People had been experimenting with management techniques long before the pandemic. With the help of previous studies, this research study is being conducted to better understand WFH challenges, employee retention strategies, and working norms. Previously published journals, articles and books are taken as the

source for secondary data. There are various journals talking about the challenges faced by people in the past due to working from home, few have outlined the advantages and disadvantages of virtual teams. The secondary data source also highlights the employee retention techniques followed by the company in virtual work environment. There are few journals mentioning about new and improved techniques to manage virtual teams, increase productivity and boost morale. It is very important to understand the gaps in existing research before starting any new dissertation. The data that is collected from the secondary resource supports the result obtained from the primary data source of this research.

3.3 Statistical tool

To identify the majority respondent's views, descriptive statistical tool is deployed, where frequencies and percentages are calculated. The analysed data is presented with the help of tabulation and figures. Descriptive analysis is done to characterise the data based on the properties. It refers to statistically describing, aggregating, and presenting the constructs of interest. It further helps to understand the features of the data. Descriptive analysis is followed by inferential statistics to draw inferences from the collected data. With the inferential statistics, a conclusion is reached that extends beyond the immediate data.

3.4 Sample size

The sample size considered for the study is 99 employees and 49 employers.

Considering the title and objectives of the study, respondents are from IT industry having experience of working in pre-pandemic, pandemic and post pandemic time. The designations of employees who participated in the study are trainee engineer, associate engineer, junior developer, senior developer, quality assurance engineer, module lead and HR (of IT industry). The designations of employers who participated in the study are project manager, product manager, director, customer relation manager, practice head, senior HR and recruiters of IT industry.

3.5 Summary

The research methodology for this research study is descriptive and inferential strategy. This is backed up by primary data source and secondary data source. The study is centered around the impact of the pandemic and recommendations based on the research to help employees and employers in the coming times.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The research is based on both primary and secondary data. The intention and inferences from the data collected are broadly mentioned below.

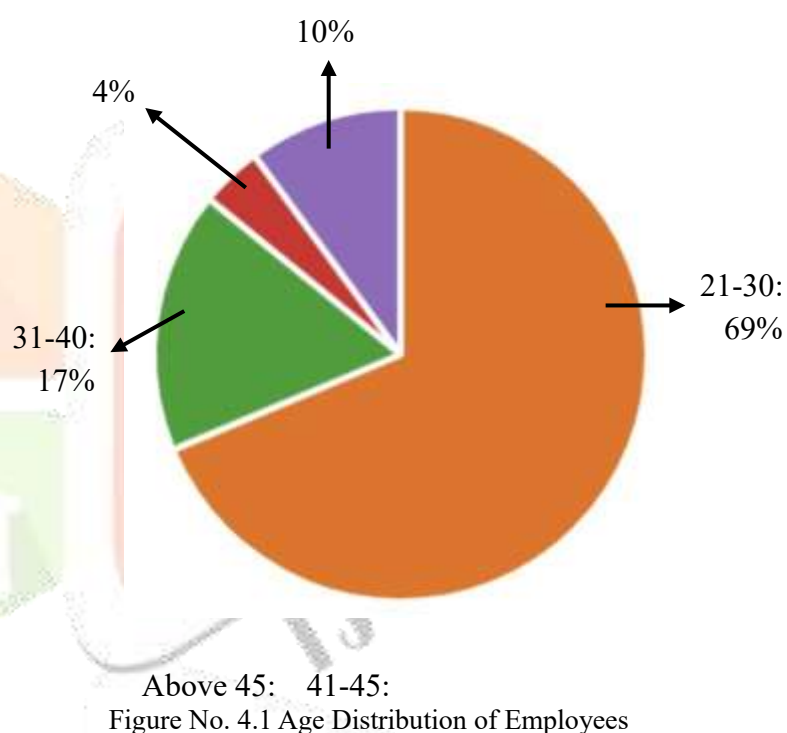
4.1 Demographical Data Analysis

Demographic data comprises of age, gender, location, and statistics that describe

people and their characteristics. It aids in understanding why people make the decisions they do.

4.1.1 Age group of the respondents (employees):

The age group of the respondents (employees in this case) is collected to understand their opinions based on their age groups and to know if a particular age group has any impact on the respondent's responses for the study.



Inference from figure no. 4.1: it is depicted that majority of the respondents are between the age group of 21 -30, i.e., 69 per cent. It is also observed that 17 per cent of the respondents are between the age group of 31-40. Above 45 are 10 percent. Only 4 per cent of the respondents are falling under the age group of 41-45.

4.1.2 Age group of the respondents(employers):

The age group of the respondents (employers in this case) is collected to

understand their opinions based on their age groups. To know if age group has any impact on the respondent's responses for the study.

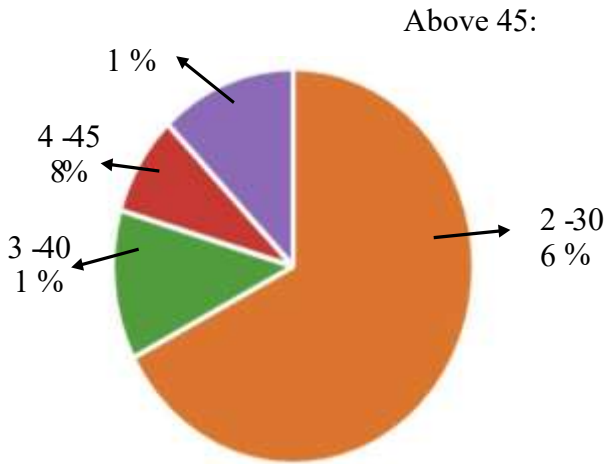


Figure No2 Age Distribution of

Inference from figure no. 4.2: It is depicted that majority of the respondents are between the age group of 21 -30, i.e., 67 per cent. It is also observed that 12 per cent of the respondents are between the age group of 31-40. There are 12 percent above 45. Only 8 per cent of the respondents are falling under the age group of 41-45.

4.1.3 Number of years of professional experience of respondents(employees):

This refers to the number of years the respondent (employee in this case) has been working in the industry. More the number of years, more is the experience that the respondent holds. Respondents with different number of years are likely to see the study questions in different manner.

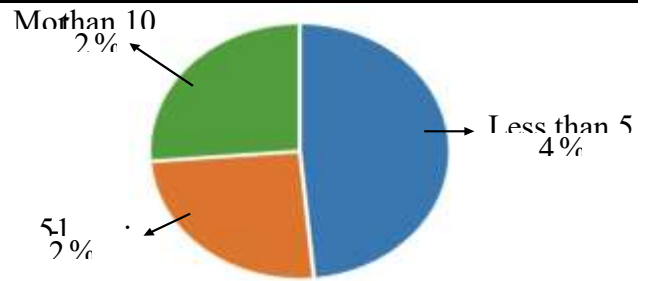


Figure No3 Professional Experience

Inference from figure no. 4.3: it is depicted that majority of the respondents are having less than 5 years of professional experience, i.e., 48 per cent. It is also observed that 26 per cent of the respondents are having professional experience of more than 10 years. 25 per cent of the respondents are having professional experience of more than 5 and less than 10 years.

4.1.4 Number of years of professional experience of respondents(employers):

This refers to the number of years the respondent (employee in this case) has been working in the industry. More the number of years, more is the experience that the respondent holds. Respondents with different number of years are likely to see the study questions in different manner.

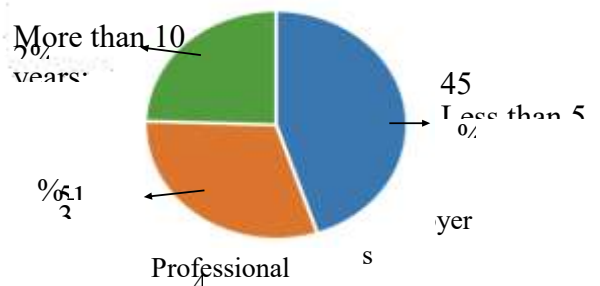


Figure No. 4.

Inference from figure no. 4.4: It is depicted that majority of the respondents are having less than 5 years of professional experience, i.e., 45 per cent. It is also observed that 24 per cent of the respondents are having professional experience of more than 10

years. 31 per cent of the respondents are having professional experience of more than 5 and less than 10 years.

4.1.5 Hometown of the respondents(employees):

Relocation is not new to anyone. It refers to moving to a new place and establish a home there for work or other things. Our respondents also belong to different locations. With this we can define the place where they were born and brought up. Different areas influence people’s upbringing in different manners.

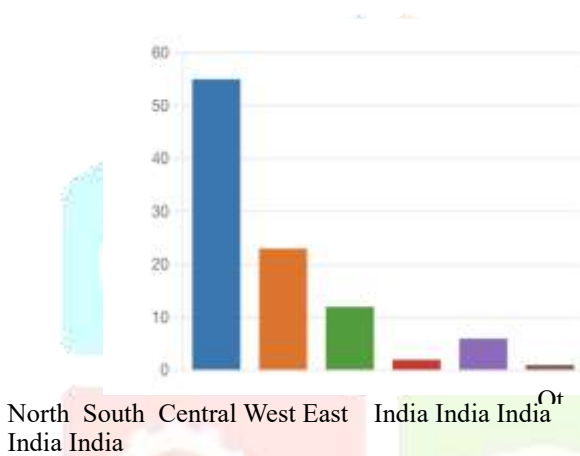


Figure No. 4.5 Hometown of Employees

Inference from figure no. 4.5: it is depicted that majority of the respondents are from North India, i.e., 55 per cent. 23 percent of the respondents are from south India, 12 percent from central part of India, 2 percent from west India and 6 percent from East India.

4.1.6 Hometown of the respondents(employers):

Establishment of a company takes a lot, sometimes to even leave your place behind. The indent here is to understand the background of the respondents (employers in this case).

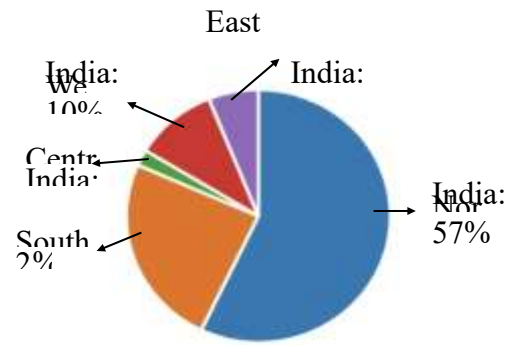


Figure 4 Hometown of Employees

Inference from figure no. 4.6: it is depicted that majority of the respondents are from North India, i.e., 57 per cent. 24 percent of the respondents are from south India, 2 percent from central part of India, 10 percent from west India and 6 percent from East India.

4.2 Analysis on the impact of pandemic on the employee engagement, the issues that the employees and companies faced due to pandemic

4.2.1 Impact of the pandemic on employee engagement: Employee’s perspective

Next few questions were designed to understand the respondents’ opinions of the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement, how the pandemic changed (if applicable) the engagements that the employees had with colleagues before and after the pandemic.

4.2.1.1 Work from home experience for respondents(employees):

Work from home was introduced to the world way before the 2019 pandemic. However, people used to take it as per the need, the pandemic changed the meaning of

work from home at many levels. On 20th of March 2020, the government declared a sudden lockdown, people in India got stuck where they were back then, no permissions were given to travel or even to leave the house. Companies started exercising the work from home option with employees. With this question the intent is to understand how the respondent's (employee's in this case) experience with this sudden work from home was.

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Inference from figure no. 4.7: it is

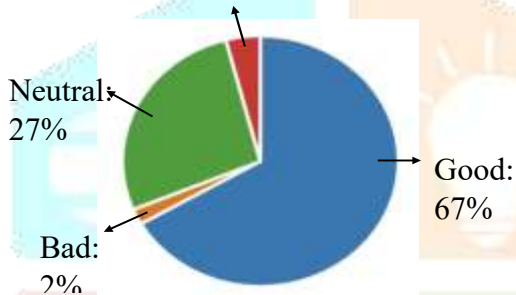


Figure 7: Experience of Employees

As depicted that majority of the respondents had a good experience while working from home, i.e., 67 per cent. 27 percent of the respondents didn't feel any difference between working from home and working from office. 4 percent respondents couldn't process the change so far and 2 percent had a bad experience while working from home.

4.2.1.2 Thought of going back to office

The entire world took this situation differently. Gradually everyone in the IT industry had started working from home. Many offices helped their employees in setting up home offices. A lot of people had adjusted with this new working style; some got so comfortable that they didn't like the

post pandemic state where they were asked to switch back to work from office.

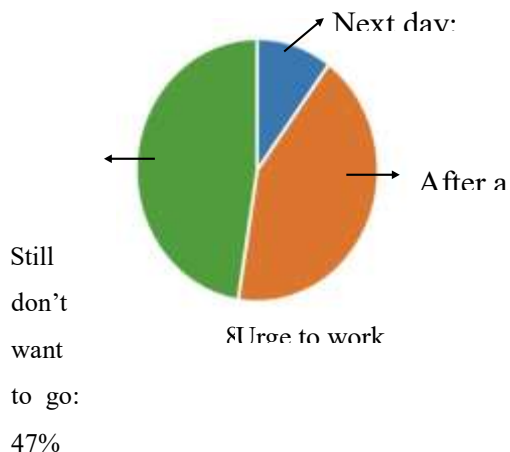


Figure No. 4.

Inference from figure no. 4.8: it is depicted that majority of the respondents don't feel like going back to office, i.e., 47 percent. About 42 percent of the respondents started to feel that it's time to go back to the office after a year while 10 percent of the respondent felt the urge from the very next day to work from office.

4.2.1.3 Got a chance to engage with colleagues (other than the project members during pandemic)

When we talk about office in the pre pandemic world, for most of the employees working in IT industry, the norms are more or less the same. Employees used to engage with each other during coffee/tea breaks, lunch, office parties, usually finding common interests, and become friends not restricted to a project. But during the work from home (during pandemic), considering a complete virtual world, things changed.

This question was asked to understand if the employees had engagement with other folks in their office other than with the ones, they were working with in one or the other projects.

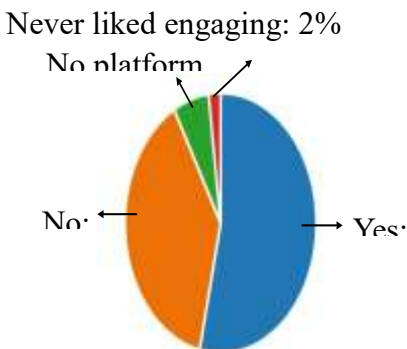


Figure No. 4.9 Employee engagement during pandemic

Inference from figure no. 4.9: it is depicted that majority of the respondents had a chance to interact with employees other than the team members and managers during pandemic, i.e., 54 percent. Around 38 percent of the respondents didn't get a chance to interact with other employees. 6 percent of the employees claimed that they didn't have any platform to interact with other employees during pandemic while 2 percent never liked any kind of engagement anyway.

4.2.1.4 Impact of WFH on performance of respondents(employees):

Pandemic affected the working conditions of employees drastically. The transition of work from home was easy on some, while difficult for many depending upon the things they had to juggle between along with work. Some folks were able to improve their working conditions and were able to do so many things while for some it was a roller coaster ride. Some employees

are still evaluating the impact while others are very happy with their increased productivity.

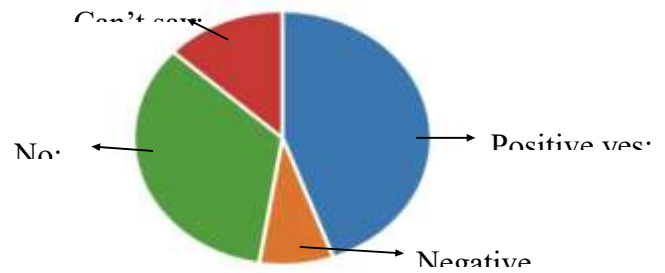


Figure No. 4.10 Impact of WFH on employee's performance

Inference from figure no. 4.10: It is depicted that majority of the respondents had a positive impact of work from home on the performance, i.e., 44 percent. 34 percent of the respondents didn't have any impact of work from home on the performance. 13 percent can't say the difference; however, 8 percent of the respondents claim to have a negative impact of work from home on their performance.

4.2.1.5 Impact of prolonged WFH on health of the respondents(employees):

With work from office style of working, people had a definitive place dedicated to work. With work from home, the boundaries got contracted. Different people had different experience when it's about working from home and hence different impact on health.

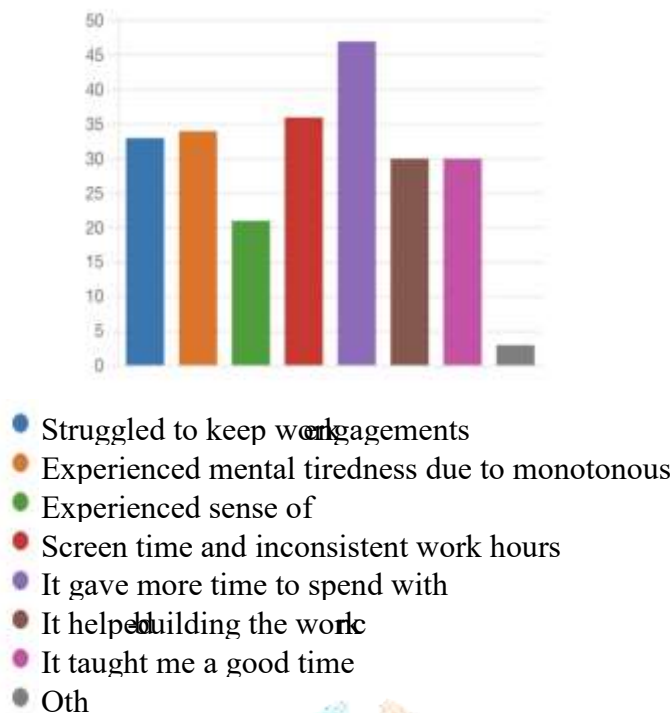


Figure No. 4.11 Impact of WFH on Employee's health

Inference from figure no. 4.11: It is depicted that majority of the respondents were able to give more time to their families (purple). Second largest majority claims that because of work from home their screen time increased significantly, inconsistent work hours were their which impacted badly (red).

Third largest majority of the respondents claims that they were not able to keep the work and home engagements separate, also due to monotonous daily routine, they experienced mental tiredness (orange and blue). On the brighter side, fourth largest majority of the respondents learnt time management because of work from home and hence were able to rebuild the work life balance (brown and pink). Few of the respondents felt isolated because of work from home.

4.2.1.6 Impact of management's interactions with respondents(employees):

With new working norm, many adjustments happened. This question was asked to the respondents (employees in this case) to understand the changes (if any) in the interaction of employees with their management because of pandemic and work from home.

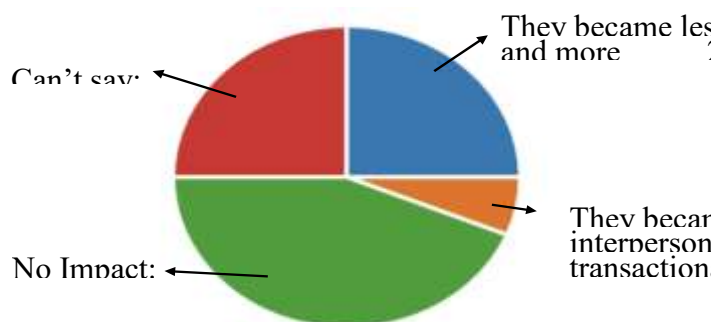


Figure No. 4.12 Impact of management's interaction on Employees

Inference from figure no. 4.12: It is depicted that majority of the respondents feels there is no impact of pandemic on management's interaction with them, i.e., 44 percent. 25 percent of the respondents feel that their managers became less interpersonal and more transactional during pandemic. Around 6 percent feel the opposite, as in their managers became more interpersonal and less transactional during pandemic. The last 25 percent couldn't determine the difference in the interaction before and after pandemic.

4.2.2 Impact of pandemic on employee engagement: Employer's perspective

The intent with this section is to understand the organization's perspective on employee engagement during the pandemic time.

4.2.2.1 How fast company accommodated WFH for employees after lockdown

The term Work from home becomes more practical and productive during the pandemic. But the implementation was sooner or later adopted by the companies. It is important to know how soon the companies started functioning remotely after the pandemic.



Figure No. 4.13 Accommodation of WFH post lockdown

Inference from figure no. 4.13: It is depicted that majority of the respondents claims that the company was able to accommodate work from home for employees from the very next day, i.e., 65 per cent. 18 percent of the respondents said, it took almost a month for their company to accommodate work from home and for 16 percent of the respondent's firm, it took more than a month to accommodate work from home for their employees.

4.2.2.2 How did pandemic impact employee engagement?

Employee engagement in a company is vital to keep up a good working environment and shouldn't be confined to mere project groups. It is important to understand how work from home during pandemic impacted the employee engagement in a company.

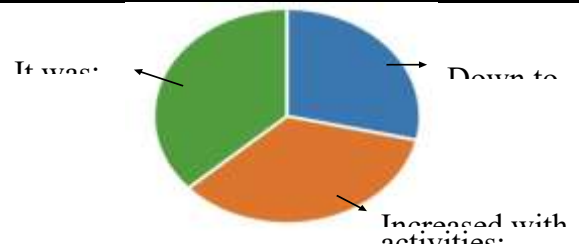


Figure No. 4.14 Impact of pandemic on employee engagement

Inference from figure no. 4.14: it is depicted that majority of the respondents felt that pandemic didn't impact employee engagement in the company, i.e., 37 percent. 35 percent of the respondents felt that employee engagement increased as there were virtual activities conducted, i.e., 35 per cent. However, 29 percent of the respondents felt that the engagement was down to zero due to pandemic.

4.2.2.3 Employees participation during company engagement activities during WFH

Many companies conduct engagement events on the floor to boost the employee morale and let them interact out of the project. It is usually done via few games, competitions, offsites and so on. When the world turned virtual, things got changed, it is important to understand how the participation was during that time.

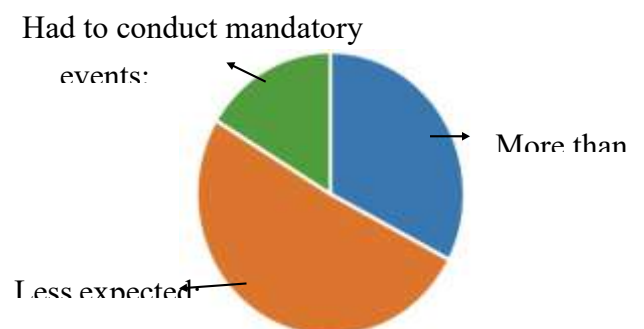


Figure No. 4.15 Employee participation in company's engagement activities

Inference from figure no. 4.15: It is depicted that majority of the respondents which is 51 percent, claims that the employee engagement during work from home time was less than expected. On a brighter side 33 percent of the respondents witnessed that the employee participation was more than expected. However, 16 percent of the respondents had to mandate the participation to keep the employee engagement in the company.

4.2.2.4 Attendance during work from home

The meaning of attending office got redefined after the pandemic hit. In pre-pandemic world, attending office meant leaving home at a particular time and reaching office. With work from home coming into the picture, it was as easy as just waking up and reaching your laptop.

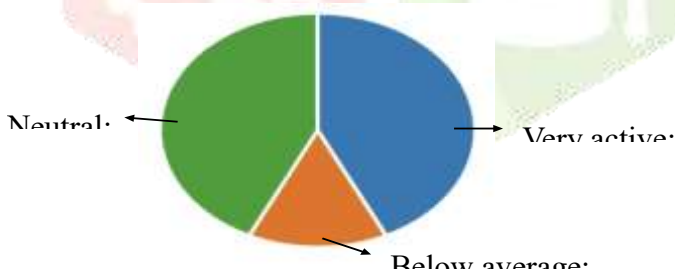


Figure No. 4.16 Attendance during WFH

Inference from figure no. 4.16: It is depicted that 43 percent of the respondents witnessed very active attendance from their employee's side. Other 43 percent claims it was neutral i.e., neither very active nor very inactive. For 14 percent of the respondents the attendance was below average during the work from home time.

4.2.2.5 Successful engagement activities planned and executed during pandemic (around 2 years)

Engagement activities are a usual setup in the office to increase the productivity by involving the employees in different activities. It is usually some time off from the daily work routine to give a break to the employees and interact with each other via fun activities.

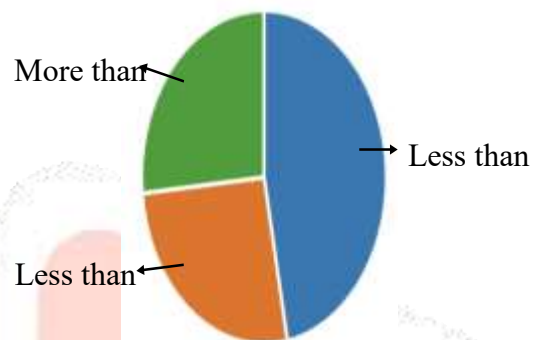


Figure No. 4.17 Engagement activities during pandemic

Inference from figure no. 4.17: it is depicted that majority of the respondents i.e., 47 percent claims that their company planned and executed less than 5 engagement activities during the pandemic period. For 27 percent of the respondents the number was more than 10 and for other 27 percent it was less than 10 but more than 5.

4.3 Analysis on the ways in which a company can retain employees, reverse engineer the exit interviews of employees to make things better in the organisation. What improvement methods can be incorporated based on the limitations that got discovered.

4.3.1 Employee resignation: Employee's perspective

Herzberg's Motivation Two-Factor Theory helps in understanding the characteristics that leads to job satisfaction and points the dissatisfaction. It is very important to understand employee's perspective to have a healthy work environment and employee retention in a longer run.

4.3.1.1 Effect of relocation in the decision to stay in a company:

Usually, one of the very important factors in any job search for an employee is relocation. If it is mandatory, what are the location options, how far are the relocation options, will the company provide any accommodation or not. Some people are willing to leave their home and move to a completely new city to follow their dream job whereas some of the folks are reluctant to suddenly leave everything behind.

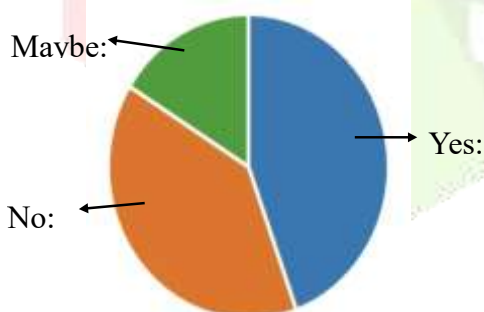


Figure No. 4.18 Effect of relocation

Inference from figure no. 4.18: It is depicted that majority of the respondents are affected by the decision of relocation which could impact the decision of staying in a company. About 39 percent of the respondents are not impacted by this decision and 16 percent aren't sure if that affects or not.

4.3.1.2 Rank the preference (employees):

Respondents (employees in this case) were asked to rank their preference on the below mentioned particulars, choice 1 having the highest preference and choice 6 having the least preference.

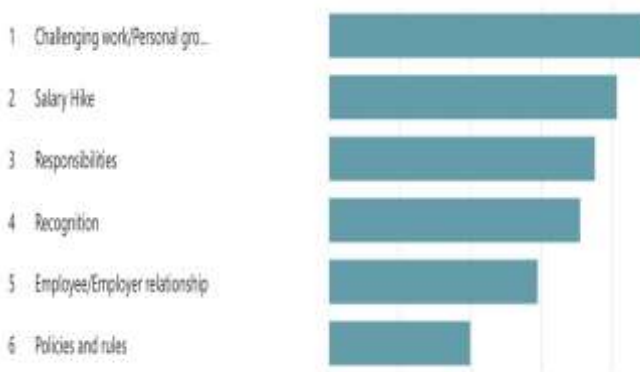
Figure No. 4.19 Employee's preference of various factors

S.No.	Particulars	Choice 1
1	Challenging work/personal growth	30%
2	Salary Hike	19%
3	Responsibilities	17%
4	Recognition	13%
5	Employee/Employer relationship	12%
6	Policies and rules	8%

Table No. 4.1 Preferences of respondents for various factors

Inference from figure no. 4.19: Majority of the respondents marked “Challenging work and personal growth” as their first preference. Second highest preference was “Salary hike”, followed by “Responsibilities” as third preference, “Recognition” as fourth, “Employee/Employer relationship” as fifth and “Policies and rules” as the sixth preference.

Inference from table no. 4.1: As per the respondents’ selection, majority of the respondents, i.e., 30 percent, marked “challenging work and personal growth” as their first choice, 29 percent of the respondents marked this as their second choice. 14 percent had this option as their third choice, next 14 percent had it as their fourth choice. 11 percent of the respondents



marked this as their fifth choice and only 1 percent of the respondents marked it as their sixth choice. “Salary Hike” was marked as first preference by 19 percent of the respondents, 28 percent of the respondents had this as their second choice, 18 percent of then ranked it as their third choice, next 18 percent marked it as their fourth choice. 11 percent had this as their fifth choice and

only 5 percent had this as their sixth choice. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 22 percent marked “Responsibilities” as their first choice, followed by 19 percent as their second choice, 18 percent as their third, 17 percent as their first, 14 percent as their fifth and only 9 percent as their sixth choice. Majority of the respondents had “Recognition” as their third preference, i.e., 26 percent. 22 percent of respondents had it as their fourth choice, followed by 17 percent as their fifth, 13 percent as their first, next 13 percent as their second and only 8 percent as their sixth. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 27 percent had “Employee/Employer relationship” as their fifth choice, followed by 21 percent as their fourth, 19 percent as their sixth, 13 percent as their third, 12 percent as their first and only 7 percent as their second.

Majority of the respondents i.e., 58 percent

had “Policies and rules” as their last preference, followed by 19 percent as their fifth preference, 8 percent as their first choice, 6 percent as their third, next 6 percent as their fourth and only 3 percent as their second preference.

4.3.1.3 Need to get involved in feedback sessions with HR/Manager (regarding work environment):

When we talk about exit interviews, there are series of sessions conducted for a person leaving to understand and evaluate the reason behind leaving. As per few studies, there can be multiple reasons for a person to leave a job; job dissatisfaction, bad work environment, better offer, stale growth to name a few. The identification process mostly happens after the resignation. The intent is to understand if the sessions are conducted on a regular basis with HR, managers, or some decision maker in the firm, how will that help employees in the company. This continuous interaction will give rise to continuous improvement in the work environment and to solve a problem nearly when it arises.

environment, i.e., 67 percent. 7 percent of the respondents doesn't feel the need to get involved in feedback sessions with HR/managers regarding the working environment. 21 percent of the respondents thinks they may or may not get involved in the sessions whereas 5 percent of the respondents can't say the need of it.

4.3.2 Retention strategies of organization: Employer's perspective

Letting an important employee go is very hard, many organizations in part few years have changed so many things in terms of culture, policies. Many have introduced exclusive employee benefit programs, carrier growth opportunities and what not to make them feel valued.

4.3.2.1 Strategies followed for employee retention in the organization:

The employers were asked to choose from a certain set of researched option to understand what the organization use as the n the employees.

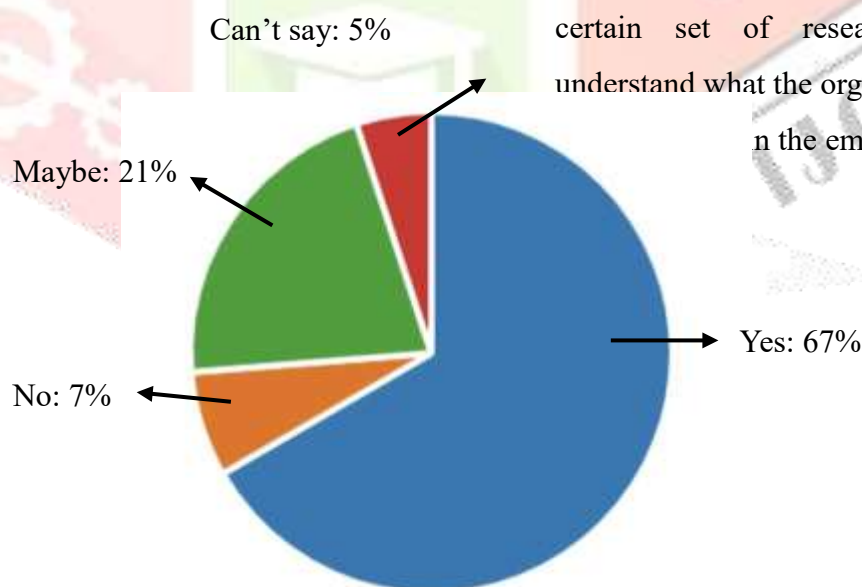


Figure No. 4.20 Need of a feedback session regarding working environment

Inference from figure no. 4.20: It is depicted that majority of the respondents feels they need to get involved in feedback sessions with HR/managers regarding the working

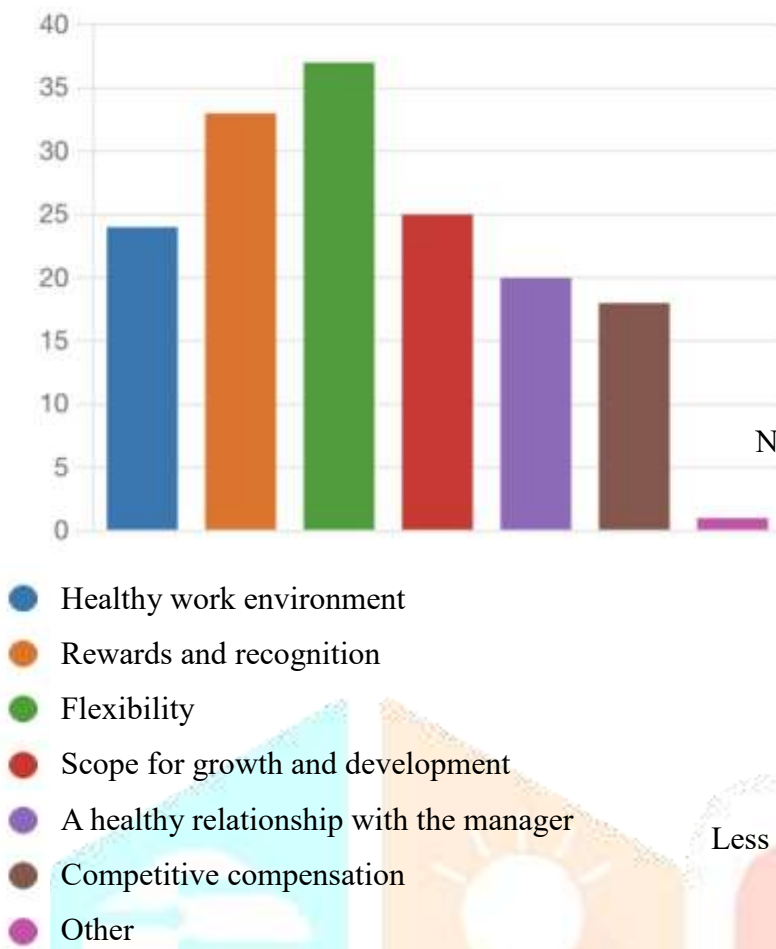


Figure No. 4.21 Employee retention strategy

Inference from figure no. 4.21: it is depicted that majority of the respondents (green) claims that flexibility is the strategy that they follow for employee retention. Rewards and recognitions are claimed by second highest majority of the respondents (orange) followed by scope for growth and development (red) at third position, healthy work environment (blue)

at fourth, healthy relationship with the manager (purple) at fifth and competitive compensation at sixth in the order.

Impact of pandemic on the ny:

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he sudden lockdown companies had nge their course in fraction of s.

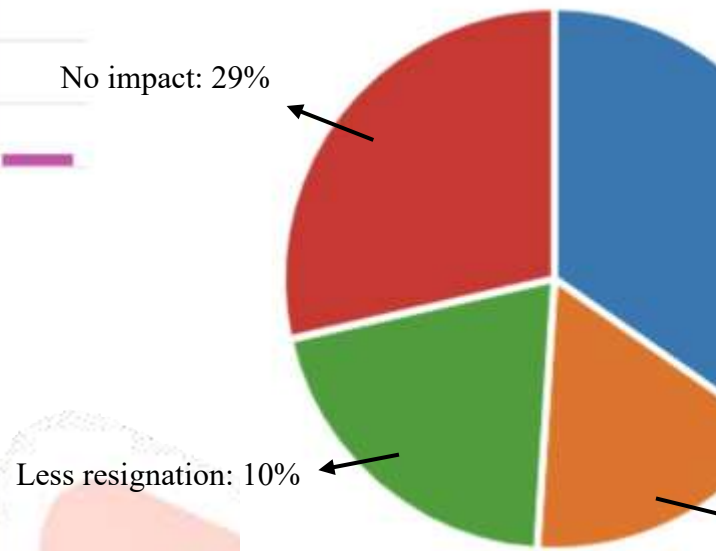


Figure No. 4.22 Impact of pandemic on the

Inference from figure no. 4.22: It is depicted that majority of the respondents claims that they witnessed more resignation as an impact of pandemic. 10 percent claims there were less resignations. 29 percent of the respondents didn't have any impact on their company with respect to the resignations or layoffs. 16 percent of the respondents claims that there were more layoffs.



4.3.2.3 Common reason for employee resignation:

The respondents (Employers in this case) were asked about the common reasons they

came across for employees to resign from the company.

Figure No. 4.23

Reason for employee resignation

Majority of the respondents, i.e., 37 percent selected “Less growth opportunity” as the second most common reason for their employees to resign, 29 percent selected this as their first choice, 20 percent marked this as their third choice and only 14 percent had this as their last choice. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 39 percent marked “Work environment” as the third common reason for resignation. 27 percent marked this as their second choice. 18 percent selected this

S.No.	Particulars	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4
1	Salary	37%	24%	22%	16%
2	Less growth opportunity	29%	37%	20%	14%
3	Work environment	16%	27%	39%	18%
4	Working relationship	18%	12%	18%	51%

Table No. 4.2 Reason for employee resignation

Inference from figure no. 4.23: As per majority of the respondent’s “Salary” is the most common reason for employees to resign from a company. “Less growth opportunity” is the second most common reason followed by “work environment”, “Working relationship” is the least common reason for the resignation.

Inference from table no. 4.2: According to the response from the respondents (employers), 37 percent of them chose “Salary” as the most common reason for their employee’s resignation, 24 percent had this as their second choice, 22 percent selected this as their third choice and only 16 percent chose this as their last choice.

as their fourth option and only 16 percent selected this as their first choice. 51 percent of the respondents selected “working relationship” as their fourth most common reason for employees to resign. 18 percent marked this as their first choice, next 18 percent marked this as their third choice and only 12 percent selected this as their second option.

4.4 Analysis on understanding the changes in IT industry post pandemic, new working norms, new thought process, new management techniques

4.4.1 Changes in IT industry post pandemic: Employee’s perspective

The intent with the following analysis is to understand the impact of pandemic and work from home on working norms, thought process, management techniques on the employees

4.4.1.1 Preferred working style for respondents(employees):

Before pandemic, many IT companies tried to evaluate different working styles like work from home, hybrid mode, introducing four workdays a week etc. But pandemic left the IT world with no other choice other than work from home. In current post pandemic world, many companies are still exercising different work styles, many have already declared permanent work from home, while some are back with strict work from office policy, some are trying hybrid approach (example three days' work from office, two days' work from home).

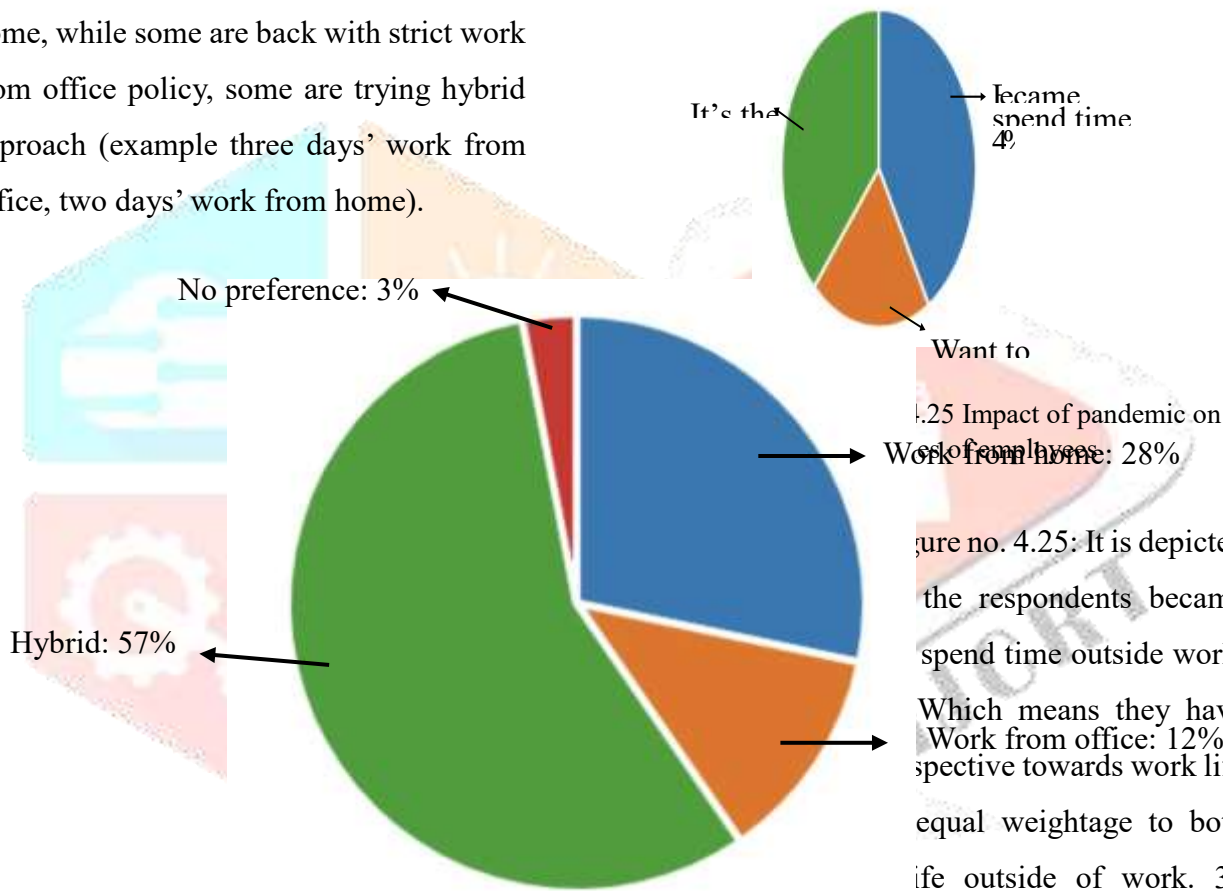
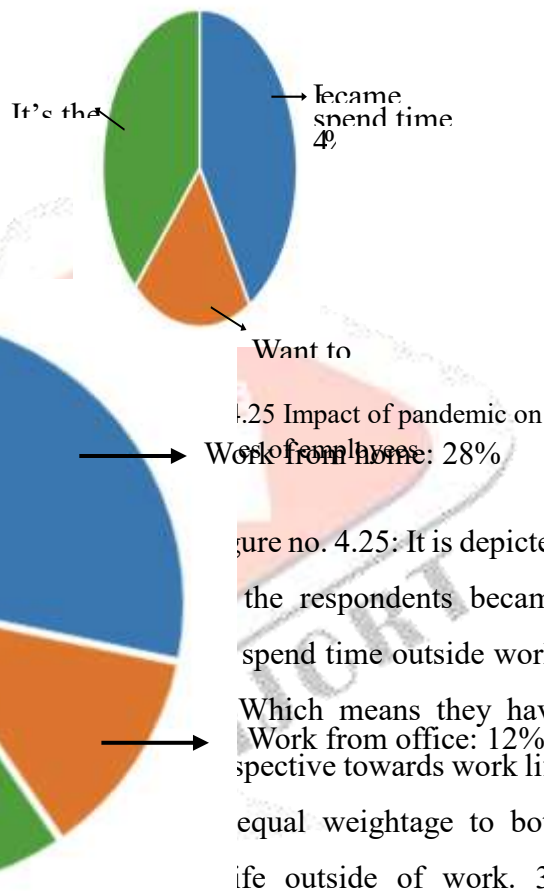


Figure No. 4.24 Preferred working style of employees

Inference from figure no. 4.24: It is depicted that majority of the respondents prefer hybrid mode of working style, i.e., 57 percent. 28 percent of the respondents are inclined towards work from home. Only 12 percent of the respondents prefer working from office while 3 percent of the respondents doesn't have any preference.

4.4.1.2 Change in priorities with respect to work-life balance because of pandemic

In pre-pandemic IT world, people never thought of what was coming until it suddenly hit everybody. During pandemic nobody had a choice but to try and balance between work and home, which played with people's priorities. The intent here is to understand how the priorities changed because of pandemic.



percent of the respondents they pandemic didn't impact anything with respect to work life balance whereas 20 percent of the respondents started prioritizing work more because of the pandemic.

4.4.1.3 Change in the ways of team bonding and working style post pandemic?

During pandemic everything became virtual for almost everyone working in IT sector. It impacted the working style, team bonding, mindset etc. The intent here is to understand

if in post pandemic world, the way people used to bond with the team changed or not.

Can't say: 8%

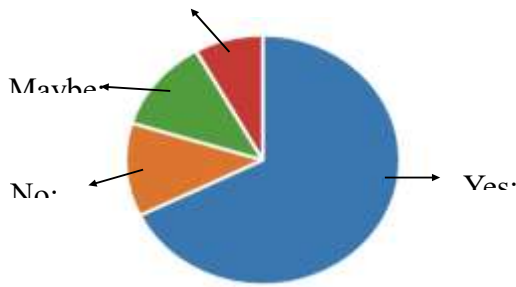


Figure No. 4.26 Impact of covid on team bonding and working style

Inference from figure no. 4.26: It is depicted that majority of the respondents felt the change in the way of team bonding and working style post covid, i.e., 68 percent. 12 percent of the respondent didn't feel any change whereas other 12 percent felt same change but couldn't articulate. 8 percent of the respondents couldn't say.

4.4.1.4 Rate the level of agreement:

With so many changes that pandemic brought in employee's life; priorities are bound to change. The intent is to understand the respondent's (Employees in this case) inclination with respect to job, family, and work-life balance.

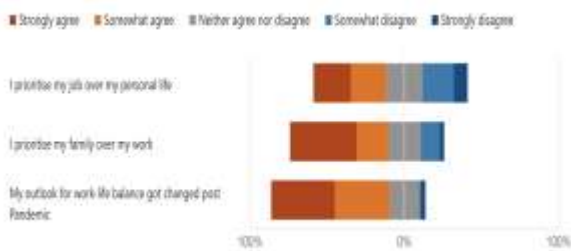


Figure No. 4.27 Level of agreement of employees on few factors

S.No.	Particulars	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
1	I prioritize my job over my personal life	24.2%	23.2%
2	I prioritize my family over my work	43.4%	20.2%
3	My outlook for work-life balance got changed post-Pandemic	41.4%	35.4%

Table No. 4.3 Employee level of agreement on a few factors

Inference: With reference to the employee's level of agreement depicted in table no 4.2, respondents strongly agreed towards all the aspects i.e., priority on Job over personal life with 24.2 %, Priority on family upon work with 41.4 %, and towards the change of outlook for worklife balance post-pandemic (41.4 %).

4.4.2 Changes in IT industry post pandemic: Employer's perspective

The Era of pre pandemic, pandemic and post pandemic taught us many new things, the intent here is to understand what all changed in terms of thought process, working norms and management techniques in the organizations across the IT industry.

4.4.2.1 Impact of pandemic on employee's performance and deliveries:

Nobody anticipated the sudden lockdown due to pandemic, but like the show must go

on, all the commitments needed to be addressed. Even though working conditions, environment and many other factors changed, it is justified to understand how it impacted employee's performance and deliveries because of this period.

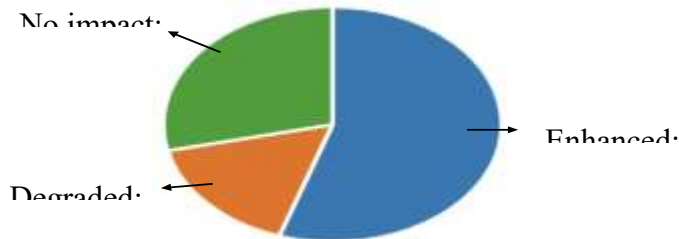


Figure No. 4.28 Impact of pandemic on employee's performance and deliveries

Inference from figure no. 4.28: It is depicted that majority of the respondents i.e., 55 percent witnessed the enhanced performance and deliveries from their employees during and post pandemic. 29 percent says that there was no impact of pandemic on the employee's performance and deliveries. However, 16 percent of the respondents witnessed degraded performance and deliveries from their employees.

4.4.2.2 Were the business expansion/new projects easy due to virtual world?

In IT industry, different organizations follow different approach for expansion, acquiring new projects, launching new product. One of the crucial points for any of the above to happen is meeting with potential clients or product owners. With work from home and everything moving to virtual rather than in person, it is important to understand this process..

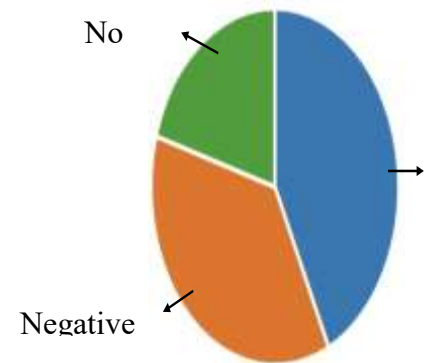


Figure 3 Impact of pandemic

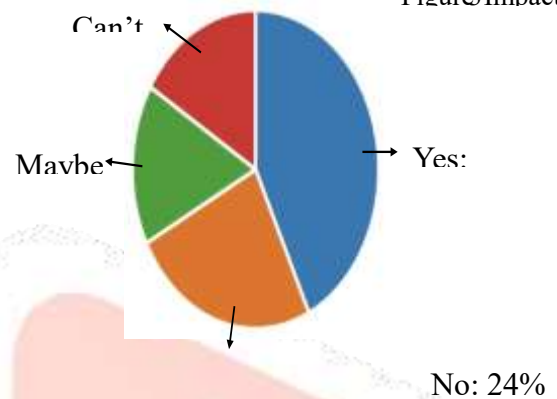


Figure No. 4.29 Impact of work from home on business expansion/new projects

Inference from figure no. 4.29: It is depicted that majority of the respondents i.e., 43 percent agrees that the virtual world due to pandemic made it easy for their firm to expand and get new projects. For 24 percent of the respondents, it was the other way round. 16 percent of the respondents couldn't claim either side and rest 16 percent is not certain if the reason behind the expansion was mere virtual connectivity.

4.4.2.3 Impact of pandemic on hiring process

Hiring process involves multiple levels depending upon the designation the process is for. There are many ways a company hires people, on-campus hiring, off-campus hiring, in-person interviews, online

evaluations and interviews. During pandemic, everything was virtual, and it impacted at different levels, it increased the reach for candidates and company by reducing geographical barrier as everything was online, whereas it decreased the quality for some.

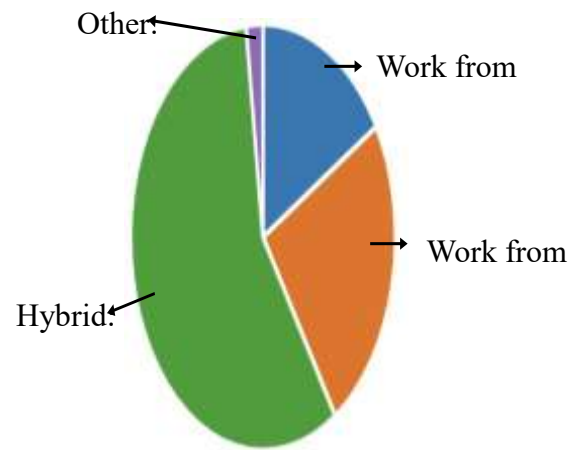
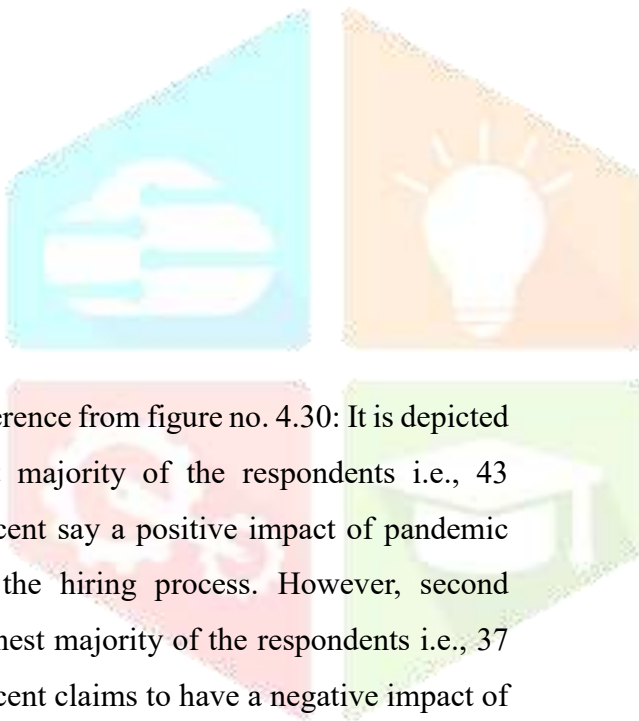


Figure 4.31 Organization's preferred working style

Inference from figure no. 4.31: It is depicted that majority of the respondents i.e., 57 percent prefers hybrid style of working for the organization. 24 percent of the respondents incline towards work from office style. Work from home style is preferred by 16 percent of the respondents.

Positive impact: 43%



Inference from figure no. 4.30: It is depicted that majority of the respondents i.e., 43 percent say a positive impact of pandemic on the hiring process. However, second highest majority of the respondents i.e., 37 percent claims to have a negative impact of pandemic on the hiring process. 20 percent of the respondents says there was no impact on their company due to pandemic.

4.4.2.4 Organisation's preferred working style?

Many companies changed their offices during pandemic, many cut down on space, many suffered resource loss. Now that we are in post pandemic world, companies changed their preference in terms of working style.

4.5 Summary

The analysis for the research study has been done based on primary data as well as secondary data source. For the analysis of primary data, structured set of questionnaires were put forth the data source. For the secondary data, professional journals, articles, and books were referenced.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to describe the findings from the analysis of the study without adding personal bias. The analysis is purely done without any influence on the

respondents (primary source) and without any interpretation of the secondary source. The findings are presented in four sub sections. First sub section elaborates about the demographical findings followed by three other sub sections which are based on each objective.

5.2 Specific to demographical data

It is depicted that majority of the employees are in the age bracket of 21-30 having working experience of less than 5 years. Most employees also lie in similar age bracket, however there are significant number of employees having more than 5 years of professional experience in IT industry. Majority of the respondents belongs to north Indian region. Both employees and employers are having significant experience of working in pre-pandemic, pandemic and post pandemic time which makes them ideal for this research study.

5.3 Specific to the impact of pandemic on the employee engagement, the issues that the employees and companies faced due to pandemic

Lockdown was a sudden measure that was taken by the government of many countries to stop the wild spread of COVID-19 virus. Majority of the employees had a good experience of sudden work from home, though it was abrupt but the experience they had was great. Most designations in IT industry just needs a laptop/desktop and a good internet connection in order to work which is one of the greatest benefits of

working in IT sector. With sudden lockdown, every employee of the company got stuck at locations wherever they were at that time. Nobody could leave the house unless special permissions were given. At that point of time, for a company to continue working, they had to establish work from home. As per majority of the employers, it took just one day for the company to accommodate the policies for work from home. For other significant employers it took more than a month to put everything in place for their employees to start working from home.

When lockdown started, nobody knew till when this was going to last, if the situation will get worse or better, how the working condition will change with time. Gradually everyone got used to work from home. It's been two years and ten months since the announcement of lockdown. Unlock started after one year and eight months (in India), many things have changed since then.

In one of the studies done on Work from home back in 2000 (M. L. Watkins)¹⁷, the author interviewed 11 people who used to work from home (6 women and 5 men). They all mentioned advantage and disadvantage of work from home, in the conclusion the main advantages were:

One can work at one's own speed and do not have to report progress constantly. It suits persons who like to be left on their own to get on with the job. Jobs can be more varied and interesting.

It gives opportunities to use one's talents. One does not have to go anywhere and no travel time is lost. It is easier to switch roles

from councillor to mother or cook. Disadvantages: There is a rush in preparing the premises. There can be interruptions. It is useful when looking after the children and the elderly parents. It is more comfortable as one is in control of heating and ventilation. One can listen to music if one wants. There is considerably more flexibility. There are fewer distractions and one can work late at night if one wishes. The great disadvantage of working from home is the isolation which may be faced on the worker and the lack of contact with persons in the same field. It is therefore possible to miss useful new developments, to become out of date and most of all there is the possibility of becoming disillusioned and of feeling out of the vibrant circle of achievers. Rearranging the work so that one visits clients regularly and having extensive discussions with them about the project in hand will possibly help. Another remedy would be to attend meetings of the relevant professional circles or societies and institutions as well as attendance of conferences with the possible submissions of papers describing an interesting topic. Leading a discourse on the triumphs and pitfalls of recent problems will undoubtedly provide a stimulus for the worker from home.

Large majority of the employees still doesn't feel like going back to office whereas other significant employees felt the urge to work from office after a year of work from home. For a healthy working environment employee engagement in any company is must. It is evident that with

more engagement there is less feeling of isolation and in many cases it is proven to increase employee productivity and performance. Larger part of the employers witnessed the increase of employee engagement due to virtual connects during work from home. Companies follow the trend of on floor activities to increase employee engagement by organising and participating in events. Due to work from home, majority of the employers were able to organise less than five events for the employees in the duration of two years and witnessed less than expected employee participation. Apart from engaging in company organised events, employees do get a chance to connect if working in office. Some might find common game interest, technology interest and what not. With work from home kicking in, as per the results majority of the employees were successfully able to engage with other employees beyond their project team.

As per results, larger part of the employers saw more attendance from employees during work from home. During work from home, screentime significantly increased, people were sitting at home as lockdown didn't allow anyone to leave home. Majority of the employees observed positive impact of work from home on the performance. Few employees felt isolated, mental tiredness and struggled to maintain work-life balance while majority of the respondents were happy to get a chance to spend more time with family and re-built work-life balance while learning time management. Majority of the employee

didn't feel any impact of pandemic on how their managers dealt with them during work from home.

A study based on social listening analyzed more than seventy-eight thousand tweets in a span of one month related to work from home during pandemic (S. Gottipati et al., 2021)¹⁸. This research highlights the state of mind of people who shifted to sudden and prolonged work from home mode due to lockdown. The major topics they discussed were WFH changes, morale, company culture, balance life, WFH preparedness. 61.38 percent of the tweets were positive, 17.55 percent were negative, and 21.07 percent were neutral which shows employee's sentiments during that time. Overwork, stress, isolation being the negative part and all the other aspects like flexibility, family time, no travel to work were amongst the positive ones. Overall work from home had a good sentimental impact of the employees during the COVID-19 outbreak.

As per a study done by J.A. Kelly (2020)¹⁹, it is evident that the people who have spent more than 60 percent of their lives working from a physical workplace, found it difficult to work from home. They saw reduction in their productivity as compared to the people who are relatively new in their profession.

5.4 Specific to the ways in which a company can retain employees, reverse engineer the exit interviews of employees to make things better in the organisation. What improvement methods can be incorporated based on the limitations

that got discovered. Prolonged work from home changed many things for organizations as well as for the employees. People across the globe relocate at some or the other point in life for various reasons, "ideal job" being one of the main reasons. Not everyone buys a house on the fly post relocation unless things are permanent or based on personal choice. Rent and subletting is the preferred alternative way for people relocating for jobs. Once the pandemic started, nobody knew how long the work from home will last, this uncertainty lead to people going back to the hometown and continue work from home. As per the results of this research study, the employee's decision to stay or leave a company is majorly affected by relocation factor. Employers claimed to have a bad impact of pandemic on the company as they witnessed more resignations. Though the most common reasons the result showed are salary and less growth opportunity. The result shows that majority of the employees ranked challenging work and personal growth at the top of their preference list which is in sync with the reasons that employers are receiving.

Every organization follow some strategies to retain the employees and make the environment healthier with each step. Pandemic impacted many policies that were in place before the pandemic time, companies had to reassess the strategies to retain the employees and come up with new ways to encourage a healthy working environment. Majority of the employers focused on providing flexibility, rewards,

and recognitions to employees as part of retention strategy. The significant advantage of work from office is the identification and resolution of issues on the fly. With work from home, it is difficult for managers or decision makers to intervene, majority of the employees feel the need of regular feedback sessions with managers, HRs and other decision makers regarding working environment or any other aspect.

Abu Shanab et al. (2021)²⁰ mentioned the effectiveness of performance appraisal for employees during pandemic. The experiment of working from home was started long before the pandemic, many companies were trying this out. The intention of the experiment of working from home was to create a balance between employee needs and work interest. This increased the productivity and speed of service. Job satisfaction, employee affiliation, and excellence was additional benefit that came out of it. Pandemic made it difficult to measure the performance as everyone worked differently than they used to before. The study recommended to have a transparent performance appraisal evaluation, feedbacks should be taken from the employees and improvements should be implemented in the systems as in when needed. The appraisals will help to motivate the employees specially in work from home condition where it is difficult to measure things like before.

5.5 Specific to understanding the changes in IT industry post pandemic, new working

norms, new thought process, new management techniques

The work from home phase saw almost everyone work in isolation, away from the company of colleagues, coffee breaks and the numerous conference room meetings. People adapted to the new normal very quickly as this mode of working not only provided great flexibility but also helped them pursue other avenues. It is quite natural for things to change after this prolonged work from home phase. According to the results, majority of the employees experienced the change in the way team bonding used to happen post pandemic. The priorities with respect to work-life balance got changed due to pandemic. According to the study

“Challenges and Gratitude: A Diary Study of Software Engineers Working from Home During Covid-19 Pandemic” (2021)²¹, the work from experience of 435 people was taken into consideration. It was observed that majority of the people faced challenge with meetings, feeling of overworked, struggle with mental and physical health (physical issues like increased repetitive strain pain, lack of movement, headaches, etc. and mental issues like feeling of isolation, depression, and anxiety). On a brighter side, they felt gratitude for the family with increased in work flexibility. As a result of this study, the company created a new program like

“No Meeting Friday”, few other companies adopted this program and received good feedback.

Majority of the employees became more sensitive towards having a healthy work-life balance and understood the importance of spending time outside of work. This gave them a new perspective, increased the healthiness and hence the productivity also improved. This is validated by majority of the employers as part of the result of this research where they witnessed the enhanced performance and deliveries of employees after the pandemic hit. The result shows that larger part of the employee's outlook for work-life balance changed post pandemic. Earlier it was more of a competitive race for most folks, pandemic made them realise that work is not larger than life. Also, the importance of staying happy must be emphasised about because staying happy fuels creativity and compassion which are a must for success in today's world. Another aspect of the scenario was that people realised how important giving time and enjoying small events with family is. Work-life balance plays most significant role in sustaining success. A study done in 2021 (L.Kapeter et.al)²² shows that the team's virtuality increased via utilization of digital tools and digital communication technology. There has been increase in perceived personal productivity and a decrease in collaborative productivity. Virtuality here refers to the shift of teams from communicating face-to-face to virtual ad-hoc meetups. As per the survey the study conducted "a majority believed that remote working did not involve any productivity loss and 28% thought that workers had become more productive through remote

working." The respondents of this study were engineers and managers who had previous experience of working from office in pre-pandemic time. Vertical communication has become more efficient and streamlined, on the other hand horizontal communication between the developers and overall communication with people from other departments has significantly decreased as informal meeting opportunities, there has been increase in individualistic problem-solving behaviour and increasing shift from team to individualistic task or project ownership. "If one person in the office is working on a problem and is making a mistake, we could see that there are issues with it. We could have noticed it on the fly, it would have been in daily operation. So that is our biggest problem in this new setup."

The virtual world comes with its own pros and cons, for any business to sustain, it is essential for it to expand or keep on working. With virtual world coming into picture during pandemic, expanding business and getting new projects was another challenge. On the other hand, it was easier to reach out as no commute was needed, no traveling to meet potential partners. Every client was now one click away which as per majority of the employers helped in business expansion and getting new projects due to virtual world. Hiring is another major pillar for any company's growth. Results shows that majority of the employers had a positive impact of pandemic on hiring process. It gave equal opportunities and a good reach

since everything was handled online. Due to virtual nature of the hiring process, companies were able to cover more than they could in pre-pandemic, non-virtual world.

A very crucial point is raised by V.Soni, D. kukreja and D.K. sharma(2020)²³ about security concerns of companies in order to grant work from home. Home networks are not configured in a similar manner to the office network. Many clients might not feel safe for employee to work from any other network. There were many security concerns and threats to both employees and employers. For employees it was having the company's data anytime anywhere, also connecting through home router and connections without adequate security measures in place. For employers it was cybercriminals exploiting and attacking the people working with weak networks and inability to monitor in real time. This is one of the major reasons that the companies wanted employees to be back at office as soon as possible. Before pandemic work from home was not much in practice and was not experienced by majority of the folks. During pandemic, everyone in the IT sector experienced work from home. People have now experience both complete work from office and complete work from home which is why employees and employers have open mind on the working style. The results of the research study shows that majority of employees and employers prefer hybrid mode of work style. Hybrid mode refers to the combination of work from office and work from home.

5.6 Miscellaneous

A study "Work from Home After Covid-19: Machine Learning-Based Approach to Predict

Employee's Choice" (B.T.G.S. Kumara et al., 2022)²⁴ used Artificial Neural Network (ANN), Random Forest, Naïve Bayes, and Ensemble Learning-based approaches to predict the employee's choice of working style post pandemic. It was found that employees, specifically women working in IT industry prefers work from home even after the pandemic provided a healthy and supportive environment at home. The conclusion includes the inclination of employees towards work from home even in the post-pandemic world. A study done to assess the risk in the home office points out the mental state of the workers to ensure security while working from home (E. Campbell, 2022)²⁵. Post pandemic, the hybrid working style has become more and more adaptive, people are now focused on securing home network as well which is a very positive aspect of pandemic induced work from home.

Few interviews were conducted for this study with employees and employers at different levels in IT sector. As per the interviewees, they would prefer work from home if they were at individual contributors or who works in a comparatively small team and would prefer frequent work from office if they need to manage a bigger team. The major reason for them to choose work from home is flexibility and focused time, in

other words to get the work done in an isolated time. However, if they were to manager a bigger team, they would want to meet them in person to get the real time updates and solve any issues on the fly.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to conclude the research study and highlight the recommendations that are gathered based on the results of the research. The research results are based on both primary and secondary research. The goal is to help employees and employers to have a healthy working environment, management techniques and work life balance post pandemic.

6.2 Conclusion of the study

COVID-19 pandemic is the most unforeseen and unanticipated event that happened in the history of mankind. The entire globe went under lockdown, many companies got shut. One thing that is undisputable is the fact that it impacted each and everyone on this planet, be it for good or bad. This study is specific to the impact of pandemic on IT industry. Various factors were taken into consideration for this research study to understand the impact and to gather recommendations. The respondents who took part in the research study as primary source were employees and employers who

have worked in pre-pandemic time and are having experience of working during the pandemic and are currently working in post-pandemic world specific to IT sector. Sudden change in working style gave people a chance to explore things. It gave a chance to spend quality time at home which was a not anticipated by anyone. People were busy in their daily routine, working, managing family and other things. It took us by surprise how employee's performance enhanced during pandemic as an impact of work from home. People took less leaves during work from home as new concept of "work from anywhere" got introduced. Work from anywhere reffers to a working style where people who are traveling carry their laptop and dongle with them and connects from wherever they are. This had a positive impact on their deliveries, health and productivity. Challenges started once the work from home got prolonged due to different phases of lockdown. To ensure the safety of employees, employers continued the work from home mode. Numerous companies didn't renew their office's lease and hence made work from home a permanent thing for their employees. Result shows that employee engagement in the virtual world didn't get impacted that much due to pandemic but didn't grow as it would have in person. Gradually countless employees started liking work from home and still doesn't feel like going back to the work from office mode. Few challenges in IT sector due to pandemic were keeping the morale up, encouraging employee engagement through virtual meetings and

events, putting work from home policies in place considering security and geographical concerns.

If an employee is happy then there is absolutely no reason for resignation. Few common factors to make a healthy working environment and employee contented based on research are highlighted in the study. Challenging work for personal growth is the very first preference an employee look for. This helps to stay motivated and to bring forth a sense of achievement. Recognition be it monetary or otherwise also gives a sense of accountability and acknowledgment. The era of work from home witnessed more than usual resignations, layoffs. When the organisation in working from home, it is certain to miss out red flags from teams, clients and employees. Any issue if not resolved timely can bottle up conflicts which can make things toxic for both employees and employers. The research study indicates that having regular checks through meetings between employees and employers can minimise this risk. The frequency of this kind of engagement should be increased. Virtual world refurbished all the traditional ways of working. Providing flexibility, chance to grow professionally yields to employee retention.

One of the vital changes that happened post pandemic is the outlook of people. Change in outlook made the entire difference. With virtual world, major convenience was the reach, without traveling one could conduct numerous meetings with anyone sitting

anywhere. Many crucial tasks in IT sector like team events, hiring process, converting potential clients needed physical presence. This is not the case anymore; pandemic changed many traditional ways people used to follow. With work from home people got so much time at home, with family. This fostered the feeling of reevaluating work-life balance. Though the performance, deliveries and productivity got enhanced during work from home, team bonding, feeling of belongingness got impacted. Post pandemic, companies started calling the employees back to the office which was not taken positively as it was not feasible for everyone to go back to previous working style just like that. To curb the situation, organizations came up with hybrid approach, which is neither complete work from home nor complete work from office. Even the ways of hiring also changed post pandemic. Many companies removed the mandate of in person interview, it's also a mix of virtual plus real-world interaction. Another key aspect of business is its expansion. IT world is globally connected, most of the firms deals with clients from cross the globe. Countries halted all kinds of travel during pandemic which gave rise to new norm for business expansion, bonding through virtual connectivity.

6.3 Recommendations

In response to the findings of this research, the actions are suggested in the following sub sections. The intention of this section is to help employees and employers of IT sector who are coming out of pandemic phase, the new and improved ways one can

handle the employees working in IT industry. Recommendations are objective wise mentioned in the following sub sections.

6.3.1 For employee engagement during work from home

Plenty of companies have made remote working permanent for the employees. Some companies have hired from across the globe making relocation difficult. Work from home is nowhere to go in this post pandemic time shortly, chances are it will be practiced even more in near future. Employee engagement is about motivating the employees to be passionately invested in their work. It indicated the commitment towards the organization and emotional connect with people they work with. To ensure that employees who are not working from office are not feeling isolated or discourages, it is recommended to increase employee engagement.

It is evident that higher the employee engagement in a company higher is the company's productivity and growth. To increase employee engagement, it is important to provide right platform for them to interact. Ensuring the availability of trainings, resources. Another recommendation is to make work fun by introducing new and frequent events which motivates team bonding, employee connect and casual meetings where folks can interact on different levels other than project work.

6.3.2 For employee retention

It is imperative to make employees feel valued and heard in organisation. Based on the research, there are few recommendations through which an organisation could retain the employees and make a healthier work environment post pandemic. Remote work has been one of the top-of-mind topics for companies even before pandemic. Providing flexibility is a significant incentive for employees to stick around. Another important recommendation from the research is to invest in employee's growth opportunity and providing the opportunity to grow. One of the greatest ways to make the employees feel heard is through frequent checkins with them and follow through the feedback. Appreciation, respect, and recognitions are the traditional and evergreen methods to retain the employees for a longer term.

6.3.3 For management techniques

Change in working norm and changed the thoughts process of employees and employers working in IT industry. First and most important recommendation from the research is following the hybrid mode of work. According to TechTarget (2021)²⁶ many companies like Google, Uber, Qualtrics have announced 3:2 ratio as their work schedule. 3:2 ratios refer to 3 days a week work from office and 2 days a week work from anywhere. This will give the flexibility to employees and show respect to employee's preference. It is undisputable that happy employee means happy organization. The change in priorities of employees and employers post pandemic

gave rise to improved work life balance. Regular connect and communication is a key to keep things afloat and solve issues on the fly specially in hybrid mode of work. New policies to increase team bonding should be incorporated, for example frequent events, outings, a way where team members can bond and feel connected with each other. This will help aligning the employees to organizations vision. Post pandemic the old traditional ways of employee evaluation has been under reconsiderations. New tools and policies should be made to evaluate employee's performance. Providing flexibility, growth opportunities and team bonding will help in making the company a better place to work and retain employees. With this the bond between employees and employers will not just be limited to professionalism but extend beyond that. There will be more emotional connect between the employer and employee, thus creating a sustainable work environment. Pandemic has taught us that there is more to life than just staying in one place unhappily. The new sense of work life balance will further help both employees and employers to create a new and positive work atmosphere.

6.4 Future work

The research study focuses on the impact of pandemic on IT industry and recommends the ways to retain employees while highlighting new working norms and management techniques. The research has been conducted based on primary and

secondary data source. The source for primary data were employees and employers of IT industry having the experience of working before pandemic, during pandemic and post pandemic time. They have worked from office as well as from home for a prolonged time. The factors considered for the research are dependent and independent variables which have made an impact on the employees and the employer during the pandemic. There could be some other factors that might have impacted the employees and employers of the IT industry, i.e., extraneous variables which is a future scope of this research. The future scope of this research also includes the expansion into other industries and giving recommendations based on the research for various industries.



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