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Original Research Article

Work from home and changing dynamics

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ABSTRACT

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

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

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1. Introduction

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

In India, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on 30th January 2020. On 24th March 2020, Prime Minister of

India announced 21 days complete lockdown for 1.3 billion Indians immediately from midnight as a way to contain the spread of the disease. But since it was not feasible to shut down the economy and all sorts of production units and service sector, WFH came as a rescuer. Although, production work of the factories was impacted, the service sector had an advantage due to this. Now, the employees have been able to work sitting in their homes with all the comforts.

COVID-19 has led to a new era of transformation and digitalisation. Not just the working sector but also the educational sector has shifted towards WFH. Different online teaching platforms have emerged assisting in teacher-student interaction. Within a year, WFH has become a

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major part of people's life. This transformation has a huge impact on the lifestyle and behavior of general public. Some companies are now even planning to make WFH mandatory for some of its workforce. Keeping this objective in mind, we aim to analyse the impact of WFH and how the general public perceives it.

1.1. Literature review

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

A paper by Ramos, J.P., & Prasetyo, Y.T. (September 27-29, 2020). The Impact of Work-Home Arrangement on the Productivity of Employees during COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach have analysed the changes in productivity of employees under the WFH arrangement. The study talks about the interrelationship between job satisfaction,¹ job performance, commuting satisfaction, job stress and productivity using Structural Equation Modeling. They concluded by saying that 'Job performance' decreases 'Productivity' while 'Job Satisfaction' increases it and 'Job Satisfaction' and 'Job Performance' are inversely related.

The research paper by Raju, S.², & Kumar, V.K. (September 2020). Quality of life of women working from home in COVID-19 lockdown: a questionnaire survey showed the impact on physical and psychological health and social relationships done by cross-sectional, structured closed questionnaire survey. They concluded by saying that lockdown made women more active, mobile and that they balanced their official work along with family setup.

Another Italian research paper by Renzo,³ L.D.; Gualtieri, P.⁴ Pivari, F.; Soldati, L.; Attina, A.; Cinelli, G.; Leggeri, C.; Caparello, G.; Barrea, L.; Scerbo, F.; Esposito, E.; & Lorenzo, A.D. (08 June 2020). Eating Habits and lifestyle changes during COVID-19 lockdown: An Italian Survey, with a total of 3533 respondents found that the perception of weight gain was observed in 48.6% of the population; 3.3% of smokers decided to quit smoking; a slight increased physical activity has been reported in 38.3% of respondents; the population group aged 18–30 years resulted in having a higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet when compared to the younger and the elderly population; 15% of respondents turned to purchasing organic fruits and vegetables, especially in the North and Centre of Italy, where BMI values were lower.

The research paper 'Impact of work from home on employee well-being during pandemic' by Dr. Benita. S.⁵ Monica and Ms. Ghayathri N focused on the impact on employee well-being due to WFH for the IT industry using the Multiple Linear Regression Equation concluded that the work demand has more influence on well-being of employees than home demand, work interfere family, family interfere work. The company can reduce the workload for

their employees and that the work demand has a greater influence on the well-being of the employees.

Working from home has increased the burden on the working women significantly according to BhattacharjeeS.⁶ in her research paperwork from home as an alternative to daily commuting for working women and in the research paper by Dubey, A.⁷, & Tripathi, S. (28 April 2020). Analysing the Sentiments towards Work-From-Home Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic, around 73% had a positive sentiment towards WFH.

2. Materials and Methods

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

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

3. Results

3.1. How do people wish to continue?

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

3.2. How different age groups perceive work from home?

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

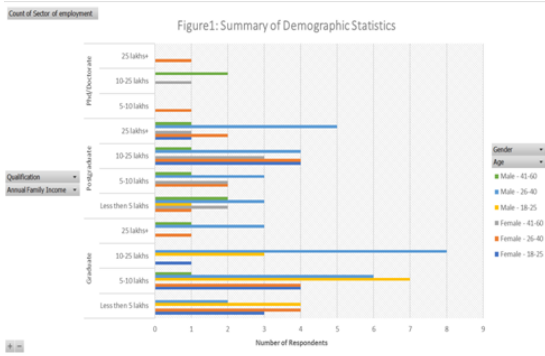


Fig. 1: Summary of demograohic statistics

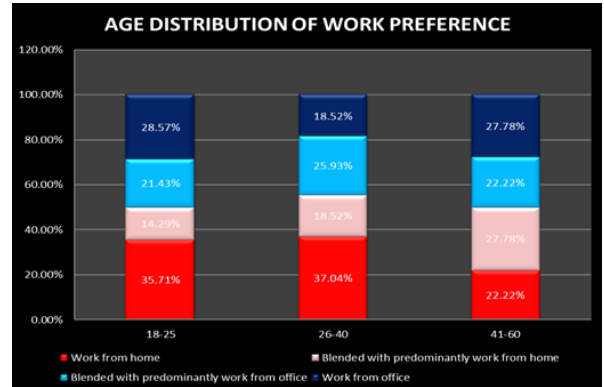


Fig. 4: Differences in perception towards WFH by different age groups

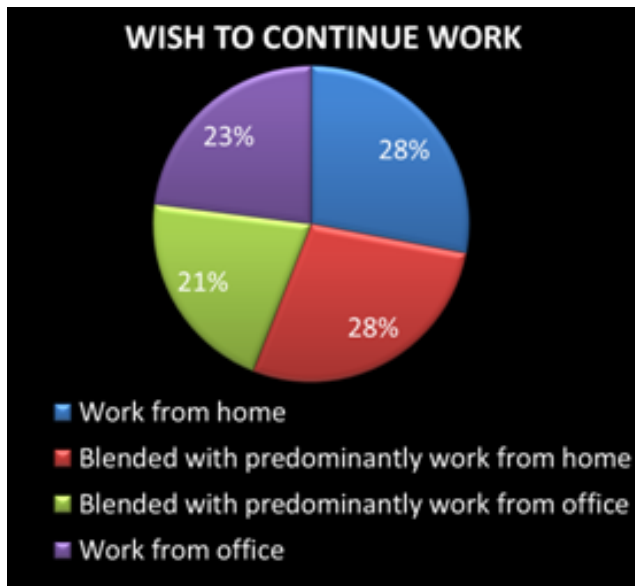


Fig. 2: Wish to continue work

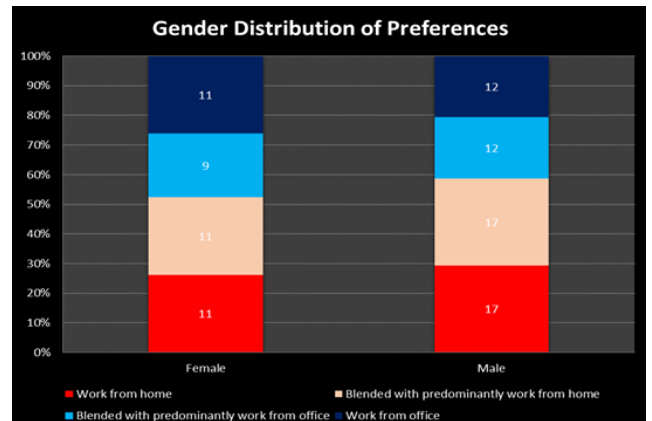


Fig. 5: Differences in perception towards WFH by different gender

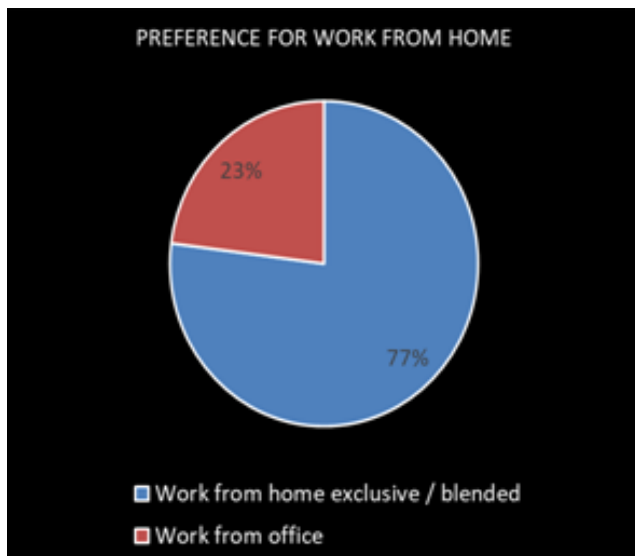


Fig. 3: Preference for work from home

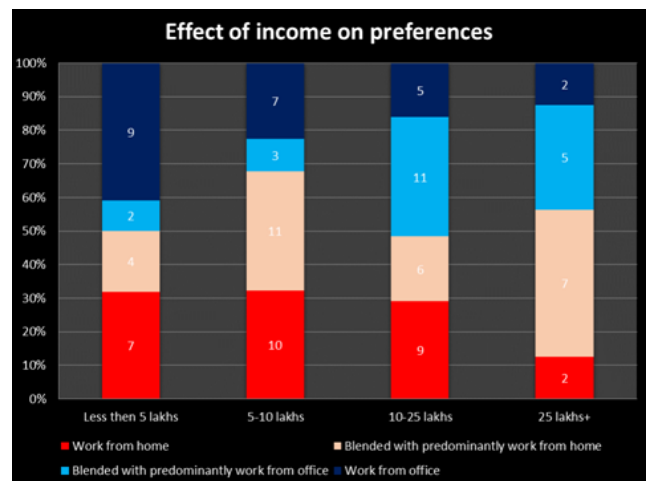


Fig. 6: Differences in perception towards WFH with different income levels

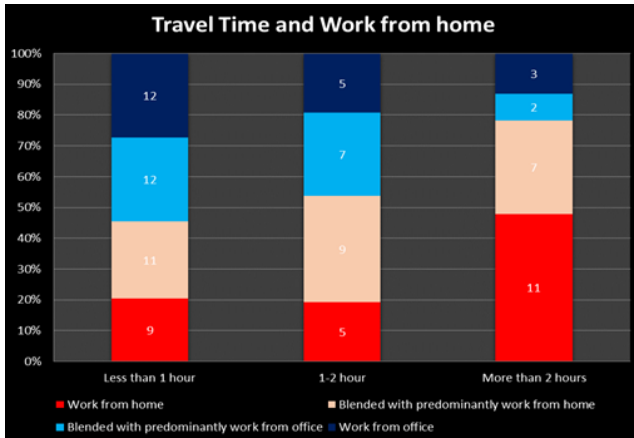


Fig. 7: Relation between travel time and work from home

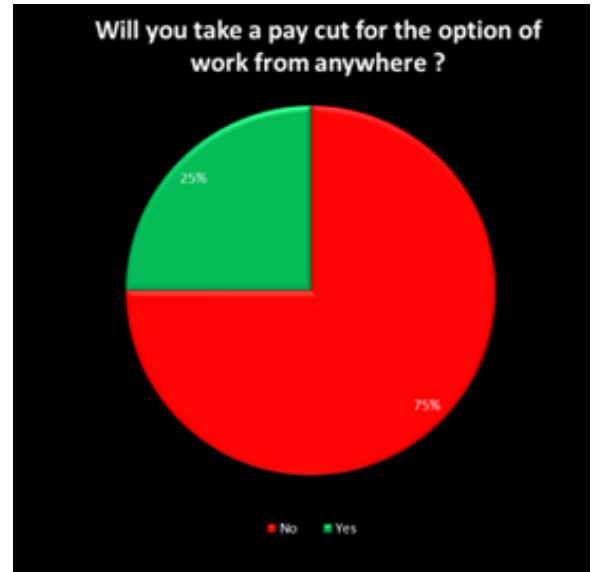


Fig. 10: Will you take a pay cut for the option of work from anywhere?

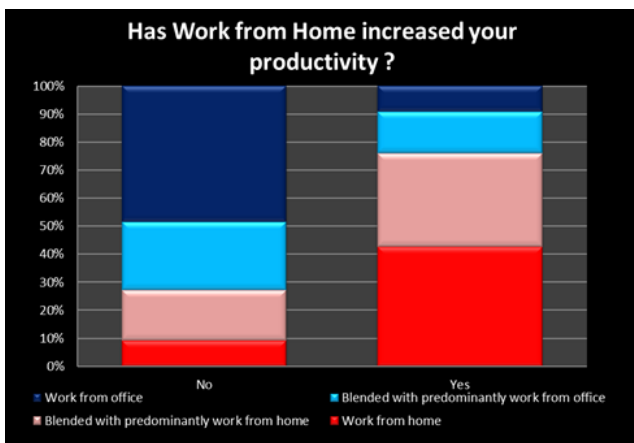


Fig. 8: Productivity and preference of work

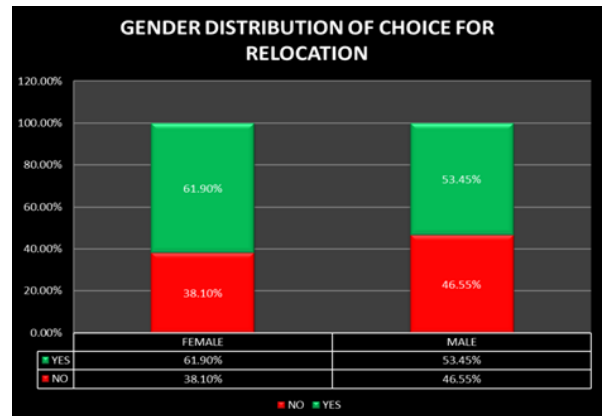


Fig. 11: Gender specific preferences To wards relocation

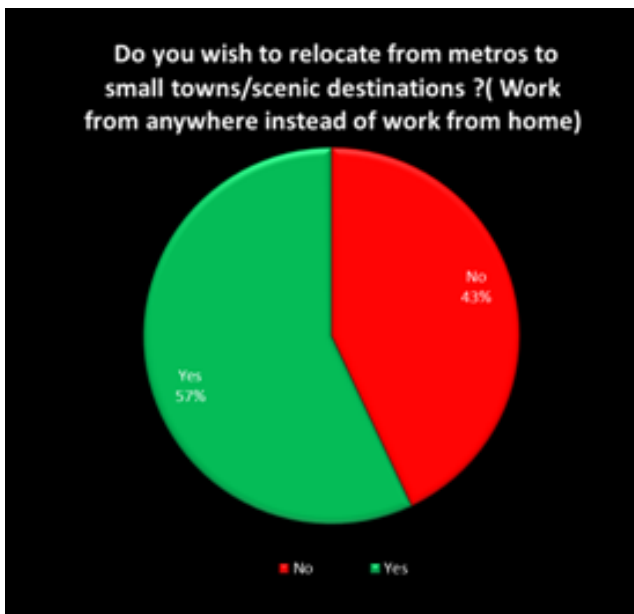


Fig. 9: Do you wish to relocate from metros to small towns/scenic destination? (Work from anywhere instead of work from home)

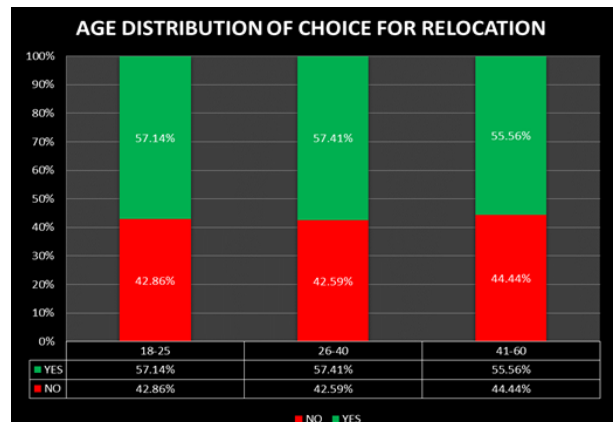


Fig. 12: Relocation and age groups

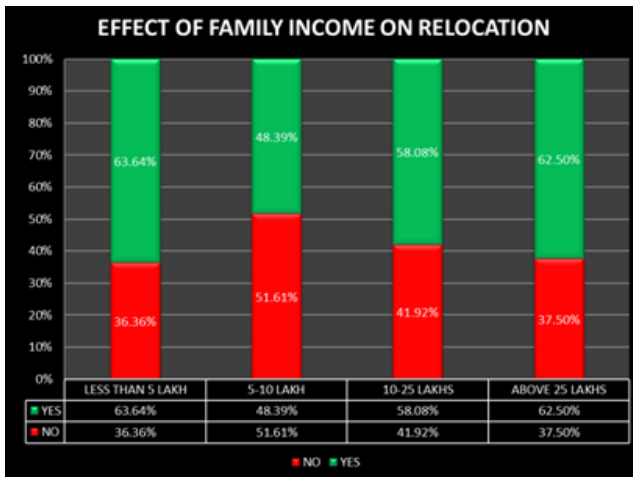


Fig. 13: Relocation and income levels

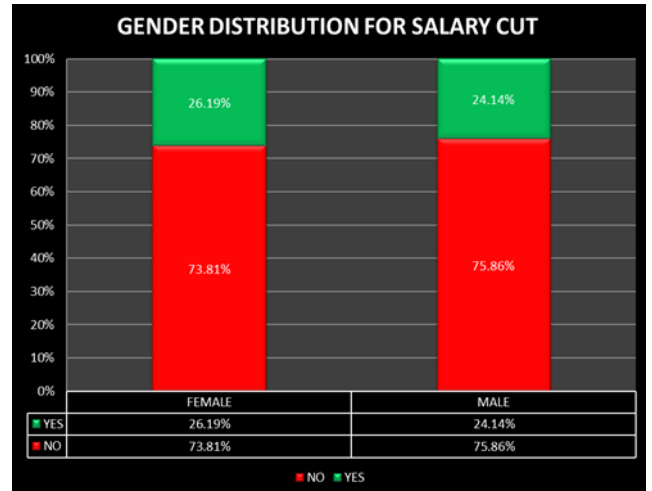


Fig. 16: Pay cut and gender

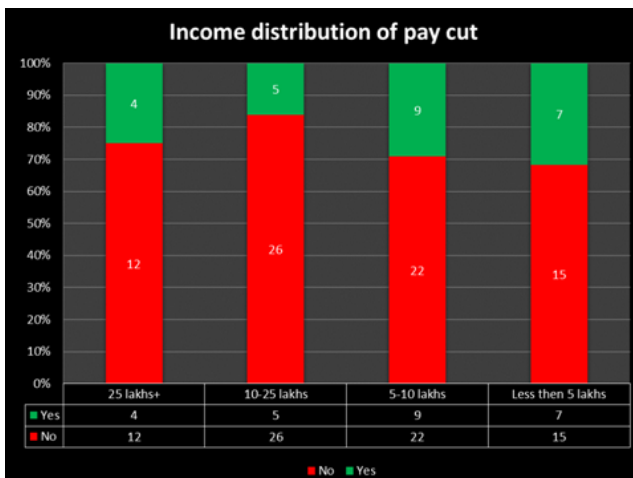


Fig. 14: Pay cut and income levels

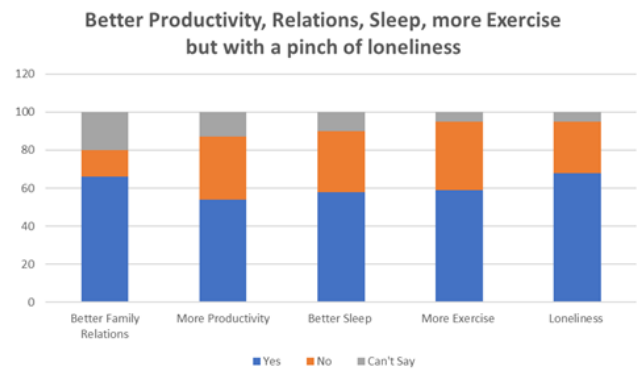


Fig. 17: Psycho-social impacts

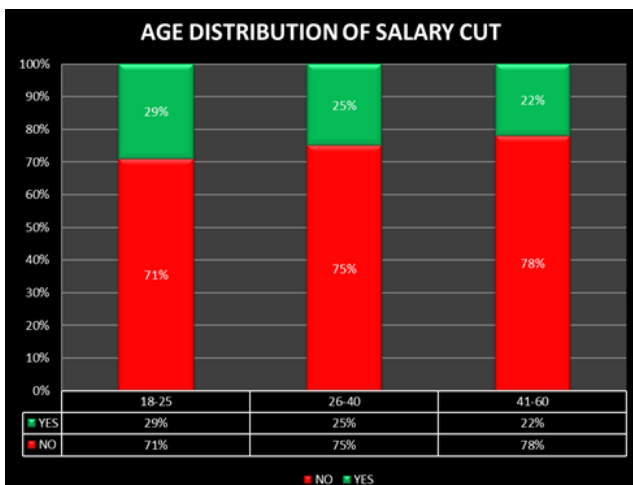


Fig. 15: Pay cut and age groups

3. 41-60 are least willing to resort to only work from home

3.3. How different gender perceive work from home?

Males are more likely to prefer work from home than females.

3.4. How people with different income levels perceive work from home?

The preference for hybrid mode goes up phenomenally with increase in income. It's clearly visible from Figure 6 that as we move from the income level of less than 5 lakhs to income level of 25 lakhs and above there is a substantial increase in the preference towards the hybrid model i.e., the percentage of people preferring the blended mode of predominantly WFH and predominantly WFO increases.

3.5. What is the relationship between travel time and preference for work from home?

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

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

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

3.7. Response towards relocation and pay cut

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

3.8. Relocation and gender specific preferences

Women are more willing to relocate as compared to men.

3.9. Relocation and age groups

Majority of all age groups are willing to relocate.

3.10. Relocation and income levels

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

3.11. Pay cut and income levels

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

3.12. Pay cut and age groups

Majority of the respondents irrespective of the age groups are unwilling to take a pay cut. However, the youth is most

willing out of the other age groups to take pay cut for work from home flexibility, that is about 29%.

3.13. Pay cut and gender

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

3.14. Psycho-social impacts

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

4. Conclusion

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

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

Table 1: Summary of responses

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

	No	36	36
	Cant say	5	5
Work from home increased loneliness and missing social gathering, meetings	Yes	68	68
	No	27	27
	Cant say	5	5
Impact on savings	Increased	63	63
	Decreased	11	11
	No Change	26	26
Relocation from metros to small towns/scenic destinations (Work from anywhere instead of work from home)	Yes	57	57
	No	43	43
Will you take a pay cut for the option of work from anywhere	Yes	25	25
	No	75	75

Table 2: Demographic statistics

	18-25 Female	26-40 Female	41-60 Female	Male 18-25	Male 26-40	Male 41-60	Grand Total
Graduate	8	9		14	19	2	
Less than 5 lakhs	3	4		4	2		13
5-10 lakhs	4	4		7	6	1	22
10-25 lakhs	1			3	8		12
25 lakhs+		1			3	1	5
Postgraduate	5	9	8	1	15	5	
Less than 5 lakhs		1	2	1	3	2	9
5-10 lakhs		2	2		3	1	8
10-25 lakhs	4	4	3		4	1	16
25 lakhs+	1	2	1		5	1	10
Phd/Doctorate		2	1			2	
5-10 lakhs		1					1
10-25 lakhs			1			2	3
25 lakhs+		1					1
(blank)							
(blank)							
Grand Total	13	20	9	15	34	9	

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

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

Table 4: Gender and preference for work from home

Gender	Work from home	Blended with predominantly work from home	Blended with predominantly work from office	Work from office	Total
Female	26.19%	26.19%	21.43%	26.19%	100%
Male	29.31%	29.31%	20.69%	20.69%	100%

Table 5: Income levels and preference for work from home

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

Table 6: Travel time and preference for work from home

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

Table 7: Productivity and preference for work from home

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

Table 8: Gender and relocation

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

Table 9: Age and relocation

Age groups	No	Yes
18-25 Yrs.	42.86%	57.14%
26-40 Yrs.	42.59%	57.41%
41-60 Yrs.	44.44%	55.56%
Grand Total	43.00%	57.00%

Table 10: Income and relocation

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

Table 11: Pay cut and income levels

Income levels	No	Yes	Grand Total
10-25 lakhs	83.87%	16.13%	100.00%
25 lakhs+	75.00%	25.00%	100.00%
5-10 lakhs	70.97%	29.03%	100.00%
Less than 5 lakhs	68.18%	31.82%	100.00%
Grand Total	75.00%	25.00%	100.00%

Table 12: Pay cut and age groups

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

Table 13: Payout and gender

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

Table 14: Work from home and psycho-social indicators

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

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

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

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

4.1. Limitations

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

4.2. Future prospects

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

5. Source of Funding

None.

6. Conflict of Interest

None.

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