

Impact of “Work from Home” on “Work-Life Balance” of Indian Workforce

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Abstract

Due to Covid –19 pandemic, people in India as well as all over the globe were suggested to stay at home to avoid the unfold of the Corona Virus. As a result, businesses were forced to work from home which created heaps of challenges in the initial stage, however as things tend to cool down, we saw a hike in the number of firms giving work from home opportunities to staff that conjointly affected the work-life balance of staff. This paper aims to view the situation from the perspective of employees in India and the way their work-life balance is affected when performing duties from home. To identify if employees were able to balance their life in conjunction with work, a survey was conducted with 46 respondents with numerous parameters that showed how staff were able to save time and endowed in alternative activities of life whereas there have been negative impacts conjointly which resulted in personal health deterioration. Considering the impacts, a hybrid model was agreed to be acceptable by a good majority of respondents which incorporates a mix of both working from home and working from an office.

Keywords: Covid –19 Pandemic, Work from Home, Work Life Balance

Objectives

1. To understand how the “Work from Home” environment has helped in having a work-life balance using various factors affecting day to day life.
2. To identify how the life of employees changed after “Working from home”.

Introduction

Imagine, how life would be if there would be no traffic, no people on road, restrictions on having a handshake with your friend, it might sound like a fictional movie but that is what happened when mankind was exposed to Corona Virus jointly referred to as SARS-CoV-2 which affected worldwide in early 2020. A Natural Hazard may not have that much huge impact when compared to this small virus which relatively took thousands of lives across the globe. In these unprecedented times, there was a gigantic challenge among countries on how to limit the spread of the virus, and after due diligence WHO issued an advisory suggesting that isolation is the best that we can do and as a result, the restriction was imposed in the form of lockdown.

Theoretically, lockdown may appear so simple on plain paper, but it had a drastic impact on the survival of human existence. One of the major impacts was seen on business as well. Millions of people across the globe travel to work from their homes however after lockdown restrictions were put in place, no one was allowed to step out of their house. To survive in the market and for smooth facilitation of business, firms and industries had to adapt to the newer working environments such as Working from Home or Remote Location (away from actual workplace). Over a year and a half has passed and work from home has now become a “New Normal” (Manjula, 2021) and through this transition phase, the companies had the challenge to ensure that the mental health and work-life balance of an employee are sustained. To understand how work from home has affected work-life balance and to fill the prevailing gap, we focused majorly on basic parameters which in reality affect our life directly such as sleep, savings, physical health, eating habits, etc. This study limits its boundaries to the Indian workforce and understands how Work from home has made an impact on the work-life balance of employees.

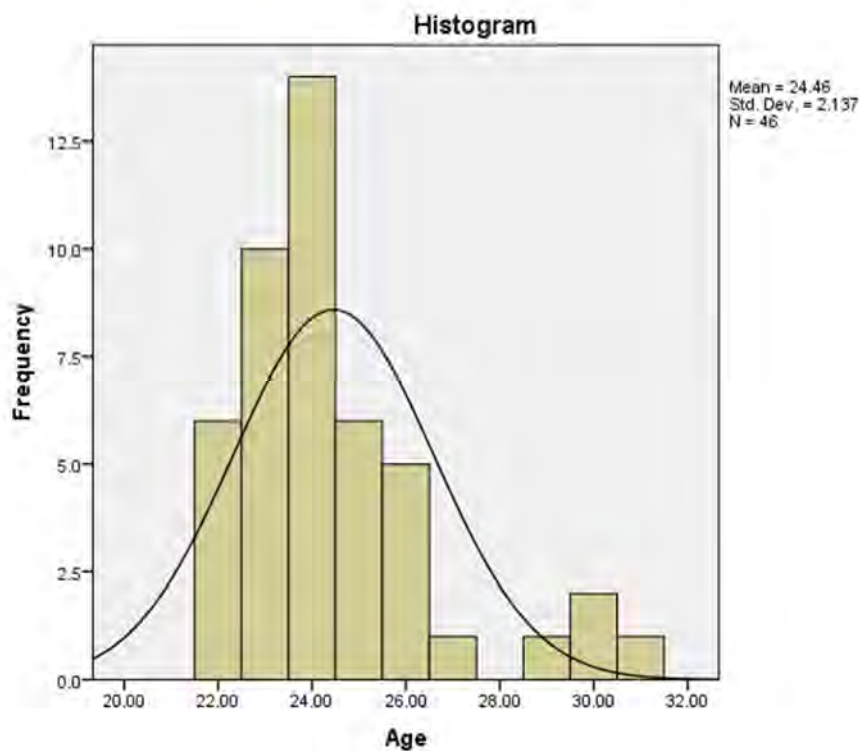
Methods

(a)Participants:

The study was conducted through a survey among 46 participants which may appear to be less, however (Robin Hill, 1998) suggested that a good amount of substantial information will be missed if we focused on a large sample size always. The time frame for conducting the study was July 21, 2021, to July 29, 2021. It is a descriptive study. Primary data was collected through questionnaires during which participants were asked regarding changes in activities and

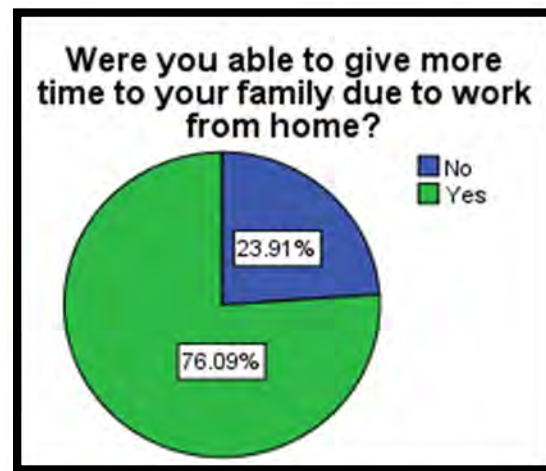
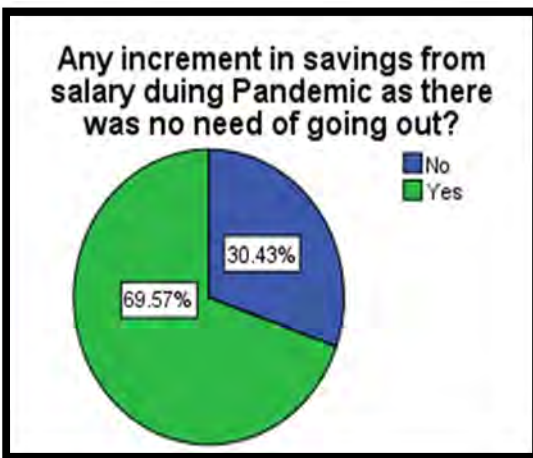
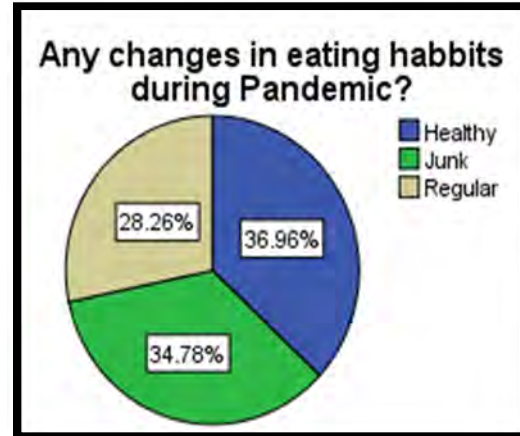
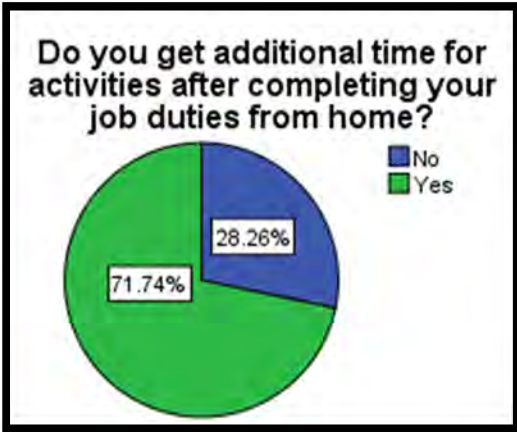
behaviors after working from home since the study was conducted with Snowball sampling there was a substantial distinction between the magnitude relation of Men and women for this survey. 31 Females and 15 Male employees were part of this survey. Respondents were engaged in different industries such as Consulting firms, Mortgage businesses, Professional services, IT firms, E-Commerce platforms, the Education sector, etc. which gives us an approximation of covering a wide variety of businesses.

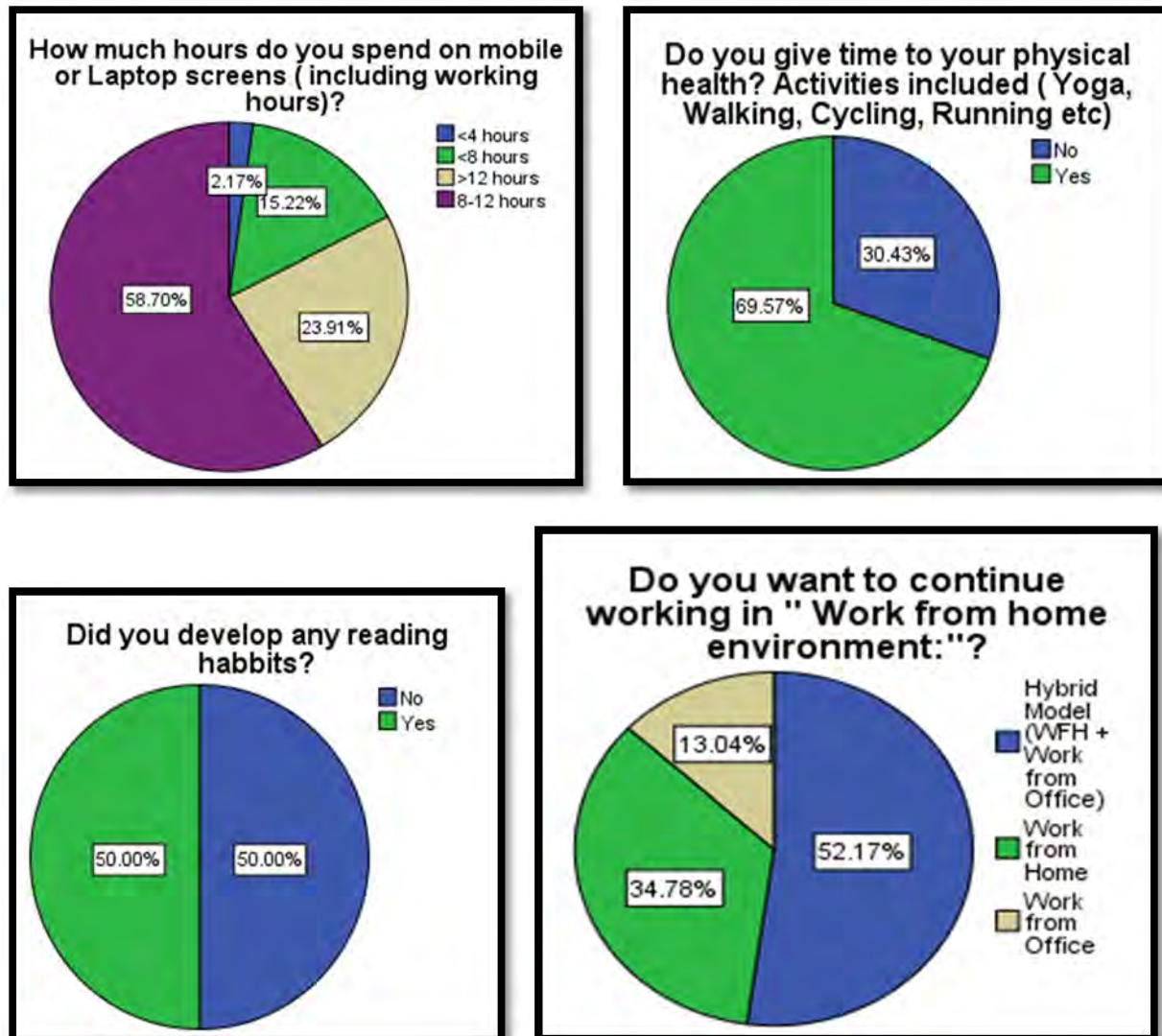
(b)Tools & Techniques: Most of the variables taken into consideration were not numerical in nature hence it was decided to interpret the result through frequencies and percentages. For effective presentation, pivot charts and histograms were used to represent the data. The charts were created using SPSS. The mean age of the group is found to be 24.46 with a Standard deviation of 2.137



Results and Findings

In order to analyze the data, pivot tables were used. Certain findings are as follows:





(a) Impact of saving time:

Most of the participants (71.74%) got the time for added activities when finishing their regular work from home that showed the direct impact in alternative activities like developing their hobbies or engaged on hobbies that they were not able to do earlier, though it was not possible to indicate hobbies of every individual, few of them are listed which is however not restricted to: Painting, Dancing, Cooking, etc. Few participants also listed that they were able to give time to their studies and few of them centered on building their channel on YouTube. When asked about reading habits (such as newspapers, articles, books) the result came out balanced i.e., 50% on both sides. Although the response was not in favor of any specific aspect, it is noticeable that people developed habits of reading which can be assumed to be the impact of saving time from

working from home. Having good family time is very important and 76.09% of respondents were now able to give time to their families.

(b) Personal Health:

The on-screen time (i.e., using Laptop or mobile) of the participants was found to be in between 8-12 hours for 58.70% of participants however there was a significant portion of other participants having an on-screen time of more than 12 hours (23.91%). Another variable that can be looked at in line with the usage of digital devices is the quantity of sleep that the participants were having 58.70% of participants admitted that they sleep less than 8 hours which might flow from long hours of depending on digital devices. (Sajul Ramachandran, et. al, 2021) indicated that due to excessive usage of digital devices health complications like eye pain, headache, back pain, etc. occur at such young age which is generally found in old age people.

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(c)Way forward:

69.57% also confirmed that they were able to save more due to the pandemic as there was no need of going out which is indicative that the traveling expenses and other related expenses, were not incurred and resulted in savings which might be one of the reasons including several others that were discussed earlier that when asked about how you would like to work in future 52.17% participants agreed for a Hybrid Model (Work from Home + Work from Office) and 34.78% were in favor of Work from Home while only 13.04% wanted to Work from Office.

(d) Comments from Participants:**Some Positive Random Comments from Respondents:**

1. " Working from home was 100 % helpful for getting the good results for my health as before it in the office place I was unable to get time for my fitness & health but currently, the condition is far better."
2. "Work from home has been good for me so far since I am a new mother and I can see my child during work."
3. "My work from home experience is good... I am earning more as compare earlier & in my comfort zone and I have spent more time with my lovely family."
4. "Would love to continue with work from home as I'm able to maintain a work-life balance!"
5. "Experience from WFH is great because I am giving time to my family and friends, and I have become more responsible towards my work and health as well and nowadays more focusing on health meals"

Some Neutral Random Comments from Respondents:

1. " WFH has helped in a lot of ways to maintain the balance now we can spend more time with family we are eating healthy homemade foods, but it has completely made social life zero that is somewhere not that good so a hybrid model is best that will balance the social life as well as work-life balance"
2. It is going great but if I talk about learning it's hard in WFH and consistency in work is also hard because there were several distractions.
3. "It was good overall. Sometimes feels frustrating."
4. "Work from home helped me realize that there are many works to be done apart of office and I should try to make a balance between professional and my personal life"
5. "I've got more time to explore myself and spend it with family however it got me away from friends and social life.
6. "It's good but exhausting if one lives with their parents.

Some Criticizing Random comments from Respondents:

- 1."Stringent working hours have taken a toll on mental and physical health a lot. It was much easier while we were working from the office as the work was only defined inside the four walls. Now there's no boundary."
2. "The concept is good but it has cons also as there is no balance between professional and personal life."

Conclusion and Discussion

Work from Home has now become an integral part of life after the Covid –19 pandemic. While there were positive impacts such as increment in savings, ability to give their family, having time to focus on Physical health, etc. there were noticeable negative impacts as well which were in form of less sleeping hours, more on-screen time which can affect the health adversely of the respondents if not given due care in the right time. It is pretty much clear that the seed of work from home which was germinated in early 2020 has taken a surge and people want to continue the trend. Several reasons for working at home include autonomy, flexibility, and increased productivity. It is significant for businesses to understand these factors in designing jobs that can be performed within a home setting. (Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1992) To maintain a work-life balance majority of the participants were in favor of a hybrid model which can give the advantage of maintaining a work-life balance and still not completely removing work from the Office environment hence in the future we may see companies also adopting such hybrid models.

Limitations

1. Due to certain restrictions, we were not able to collect a large sample of data, however, for future reference, larger sample size can be collected and quantitative testing and tools can also be applied.
2. Also, the research data can be collected for a certain industry and limiting the geographical boundaries. The variation in gender differences can also be addressed when collecting the data for the study in the future.
3. The impact on different variables such as demographics, socio-economical and psychological, etc. can also be studied.

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