

Work from Home: Boon or Bane to Employees?

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ABSTRACT

The study is focused on the opinions of IT employees on various aspects of Work from home. The study is conducted using original data collected from 120 respondents via Google Forms which was gathered from employees of IT hub Technopark, Trivandrum City, Kerala, India. Employees' perspectives are investigated based on their increased expenditures, work stress, and monetary cuts as a result of the pandemic. Employee replies have an above-average mean score, indicating a negative attitude toward work from home in all areas of research, including Employee Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Psychological and Physiological Issues, Work Performance, and Job Security and Stability. Employee expenses have increased as a result of working from home, including electricity bills, internet charges, consumables, and equipment maintenance. As a result of the pandemic, financial sacrifices were imposed. Increased targets, work hours, meetings outside of business hours, and other factors have put a pressure on a large number of employees. Lack of interaction with co-workers has resulted in psychological issues, and many employees are suffering from obesity and lifestyle diseases as a result of their work schedule. The safety of one's job has often been a source of concern.

Keywords: Work from home(WFH), IT employees, Work stress, Work performance, Psychological issues

Introduction

Covid 19 Pandemic has pressured man to seek alternatives in all walks of life, be it, economic or non-economic in nature. Several industries that thrived before the pandemic slackened and many industries have made a tremendous growth during the pandemic either by its adaptability or the pandemic itself helping them. E

Commerce, Information Technology, Over the Top Platforms, Online Content Creators, etc. picked up their pace while Transportation Industry, Theatres, shopping malls, Restaurants, etc. had crashed their business. Many of the business improvised to keep up with the scenario while those businesses that couldn't became dormant since the pandemic started its chaos. Work from home became the new normal.

According WHO (2020), Working from home or remote working permits employees to safely stay at home and work, obeying to the recommendation of social distancing issued by

Public Health agencies across the globe. IT sector, like almost all other sectors, saw a boom in this period as their activities could be done using internet facilities. Almost all of the IT jobs could be converted into Work from Home category, which not only helped IT based organizations to continue with their work but also reduce the cost drastically. Most of the employees even worked overtime to reduce their boredom which also increased the productivity of that organizations. Rose and Brown (2021) found out that the South Korean managers are more inclined towards doing the work from home although WFH was forcefully adopted during the pandemic. But the Work from Home from Employees point of view was not evidently visible. This study helps to shed light on the Work from Home aspect from Employee point of view considering various aspects of it. Many researchers agree that the younger people are more adaptable than the older generation. But Raišienė et.al (2021) contributed that, millennial men faced

more problem in their career development than millennial women or employees from any other generation, indicating the importance of providing feedback to the younger workers. The organizations had to redesign the work culture to ensure the safety and productivity of employees. Developing commitment and team spirit is a difficult task especially for the new recruitments. The adaptation and transition require close attention. Proper and active communication of policy changes, compensation for infrastructure etc., must be looked into. Giving the required training, ensuring data security and compensation to the employees are some of the changes to be done. The management must trust the employees with their job. Although working within the comfort of one's home might appear soothing, it is quite challenging in the long run. The line between personal life and work life fades, because the employees could be accessed anytime and the meetings could go on beyond the time limit. This could affect mental and physical health. Mohanty (2021) insinuated the importance of providing emotional support and counselling facilities to the employees to ensure efficiency and regularity which could be caused by the family situations. There is even an increased the risk of domestic violence against women in a number of different ways (Noman et.al 2020).

The employees' point of view is studied on the basis of their increased expenditures, work stress, monetary cuts due to pandemic, psychological and physiological problems, Hindrances of poor connections, electric disruptions and device malfunctions, Concerns about Job security etc. are studied in detail to draw required information. The study is conducted with the help of primary data collected via google forms from 120 respondents from different age category, area of work, educational qualification, and years of experience. Data was collected from IT employees of Trivandrum City, Kerala, India.

Literature Review

(Baruch, 2000) states that teleworking improves the performance of employees as they can work without any interruptions.

(Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020) on studying the continuing experience of the employer and employees states that even though it seems the employees are satisfied at first instance it was later revealed from the study that there is a

dissatisfaction among them due to lack of policies to conduct effective Work from Home. The employees do like the WFH but not in its current form.

(Dingel & Neiman, 2020) states that an employee's productivity may considerably be affected while working at home than working at a specified workplace. Lower income economies have fewer jobs that could be done from home.

(Caulfield, 2015) states that WFH reduces travel time and cost of travel substantially. People belonging to the areas where there is a poor transportation facility has an affinity towards work from home.

(Liang et al., 2018) states that it is better for telecommunication sector employees to work from home as they require neither team work nor face to face interaction, moreover quantity and quality of work can easily be quantified and evaluated. The study group of call center employees showed more satisfaction, performance and preference to WFH.

(Grant et al., 2019) states that there exists a relationship between e-working and employees social and physiological well-being. The study also suggested a scale for measuring the performance of workers e-working.

Statement of the problem

Work-from-home is thought to be a win-win situation for both employers and employees. Employers will be able to choose from a variety of talents while also lowering operational costs. Employees, but from the other hand, seek flexibility and a healthy work-life balance. More governmental and private organizations are allowing employees to work from home as a convenient option. All through during Covid-19 pandemic, working from home has become more prominent, as

many countries use a physical separation technique to avoid the disease outbreak. As a result, for some employees, working from home seems to have become their only option. The challenges of working from home are many, given the variety of situations from which the employees may come from. It is difficult to maintain professionalism when you are with family and most of the people would not be equipped for setting up an office space in their home. So, the present study focused on whether WFH is a boon or bane based on of their increased expenditures, work stress,

monetary cuts due to pandemic, psychological and physiological problems, Hindrances of poor connections, electric disruptions and device malfunctions, Concerns about Job security etc.

Scope of the study

The present study is about the attitude of IT employees towards work from home and the selection of samples were made from among the IT employees from Technopark Campus, Trivandrum city where there is a fair share of IT employee population. The employees currently working on Work from Home only has been considered for the purpose of the study. The study also analyses the factors affecting determining work from home based a gift or a curse based on employee expenses, work stress, financial cuts, psychological and physiological problems, job security & Stability.

Objective of the study

1. Analyze and Evaluate Whether Work from Home a Boon or a Bane to employees

Hypotheses

I. H0: Opinion regarding statements on Employees Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Psychological & Physiological Problems, Performance of Work from Home and Job Security & Stability are equal to average.

II. H0: There is no significant difference between gender and factors determining Work from home a boon or bane.

III. H0: There is no significant difference between Working Shifts and factors determining Work from home a boon or bane.

The present study is designed as a descriptive study. The data were purely collected from primary sources. The study is done with the help of Primary data collected via Questionnaire using google forms from 120 employees of IT sector in

Technopark campus, currently performing Work from Home. The sampling technique adopted for the study was Convenient sampling. The study population constitutes the total IT employees working presently in Technopark, Thiruvananthpuram. A period of 3 months from January 2022 to March 2022 was used for collecting primary data from the IT employees. The collected data is analyzed using One sample t-test and Independent Sample t-test.

Analysis and Discussion

Hypothesis I

H0: Opinion regarding statements on Employees Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Psychological & Physiological Problems, Performance of Work from Home and Job Security & Stability are equal to average.

Statements on Employees Expenses are Increase in electricity bills (ES1), Internet bills (ES2), Stationary Consumption (ES3) and Equipment maintenance (ES4)

Statements on Work Stress are Increase in working hrs (WS1), Raised Targets (WS2), Meetings outside working timeframe (WS3) and Increased holiday working (WS4)

Statements on Financial Cuts are Decrease in basic salary (FC1), Reduced incentives (FC2), Employer contribution to Employee Funds (FC3), Reduction in perquisites (FC4), Freeze on Promotion and Salary hikes (FC5)

Methodology

WS3	3.9	1.032	41.387	<0.001**
WS4	3.53	1.028	37.635	<0.001**
FC1	2.95	1.353	23.892	<0.001**
FC2	3.23	1.262	28.07	<0.001**
FC3	3	1.257	26.146	<0.001**
FC4	2.78	1.323	23.042	<0.001**

FC5	3.5	1.223	31.349	<0.001**
PPP1	4.02	1.061	41.47	<0.001**
PPP2	3.92	1.089	39.393	<0.001**
PPP3	3.77	1.09	37.844	<0.001**
PPP4	3.93	1.128	38.191	<0.001**
PPP5	2.9	1.405	22.616	<0.001**
PW1	4.3	0.846	55.669	<0.001**
PW2	4.35	0.795	59.904	<0.001**
PW3	4.2	0.894	51.439	<0.001**
JSS1	3.55	0.977	39.784	<0.001**
JSS2	3.72	0.862	47.247	<0.001**
JSS3	3.72	0.9	45.243	<0.001**

Statements on Psychological & Physiological Problems are stress due to non interaction with co-workers (PPP1), Increase in Body weight (PPP2), Increase in life style diseases (PPP3), Disruption in sleep pattern (PPP4), Increase in use of intoxicating substances (PPP5)

Statements on Performance of Work from Home are Power Failure (PW1), Connectivity Issues (PW2), Device Failures (PW3) Statements of Job Security & Stability are Chance of Layoff (JSS1), Early windup of existing projects (JSS2), Cancellation of upcoming projects (JSS3) (The Average value for all statements is equal to 3)

Table 1: t-test for specified values of all statements of Factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane

Factors	Mean	SD	t value	p-value
EE1	4.2	0.836	55.024	<0.001**
EE2	4.13	0.961	47.123	<0.001**
EE3	3.55	1.06	36.688	<0.001**
EE4	3.78	1.117	37.117	<0.001**
WS1	4.15	0.816	55.69	<0.001**

WS2 3.87 1.045 40.546 <0.001**

Note: ** Denotes 1 % significance level
Here null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level since the p value is less than 0.01%. The one-sample t- test suggests that the opinion regarding statements on Employee Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Psychological & Physiological Problems, Performance of Work from Home and Job Security & Stability are not

equal to average, i.e, 3. Depending on the mean score it is understood that the opinion regarding all the statements of are above average.

Hypothesis II

H0: There is no significant difference between gender and Factors determining whether Work from Home a boon or bane

Table 2. t-test for significant difference between gender and Factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane

Factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane	Male	Female	t	P
Employee Expenses	16.91 (2.067)	14.95 (3.354)	3.51	<0.001**
Work Stress	16.32 (2.577)	14.95 (3.224)	2.408	0.018*
Financial Cuts	17.32 (5.244)	14.39 (5.162)	2.977	0.004**
Psychological and physiological problems	19.45 (4.353)	18.00 (4.822)	1.649	0.102
Performance of work	13.14 (1.733)	12.68 (2.311)	1.127	0.262
Job Security and Stability	11.73 (2.117)	10.55 (2.187)	2.868	0.005**
Overall	94.86 (14.346)	85.53 (14.857)	3.359	<0.001**

Notes: 1. ** Denotes 1 % significance level

2. *Denotes 5% significance level

3. The figure inside the bracket denotes Standard Deviation

All:** The null hypothesis is rejected at 1% significance level for Employee Expenses, Financial Cuts, Job Security and Stability and Overall, as the p- value is less than 0.01. This implies that male and female employees exhibit a highly significant difference between the above-mentioned factors determining whether work from home a boon or bane. Male employees exhibit a better mean score than female employees.

All*: Null hypothesis is rejected at less than 5% significance level for the factor Work Stress where the p-value is less than 0.05. Here there is a significant difference between male and female regarding Work Stress factor. Male employees exhibit a better mean score than female employees.

No*: Here the null hypothesis is accepted. This means there is no significant difference between male or female towards factors such as Physiological & Physiological Problems and Performance of work.

Hypothesis III

H0: There is no significant difference between Working Shifts and Factors Determining whether Work from Home is a Boon or a Bane

Table 3. t-test for significant difference between Working Shifts and Factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane

Factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane	Day Shift	Night Shift	t	p
Employee Expenses	15.46 (3.373)	16.07 (2.433)	1.039	0.301
Work Stress	15.47 (3.108)	15.41 (3.016)	0.091	0.928
Financial Cuts	15.43 (5.695)	15.54 (4.691)	0.109	0.913
Psychological and physiological problems	19.1 (5.143)	17.44 (3.464)	2.098	0.038*
Performance of work	13.16 (1.891)	12.24 (2.416)	2.295	0.023*
Job Security and Stability	11.14 (2.229)	10.68 (2.219)	1.065	0.285
Overall	89.76 (15.894)	87.39 (14.122)	0.804	0.406

Note: * Denotes Significance level at 5%

All*: Null hypothesis is rejected at less than 5% significance level for the factors Psychological and Physiological problems and Performance of Work where the p value is less than 0.05. Here there is a significant difference between Day Shift and Night Shift regarding Psychological and Physiological Problems and Performance

of Work factors. Day Shifters exhibit a better mean score than Night Shifters. **No*:** Here the null hypothesis is accepted. This means there is no significant difference between Day Shift or Night shift towards the factors such as Employee Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Job Security & Stability and Overall.

Findings

- The opinions of IT employees towards various statements of Work from Home are above the average level, which indicates a higher degree of agreement to the statements of all factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane, i.e., majority of the employees are not having a positive opinion towards work from home.

- Effects of Psychological Problems and Performance of work are similar to all employees irrespective of their gender, whereas all the other factors that determines employees' opinion towards Work from Home such as Employee Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts and Job Stability are Gender depended.

- On an overall level we can say there is no significant difference between opinions of

male and female employees towards factors Determining whether Work from Home a Boon or Bane.

- Work stress is more shift depended. Employees performing night shift and day shift are having a difference of opinion regarding psychological and physiological problems associated with work.
- Night shift workers have a higher mean score indicating a higher degree of work stress compared to Day shift workers.

Conclusion

The mean score of employee responses shows an above average level of response which indicates a negative approach of employees towards work from home in all aspects of study such as Employee Expenses, Work Stress, Financial Cuts, Psychological and Physiological Problems, Performance of Work and Job Security and Stability.

Shifting the work to home shifted the operational expenses from the employer to the employee, like electricity bills, internet charges, consumables, equipment maintenance etc. Added to this, the organizations have made financial cuts during the pandemic. Since there is no separation between workplace and home, they feel like they are working all the time. There is an increase in targets, work timing, meetings outside work schedule. This has caused job stress and affected their family time. Lack of interaction with co-workers have created psychological problems. Many employees have problems related to obesity and life style diseases due to work pattern. Job security has also been a question of concern. Many get laid off online.

While work from home could be a good thing, it could be bad in the long run, at least under the current circumstances. Necessary policy changes regarding working hours, compensation, adaptation of workers, training supporting them to build work-life balance so that they can work and live healthy can help the shift become sustainable.

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Questionnaire**

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

20-25 years

25-30 years

30-35 years

35-40 years

Above 40 years

3. Qualification:

Higher Secondary

Graduation

Post-Graduation

4. Area of work:

Finance & Audit

HR & Office Administration Software Development

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)/Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) Content Writing

Business Analysis Technical Support

5. Experience in Years:

Less than 5 Years

5-10Years

10-15Years

Above 15 Years

6. Working Shifts

Day Shift

Night Shift

7. Post Pandemic Work stress

Working hours have increased considerably	SA	A	N	D	SD
Target have been raised	SA	A	N	D	SD
Meetings outside working timeframes have been increased Holiday working has been increased	SA	A	N	D	SD
Target have been raised	SA	A	N	D	SD
Meetings outside working timeframes have been increased Holiday working has been increased	SA	A	N	D	SD

8. Post Pandemic Financial Cuts

Decrease in Basic Salary was made	SA	A	N	D	SD
Cut Short of Incentives	SA	A	N	D	SD
Reduction in Employer contribution to Employee funds	SA	A	N	D	SD
Perquisites like insurance, medical facilities, food coupons etc cut short A freeze on timely promotions and salary hikes	SA	A	N	D	SD
A freeze on timely promotions and salary hikes	SA	A	N	D	SD

9. Increase in Employee expenses

Bill for Internet facilities due to work from home	SA	A	N	D	SD
Increase in Stationary consumption (Printing paper, Pens, pencils etc)	SA	A	N	D	SD
Increase in Electronic equipment maintenance (Printer Ink or Cartridges, Laptop maintenance etc.)	SA	A	N	D	SD

10. Psychological and Physiological problems

Stress due to non-interaction with co-workers	SA	A	N	D	SD
Increase/Decrease body weight	SA	A	N	D	SD
Increase in life style diseases (Blood Pressure, Diabetics, Cholesterol etc)	SA	A	N	D	SD
Disruption in sleep pattern	SA	A	N	D	SD
Increase in use of intoxicating substances	SA	A	N	D	SD

11. Factors effecting performance of work from home

Adverse effect on work due to power failure	SA	A	N	D	SD
Adverse effect on work due to connectivity issues	SA	A	N	D	SD
Adverse effect on work due to device failures	SA	A	N	D	SD

12. Job security and stability

Increase in chances of lay off	SA	A	N	D	SD
Early wind up of existing projects	SA	A	N	D	SD
Cancellation of upcoming projects	SA	A	N	D	SD