

AN INVESTIGATION OF WORK FROM HOME IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

There comes a period in every employee's life when he fantasizes about escaping his boring nightmare of long office hours followed by traffic jams. Nonetheless, there are times when he believes his office brings out the best in him. Long working hours, a grumpy boss, and being stuck behind a line of cars working from home will save you time and lowering your expenses will save you even more time. Working from Home (WFH) is a controversial notion that is being investigated by an increasing number of companies throughout the world. The major aim of this study is to concentrate on and comprehend current perceptions on the concept of WFH. The study's objective is to find a correlation and assess its applicability in the Indian workplace. This research also discusses its benefits and drawbacks, as well as making some recommendations. The study's methodology comprises primary data from a survey sample of 50 employees of Davangere, who are working in IT industry, Bangalore. Information from similar research papers, case studies, and articles gathered from the internet, as well as newspapers and magazines, is included in the secondary data.

Keywords: WFH, office hours, Covid, IT Industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jack Nilles, a NASA engineer, coined the phrase "telecommuting" in 1973, which refers to the use of electronics to operate from a distance. In around 20 years, he said, the 'telecommuting' style of employment will become the standard and culture. Telecommuting has gained popularity in many areas of the world in recent decades, but its acceptance in India has remained limited. The majority of Indian businesses do not allow employees to work from home. However, the Pandemic Coronavirus and subsequent Lockdown pandemic have rendered remote working an inevitability. Several Indian organizations have urged and made mandatory their employees to Work - From - Home to socially isolate persons and reduce the spread of COVID -19 during the statewide lockdown.

Work-from-home is a concept of working in an organization where employees are not required to commute to a single, central location. Telecommuting, remote work, and telework are all terms for the same thing. WFH is a well-known idea that has changed over time. Employees can now work effectively and efficiently without having to sit at their desks in the office all day⁸ because to advances in technology and connectivity. "When we work from home, speed and quality are sometimes sacrificed," Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer stated. We need to be one Yahoo!, and that begins with physical proximity¹³". This decision sparked various debates over the work-from-home concept¹⁰. A move like this by a multinational firm like Yahoo highlights a number of flaws in the notion.

Work - From - Home is a flexible working system for organizations in the twenty-first century. The Corona Virus Pandemic (COVID-19) has forced the world's largest number of employees to work from home. Employees in most countries, including India, are encouraged to stay at home and avoid social engagements. COVID -19 had an impact on every sector of the economy. Work-from-home became more popular at this moment, as most companies across industries began to include work-from-home rules in their HR policies. Because the notion was new in India, the researchers attempted to discover Indian employees' preferences for working from home across various industries/sectors and demographic characteristics.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work-from-home, according to a Stanford University research, boosts productivity significantly. When compared to office workers, previous Harvard Business School research shown that WFH can reduce attrition by 50% while also reporting much higher job satisfaction. Mothers who have flexible work hours and the option to work from home earn more money. At the employee level, the possibility of working remotely is more appealing. According to a research done in 2017, the average employee is willing to accept an 8% pay cut in exchange for the ability to work from home. This demonstrates that employees place monetary value on the flexibility provided by a WFH policy.

Work and personal life are believed to be the most important aspects of a person's existence (Toyin et al., 2016). Certainly, combining career and personal life is one of the most difficult challenges that families face in today's world (Walker et al., 2008). The family can play an important role in promoting and supporting Employees's well-being and the social order. "Four Circles" represents the four areas of one's existence, according to Friedman (2014): "work, home, community, and self." To mimic the worth of each sphere, he suggests altering the proportions of the spheres. This helps to reproduce the "principles, aims, interests, actions, and results" cultivated in each sector, as well as whether they are complementary or antagonistic.

According to Grant et al. (2013), technology has had a huge impact on work, allowing Employees to work from home or from any location. Work has evolved into a "limitless activity" that may be done "anytime and anywhere," according to Kurland and Bailyn (1999). Toffler (1980) proposed that work flexibility can assist in achieving a work-family balance. It is thought-provoking for workforces to achieve a work/home balance, according to Kreiner et al. (2009) and Mayo et al. (2011). According to Grant-Vallone and Ensher (2011), a battle between work and home can lead to health issues as well as personal/family issues.

3. THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

The major aim of this study is to concentrate on and comprehend the present view of the notion of WFH among Davangere working class, in order to draw conclusions about its trend in the city. In addition, the research examines the impact of the concept of "work from home" on employees. The study's objective is to find a correlation and assess its applicability in the Indian workplace. The paper also discusses its advantages and disadvantages.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

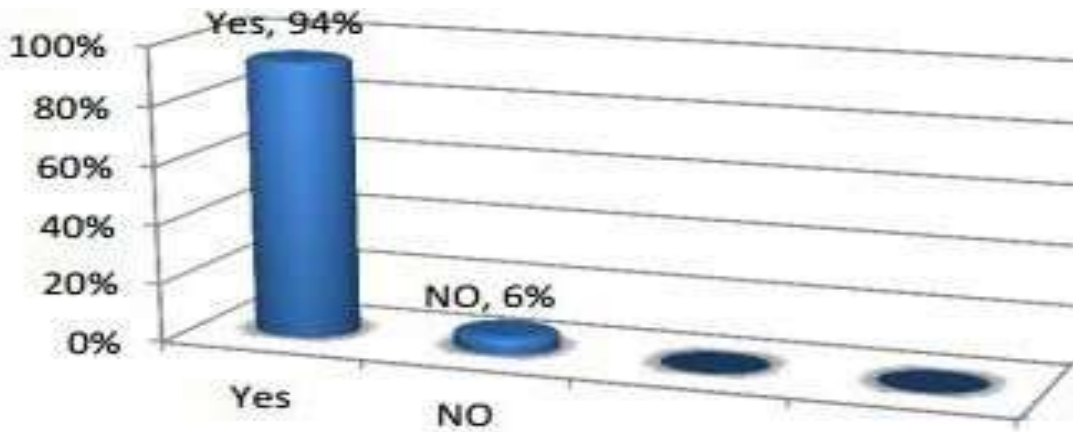
Sample, Data Collection Source, and Statistical Tool

The study is based on original data acquired from a random sample of 50 Davangere residents. A questionnaire and in-depth interviews with a sample of Employees from various income and age groups were used to collect data. Secondary data was also used, such as articles from books, journals, periodicals, research papers, newspapers, and reports.

5. DISCUSSION AND OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

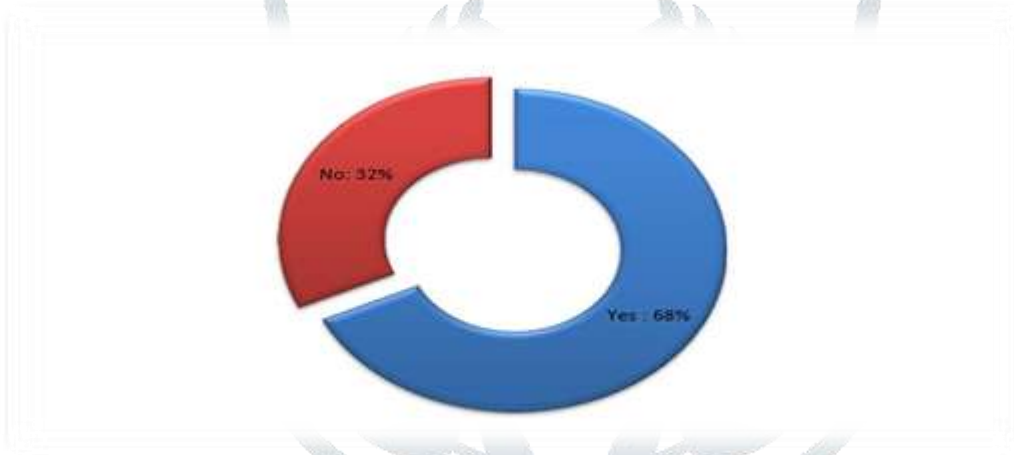
50 persons, mostly from the IT sector in Davangere, completed survey questionnaires with nine questions each. The following pie charts and histograms represent the question-by-question data obtained.

Figure 1. Employees Awareness towards the concept "Working from Home"



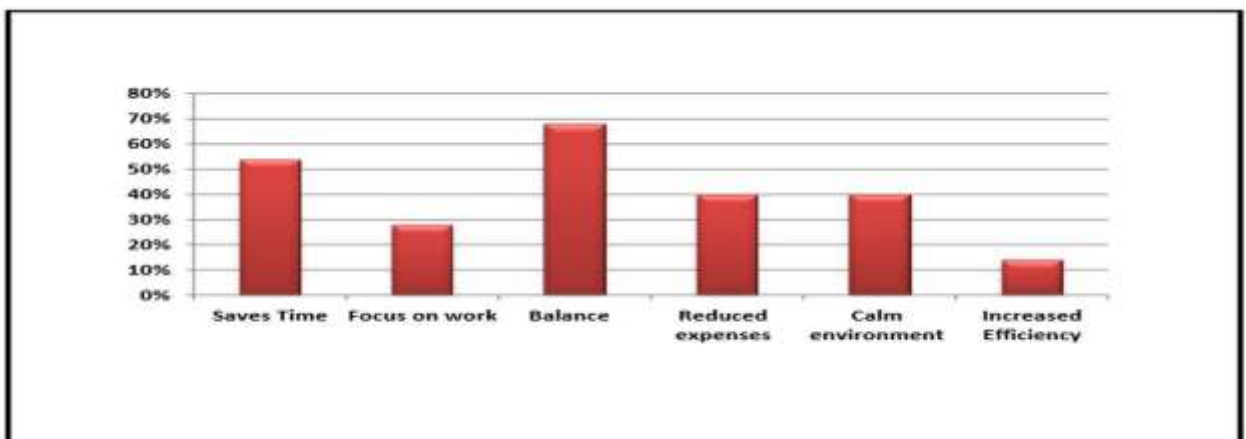
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 2. Flexibility in the job to allow employee to 'Work from Home'



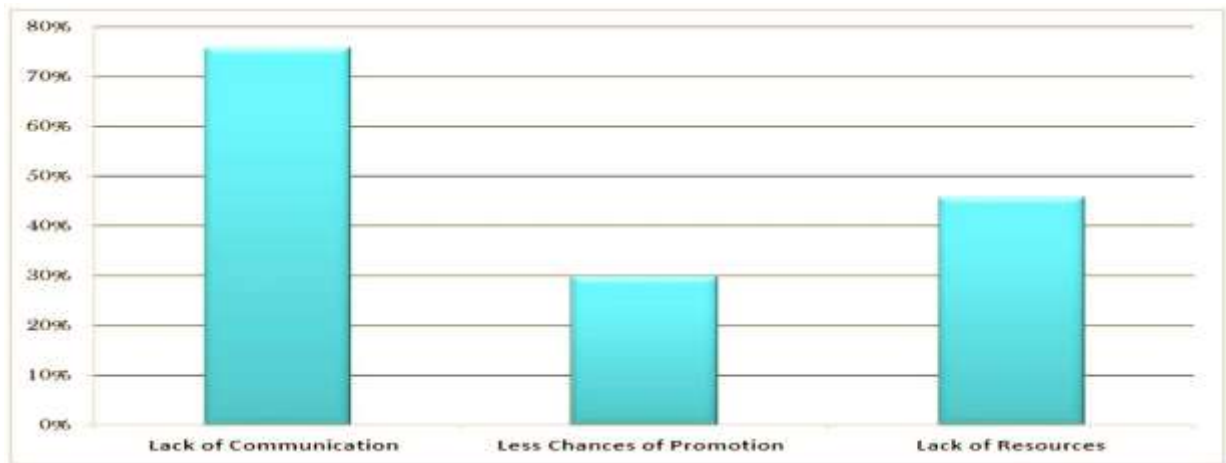
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 3. Benefits of 'Work from Home'



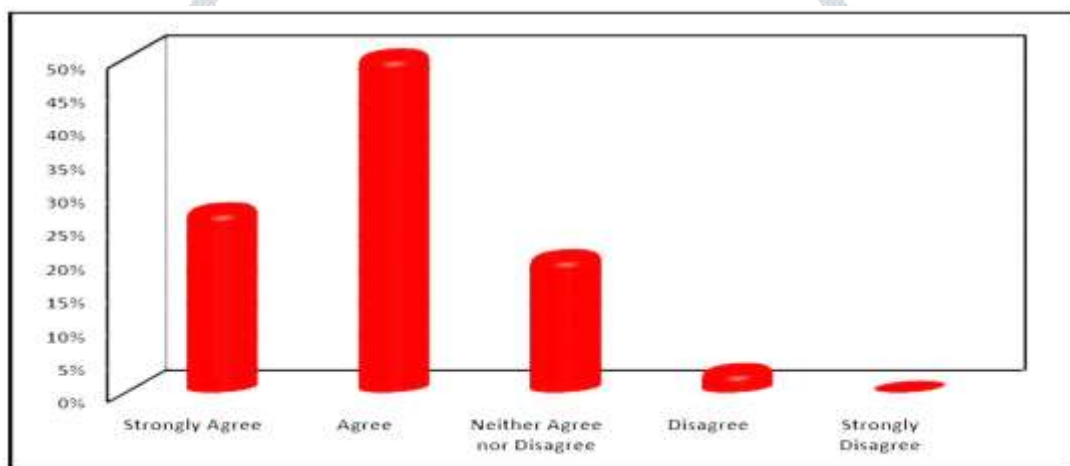
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 4. Demerits of ‘Work from Home’



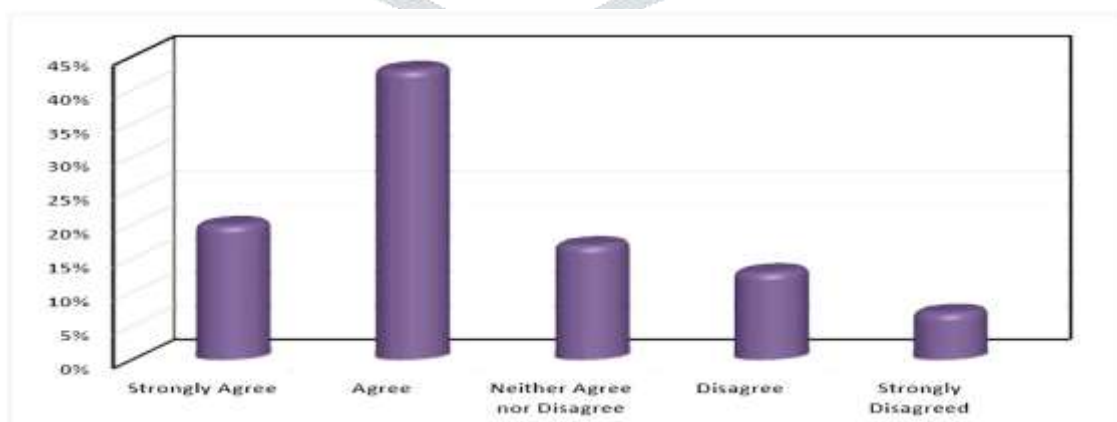
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 5. “Work from home” will eventually improve one’s quality of working life



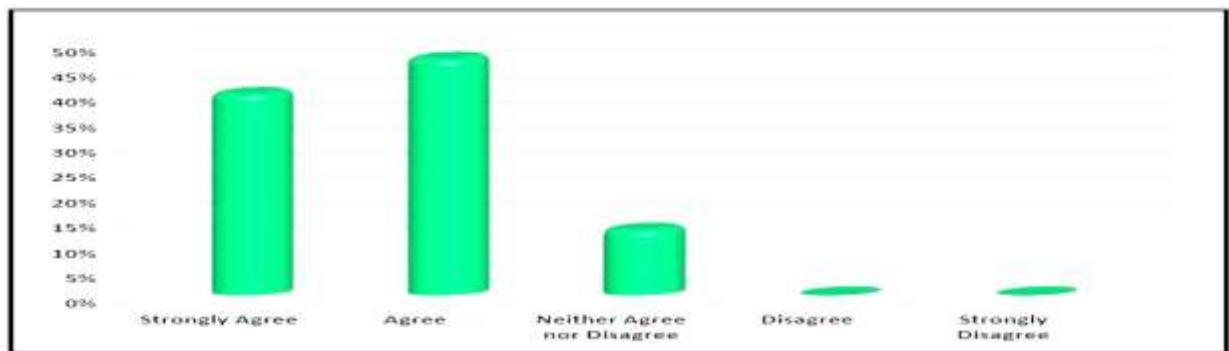
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 6 Work from Home concept will be suitable for the Indian working environment



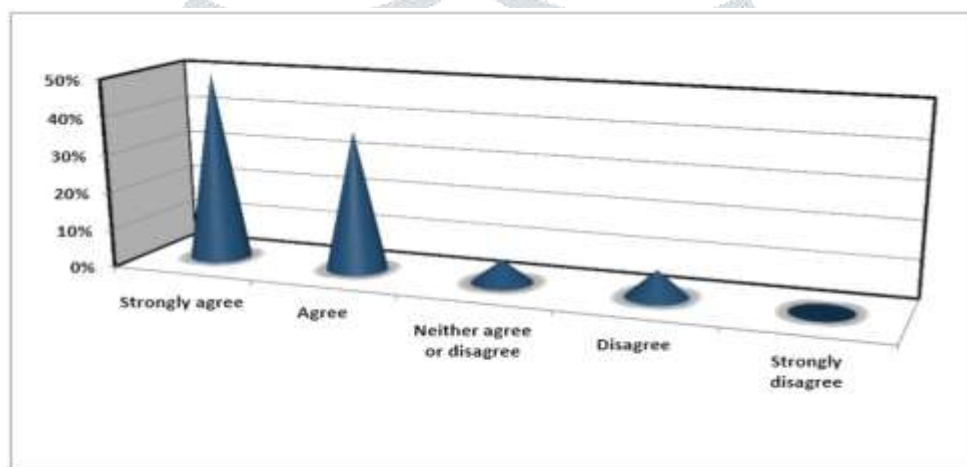
(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 7. Working from Home would be preferable for married Indian women



(Source: Field Survey)

Figure 9. In today’s fast track world working from Home concept should be kept as an option for employees



(Source: Field Survey)

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

94% of those polled were familiar with the concept of working from home. It's noteworthy to notice that even the 6% of Employees who had never heard of the notion were eager to learn more about it. Employees familiar with the topic discussed how it has been hotly disputed in recent years.

68 percent of those polled claimed their job gave them adequate flexibility to work from home. Two days per week was the average amount of days they worked from home. The majority of those who answered negatively worked in jobs that required them to be in an office or a comparable setting in order to do their jobs successfully and efficiently. This highlights the concept's inapplicability none every sector of the economy.

Time savings, increased productivity, emphasis on work in a quieter setting, balance between family and work life, reduction of travel and oil expenses, and a less stressful environment are among the advantages of working from home, according to the respondents. Work from home, according to 68 percent of them, allows for a better balance of work and family life, while 54 percent say it saves time. Surprisingly, only 14% stated it boosted their efficiency, while 28% said it helped them focus on their

task. This demonstrates that employees regard the office atmosphere to be more conducive to efficient work, but working from home often results in interruptions.

Employees were asked what the downsides of working from home are in their opinion. They were offered options such as a lack of direct communication with coworkers and superiors, less opportunities for advancement, and a lack of resources. Working from home has the largest disadvantage of lack of communication and engagement with co-workers, according to 76% of them, while just 30% believe it reduces their prospects of promotion. The findings contradicted the widely held belief that employees who work from home are less likely to receive promotions and higher pay. Lack of discipline, infrastructure changes, and intranet network connectivity were also highlighted as negatives by some respondents.

Employees were asked what they were willing to give up in order to work from home. They were given options such as salary reductions, vacations, interaction with coworkers, teamwork innovation, and free office resources. 24 percent were willing to take fewer vacations, and 38 percent were willing to forego office resources in order to work from home.

On the other side, 28% of respondents were unwilling to accept a pay cut, and 20% were unwilling to forego face-to-face connection in order to work from home. Furthermore, 26% were unwilling to forego workplace resources in order to work from home. These findings accurately reflect the work-oriented nature of Indians, who are willing to forego vacations but not their salaries.

The respondents were asked if they thought "working from home" would improve one's quality of life in the long run. Thirty percent strongly agreed with the statement, and fifty percent agreed. Only 2% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. The majority of them believed that working from home would allow them to be more productive at work while also allowing them to maintain a work-life balance.

Respondents were asked if they thought WFH would be suitable for the Indian workplace. Only 13 percent disagreed and 7 percent strongly disagreed with the statement, with 20 percent strongly agreeing and 43 percent agreeing. This demonstrates that, while the majority of Indian employees are open to the notion, a substantial proportion of them are wary of it because of perceived disadvantages such as compensation reductions and promotions.

When asked if WFH would be better for married Indian women, 40 percent strongly agreed and 47 percent agreed. It's interesting to note that no one objected to the assertion. Married Indian women are typically expected to balance career and family responsibilities. Working from home would be beneficial to them since it would allow them to strike a better balance between work and family life.

Working from home should be kept as an option for employees, according to one out of every two respondents, and 37 percent agreed with the statement. Only 7% of employees disagreed, indicating that they are well aware of the concept of working from home and are willing to embrace it despite preconceived notions.

7. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Working from home on all days of the week is not something we recommend. Instead, when making this decision, keep the type of task in mind. The company should keep this choice open so that employees may make an informed decision, which would improve work-life satisfaction. The organisation needs to strike a balance between working in the office and working from home. We recommend that the company designate two to three days per week for workers to work from home, and then bring them back to the office for the remainder of the week. This allows the company to reap the benefits of both telecommuting and the innovative partnerships that result from teamwork and peer engagement.

Researcher was able to determine through this study that employees in the IT sector are strongly in favour of adopting the notion of "working from home" into their organisational structure and management practises. We were also able to determine that the employees weighed the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting in a manner similar to their western colleagues. Working from home was chosen by the majority of them because they considered it would provide them with a better opportunity to strike a balance between their professional and personal life, as well as save them time that would have been spent on travel and informal talks with peers. They agreed that it was a "green concept" because it invariably resulted in less pollution and a cleaner environment.

The lack of communication and collaborative sessions with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates that arise when one works from home were mentioned as disadvantages. Employees were adamant about not giving up a portion of their pay to telecommute. To summarise, technological developments and a focus on efficiency and reduced stress make it appropriate for the present Indian work environment, and it should be considered as a viable choice in enterprises where the sort of job allows for 'working from home'.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH SCOPE

During the writing of this research paper, I ran into a lot of roadblocks. For starters, many companies approached to conduct the survey had a negative reaction and did not support the idea of distributing questionnaires to their employees. Second, the concept is not appropriate for all sorts of businesses, as some jobs necessitate working in an office. As a result, the number of people who were studied using the questionnaire was limited. Furthermore, only huge firms with significant resources and technology improvements can apply this notion, as working from home frequently necessitates a faultless network connection, as all conversations are conducted via the internet.

The paper's future scope would be to conduct a comparable survey in other parts of India, while this one was mostly focused on Davangere city. Furthermore, employees from industries other than information technology might be evaluated to compare and contrast the concept's appropriateness in different industries.

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