



WORK FROM HOME IN PANDEMIC - AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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With lockdowns consequent to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most people were confined to their homes, along with their children and many of the vulnerable elderly. The spill-over effect of the pandemic brought about rampant changes in the lives of all, with working from home being a major one. This study was done to find the perspective and experiences of the Indian workforce after two years of working from home, with many still pursuing the same format. Also, it was intended to assess the personal factors contributing to one's willingness to continue to work from home post-pandemic. The chi-square test and the SPSS ordinal regression procedure were employed to test the hypotheses defined for achieving the objectives of the study. The study found that the experiences and challenges faced by both males and females were significantly different, with females facing greater stress. For males, working from home was more pleasant. However, they faced difficulty maintaining a work-life balance. While gender was insignificant, age and having no children, particularly less than ten years old, were significant predictors of willingness to work from home in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: Work from home, gender, pandemic, stress, willingness to work from home.

Introduction

Steve Jobs ingenious imaginations at Pixar Animation Studios revolutionized the world of films with Toy Story in 1995. His sheer belief in the magic of serendipity was based on the fact that creativity comes from spontaneous meetings, from random discussions and accidental bumping into other people. The innate quality of being social keeps humans at greater ease, when they are near other people and can express their feelings. This corroborates the point that the office is not to make people more productive but to bring them together (Petriglieri, 2020).

Curtailing movement and human interactions, the last month of 2019 saw the onset of a pandemic (the novel Corona Virus, Covid-19), resetting the way people worked, lived and socialized. The 'home became the school, the workplace, the playground, sports facility, and family sanctuary' (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021). Stuck at home, India too witnessed far-reaching impact as several million workers across diverse sectors were confined to their homes; with *work from home* (WFH) becoming the new normal (De Klerk et al., 2021).



But working from home in general and in a pandemic with stringent guidelines posed a different set of circumstances (Mirela, 2020). Though initially the trepidation of first-hand experience of WFH was profoundly positive, yet with one meeting bleeding into another the world started wearing out as people found isolation and loneliness as their new companions.

The current WFH arrangement with children, in unsuitable spaces, no in-office days and no choice were completely different (Gorlick, 2020) transforming the WFH dream into a nightmare. “*We are all sleeping in the office now*” proclaimed many (Naughton, 2020) and with the eventual burnout of employees after the short-term productivity bump (Gelles, 2020), the social media too flooded with #ZoomGloom, #AnxietyAttack, #DeathByWebinar as fatigue, distress and discomfort took a toll over peoples’ lives (Mandavia & Chandrashekhar, 2020).

Emerging in the pandemic era, webinar fatigue - an increased use of online work arrangement demands not just heightened attention, but also requires persistent elevated physiological alertness leading to waxing pressure to respond and perform remotely with great efficiency. This has often resulted in anxiety, a sense of restlessness and inability to relax (Sharma et al., 2021).

Another challenge arising from the pandemic was consequent to the caregiving responsibilities of working parents. While historically motherhood has been associated with a sharp fall in employment, earnings and working hours in comparison to fatherhood (Berniell et al., 2021); the onset of the pandemic with novel work place played havoc for working mothers (Aldossari & Chaudhry, 2021; Alon et al., 2020; Kaur & Sharma, 2020; Soman & Mohanan, 2022; Wang & Inoue, 2020).

Emerging evidences indicate that women have greatly borne the ripples of the pandemic (Aldossari & Chaudhry, 2021; Chattopadhyay, 2021; Israni & Kumar, 2021; Reichelt, 2021; Soman & Mohanan, 2022). In a study to assess gender differences with regards to WFH on one’s physical and psychological health, the authors opine that females face greater health issues compared to males. The difference they concur is on account of the traditional gender roles. In most cultures, males are perceived as ideal citizen workers whose primary focus is work, whilst for women dual roles exist in the work and domestic sphere (Oakman et al., 2020).

A study in the United States found that in comparison to fathers, mothers with young kids were working lesser by four to five hours. With a consequent heightened gender gap in work hours by 20–50 per cent (Collins et al., 2020), women were expected to toil more with the additional burden of household chores and childcare (Del Boca et al., 2020) in the absence of maids, crèches, and schools.

Likewise, a study assessing the challenges faced by women found a strongly significant positive association between ‘Being women, it is more challenging to work from home than work at office’ and ‘Working more as that of normal hours’ (Kaur & Sharma, 2020). In a similar vein, using a convergent parallel design for data collection from married and working women, a study in Kerala, too observed that home-based work was much more stressful for women, with nearly 76 percent experiencing excessive stress (Soman & Mohanan, 2022).

In India while women account for almost 50% of the population yet are precariously underrepresented across sectors (Beniwal, 2020) – with merely 19.9% of the total labour force of the nation aged 15 years and above (Israni & Kumar, 2021). Exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the



grim scenario of the recent job stagnation and high unemployment rates for women are bound to blur further (Kamdar, 2020) leading to 'India's painful secessions' (Beniwal, 2020).

Given the fact that our patriarchal society with risk-averse employers prefer males over females for saving on cost, the International Labour Organization cautions of an intensifying labour market inequality due to the pandemic (ILO, 2020). Additionally, in a study on telecommuting and gender inequality, it was found that more women were not just losing jobs, but even those with a WFH option were greatly suffering emotionally compared to their male counterparts (Cummings, 2020).

A Review of Literature

Tracing back to the pre-industrial revolution, home working is an old concept (Boris, 2019) which lost its sheen with industrialization and technological advancements. But in recent years, with the rapid progress in Information and Communication Technology (ILO, 2020; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Saludin & Hassan, 2012; Shareena & Shahid, 2020), the old wine began regaining its vitality in a new bottle – rebranded as *Teleworking, Remote-working, e-working or Work from Home* (Grant et al., 2019; Hassan & Nuruddin, 2011; Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

It is often an arrangement in which employees perform their usual job-related tasks at a remote location/ home rather than in a central workplace, for a regular portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to communicate with others (Abdullah et al., 2020; Stadlander et al., 2017). In short, WFH is the execution of work duties in flexible workplaces (especially at home) assisted by technology (De Klerk et al., 2021; Dizaho et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2019; Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

The 2020 State of Remote Work (prior to COVID-19) reported a record 98% of its respondents (3,500 remote workers from around the world) favouring WFH (Buffer & AngelList, 2020). Coupled with convenience (Shareena & Shahid, 2020) and flexible work schedule (Boris, 2019; Buffer & AngelList, 2020; De Klerk et al., 2021; Lupu, 2017; McCloskey, 2018; Purwanto et al., 2020; Wienclaw, 2019), WFH gives employees' an opportunity to do their job from the comforts of their cocoons (Abdullah et al., 2020).

In addition to getting more time for their personal life, employees also find greater autonomy (De Klerk et al., 2021; Lupu, 2017; Shareena & Shahid, 2020). Some researches hold that it helps strengthen work-life balance (Dizaho et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2019), improves productivity (Shafizadeh et al., 2020), besides reducing absenteeism, as one may take care of sick children or elders easily without having to take time off from work (De Klerk et al., 2021; Wienclaw, 2019).

Moreover, the employers' too save immensely in their expenses by curbing overhead costs like rent, electricity, maintenance and reduced costs of parking space for the employees' cars (De Klerk et al., 2021; Lupu, 2017; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Patwa, 2020; Shafizadeh et al., 2020). A survey of 317 chief financial officers and financial leaders by Gartner Inc. in March 2020 revealed that 74 percent intended to switch some employees permanently to remote work as a cost saving measure (Lavelle, 2020).

Another vital aspect of WFH is that it does away with the need to commute to a central and single place of work (Buffer & AngelList, 2020; Shareena & Shahid, 2020). A Mobility study by Ford



European Commuter Survey (2015) of 5503 commuters in Europe found that one in three Europeans found commuting more stressful than the actual job (Ford Media Centre, 2015).

Stress of long travel time, high travelling cost and increased energy consumption were some of the reasons complained by many employees the world over (Lachapelle et al., 2018; Nayak & Pandit, 2021; Saludin & Hassan, 2012; Shafizadeh et al., 2020). With WFH, one had the opportunity to repurpose commute time for meetings (Singer-Velush et al., 2020) or other personal work (Wienclaw, 2019). Consequently, besides saving on the travelling expenses (Purwanto et al., 2020; Wienclaw, 2019), travel time and cost (Nayak & Pandit, 2021; Patwa, 2020), one’s productivity too increased by saving on time spent on commuting during rush hours (Grant et al., 2019; Kazekami, 2020; Lachapelle et al., 2018). A study by Awfis found that an average working professional in India is saving ₹ 5,520 per month and almost two hours of travel time every day while working from home (Haider, 2020).

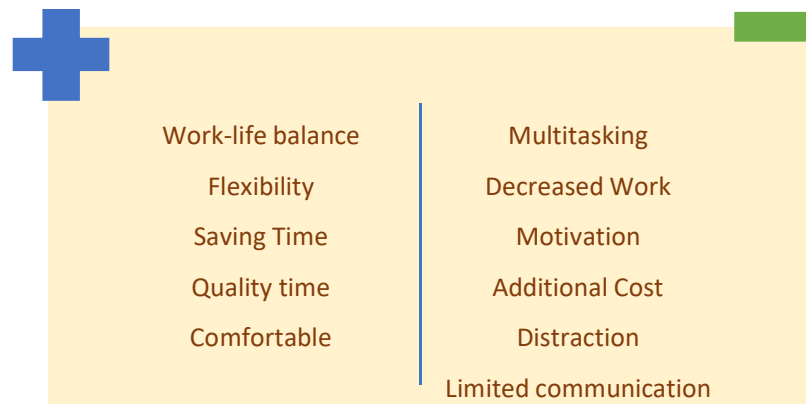
However, the flip side of WFH often stated is the difficulty to monitor a worker's effort at home (Mustajab et al., 2020; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Shareena & Shahid, 2020) with limited communication (Mustajab et al., 2020; Thorstensson, 2020) resulting in delay in the submission of work (Shareena & Shahid, 2020).

A VitalSmarts Survey of 1,153 employees globally found that the emphasis on deadlines and routine information often makes remote workers feel like a cog in the machine rather than an essential part of a team (Russell, 2019). Additionally, when a home needs to be transformed into an office, it can become tricky to create a balance between work and personal life while remaining productive (Kaspersky, 2020; Thorstensson, 2020).

Over a period spanning nine months, a study on the employees of Ctrip, a Chinese travel company found 13 percent boost in their performance. It was found that they consistently completed more calls than their counterparts who remained in the call centre. However, at the culmination of the study, half of the reps requested to return to office, as they felt isolated, lonely and depressed at home despite greater job satisfaction (Bloom et al., 2015; Gorlick, 2020).

Figure 1

Pros and Cons of Work from Home



Source: (Abdullah et al., 2020; Bloom et al., 2015; Mustajab et al., 2020; Song & Gao, 2019)



So, a review of past literature indicates both pros and cons (Figure 1) of WFH (Abdullah et al., 2020; Bloom et al., 2015; Mustajab et al., 2020; Song & Gao, 2019) in pre and post pandemic period. With an uncertain future of WFH, studies have often found that employees hold a complicated relationship with their office. Many attribute the office as a prison for the soul, yet cosy cages (Petriglieri, 2020).

Need for the study

In the wake of the outbreak of the pandemic, the government sanctions for maintaining physical distancing left the corporate sector with WFH as the only way out (Abdullah et al., 2020; Bick et al., 2020; Chattopadhyay, 2021; Kaur & Sharma, 2020; Reichelt, 2021; Shahid et al., 2022). Stirring up the hornets' nest, Covid-19 pandemic has unravelled an unplanned and a massive experimental setup for organizations and researchers to study, explore and examine work from home - its impact, costs and benefits. For the Indian economy too, the current pandemic and the eventual WFH arrangement brought with it a new set of challenges and learnings. The current situation, therefore gives us an unfortunately fortunate opportunity to explore and understand the effect(s) of work from home during pandemic. This study takes a step further and examines the consequences on men and women as they WFH in a pandemic.

The objectives of this study and the corresponding hypotheses are stated below. Three hypotheses ($H_{01} - H_{03}$) have been framed to assess the first objective, while four hypotheses ($H_{04} - H_{07}$) have been designed to evaluate the second objective stated for this study.

1. To understand the overall effect of work from home during the current pandemic on gender.

H₀₁: The first-hand experience of work from home is independent of the respondent's gender.

H₀₂: The issues faced while working from home are independent of the respondent's gender.

H₀₃: The health implications arising out of work from home are independent of the respondent's gender.

2. To gauge the personal factors that may contribute towards the willingness of an employee to WFH in a post pandemic era.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between age and willingness to work from home.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between gender and willingness to work from home.

H₀₆: There is no significant relationship between 'no children below 10 years' and willingness to work from home.

H₀₇: There is no significant relationship between 'having no children' and willingness to work from home.

Analyses of Findings

For the purpose of this study, an online survey was used to collect responses. Respondents included employees of IT & ITES, Education and E-commerce & supply chains who were mostly working from home since lockdown was imposed. Survey responses were recorded during the months from December 2022- May 2023. After repeated approaches, responses of 318 professionals were obtained. Of these, however only 287 respondents' questionnaires were complete and were still working



from home owing to the Covid-19 restrictions since March-April 2020. Additionally, relevant data and information were also perused from various journals, newspapers, reports and websites.

Demographics

Of the total 287 respondents, 61 percent are male while 39 percent are female. With regards to age, 27 percent of the respondents are less than 30 years; 45 percent belonged to the age group 30 to 39; 16 percent are between 40 to 49 years while 12 percent of the respondents are 50 years and above. Among the respondents, 45 percent belong to Education sector, while 27 percent are from E-commerce & supply chain and 28 percent of the respondents are professionals in IT& ITES.

While a majority of respondents are married (58 percent), 42 percent are either single or in a relationship. 52 percent have children (of which 43% have one or more below age 10 years) while 48 percent have no children. Most of the respondents are living in nuclear families (77 percent) with just 23 percent in a joint family.

Hypothesis Testing

This section analyses each of the seven hypotheses of the study in detail.

Analyses of hypotheses $H_{01} - H_{03}$

The three main factors considered in this study for understanding the first objective of the study, was part of the survey as categorical multiple response questions. When more than one answer may be selected by the respondents, the response for a single observation can be classified into more than one category (Koziol & Bilder, 2014; Lavassani et al., 2009).

The data admitted with more than one response from the list of items is referred to as multiple response data. For analysing multiple response data, the first and most important step is to create a multiple response set (Vlach & Plašil, 2006). Table -1 depicts the elementary variables within each of the three factors. Additionally, for the test of independence between the variables of interest Pearson's Chi-Square test was done. A chi-square test is performed to test the null hypothesis of no association between the two variables or to assess if there exists a significant difference between two variables (Franke et al., 2012).

The first multiple response test was done to assess the first-hand experience of respondents towards WFH during the past years (Table 2). With respect to the first-hand experience of WFH, as many as 69 percent females found it stressful as against just 21% males. While merely 8% females felt lonely & disconnected as against 30 percent males. For most of the men, WFH was a pleasant (38 percent) and an accessible (32 percent) option.

The second multiple response test was to assess the general issues (Table 3) faced by the respondents as they continue to WFH. For females, maintaining a regular work schedule (67 percent), extended work hours (59 percent) and child care (53 percent) were the top three issues faced while working from home during the pandemic. On the other hand, for males the top issues included work-life balance (55 percent), distractions at home (55 percent) and extended work hours (45 percent). Another pertinent finding was that for females, rise in personal expenses and for males, child care was the least challenging issue, when working from home.



Table 1

Elementary Variables of the Three Factors

Name	Label	Coded as	Counted value	Data type	Elementary Variable
Experience	First-hand Experience of WFH	Dichotomies	1	Numeric	1. Accessible 2. Lonely & disconnected 3. Engaging 4. Dull & Boring 5. Stressful 6. Pleasant
Issues	WFH Issues	Dichotomies	1	Numeric	1. Internet connectivity 2. Extended work hours 3. Maintaining a regular work schedule 4. Difficulty in Communicating with co-workers/ superiors 5. Inaccessibility of information/ equipment needed 6. Spike in personal expenses 7. Pay cuts 8. Distractions at home 9. Work- life balance 10. Child care
Health Issues	Health issues	Dichotomies	1	Numeric	1. Often backache 2. Always hungry 3. Frequently angry 4. Loss of appetite 5. Eye fatigue 6. Frequent headache

Table 2

First-hand Experience of WFH

		Gender			
		Female		Male	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
First-hand experience of WFH	Accessible	38	38.4%	47	32.2%
	Lonely & disconnected	8	8.1%	44	30.1%
	Engaging	23	23.2%	30	20.5%
	Dull & boring	19	19.2%	30	20.5%
	Stressful	68	68.7%	31	21.2%
	Pleasant	44	44.4%	56	38.4%



Table 3
General Issues when Working from Home

		Gender			
		Female		Male	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Issues faced in WFH	Internet connectivity	33	33.0%	66	44.0%
	Extended work hours	59	59.0%	67	44.7%
	Regular work schedule	67	67.0%	60	40.0%
	Difficulty in Communication	26	26.0%	59	39.3%
	Inaccessible information about equipment	27	27.0%	35	23.3%
	Rise expenses	10	10.0%	19	12.7%
	Pay cut	13	13.0%	24	16.0%
	Distractions at home	40	40.0%	82	54.7%
	Work-life balance	34	34.0%	83	55.3%
	Childcare	53	53.0%	16	10.7%

Table 4 presents the multiple response test result of the health implications of work from home after more than a year. It is evident that females and males were respectively facing similar problems of frequent backaches (59 and 52 percent), headaches (51 and 41 percent) and eye fatigue (49 and 32 percent).

Table 4
Health Implications of WFH

		Gender			
		Female		Male	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Health Implications of WFH	Backache	41	59.4%	53	52.0%
	Always hungry	11	15.9%	7	6.9%
	Always angry	15	21.7%	17	16.7%
	Loss appetite	18	26.1%	17	16.7%
	Eye fatigue	34	49.3%	33	32.4%
	Headache	35	50.7%	42	41.2%

From the results of the Chi-square test (Table 5), the p-value is found to be less than 0.05 in all the three factors. Hence the alternative hypotheses are accepted and all the three null hypotheses stands rejected. It can thus be concluded that the first-hand experiences, general issues faced and health implications associated with work from home are dependent on the gender of the respondent. In other words, the overall experience of work from home differs for males and females.



Table 5

Result of Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Experience of WFH	Issues of WFH	Health Implications
Gender	Chi-square	74.559	101.441	13.929
	Df	6	10	6
	Sig.	.000*	.000*	.030*

Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost sub-table.

*. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the 0.05 level.

Analyses of hypotheses H₀₄ – H₀₇. In order to gauge the personal factors responsible for the willingness to work from home post pandemic; gender, age, having children and having children below 10 years (all categorical variables) were considered as predictor variables. The outcome variable was the willingness to continue to work from home post pandemic, measured on an ordinal scale from ‘Always’ to ‘Never’.

According to Agresti (Agresti, 1981), the most appropriate measures for summarizing the degree of association between two variables depends on the measurement scales of those variables. Ordinal logistic regression (OLR) analysis is used to predict an ordinal dependent variable given one or more independent variables (Lund & Lund, 2018).

For the purpose of the second objective of the study, SPSS Ordinal Regression procedure, or PLUM (Polytomous Universal Model) was employed. The OLR test statistic utilizes cumulative probability, or odds of cumulative effects of the predictor variable (O’Connell, 2006). OLR is used to test and identify factors which qualify towards the willingness to continue to WFH post pandemic.

Parameter Estimates. Table – 6 presents the regression coefficients and significance tests for each of the independent variables in the model. Osborne (2017) states that these estimates can be interpreted as the ‘log odds of being in a particular group or lower when scores on the other variable(s) are zero’ (Crowson, 2019). As this study has three possible outcomes ‘Never’, ‘Sometime’, ‘Always’; there are two thresholds- one is for the increase from ‘Never’ to ‘Sometime’ and the other from ‘Sometime’ to ‘Always’.

Age was a significant positive ($p = .040 < .05$) predictor of the willingness to WFH. For every one unit increase in age, there is a predicted increase of 0.310 on willingness to WFH post-pandemic. This indicates that as the age of a respondent increases s/he is more likely to indicate greater willingness to WFH.



Table 6

Regression Coefficients of the Independent Variables

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[Willingness to WFH post-pandemic = 1]	1.854	.477	15.106	1	.000	.919	2.790
	[Willingness to WFH post-pandemic = 2]	2.608	.489	28.386	1	.000	1.648	3.567
Location	Age	.310	.151	4.217	1	.040	.014	.606
	[Gender=Female]	-.017	.246	.005	1	.944	-.499	.465
	[Children below10=Nil]	.817	.313	6.829	1	.009	.204	1.430
	[Do you have children=No]	.748	.348	4.626	1	.031	.066	1.429

Link function: Logit.

Respondent’s having no children below 10 years was also a significant positive predictor of the willingness to WFH. For every one unit increase in a respondent having no children below 10 years, there is a predicted increase of 0.817 on willingness to WFH post-pandemic.

In the same vein, we can conclude that having no children too is a significant positive predictor of the willingness to WFH (regression coefficient = 0.748, $p = 0.031$). However, gender was not a significant predictor variable ($p = .944 > .05$).

The result strongly points to the fact that for both male and female respondents, the decision of continuing to work from home post pandemic is strongly dependent on them having or not having children, especially young children below 10 years and the respondent’s age.

Discussion

With the Covid-19 shoving both work and home lives under the same roof, this study found men facing greater challenge in working from home due to more distractions. Moreover, with the radical collision of domestic life and work, maintaining a work-life balance was a concerning challenge for most men, though for women it was of a lesser concern.

In the past Eddleston & Mulki (2017) too reported men experiencing greater work-family conflict due to integration of work into the family domain (Oakman et al., 2020) when working from home. But studies across nations during the pandemic, are indicative that while parents in general faced immense pressure of balancing personal and professional, the mothers often beard the burden – spending less time on paid work in comparison to household chores (Collins et al., 2020; Hennekam & Shymko, 2020; Sevilla et al., 2020).



As studies in the past highlight the fact that any crisis affects men and women differently (Del Boca et al., 2020; Périvier, 2014); the present study also found that both the gender had to a great degree, significantly different experience of working from home during Covid-19 pandemic.

For almost 70 percent of females WFH was a rather stressful arrangement as they increasingly faced the challenge of maintaining a regular work schedule. Researches have often found WFH to be positively correlated with increased stress (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Vander Elst et al., 2017). And during the pandemic as work psychologically and physically encroached into the homes, WFH became more stressful for women, and especially mothers (Alon et al., 2020; Esquivel et al., 2023; Soman & Mohanan, 2022).

Besides, with the additional load of household chores especially childcare, women often ended up working extended hours. This is especially true for mothers who are often interrupted by young child(ren) – seeking attention, help or concern resulting in fragmented and stretched work hours (Collins et al., 2020). The findings also concur previous research that women face stress, sleep deprivation and burnout as they tend to spend extra hours to wind up office tasks after managing their gender-specific responsibilities (Parkes et al., 2015).

In spite of a remarkably high labour participation rate, even in Iceland, depicted as the ‘paradise for women’ (Jóhannsdóttir, 2018; Óladóttir et al., 2021) challenges still face women with regards to gendered realities (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021). Despite being at the pinnacle for the past fourteen years, Iceland (one of the 146 nations across the globe) has achieved 91.2 percent gender parity (WEF, 2023). With indications of women still bearing greater household and childcare burden, a recent study advocated that in the face of the dominant discourse it is still evident that the mothers, emotionally and mentally drained, often ended up stressed and frustrated (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021).

For men, surprisingly WFH arrangement was mostly found to be a pleasant experience. Though requiring further in-depth study for the cause, this may be due to the opportunity to spend more time at home. Moreover, for men this was the first guilt-free break and a stay-work at home option for the bread-earner of the household, who was otherwise expected to be stuck in office cubicles through the day.

Although for around 56 percent males the most prominent issue faced was work-life balance. This may be on account of the fact that most male respondents found distractions at home a pertinent issue. Flexibility with respect to work hours or work from home while enjoyed by men tend to have negative consequences on a women’s career (Friedman, 2015).

Past studies on gender and multitasking have often stated that women are better at switching/juggling tasks (Friedman, 2015; Morgan, 2013; Stoet et al., 2013; Szameitat et al., 2015). Some point to the fact that they just do more task/ work extra hard and are actually similar to males at multitasking (Ruppanner, 2015). So, WFH in a gender perspective provides many disadvantages for women in which they have to do multitasking that requires them to simultaneously do office work and homework (Mustajab et al., 2020) with work interruptions greatly affecting the quality of mother’s work and increasing their stress relative to father’s (Lyttelton et al., 2020)

Consequently, the new working arrangement has the potential to further increase women’s burden, massively affecting their representation in the workplace. With females mostly engaged in social



service sectors, informal sectors and doing more unpaid household work, an International Monetary Fund study found that men are three times more likely to return to work than women, especially with child(ren) below six years (Georgieva et al., 2020).

Moreover, a study in this domain found that women with child(ren) below the age of 12 are likely to leave employment compared to those without children, with child(ren) above 12 years or men with/out children (OECD, 2021).

A study in India too contends that with a disproportionately amplified burden of unpaid work for women in comparison to men, women are less likely to return to workplaces post-pandemic (Chauhan, 2022). Besides, gendered segmentation of work and concentration of women in specific industries too has considerably impacted their job in the pandemic (OECD, 2021).

With childcare most frequently impinging upon a mothers' work time, following the pandemic stay-at-home orders, Lyttelton *et al.* (2020) found that telecommuting mothers often reported feelings of anxiety and depression than telecommuting fathers (Lyttelton et al., 2020).

Besides stress and increased load, the blurring of physical and organizational boundaries between work and home can also negatively impact an individual's mental and physical health due to extended hours (Allen et al., 2015). With the frenetic pace of work since lockdown - long working hours and improper posture involving precarious screen-time; most respondents often reported facing increased instances of backaches, headaches and eye fatigue.

The changes in work pattern induced by COVID-19 have enhanced physical distress and digital fatigue (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020) thus causing pandemic fatigue (Turmaud, 2020). Zoom exhaustion and webinar fatigue along with psychological distress and dissatisfaction have been often reported (Deniz et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2021). 75 percent of people using two or more gadgets simultaneously and 53 percent using one gadget at a time persistently complain of webinar fatigue (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020)

In a review of mental and physical health effects of WFH, it was found that the most frequently reported health outcomes included pain, stress, depression, and fatigue, that could be mitigated by a strong organizational support to employees (Oakman et al., 2020). Discomfort and pain in the neck, back and shoulders, increased sensitivity to light and eye strain, as also disturbed and diminished sleep have been found to be a prevalent complaint amongst those WFH (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020).

As such, organizations need to support their employees by stressing on the significance of regular exercise, yoga, proper posture and adoption of ergonomics in home office. A healthy employee is highly productive fostering greater job satisfaction and reducing the chances of developing difficult or problem employees.

These findings of the study will be of great value to organizations while drafting their health and wellness programs. Another vital aspect that needs to be massively campaigned regarding webinar is the significance of 'less is more' besides 'quality rather than frequency' (Sharma et al., 2021).

Finally, it was found that the willingness to work from home post pandemic, while independent of the gender was dependent on the respondent's age, having no children in particularly having none below 10 years. While respondents were more willing to opt for WFH (with increasing age) their tilt in favour of WFH also multiplied when they'd no children.



Replete studies have recently voiced that work from home in the current situation is a great challenge especially for parents with young children (Asif et al., 2022; Collins et al., 2020; Georgieva et al., 2020; Gorlick, 2020; Hennekam & Shymko, 2020; Hjalmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021).

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

With the turbulences bought about consequent to Covid-19, almost every worker has tasted the new normal workplace - Work from Home. Reshaping the traditional way of work, WFH has affected workers at both work and in personal spheres.

In absence of maids and burdened with domestic tasks, around 67% Indians faced sleep deprivation (IANS, 2020) coupled with the impinging fear of job loss, loneliness and a feeling of burnt out played havoc in the personal and professional lives (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

Though the true picture of work-balance will be visible only post-pandemic when WFH is not a forced mandate, but rather a flexible option. But once a desirably favourable option, WFH has not proved to be the best (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). Though in years to come, as couples favour smaller family size, and organizations evolve their support functions; the future will indeed witness sweeping workspace changes. The present work place may eventually metamorphose into Agile Workspaces; where flexibility of time and space will rule.

Besides, as the world has embarked on the journey of becoming 'smarter' in every sphere. Researchers indicate an evolving workspace (Angelici & Profeta, 2020). They advocate that 'Smart-working is a new organization of work which includes flexibility of location (working from home, but also from another place different from the usual workplace) and flexibility of time (a personalized work schedule)' (Del Boca et al., 2020).

Extensive research in the present holds potential to unravel and develop a better insight about individual, organizational and occupational factors that associate with effective and efficient WFH. It will provide requisite information to organizations to appropriately design and designate individuals/teams to working (or not working) from home.

In the words of Kramer and Kramer (2020), 'the economic and social shock presented by the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to reshape perceptions of individuals and organizations about work and occupations and result in both micro and macro shifts in the world of work' (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Setting the foundation, more study may be done to investigate the deeper impact of having children or other dependents on one's decision to opt for working from home. This in future will help organizations to make effective policies for their employees and enhance organizational profitability.

As a child imitates and learns from adults while growing. In this tech driven era, the huge indulgence of parents in front of screen while working from home, is sure to have a bearing on the developmental psychology of youngsters. Future researchers may study the impact that WFH may have on the psychology and perception of children about their working parent(s) and their efforts as they juggle work and home. Moreover, research may also be conducted to evaluate how children assess what work and earning is in such a work setting.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests. The author declares no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.



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