

Work from Home: the Modus Operandi during COVID-19Abhilash Mishra^{*1}, Ankita Agarwal² and Varun Agarwal³^{1,2}School of Management, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, India³Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, India**ARTICLE INFO***Article history***RECEIVED:** 26-Jun-20**REVISED:** 25-Sep-20**ACCEPTED:** 29-Sep-20**PUBLISHED:** 15-Oct-20***Corresponding Author**

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Author 2: ankita.agarwal7000@gmail.comAuthor 3: varunagarwal009@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

As whole world has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic companies are slowly trying to get back on track. India went to 21 days of complete lockdown disrupting lives of billions of people. Gone are the days when people used to get up and rush to their office. As Govt. has prioritized social distancing norms and asked people to stay at home to curb the virus infections, company have asked their employees to work from home. It has become an essential mode of survival for both employee and employer. This pandemic isn't going to end very soon as per researcher so work from home seems to be carried on for a long time. With the number of COVID-19 positive cases hitting almost 12000 per day and India being currently 4th worst hit country by the pandemic situation looks too grim at present. This paper focuses on evolution of work from home, its effect on productivity. It also tries to make out a brief comparison about how the work from home mode has grown during the pandemic. This paper also throws some light on the benefits and challenges during work from home and finally future implications. The researcher has also thrown some lights on the current scenario of work from home in India and also the impact of COVID-19 on the IT sector.

Keywords: Work-from-home, Evolution, Covid-19, IT sector, productivity.**Introduction**

Life had come to a standstill in India when Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi declared complete shut-down on 24th March 2020 for complete 21 days. This was done to break the COVID 19 cycle from spreading rapidly. The pandemic already had such disastrous effect on other countries like US, Russia, China the government of India had to go for a complete lockdown because of such a huge population. Companies across India and abroad went for Work from home mode following the Stay Home, Stay Safe principle. With government now easing the norms still most of the companies are preferring to continue the WFH mode for their employees with their safety the utmost concern. With the number of positive cases of COVID 19 almost touching 15000 per

day WFH seems to be the new normal. Even after the initial restrictions imposed the number of cases are seeing a increasing trend since the government has given some relaxations. Work from Home has grown rapidly during the pandemic outbreak and is helping for the smooth operations of the companies. It may not be possible for every sector to implement this mode but still maximum sectors are implementing this to curb the spread of the pandemic.

Methodology

The research paper study has been based on secondary data that has been collected from various websites, newspapers and research article.

Evolution of Work From Home(WFH)

There was a time when work from home(WFH) wasn't a possibility as technology didn't exist. If one's colleague or business partner wanted to get in touch with one when someone was out of office than they couldn't email, text or direct message. One would have to provide a alternate phone number, a pager or even a fax number for any work related conversation. As per Samantha Lambert, director of human resources at website design company Blue Fountain Media work from home meant a telemarketing or customer service position at minimum age ten years ago. It was rarely considered as a full time career. But now with the advancement of technology the same job can be done no matter wherever we are. It has enabled to be with contact with the workers or client any time. One of the most helpful technologies for seamless WFH is video conferencing. Live video feeds help workers with interact with each other in real-time anywhere with just a help of internet connection which is next best thing to face to face interviews. This could only be possible because of widespread broadband adoption in the last 10-15 years. With the advancement of technology many companies have done away with traditional offices and run their business out of co-working spaces to encourage people to WFH. In a severe pandemic like COVID 19 with more and more employees WFH they would not only protect public health but also contribute towards continued success of the business.

policies to enable most of employees to WFH. Marico is working with a external consultant to bring about a critical shift in the way the company was traditionally operated. They are planning to put at least 40% of its office based staff to WFH. Advertising firm Wunderman Thompson is looking for a 50:50 solution so that not more than half of its staff on any given day are at office. Mercedes-Benz India is looking to mandate only three working days in office each week and two days of WFH. At KPMG India, 33% of the staff will have access to office in Phase 1 on a rotational basis. During the lockdown Indian IT industry made employee WFH as per government's mandate. As a result 90% people worked from home out of which 65% of them worked from homes in metros and 35% from homes in small towns. Amazon India has extended its WFH for employees till October 2020 whereas its rival flipkart will start its proceedings on a rotational basis.

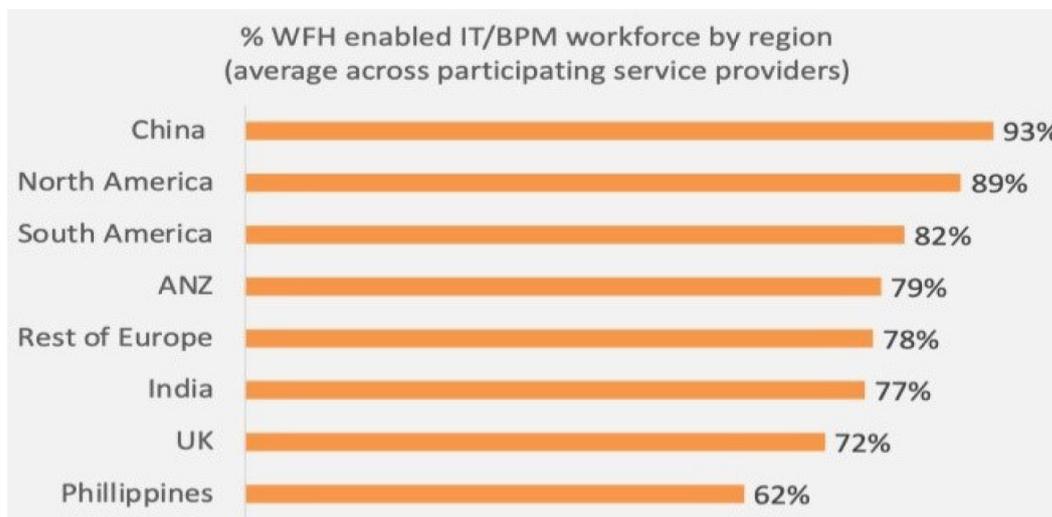
Though countries across the globe are fighting the COVID 19 pandemic, technology companies are ensuring that there is no lockdown in work. They have asked their employees for remote work to run their businesses among all uncertainties. This was the survey done by HFS research during the month of April 2020. It can be seen global IT-BPM industry did a remarkable shift in the way they were operating by enabling over 75% of employees to work from home within weeks. We can see from the data china was leading with 93% employees whereas Philippines lagged behind with only 62%.

Current Scenario of WFH in India

Even as the restrictions for the COVID-19 lockdown are gradually easing, organizations are framing long term

WFH effect on productivity

As per the survey done by Airtasker in US which consisted of 1004 full time employees, 505 were remote employees



Source: HFS Research

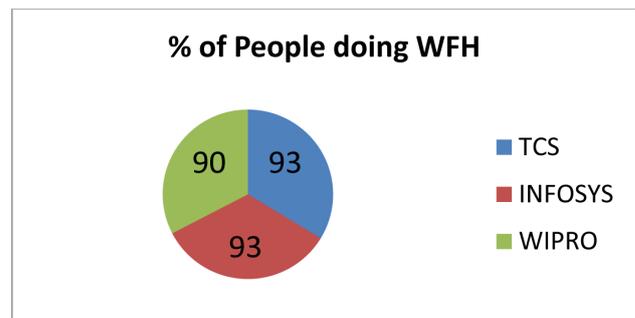
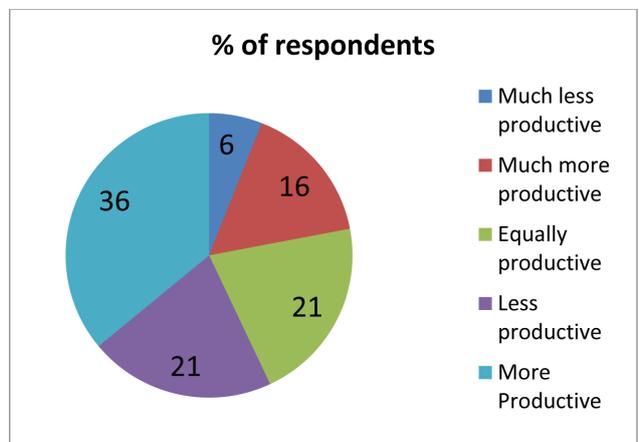
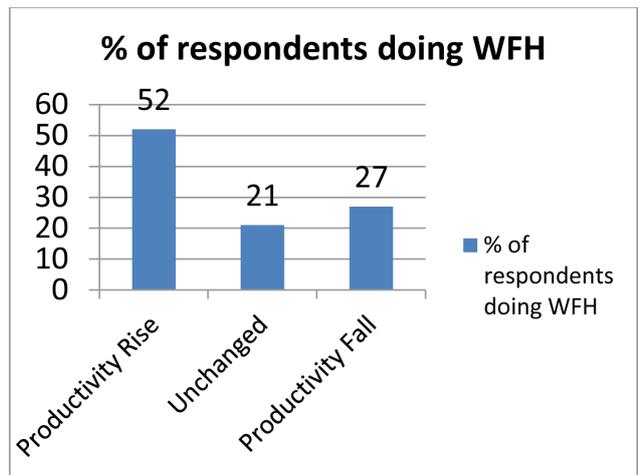
the results indicated that remote workers were actually more productive than their office counterparts. The study found that remote employees worked an additional 1.4 more days per month than office goers which is approximately 17 workdays a year. It was also found that remote employees take longer break than employees which is 22 minutes as compared to 18 minutes by office goers. However they work additional 10 minutes a day. The study also suggested that office goers are unproductive for an average 37 minutes a day whereas it is 27 minutes in case of remote employees. Moreover 15% remote employees claimed their boss distracted them at work which was 7% less as compared to office goers. While this statistics may encourage both employee & employers to implement a work from home program, some remote employees also reported higher levels of stress and more difficulty in finding work life balance as compared to office goers. According to American Psychological Association remote work can increase employee satisfaction if implemented correctly.

However according to a study done by research based innovative venture SCIKEY Mindmatch about 99.8% of workforce in IT sector is incapable of working from home

and only 0.2% are WFH champions and showcase high productive attributes. It further indicated 99.8% of the workforce lacked at least one of the qualities, including resistance to learning and exploring (95%), practical communication skills (65%), planning and execution (71%). Therefore it still remains a debatable topic whether WFH increases productivity as it may vary across industries and countries.

Impact of Covid-19 on IT sector

Hardly did anyone know that India’s 4 million IT sector would shift to working from home overnight after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. As per Ramkumar Ramamoorthy, chairman & MD of cognizant India the company set up a core committee that worked across multiple work streams to ensure delivery and service continuity, while safeguarding public health and wealth being. The lockdown which was effective from March 24 to curb the spread of the pandemic meant 90% of two lakh cognizant employees could not work from campuses in India and as it spread globally same was the case in Europe and US. Indian IT industry had to move desktops that employees were using at workplaces to their homes as they couldn’t procure laptops in huge numbers at such short span of time. It was not just cognizant, its rival TCS also made the shift along with software companies like Infosys, HCL technologies, Wipro and Tech Mahindra. These companies together employ over 1.2 million people which contribute almost half of India’s software exports. TCS said it had built a infrastructure model that could shift nearly 4.5 lakhs employees to work remotely. As per N Ganapathy Subramaniam, chief operating officer at TCS close to 90% of employees are working remotely and the company shifted 40000 desktops to employees to work from home. Infosys provided high speed broadband connectivity for remote workers and expanded by ten times its own virtual private network bandwidth. It also shipped 35,000 computers to employee residences



Source: Simplilearn- A digital Skills training platform

Source: Nasscom data

and made sure that there was four times increase in backend capacity to support the increase in concurrently connected remote users.

Benefits of Work from Home

For Employees

i. It's more productive compared to work from office

Productivity studies have revealed that working from home has helped employees to get more out of their workday. A study done by Stanford showed that people doing WFH were 13% more productive than their traditional office colleagues. Moreover people doing WFH took less sick leave and they can organize their work to fit their most productive times and produce good quality work.

ii. Workers save more money compared to office workers

A study done by Global workforce Analytics found that people doing WFM can save \$2000-\$7000 every year. Workers can save on commuting, clothing, food, child care etc.

iii. Less Stress and better work life balance

It is one of the flexibility provided by WFM. People have less stressful life and a better work life balance. According to a study done by Owl Labs, many workers reported alleviated stress levels wit even one day of work outside office. 86% of the respondents in the survey reported WFM not only reduces stress levels but also improves their health.

iv. Flexible work schedule

In a survey done by Buffer it was found that 40% of respondents considered flexibility as one of the biggest perks. The ability to work during ones productive hours and to choose days to work in a week allowed people to spend time with their families.

v. Better job opportunities for professional

As people would save time in travelling and spending time in office they can spend those valuable time in developing their careers and looking for better job opportunities.

For Companies

i. Higher Employee loyalty & Retention Rate

As per the survey done by owl labs, people doing WFH said they were likely to stay in their current job for the next 5 years,13% more than onsite workers. Moreover 55% respondents said they would likely look for another job if they were disallowed the same method of working.

ii. Cost saving

Not only employee save by WFH employers too get lots of benefits. The benefits could be in form of office rent, furniture, monthly utility bills which could help in increasing the profit.

iii. A broader pool of professionals to choose from

With WFH being the modus operandi employers would no longer be limited to hire local people as they can recruit people from anywhere as people won't be required to attend office.

iv. Improved Employee Morale

The flexibility in working conditions will motivate employees to be more productive at the workplace. High employee morale leads to less turnover, greater enthusiasm to work and high job satisfaction.

For the environment

Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

As people won't be required to travel to office during WFH there will be reduction in millions of oil barrels required for the transportation vehicles. We have already got the evidence how the pollution level reduced drastically when India was under complete lockdown to control the COVID 19 pandemic.

Challenges facing Work from home

i. Unplugging from work

People working from home tend to be workaholics, especially when the deadlines are strict and there's a heavy workload. Since most of the work is done from home

people tend to find it difficult to switch from work atmosphere to enjoy available free time.

ii. Loneliness

Work from home method also separates workers from co-workers as they don't get face to face interactions which are only limited to online meetings and collaborative online workplaces. So they tend to feel isolated. It may not be the case with married people or people having more friends outside.

iii. Distractions

While working from home people may have to do many things simultaneously which may distract themselves. In the office it is not the case as they are constantly monitored and certain set of guidelines are followed by all co workers.

iv. Collaboration and communication

It can be highly challenging for people working from home to collaborate with co workers and communicating ideas to other team members. They have to be highly reliant on written and asynchronous communication using project management systems.

Conclusion & Future Implications

Despite the government lifting lockdown restrictions most IT and technology companies in India are in no hurry to get back to office. Since most of their work happens over the internet and since there are more powerful online collaboration tools work from home has had no adverse impact on productivity. Most are planning for staggering returns over several months. Some are looking at rotating teams that come into office and many are leaving it upto employees to decide whether they feel comfortable enough to return.

Goldman Sachs, which has a 5500 people strong technology and service centre in Bengaluru expects only about 30% of its staff working from its office over the next few months which will also be done in staggered manner. Global software consultancy Thought Works is looking at a new normal where only 40-50% of employees will work from office, on a rotational basis. Employee will be allowed for work from home option as long as needed. Google and Facebook in India indicated they would be following their global guidelines. As per Google

CEO Sundar Pichai, the company is planning to have an employee come in one day every couple of weeks, which would mean about 10% building occupancy at any point. Around September it will scale the rotation programme to 30% of building capacity. As per the Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg employees can choose from work from home in 2020 if they can do their jobs productively. It is planning to open offices with 25% of capacity initially. So it can be seen that health and safety of employees have been given utmost priority by all organizations and they are not willing to compromise on it. Moreover it might not be possible for every industry to adopt the WFM approach and it may vary across industries.

Competing Interest Statement

All authors have read and approved the manuscript and take full responsibility for its contents. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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