

# The Impact of Working from Home During COVID-19 on Work and Life Domains: A Descriptive Study on Central Kerala



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## Abstract

One year have passed since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The pandemic has brought a lot of changes in our lives and the future looks uncertain. Many people lost their jobs and at the same time, work from home becomes the new normal. The impact of corona virus is visible in all fields and thus the pandemic has normalized remote work. This is one of the major challenges that exist in the current situation. Since this pandemic was unpredictable, many people are struggling to maintain their work-life balance. Work from home have certain benefits like flexibility of time and place, productivity etc. But besides all this benefits, there are demerits like stress, distraction, unbalanced eating, work-life balance etc. So, this research is an attempt to analyze the impact of work from home on gender basis due to pandemic through chi square and factor analysis.

**Key words:** Covid-19, Challenge, Productivity, Work from home, Work-life balance.

## 1. Introduction

For every individual, career is the most important factor in their life. It plays a major role in featuring the social and person identity of an individual. It's a sad truth that even family bonds are based on career in these days. So, in short, we can say that job is one major factor which controls the life of an individual. It's quite different for men and women. But they need to find a perfect balance between their work and personal life. Through various research, it's proved that, the attitude of an individual in a family is based on their satisfaction in their work life. If they are highly stressed or dissatisfied in their work, it will affect the family in a bad way.

Before witnessing the pandemic COVID-19, lockdown etc. the work from home culture was not popular in India. Even the industries were not ready to provide such a facility for their employees even in case of emergency situations. Employees were forced to present in their office during the office hours. Many people were shifting to new places or travelling hours to do their job. They were struggling to meet the ends of their life. With the change brought down by COVID-19, the world has witnessed a revolutionary change in all sectors of business and the way of life. It developed a new culture known

as Work from Home (WFH). In now a day, work from home is the new normal. The 21st century is remarkable period in job sector also. Because, before pandemic, the companies don't even have policies relating to work from home. The whole structure of companies has been changed due to pandemic. The companies were not sure about the productivity from work from home. But studies show that, the productivity while working from home is unexpectedly high. Even though lockdown restrictions have been lifted in many places and workplaces are resuming, the dilemma of reopening the office is staggering. Due to pandemic and other reasons, the companies are only bringing back employees whose presence in office is critical.

Companies have many benefits because of the new trend. But along with the benefits, employees are having lot of difficulties due to work from home. They are facing issues that are physical and psychological. They are struggling to maintain work-life balance.

## **2. Literature Review**

The culture 'Work from Home' is having a great significance in the current pandemic. Telework, work from home, remote work and other similar terms is not new now. The findings from the latest research report from the European Union suggest that telecommuters were disproportionately urban-based, white-collar, well-educated, service sector employees. Additionally, the same study revealed that the main determinants of WFH were the nature of the work and the extent to which telework was feasible, rather than the individual or household circumstances of employees.

In the same time, the UK Health & Safety Executive published guidance to minimise risks for employees working alone, including the population of telecommuters during the pandemic, and refers to the contact of lone workers with others, working environment and equipment considerations, possible impacts on mental health and well-being, pre-existing medical conditions, response to health & safety emergencies during working hours as well as training and supervisory arrangements.

The study of Wheatley (2017) found that, a gender effect with women using less flexible work arrangements comparing to men and often opting for reduced working hours. This seems to be the result of societal expectations and a greater likelihood of female employees using such arrangements to facilitate the management of their domestic housework and mothering roles, turning an otherwise 'optimal' arrangement into a 'restrictive' one.

According to Government of UK (2015) the use of mobile working is seen to be beneficial to an organisation, however, there is concern around how to manage employees effectively as this may be extremely challenging for any business. Additionally, it outlines that while working from home may appear to be a positive form of working for many organisations there may be some organisations that this form of working does not suit.

Prithwiraj Choudhury, Wesley W. Loo and Xina Li (2020), "Working (From Home) During a Crisis: Online Social Contributions by workers during the Coronavirus Shock" published in Harvard Business School which focuses on whether workers who continued to work (albeit from home) during this crisis were constrained in their ability to make social contributions and exhibited disproportionately greater psychic costs compared to workers who could not WFH. The Study demonstrates that WFH workers make disproportionately greater online contributions to socially helpful topics such as remote work best practices and yet face disproportionately higher psychic costs and possibly time famine, managers might consider awarding WFH workers temporal flexibility in the form of a few "free hours" to engage in online contributions and other "virtual water coolers" in order to deal with work-

social and work-life balance.

According to Barton in 2017, he outlines that a recent study carried out by the University of Arizona concludes that in terms of strategic direction 40% of employees feel like they are disconnected from the organisation and around a third of employees working from home feel that they do not receive enough support from their managers.

Shweta Belwal and Rakesh Belwal (2014), “Work-Life Balance, Family-Friendly Policies and Quality of Work Life Issues: Studying Employers' Perspectives of Working Women in Oman” published in Journal of International Women's Studies. This study aims to secure managers' perception of WLB and QWL-related issues and also their opinion about offering certain FFP-related benefits to the working women in Oman. It found that Work-life balance initiatives support the needs of staff in achieving a balance between their work and family lives. Better management of work and family life can help in reducing stress and increasing a motivated, loyal and productive workforce

K. Agha, F. T. Azmi and A. Irfan (2017), “Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction: An Empirical study focusing on Higher Education Teachers in Oman” published in International Journal of Social Science and Humanity examined that is there a need to integrate work and personal life in a smooth manner? This study found that balance or imbalance between work and personal life is likely to affect the overall performance of the teachers as well as the overall performance of the organization.

Another biggest concern related to this is the work life balance of an individual. The struggle between work and home roles manifests itself more strongly when work from home is enforced and not merely offered as a possible work arrangement. Studies reveal that, there are multiple instances of work-family conflicts among individuals. For e.g., continuing to work overtime and weekends when family members are around, incapacity to adjust between work and family, stress, productivity etc. So, in general, work from home in the COVID-19 period is accompanied by evident and hidden challenges as well as opportunities.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research is based on 60 responses and interviews which aims to study the impacts of work from home due to pandemic. Due to lockdown and other COVID-19 restrictions, the survey is done through google forms. The survey is done among selected peoples in central Kerala who works as Engineer, Teachers, Data Analyst etc. The convenience sampling method is used for selecting the respondents

The interviews are also done through online platform due to the current situation. Through these personal interviews, I was able to understand the issues of individuals in a detailed manner.

### **4. Source of Data**

The study was conducted based on primary and secondary data;

*Primary Data.*: Primary Data is collected by the researcher itself. The research is truly based on an online survey through structured questionnaire. Due to pandemic and other restrictions the size of the sample is limited to 150 responses mainly from the Central Kerala.

*Secondary Data.*: The secondary data are collected from already published articles, studies and other research papers. It is already collected and analyzed by some other individuals.

## 5. Methods of Data Collection

- Primary Sources of Data Collection.

*Questionnaire:* Aiming the objective of research, a simple questionnaire was prepared in simple language. It was also arranged logically.

*Interviews:* The interview was conducted in a virtual manner which includes employees working in different categories. They were personally interviewed and information was gathered.

- Secondary Sources of Data Collection.

The secondary information's are collected by referring some journals, articles and research papers that has been officially published. Articles from newspapers are also referred for this purpose.

## 6. Data Collection

I have collected details from individuals through a questionnaire by using google form. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions in 5 points Likert scale was used for data collection. The questions were relating to psychological impacts of work from home due to COVID-19.

The collected information through a survey of 150 responses. All the questions were related to work life balance and productivity during the pandemic. This survey has focused on employees of different work category and different age groups.

The respondents of this survey were employers in Central Kerala in different professions. They were able to share their problems and experience due to work from home.

## 7. Objectives

The Primary objective of this research is to

- To analyze the impacts due to work from home.

The Secondary objectives are:

- To understand the psychological impacts on individuals due to the new normal.
- To understand the work-life balance of individuals.
- To analyze the significant relationship of satisfaction related to WFH arrangement with respect to work category and gender.
- To analyze the significant relationship of factors affecting WFH with respect to gender.
- Study and analyze the factors which affects WFH positively and negatively.

## 8. Results

Through this survey, the data collected from respondents have been shown, by using appropriate statistical tools.

Table 1: Distribution of frequency according to Profession

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Engineer	30	20	2
Teachers	27	18	3
Data Analyst	3	2	4
Accountant	0	0	5
Others	90	60	1
Total	150	100	

The respondents were from different profession. Main professions were mentioned in the questionnaire and rest were categorized as others. The professions were divided into 4 different categories. The different categories were Engineer, Teacher, Data Analyst, Accountant and other.

There were 30 respondents (20%) from Engineering profession, 27 respondents (18%) from Teaching profession, 3 respondents (2%) from Data Analyst, 0 respondents from accounting profession and 90 respondents (60%) from others.

Table 2: Distribution of frequency with respect to satisfaction with respect to WFH arrangement

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Always	24	16	2
Very Often	15	10	4
Sometimes	66	44	1
Rarely	21	14	3
Never	24	16	2
Total	150	100	

24 respondents (16%) were always satisfied, 15 respondents (10%) were very often satisfied, 66 respondents (44%) were sometimes satisfied, 21 respondents (14%) and 24 respondents (16%) were never satisfied with the current work from home arrangement.

Table 3: Distribution of frequency with respect to maintaining regular break schedule with respect to WFH

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Always	18	12	4
Very Often	45	30	2
Sometimes	51	34	1
Rarely	24	16	3
Never	12	8	5
Total	150	100	

18 respondents (12%) are always able to maintain regular break schedule, 45 respondents (30%) are very often maintained, 51 respondents (34%) are sometimes maintained, 24 respondents (16%) are rarely maintained and 12 respondents (8%) never maintain regular break schedule due to WFH.

*Table 4: Distribution of frequency of social isolation due to WHF*

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Always	48	32	1
Very Often	30	20	3
Sometimes	45	30	2
Rarely	15	10	4
Never	12	8	5
Total	150	100	

48 respondents (32%) always feel social isolation, 30 respondents (20%) very often feel, 45 respondents (30%) sometimes feel, 15 respondents rarely feel and 12 respondents never feel social isolation due to WFH.

*Table 5: Distribution of frequency of work life balance due to WFH*

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Always	9	6	5
Very Often	33	22	3
Sometimes	54	36	1
Rarely	36	24	2
Never	18	12	4
Total	150	100	

9 respondents (6%) are always able to maintain work life balance, 33 respondents (22%) are very often maintained, 54 respondents (36%) are sometimes maintained, 36 respondents (24%) respondents are rarely maintained and 18 respondents (12%) never able to maintain work life balance due to work from home.

*Table 6: Distribution of frequency of stress felt due to WFH*

Options	<i>f</i>	Percentage	Rank
Always	60	40	1
Very Often	27	18	3
Sometimes	32	21.33	2
Rarely	27	18	3
Never	4	2.67	4
Total	150	100	

60 respondents (40%) respondents always feel stressed, 27 respondents (18%) very often feel stressed, 32 respondents (21.33%) respondents sometimes feel, 27 respondents (18%) rarely feel and 4 respondents (2.67) never feel stressed due to work from home arrangement.

**9. Cross Tabulation and Chi Square Analysis**

**Gender. Vs Satisfied with work from home arrangement**

Ho: There is no relationship between satisfaction with WFH arrangement and Gender

Table 7: Cross Tabulation

Count		Satisfied with work from home arrangement					Total
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Gender.	Male	3	9	9	3	6	30
	Female	21	6	57	18	18	120
Total		24	15	69	21	24	150

Table 8: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.335 <sup>a</sup>	8	.004
Likelihood Ratio	19.903	8	.011
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value =0.004 <0.05 So we reject Ho. Hence there is significant relationship between Gender and WFH arrangement.

**Work Category. Vs Satisfied with work from home arrangement**

Ho: There is no relationship between satisfaction with WFH arrangement and work category

Cross Tabulation Table: 9

		Satisfied with work from home arrangement				
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Work Category.	Teacher	0	0	12	9	6
	Engineer	12	6	6	0	3
	Data Analyst	0	0	6	0	0
	Others	12	9	45	12	15
Total		24	15	69	21	24

Table 10: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.910 <sup>a</sup>	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	54.376	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.264	1	.608
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value =0.000 <0.05 So we reject Ho. Hence there is significant relationship between Worker category and WFH arrangement.

**Gender Vs Difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to WFH**

Ho: There is no relationship between gender and difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to WFH

Table 11: Cross Tabulation

		Difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to work from home				
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Gender.	Male	3	12	6	9	0
	Female	15	33	45	15	12
Total		18	45	51	24	12

Table 12: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.841 <sup>a</sup>	8	.032
Likelihood Ratio	19.367	8	.013
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value =0.032 <0.05 So we reject Ho. Hence there is significant relationship between Gender and difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to WFH. Female employees felt more difficulty in maintaining a regular schedule due to WFH.

**Gender Vs social isolation due to WFH**

Ho: There is no relationship between Gender and Social isolation due to WFH

Table 13: Cross Tabulation

		social isolation due to work from home					Total
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Gender.	Male	9	9	6	3	3	30
	Female	36	24	39	12	9	120
Total		45	36	45	15	12	150

Table 14: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.431 <sup>a</sup>	8	.133
Likelihood Ratio	11.442	8	.178
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value =0.133 > 0.05 So we accept Ho. Hence there is no significant relationship between Gender and social isolation due to WFH.

**Gender Vs Work Life Balance due to WFH**

Ho: There is no relationship between Gender and Work life Balance due to WFH:

Table 15

		Maintain work life balance due to work from home				
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Gender.	Male	6	3	12	6	3
	Female	9	27	42	27	15
Total		15	30	54	33	18

Table 16: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.044 <sup>a</sup>	8	.042
Likelihood Ratio	14.583	8	.068
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value =0.042 < 0.05 So we reject Ho. Hence there is significant relationship between Gender and work life balance due to WFH. Female employees were more struggle to maintain work life balance.

**Gender. Vs Feel stressed due to work from home**

Ho: There is no relationship between Gender and Stress due to WFH

Table 17: Cross Tabulation

		16. Do you feel stressed due to work from home?					Total
		Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
2. Gender.	Male	12	3	9	6	0	30
	Female	48	21	27	18	6	120
Total		60	24	36	24	6	150

Table 18: Chi - Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.531 <sup>a</sup>	8	.025
Likelihood Ratio	15.202	8	.055
N of Valid Cases	153		

From the above table p value = 0.025 < 0.05 So we reject Ho. Hence there is significant relationship between Gender and Stress due to WFH. Female employees were more stressful than male employees.

### 11. Factor Analysis

It may be noted that the value of KMO statistics is greater than 0.5 indicating that factor analysis could be used for the given data and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant.

Table 19: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.852
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	466.100
	df	28
	Sig.	.000

Table 20: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
4. Are you satisfied with Work from home arrangement	1.000	.610
5. Do you face internet connectivity problem due to work from home?	1.000	.514
6. Do you face difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to work from home?	1.000	.793
7. Do you feel childcare as a challenge due to work from home?	1.000	.591
8. Do you face difficulty to maintain physical work space at home?	1.000	.620
9. Do you have proper communication with your co-workers due to work from home?	1.000	.684
9. Do you have proper communication with your co-workers due to work from home?	1.000	.597

Communality is a measure of the percentage of variable’s variation that is explained by the factor. A relatively high communality shows that not much of the variable is left over whatever the factor represent is taken into consideration.

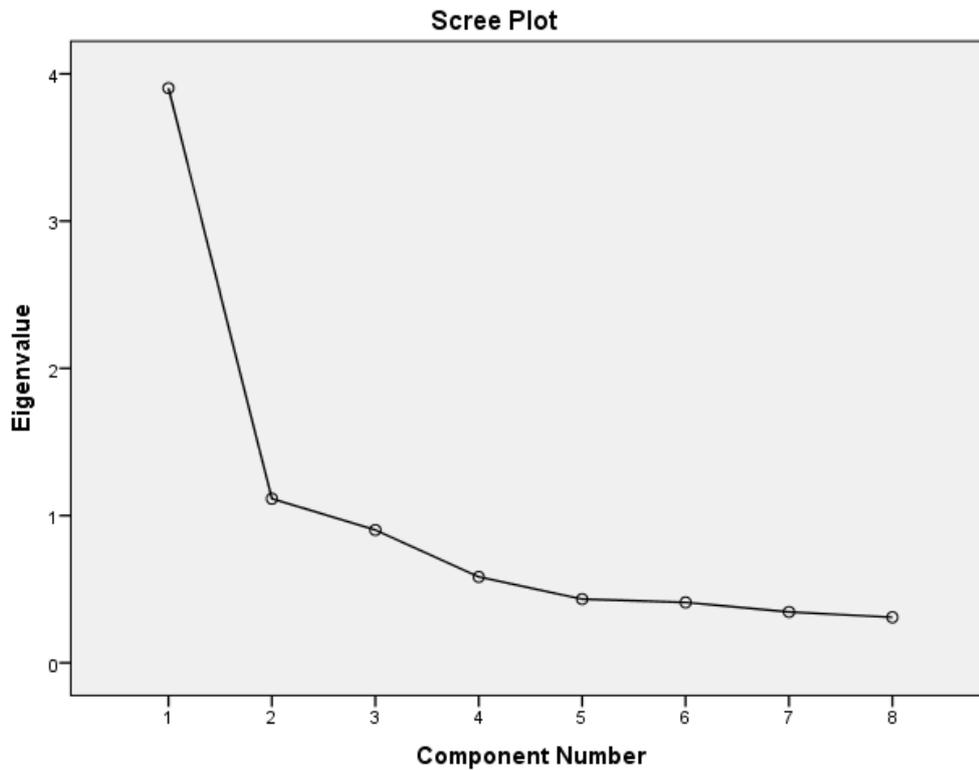
Table 21: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance
1	3.903	48.788	48.788	3.903	48.788
2	1.114	13.931	62.719	1.114	13.931
3	.902	11.273	73.993		
4	.584	7.295	81.287		
5	.432	5.405	86.692		
6	.410	5.129	91.821		
7	.345	4.316	96.138		
8	.309	3.862	100.000		

Table 22: Total Variance Explained

Component	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	48.788	3.883	48.543	48.543
2	62.719	1.134	14.176	62.719
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

There are two factors resulting from the analysis explaining a total of 62.719 percent of the variations in the entire data set. The percentage variation explained by first factor is 48.788 percent and second factor is 13.931 percent..



The scree plot gives the number of components against the Eigen value. In the above plot the first two components have steep slope and later the slope is shallow. Thus, the ideal number of components is two.

	Component	
	1	2
Satisfied with work from home arrangement	-.763	.166
Internet connectivity problem due to WFH	.637	-.329
Difficulty to maintain a regular schedule due to WFH	.052	.889
Childcare as a challenge	.701	.316
Difficulty to maintain physical work space	.782	.093
Proper communication with your co- workers	-.821	.100
Too many distractions due to WFH	.753	.173
Feel social isolation due to WFH	.741	.243

The maximum of each row (ignoring the sign) indicates that respective variable belongs to respective component. The variables Not satisfied with WFH arrangement, Internet connectivity problems, childcare challenge, difficulty to maintain physical work space, no proper communication with co-workers, too many distractions, feel social isolation are highly correlated and contribute to a single component factor 1. Difficulty to maintain a regular schedule alone contribute to Factor 2. First factor is purely the reflections due to WFH and Second factor is purely a human behaviour.

## **12. Suggestions**

Through the survey, it is clear that people are facing high stress and social isolation due to work from home. They face lack of clarity in communications among their team members. They are not able to take regular breaks during their jobs. So, to resolve these problems, management of each enterprise should make working hours more flexible which will help to maintain work-life balance. Likewise, they should also ensure enough breaks during duty time. Otherwise, employees will get exhausted and they won't be able to spend time with their family which will result in social isolation.

Companies can provide training to employees to balance their professional and personal life due to work from home. And also, by providing flexible work schedules they will be able to work stress and distraction freely. If needed, companies can also provide positive talk sessions to employees to reduce their stress and social isolation.

In addition to this, organizations should avoid overtime jobs. Because, it will increase the stress level of individuals, which will damage their personal life. So, by taking some new initiatives, the psychological impacts due to new normal can be reduced to a great extent.

## **13. Conclusion**

COVID-19 is having a great impact in the life style of human beings. New normalization like work from home has been emerged in our societies. This research, aimed to understand the impacts of work from home with respect to work category and gender due to Covid-19. Through this research, it is clear that, lots of people are facing lots of psychological and physical problems due to work from home. 40% of the respondents in this survey states that, they having high level of stress disorders due to work from home. So that, they are not able to maintain a proper work life balance. 48% of people always feel social isolation from society and their families due to work from home. 54% of people are not able to maintain proper work life balance due to work from home. WFH has proven to be advantageous for the employees especially when this survey took place during the global pandemic situation of COVID-19. But on the other side of it, employees who are working from home do face big challenges such as according to the survey conducted keeping a regular schedule is the main problem. The result of this study portrays that only 9% of respondents feel that they are able to balance their work life while working from home.

Moreover, through our test, it is proved that stress is more for females when compared to male. They are struggling to handle work life and personal life. Female employees are having great struggle in the case of child care. This is one of the main reasons for the stress caused for women more than men. Due to this, they are having problems in their personal life too.

In order to overcome these problems, organizations have to implement policies which will ensure flexibility of working hours, regular breaks etc. Thus, the stress and social isolation faced by the employees can be reduced. This descriptive study helps to understand the impacts of work from home in human life.

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