

Challenges Faced by Employees in Maintaining Work-Life Balance During Work from Home in Covid-19 Pandemic in India

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Abstract

This study includes the various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employees of India. The worldwide pandemic has reduced the performance of the employees and affects the overall growth of the organizations. Moreover, the concept of work-life balance is crucial for the employee's health and healthy work environment of the workplaces. The coronavirus has shown various impacts on employees for maintaining a balance between work and personal life of the employees. Due to the mode of work from home, the employees are not able to extract some time to spend with their friends and family. The study shed light on the importance of maintaining the work life balance in the duration of work from home because of the covid-19 pandemic situation.

Apart from that, to analyses the challenges that the employees of several companies have to face to maintain work life balance during work from home is the purpose of this study. Therefore, it is identified that the engagement of the employees towards their work is important for the development of productivity of any company. Furthermore, a proper environment for work is important for the engagement of employees towards their work and at home this engagement becomes poor. This study also includes the primary and secondary methods and techniques adopted for the completion of the research. Hence the techniques and the methods that the research has used are useful and the data that are collected are also analysed by using proper technique.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, lockdown, work from home, pandemic, work life balance, employees, engagement, maintain

Introduction

The global pandemic COVID-19 is a pandemic that spreads across the world and creates many challenges for societies in various ways. The pandemic has also forced the population of the entire world to learn many different practices like working from home, leisure and many other tasks. Moreover, the pandemic has not only affected the individual country but has also affected the entire world with various challenges. In addition to this, it has also shut down the economy of the world and brought the whole economic sector to a stand at a point. There are lots of difficulties faced by the employees and different countries regarding the jobs and businesses. The pandemic has mostly affected the healthcare sectors and forced the sector to make necessary changes such as planning, facilities and training.

The society of the entire world is not mentally prepared for these numerous and sudden changes so they are also affected by this pandemic. The various issues developed in the working style of employees and impacts of lockdown and coronavirus are also discussed briefly in the study. Before the pandemic nobody has planned their future and work-life balance, they have various doubts and different questions regarding their future life and work balance. Along with that, after the pandemic they have a clear vision that if they do not plan about their future life then there must be serious consequences on their life. There is great importance of the work-life balance, especially for the employees. Some companies and businesses have adopted the practice of working from home; not all organizations have adopted these techniques and working styles. So, the employees of those organizations are facing critical issues like lack of money and many others. Furthermore, the results of the challenges and adopting the working from style and its discussions are also elaborated briefly.

Impact of Lockdown and COVID-19 on Employees

The coronavirus pandemic has started at the year-end of 2019 from Wuhan, China. In Wuhan, the first case of this deadly virus has been reported and slowly it spread in the entire world. Moreover, it has caused many businesses and lives of human beings to be at risk. All the operations of the entire world have been stopped and all the population of the country has to stay at home which additionally creates many health risks to the population of the globe (Kaushik and Guleria, 2020). The pandemic has not only created challenges for the employees but also impacted the organizations which result in the adoption of the different practices for running the business and forces the employees to learn and adopt these technologies to secure their jobs in the time of the pandemic. The pandemic has impacted the mental and physical health of the people and makes them lazy as all the movements have been stopped so all the people of the world have to stay at home which creates additional impacts on their minds and body.

In India, the first case positive case of the virus has been reported in March 2020 and there is no doubt that this virus has impacted the country at a small rate (Woloret *al.* 2020). After the first case of the corona, the number of positive cases has grown exponentially which increases the challenges for the healthcare industry of the country to improve the systems, beds, sanitizers, corona testing and many others. The virus has forced the total population of the country and employees of the healthcare industry to take care of certain vital measures for their protection such as wearing of PPE kit, using sanitizers and regularly washing of hands with soap and so on (Jain and Mohanan, 2020).

The increasing positive cases of the coronavirus forced the country to make a lockdown in order to stop the spread of corona on the entire population of the country and save the living population of the country. In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the migrant labourers and employees into the situation of extreme despair, homeless, hunger, mass migration to go back to their homes and be jobless (Singh and Kumar, 2020). More than thousands of employees or migrant labourers walking on the national highways and roads with their kids and families return to their villages as the operations of urban areas have been stopped (Joshi *et al.* 2020). The rural economy of the country is not designed to fulfil the needs of the local labourers which forced the labourers to go to other cities for work.

The legal authorities of India must develop and make necessary arrangements to create many opportunities for the local labourers in their rural areas or villages that do not force them further to go outside for employment. The pandemic has affected the mental health of people by influencing their anxiety levels, fears and worries (Patil and Gopalakrishnan, 2020). During the time of pandemic in addition to the cases of the corona, many cases are also seen related to mental problems. On the other hand, in spite of the negative impacts of the coronavirus on the employees and overall population, there are many other positive changes such as flexibility of working. Before the pandemic, most of the employees came from various distances to do work so the pandemic provides them some relief in the form of working from home (Debataet *al.* 2020). The below figure shows the changes noticed in the employment rate of India.

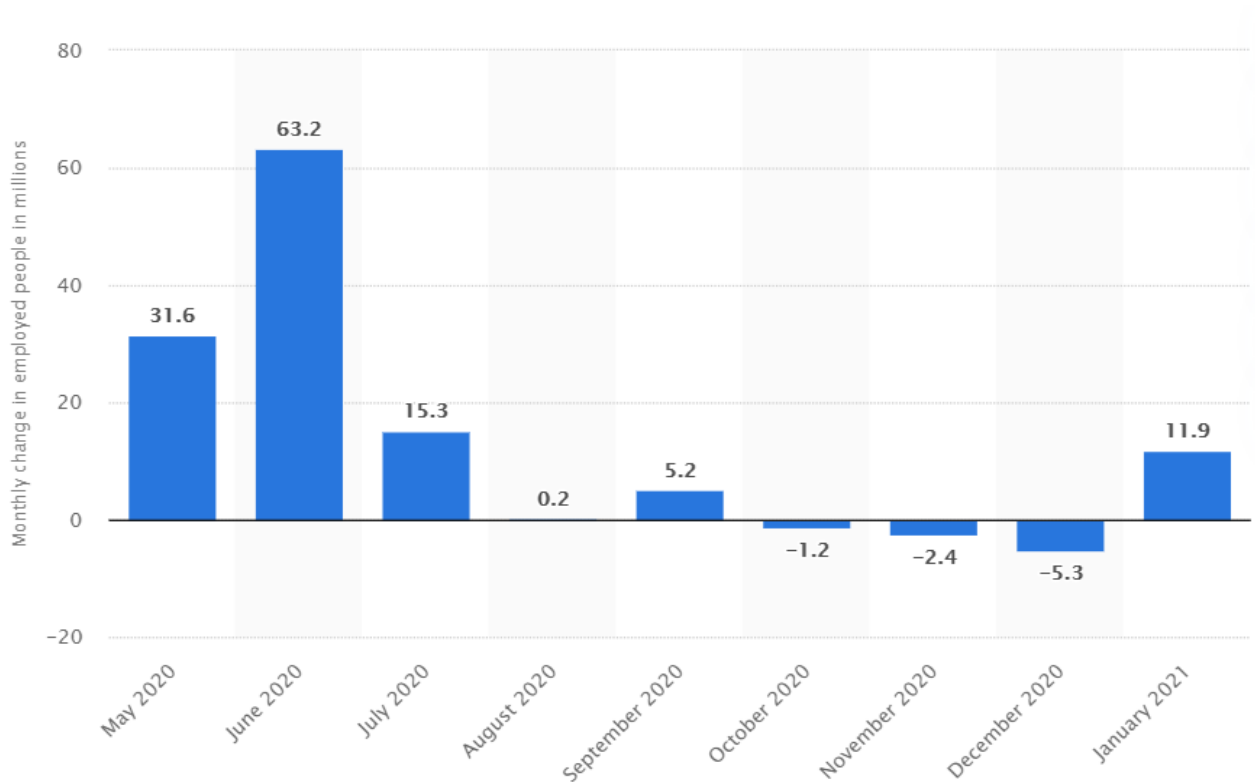


Figure 1: Impact of COVID-19 on the employment rate of India

(Source: Statista Research Department, 2021)

The above-given figure illustrates that during the starting period of lockdown and most of the companies have stopped their operation whereas some of the companies have adopted the work from home style to run their business with a limited number of employees. In the time of May 2020, the employment rate of the country has been reduced to 31.6 million and the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have recorded multiple new job opportunities in the country which has been raised to 63.2 million in the year June 2020 (Dwivediet *al.* 2020). Furthermore, after June2020 the employment rate of the country has observed a sudden fall and noticed the employment rate as 15.3 million in the next month July 2020.

The situation has become worse than ever due to the increasing cases of coronavirus patients and the reported employment rate of 0.2 million in August 2020. Along with that, the situation has not become better and the same situation has continued up to December 2020 (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). After the end of the year 2020, the starting month of January of 2021 has recorded sudden growth in the employment rate with 11.9 million new job opportunities for the employees.

Importance of work-life balance and employee’s engagement in pandemic

Keeping a balance between work and personal life is not only crucial for human health but also their relationships. In addition to this, the work-life balance also improves the productivity of the employees and their performance. The work-life balance also makes the work environment healthy for the employees and helps the employees to reduce stress, anxiety and protects themselves from several burnouts from the workplaces. In the workplace, the most common and impactful health problem is chronic stress. According to a survey, it is observed that 28.64 % of people in India have reported an increase in workload pressure which has influenced their overall work-life balance (Prasad *et al.* 2020). Along with that, 32.9% of the

country's population has reported that due to the changed working style they are uncomfortable and unsatisfied with the changed mode of working.

20.33% of the employee population of the country has reported they have required improvement in the work-life balance. In the pandemic time, most of the employees are staying at home and some of the employees are working from the comfort of their home stating that they are not able to properly and get engaged with their colleagues that decreases their performance and overall growth of the business (Halley *et al.* 2021). The schedule of working from home has not allowed the employees to spend time with family and friends. All the time the employees go through working on their laptops or desktops. The continuous working in front of the computers impacts the health and directly impacts the eyes of the employees.

There are a lot of challenges that the employees of several companies have to face during the COVID19 pandemic. Therefore, emotional exhaustion is a big challenge for the employees to do work from home and maintain the work life balance. A good environment for work is important and the environment of home somehow is not proper for work. Therefore because of that emotional exhaustion occurs and that became a challenge for the employees to maintain the work life balance during the covid pandemic (Woloret *al.* 2020). Apart from that work interference with the personal life of the employees is another challenge that the employees have to face during the work from home duration due to covid-19 pandemic. As it is mentioned before that a proper environment is very important to develop the work growth of an employee and therefore the environment of a home is not appropriate for work. Thereafter in the environment of home the employees have to face the interference of personal life in their work in the COVID19 pandemic situation.

Apart from that, maintaining a work life balance is very important for good work. All the companies and businesses were closed for a certain time due to the covid-19 pandemic situation. Therefore, now when the companies are open and employees can work by using the facility of work from home they should work properly for the growth of the companies (Yunuset *al.* 2020). Apart from that the economic condition of the employees was impacted by the covid-19 pandemic and it is identified due to this situation the economic condition has decreased. Thereafter working properly is the way to develop the economic condition of the company and that will lead to the development of the economic condition of the employees.

On the other hand, there are some ways that can be helpful in the maintenance of work life balance such as identifying the importance of work life balance for the development of the work of the employees. First of all, the employees have to understand that work-life balance is important for proper working and a better outcome. Apart from that, defining the home in an office is another way to maintain the work life balance (Schiemanet *al.* 2021). Not the entire home but only one room for one section of the home can be defined as an office. There are such things that are helpful to create a proper environment for work and the employees should adopt those things and create an environment in the home for maintaining work life balance during the work from home duration in the covid-19 pandemic.

Methods and Techniques

The usage of several methods and techniques is very important for making a remarkable research study. Therefore, there are different types of techniques for collecting proper and accurate data and analysis of the data. For this project different types of techniques for collecting more and more data about the research topic have been used. There are generally two types of techniques for collecting the data such as primary technique for collecting the data and secondary technique for collecting data (Chu, 2017). Primary technique for collecting proper data is one of the most important methods and the technique is based on

real life experiences and because of that the technique helps to get some genuine and proper information about the research topic. Apart from that, the secondary technique is equally important for any research study and helps to collect proper and accurate data. Furthermore, the secondary technique of collecting data is based on the primary techniques of collecting data.

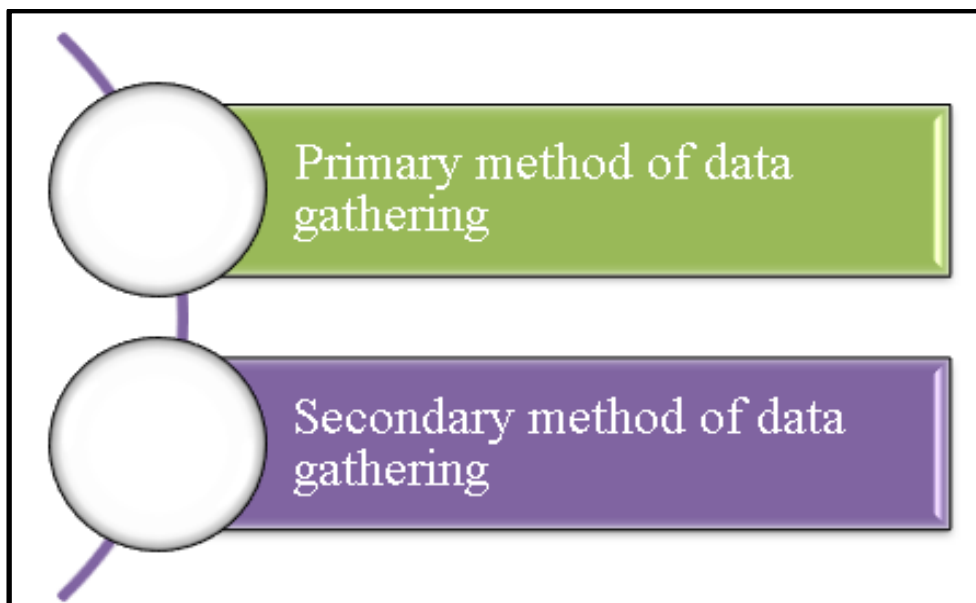


Figure 2: Techniques of collecting data

(Source: Garcia, 2018)

On the other hand, there are a lot of resources for these techniques of collecting data. This project has adopted the **secondary technique for collecting data** about the importance of work life balance during the pandemic situation. Primary data collection methods and online survey method for the completion of the study and 51 participants have participated in the online survey process have also been used. Moreover, the data that are collected by some primary users and then published are called the secondary data. Therefore the **secondary technique** and the resources of the secondary technique of data collecting are books, newspapers, government records, magazines, public records, articles, journals and other published sources (Garcia, 2018) have also been utilised for this project. Furthermore, the sources of secondary techniques of collecting data are very effective and efficient to collect appropriate data about the research topic.

Apart from that, the data and knowledge that has been gained from those journals and articles will be analysed in this research study properly. Gained knowledge about the importance of work life balance during the pandemic situation by using some articles and journals that are published between 2017-2021 is also being used. In addition to that, the secondary technique is helpful to gain knowledge about the research topic and helpful to gain more and more information about any topic (Jiang *et al.* 2019). Thus, this is the reason that the secondary technique for collecting proper data about the importance of work life balance in the pandemic has been used. Along with that, the COVID19 pandemic is another reason because in this situation, primary techniques cannot be used. Hence it can be said that the usage of secondary techniques in this particular research study was worthy because the technique was helpful to gain knowledge and information about the challenges that the employees have to face during the COVID19 pandemic for maintaining work life balance.

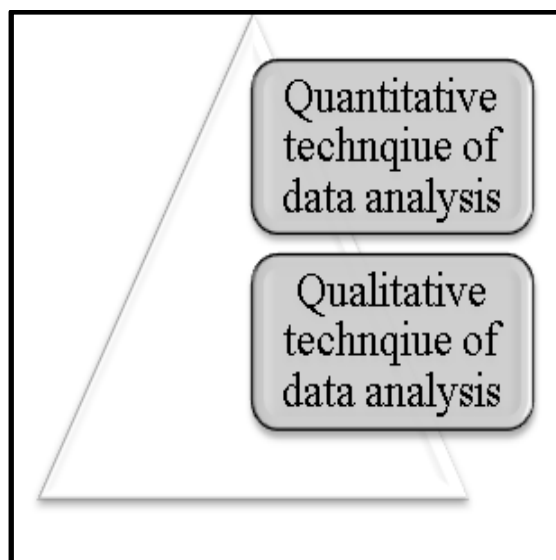


Figure 3: Techniques of analysis of data

(Source: Shah *et al.* 2020)

In addition to that, the project has adopted proper techniques for analysing the collected data. Basically, there are two types of techniques for analysing the collected data such as qualitative technique for analysing data and quantitative technique for analysing the data. Both of the techniques are impactful and efficient for analysing the collected data properly. Furthermore, the quantitative technique is used for analysing the data that are collected by using the secondary technique. Along with that, the **qualitative technique** is used for analysing the data that are collected by using the secondary techniques (Shah *et al.* 2020). As the secondary technique for collecting data has been used, therefore the researcher had to use the qualitative technique for analysing the data. Thus, the data that are collected, are analysed below by using the qualitative technique in this particular research study.

Results and Discussion

Challenges	Solution	Sources
Lack of communication	Using several digital applications for video conferencing and joining team meeting is important	Carnevale, 2020
Distraction	Create a specific room so that no noise can enter and in this way the employees can solve the problem of distraction.	Tawalbehet <i>al.</i> 2020
Lack of motivation	Use several types of strategies to enhance the skills of self-motivation.	Kaushik, 2020
Disturbance of technology	Keeping a spare laptop for emergencies is safe when the disturbance of technology	Diraniet <i>al.</i> 2020

	occurs. Apart from that, during the disturbance of WIFI connection, the employees can use mobile data.	
Lack of proper environment	There are a lot of things that help to create a proper environment for work. Therefore, the employees should adopt those strategies.	Rysavy, 2020
Exhaustion	The issues or challenges that are described above are the reason for exhaustion. Therefore, solving those problems is the solution to this challenge.	Ahmed <i>et al.</i> 2020

Table 1: Challenges that employees are facing during work from home and solution

(Source: self-made)

It is identified that there are a lot of challenges that the employees of several companies have to face in the duration of work from home due to the covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are analyzed in the above table and some of their solutions are also analyzed. It is identified that more than **38 %** of employees are unable to maintain the work life balance during work from home (Dirani et al. 2020). One of the biggest challenges is lack of communication skills. In addition to that, face to face interactions are important for work to understand all the information properly. During the work from home in covid-19 pandemic the face to face interaction was not possible and the communication between the employees through technical devices is only the way for interaction. Therefore, there are some solutions to this particular challenge such as using several digital applications. Furthermore, there are a lot of digital applications nowadays that help to communicate with others in an innovative way by using video conferencing processes.

Apart from that, joining all the team meetings through those applications is important for the employees to develop productivity. In addition to that, distraction is another big challenge for the employees during work from home. As the environment of a home is not the proper environment for work and because of that the noise and several types of activities can distract the employees in home from their work (Ahmed et al. 2020). Therefore, there is also a solution for distraction such as creating a specific room in the house. The employees that are unable to be attentive towards their work during the duration of work from home, can create a specific room for their work so that any kind of noise or activities can enter to distract the employee. Therefore, it will be helpful for them to be attentive towards their work and that will be helpful to enhance the productivity of the employees.

On the other hand, lack of self-motivation skill is another big challenge for employees during work from home. As there are a lot of challenges the employees have to face and because of that they can have exhaustion. At this time motivation is very important to keep yourselves attentive towards your work and lack of self-motivation skill can be a big challenge in this time. Therefore, using several types of theories and strategies can help the employees to improve their self-motivation skills (Tawalbeh et al. 2020). Thus, they should use those strategies such as reading books and knowing yourself. Apart from this there is another challenge during work from home for the employees and that is disturbance of technology full stop as we

all know the uses of technology in our works is increased and disturbance of internet and technology e is a big challenge for the employees. To solve this challenge or issue the employees can keep a spare laptop with them for emergencies.

In addition to that they can use their mobile data whenever the disturbance of Wi-Fi connection occurs. Furthermore, lack of a proper environment is another challenge for the employees during work from home (Rysavy, 2020). Hence there are some specific things that can help them to create a proper environment of work. Therefore, the employees can use some of those things to create a working environment in their homes for better outcomes. Along with that the employees can face exhaustion due to all these issues and that can affect the work of the employees. Hence the solution of the issues or problems that are described above in this study is the solution to reduce exhaustion.

The situation of remote working is new and unique for most of the population of India. The above-given figure shows three categories of employees such as new remote employees who have experienced less than 3 months. In addition to this, other categories of employees are oriented remote employees who have experience between 3 months and 1 year. Moreover, the tenured employees have experienced more than 1 year in remote conditions.

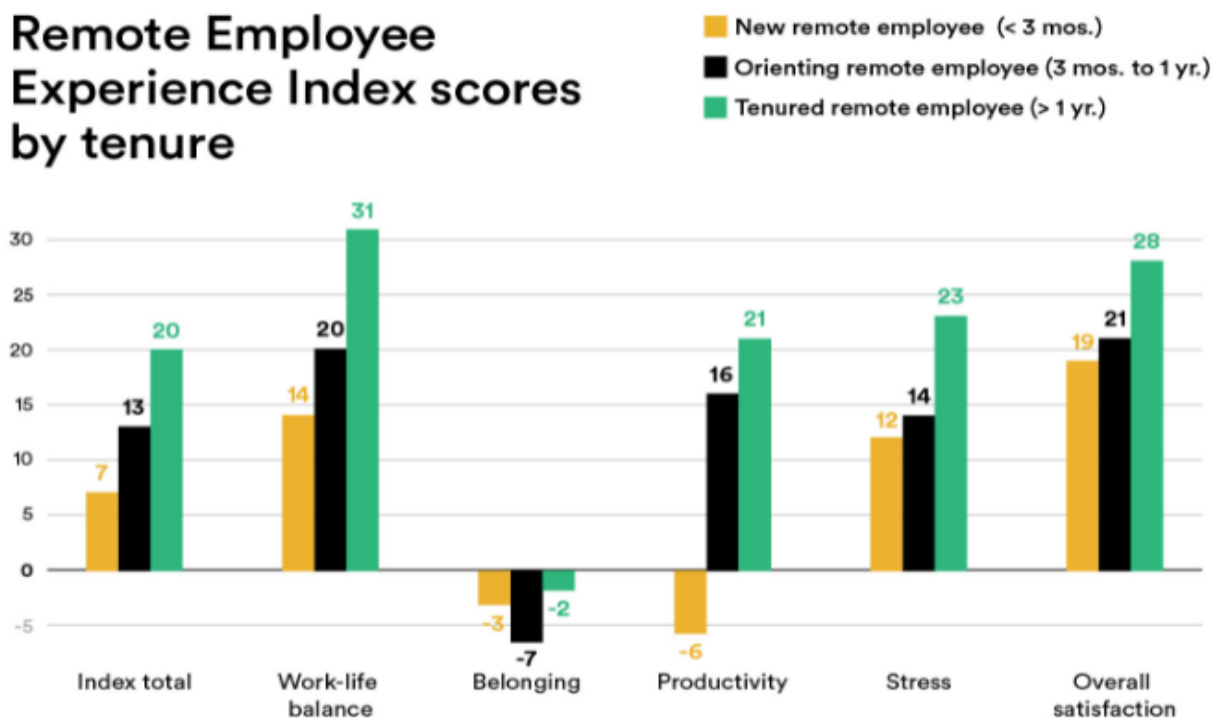


Figure 4: Experience Index scores of employees while working remotely

(Source: Dwivediet al. 2020)

From the above figure, there are several problems faced by the employees during working in the work from home scenario: productivity, overall satisfaction, stress, work-life balance and belonging. In the case of balancing, between work and personal life, 31 scores given by the employees of the tenured group have reported that they have balanced the work and personal effectively (Anwer, 2020). Along with that, remote-oriented employees have responded with 20 scores that they have balanced the work-life and 14 scores of new employees have said that they are maintaining the work-life balance. All the employees of

the three categories have reported that they do not belong to remote working. On the other hand, productivity index scores are 21 in tenured and 16 in oriented employees but new employees have not reported productivity in their working (Prasada *et al.* 2020).

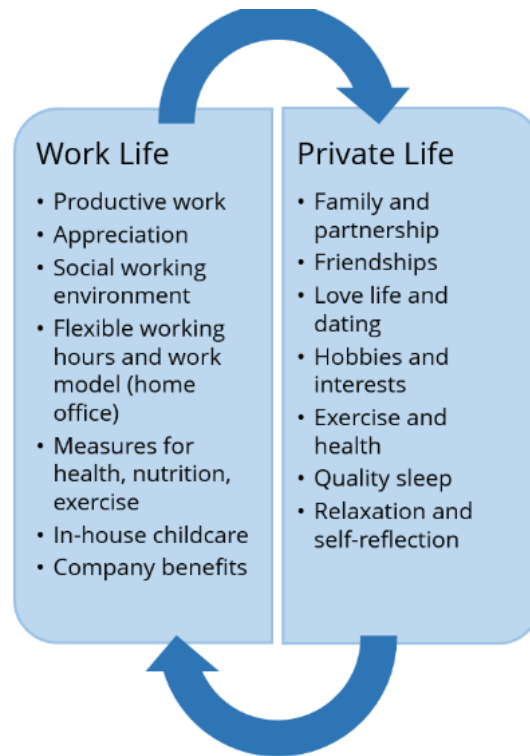


Figure 5: Work life balance

(Source: GS, 2020)

Many employees have faced the situation of stress in their changed style of working. In working from home the score given by employees who have experienced the situation of stress, 23 scores in tenure employees, 14 scores in oriented employees and 12 scores in new employees (GS, 2020). In addition to this, 29 scores have been given by the tenured employees that they are overall satisfied with the situation of remote working. The index scores of satisfaction are given by oriented and new employees are 21 and 19.

Q1. What is your age?

In the survey process, a total 51 participants have participated for their response in the survey process. Out of the 51 respondents, 20 respondents are between the age 10 to 20, 14 people of them are between the age 21 to 30. Moreover, 2 people are between the age group 31 to 40, in the age group of 41 to 60 years only 11 people lie between and 4 people are above 60 years of age.

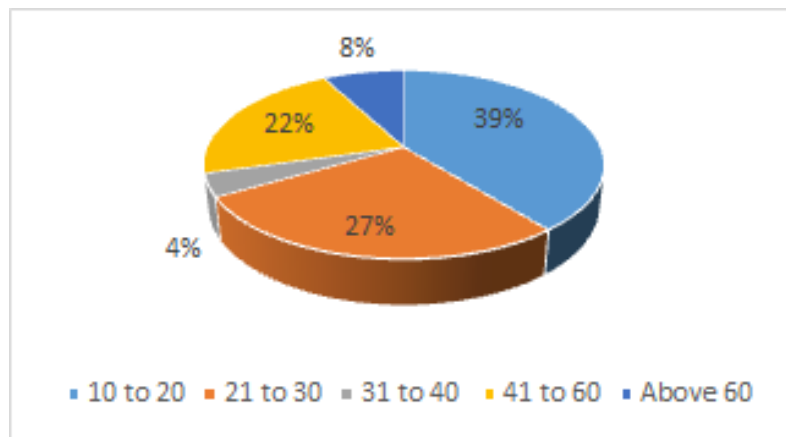


Figure 6: Age of the Respondents

(Source: MS Excel)

Q2. What is your gender?

Out of the 51 respondents, there are different genders working remotely and have participated in the survey process, the number of male respondents are 18. In addition to this, the number of female respondents are 14, 4 people are from transgender category and 6 people are from others category.

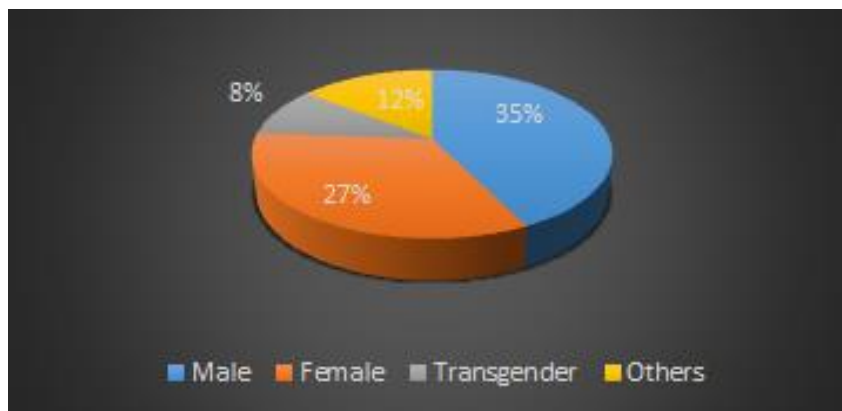


Figure 7: Gender of the Respondents

(Source: MS Excel)

Q3. Have you faced communication problems?

The respondents have reported that they have faced communication problems while working from home. 17 respondents from the 51 respondents have regularly faced the communication problem. Moreover, 23 respondents have faced communication problems every week and 1 respondent have reported that there is a communication problem every month. In addition to this, 4 and 6 people have responded that they have faced the problem of communication very often and never. From the responses it is clear that most of the employees are facing communication problems.

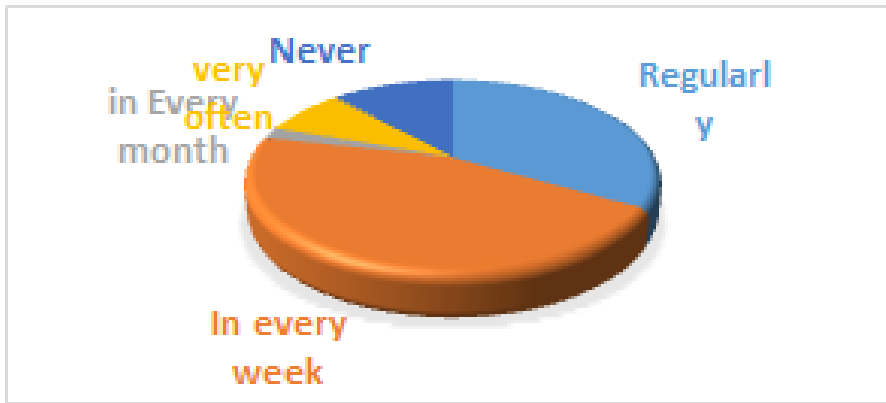


Figure 8: Problem of communication

(Source: MS Excel)

Q4. Do you ever feel a lack of motivation in the workplace?

Out of the 51 respondents, 11 people have responded that there is a lack of motivation regularly in the workplace. In addition to this, 19 people have reported that there is lack of motivation every week and 5 people also feel lack of motivation in the workplace every month. Along with that, 10 and 6 people have responded that there is a lack of motivation in the workplace very often and never. According to the responses, most of the employees have felt lack of motivation in the workplace.

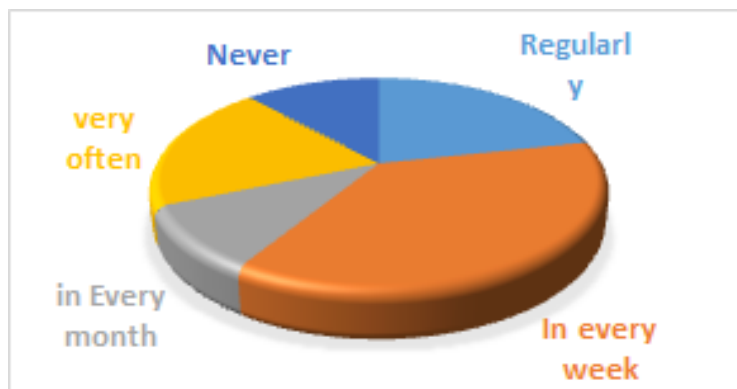


Figure 9: Lack of motivation in the workplace

(Source: MS Excel)

Q5. Have you been distracted by personal work while working from home?

The number of people strongly agreed and agreed that there is a distraction problem while working remotely are 8 and 7. In addition to this, 2 people have not felt the distractions while working from home. Moreover, the 20 and 14 people disagree and strongly disagree that they have not been distracted by the personal work in working from home. As per the responses it can be estimated that employees are distracted by their personal works.

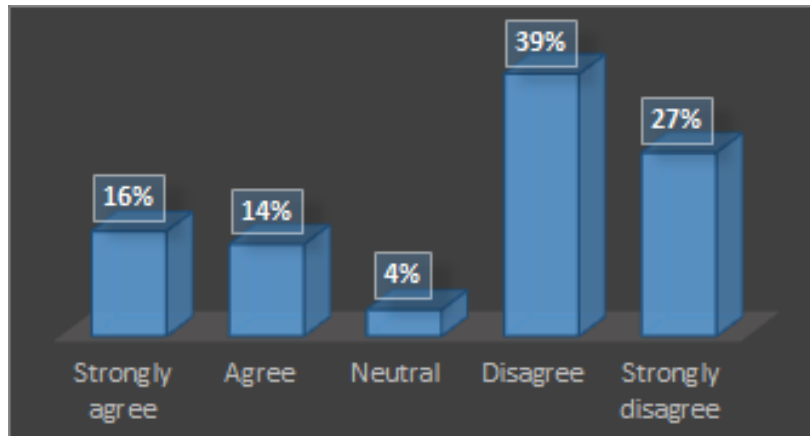


Figure 10: Distraction by personal works in work from home

(Source: MS Excel)

Q6. Do you ever feel technological problems while working from home?

The number and responses of the people who have faced the technological problems of vehicles working from home are 8 and strongly agree, 7 and agree, 2 and neutral, 30 and disagree, and 4 and strongly disagree. Therefore from the responses it is clear that employees have faced technological problems in remote working situations.

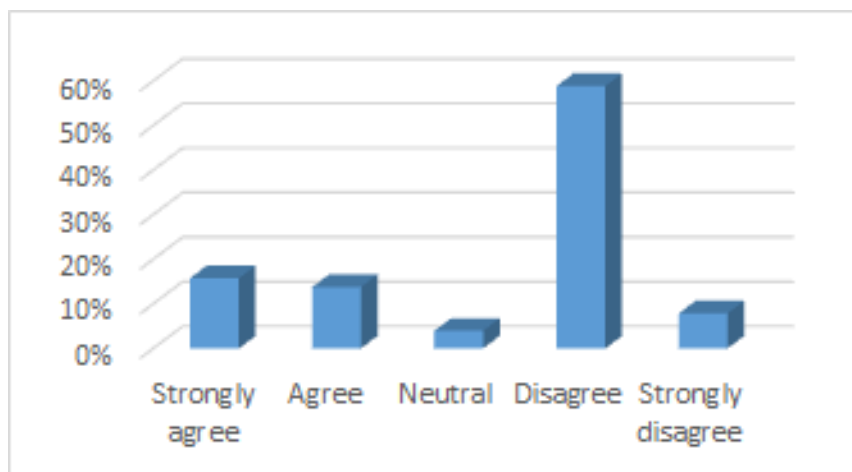


Figure 11: Technological problems in working from home

(Source: MS Excel)

Q7. Do you think that there is a lack of positive working culture?

30 people strongly agree, 4 people agree, 2 people neutral, 11 people disagree and 4 people disagree that there is a lack of positivity in the working culture. From the responses of the respondents, it is clear that most of the employees have felt that there is lack of positivity in the working culture.

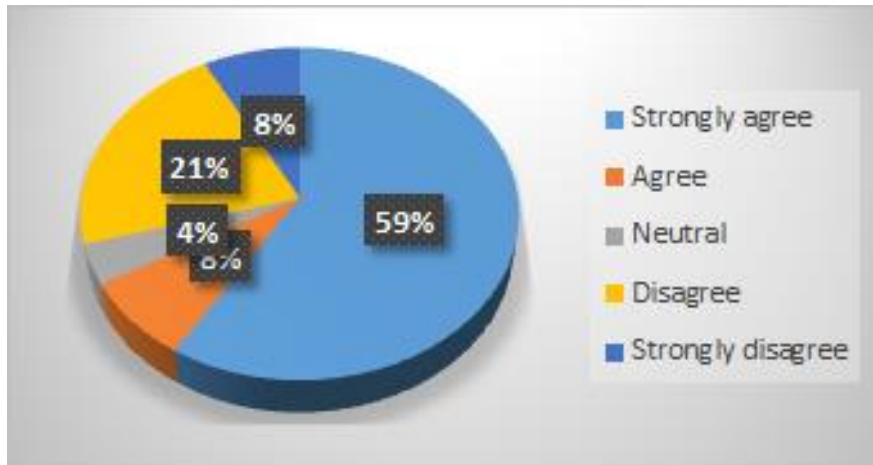


Figure 12: Lack of positive working culture

(Source: MS Excel)

Q8. Have you faced collaboration problems while working remotely?

Regarding the collaboration problems the number of respondents is 20 strongly agree, 14 agree, 11 neutral, 2 disagree and 4 strongly disagree. From the below given figure it can be estimated that employees have faced the collaboration problems while working remotely.

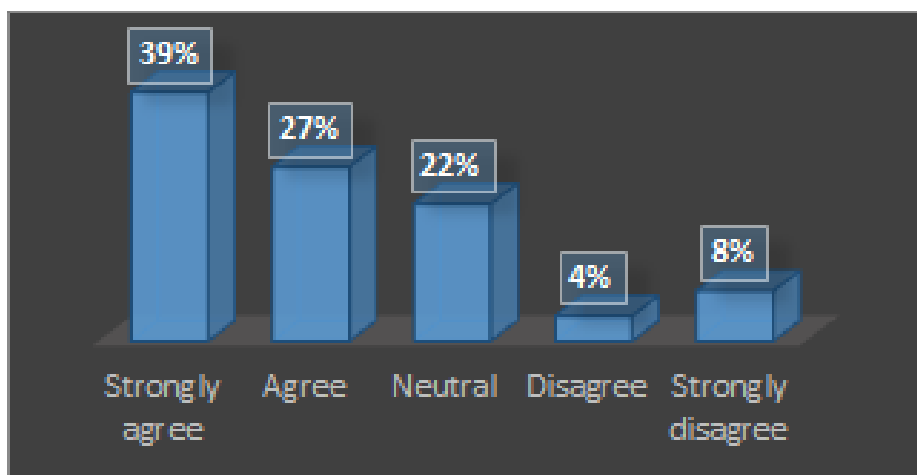


Figure 13: Collaboration problems in remote working

(Source: MS Excel)

Q9. Do you agree that it is impossible to maintain a balance between work and personal life?

25 people strongly agree, 19 people agree, 10 people neutral, 3 and 4 people disagree and strongly disagree that it is impossible to maintain work-life balance. According to the figure, most of the employees have responded that maintaining a balance between work and life is impossible.

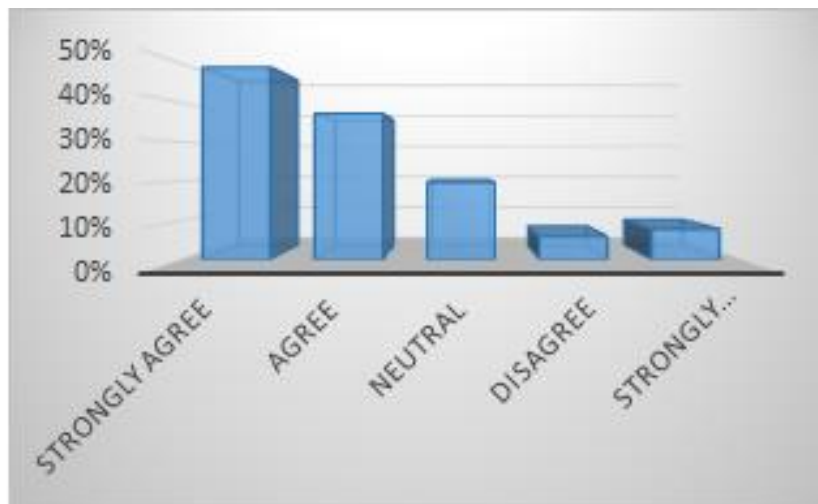


Figure 14: Impossible to balance between work and personal life

(Source: MS Excel)

Q10. Do you think your performance has improved at work from home?

The responses of the people regarding the improvement in the performance of the employee in working from home are 35 strongly agree, 16 agree, 7 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree. As per the responses and below give figures it is clear that the performance of the employees has improved in working from home.

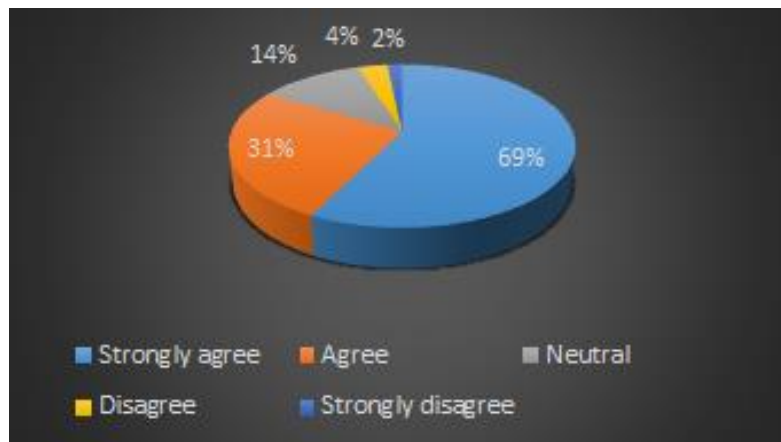


Figure 15: Performance improved in working from home

Conclusion

This study includes the challenges faced by the employees after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in maintaining the balance between work and personal life during remote working. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire population of the country along with the entire world. The global pandemic has affected the economy of the world and shut down all the operations throughout the world. The pandemic also has forced the employees or the population of the world to think about their future and learn various practices like working from home, leisure and many others. On the other hand, the pandemic has mostly impacted the migrant labourers of the country who live in the rural areas and go to urban areas for work. In addition to this, the epidemic has impacted the employment rate of the country. There is a vital

significance of making a balance between work and personal life, the work-life balance makes the environment of the workplace healthy and positive.

It also improves the engagement between the employees and helps them to decrease the stress level, anxiety and many others. The secondary data collection method has been used by the researcher for the completion of the study. The data is collected from journals, articles, research papers, newspapers published after the year 2017. Additionally, for the analysis of the collected data qualitative techniques have been undertaken. Furthermore, the employees have faced many challenges such as lack of proper communication, distraction, lack of motivation, exhaustion and many others. These problems can be solved by using digital applications for meetings and video conferencing. Using different kinds of strategies for enhancing self-motivation and making a particular room for remote working reduces the distraction. At last, the index score according to the employee's experience in working from home has also been discussed

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