

# To Study the Indian Perspective on the Concept of Work from Home

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## Abstract

*Cranky boss, long working hours, and standing behind line of cars. Work from home shall save you time, for reduction in expenses shall save you lots of time*

There comes a time in every employee's life when he pictures himself free from his monotonous nightmare of long office hours and then getting stuck in traffic. Nonetheless, there also comes a time when he feels that his office brings the best out of him. Working From Home (WFH) is a debatable concept which is being explored by an increasing number of organizations across the globe. The main objective behind this research paper is to focus and understand the current perception of the concept of WFH. The study aims to seek the correlation and analyze its suitability in the Indian work environment. The paper also highlights its merits, demerits and proposes certain recommendations. The research methodology includes primary data over a survey sample of 50 employees, belonging to the IT Sector of Pune. The secondary data includes information collected from analogous research papers, case studies and articles that were sourced from the internet, as well as newspapers and magazines.

**Keywords:** Concept, Employees, Office, WFH

## 1. Introduction

Work from home is a concept of working in an organization where the employees do not have to commute to a single and central place of work. It is also called telecommuting, remote work, or telework. WFH is a popular concept that has evolved over the years. Advances in technology and communications have enabled people to work effectively and efficiently without being constantly at their desks in the office<sup>8</sup>. Yahoo's chief executive Marissa Mayer said "Speed and quality are often sacrificed when we work from home. We need to be one Yahoo!, and that starts with physically being together<sup>13</sup>". This move brought about several arguments regarding the work from home concept<sup>10</sup>. Such a move by a multinational corporation like Yahoo, points out to various shortcomings of the concept.

## 2. Review of Literature

In their article, Boas Shamir and Ilan Salomon<sup>1,2</sup> talks about the aspects of working from home and from an office and how the decision of a workplace influences an

office and how the decision of a workplace influences an employee's. It also focuses on the aspect of how an individual's well-being positively influences his satisfaction and stress in work life. The authors don't make their own analysis but instead takes up different examples to show the current and future aspects of telecommuting and its impact on one's quality of life. One of the first characteristics focused on was autonomy. On one hand, since the employees are not closely supervised, their level of autonomy might increase but at the same time in case of females, the level of freedom might decrease due to household demands. Certain organizations gave their employees an option to choose between telecommuting and regular office environment, while others imposed the idea of work-from-home. People working from home mainly rely on technology; therefore the face to face feedback aspect is limited and henceforth receives lower quality of feedback from their superiors and supervisors. And lack of contact with colleagues would reduce the quality of work as an employee would not be able to retain his competitiveness. It also weighs both positive and negative aspects

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of working from home in cases of working women. A comparison is made between the domestic stress and the work stress and how that would affect their quality of life on a whole. The inability to segregate work from non-work tends to increase stress in individuals mainly in case of fairer sex. A one of its kind experiment on work-from-home was conducted at a Chinese travel agency by the students of Stanford University, during the course of nine months<sup>6,7</sup>. The only difference between the office and home workers was that of location, with everything else remaining the same. This experiment showed that working from home led to performance increase, which could be attributed to fewer breaks, sick days and a quieter working environment. Such workers were reported to have improved work satisfaction, with the company personnel turnover remaining minimum. However, their promotion rate conditional on performance fell. The experiment illustrated the fact that executives were vary of this concept as it had high chances of leading the employees to 'shirk from work'. From the employees' point of view, the favorable prospects were time and money saved on commuting. However, they were worried about isolation, losing out on long-term career opportunities and reducing their chance of being chosen for promotion due to lack of face-to-face interactions with the respective bosses and lack of interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in managerial positions. Deborah L. Cohen's "Government Work-at home<sup>3,4</sup>" article showed how the productivity of those working at home was more than those working onsite. Work at home made the worker flexible and in control of his day. The U.S. Patent and Trademark office (PTO) introduced telecommuting in 1997 with 18 attorneys. It now has around 6,500 attorneys. PTO was also successful in providing its workers with all the technologies-computer, faxes, access to agency systems and online research to replicate the office environment in their homes. Telecommuting is now emerging as a business strategy. An important advantage is that employees stay connected even during bad weather conditions like snow storms. WFH greatly saved \$11 million in real estate costs as well as the carbon footprint. WFH is especially suitable for standardized legal work, the performance of the attorneys for which can be clearly evaluated. Everyone knows exactly how much is expected from them. Nathaniel Borenstein and Ben Waber<sup>5</sup> focused on both the possible pros and cons to come to a conclusion whether work from home strategy is beneficial for an organization as well as its employees.

They came to the conclusion that the feasibility of the concept was based on the structure of the employer and the motivation of the employees. Flexibility also widens the prospective candidate pool. Being open to physically handicapped or geographically isolated workers can improve the chances for finding a highly qualified candidate. They pointed out the demerits that lack of face to face interaction would ultimately negatively affect the employees' performance and mental health.

### 3. Objectives and Methodology

For the purpose of this research paper, both primary and secondary sources of information have been used. The primary sources consist of a sample size of 50 people, belonging to employees of the IT Sector. This sample was chosen mainly because the employees of the IT Sector can have a flexible work environment due to the technological advancement in the Information Technology Field. Each one was made to fill in a questionnaire, which focused mainly on present day usage of the concept of Work from Home and its implementation in various organizations throughout Pune City. The secondary data includes information collected from analogous research papers, case studies and articles that were sourced from the internet, as well as newspapers and magazines.

#### 3.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective behind this research paper is to focus and understand the current perception of the concept of WFH among the working class of Pune City and hence reach a conclusion regarding its trend in the City. Also, the paper focuses on the study of the impact of the concept of 'work from home' on the employees. The study aims to seek the correlation and analyze its suitability in the Indian work environment. The paper also highlights its merits and demerits.

#### 3.2 Research Methodology

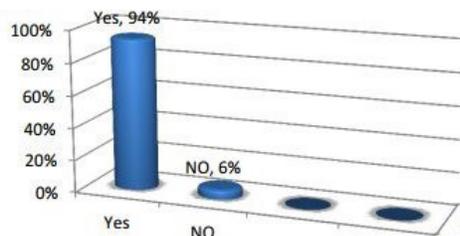
##### 3.2.1 Sample, Source of Data Collection and Statistical Tool

The research is based on primary data collected from a sample of 50 people from the City of Pune. Data was collected through a questionnaire and in depth interviews of the sample belonging to various Income and Age Groups. Secondary data in the form of articles published in books, journals, magazines, research papers, newspapers

and reports was also referred.

## 4. Discussion and Result

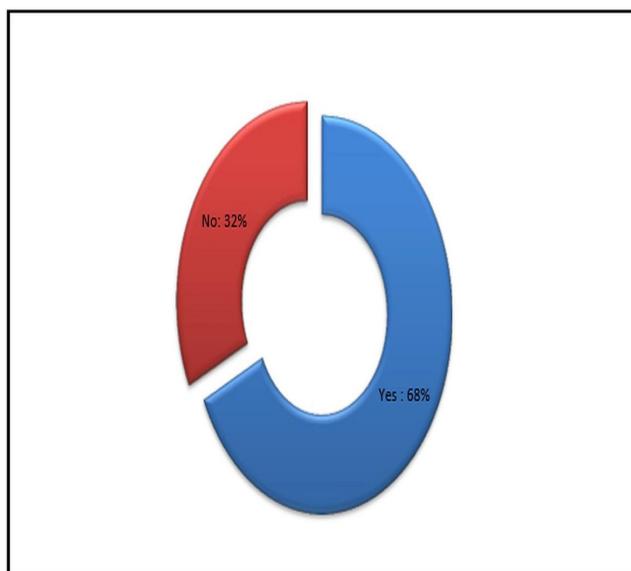
Survey questionnaires consisting of 9 questions were filled by 50 people, mainly people employed in the IT sector in the city of Pune. The question-wise data collected has thus been depicted onto the following pie charts and histograms.



**Figure 1.** Awareness among people regarding the concept "Working from Home".

### 4.1 Interpretation

94% of the people asked were aware of the concept of Work from Home. It is interesting to note that even the 6% who were not aware of the concept, were enthusiastic to know about the concept in detail. The people aware of the concept spoke about how this concept was being highly debated in recent times.



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

### 4.2 Interpretation

68% of the respondents said their job was flexible enough to allow them to work from home. The average number of days they worked from home was two days in a week. The percentage of people who responded in negative held jobs, which mandatorily required them to be in the office or in a similar environment to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. This throws light on the inapplicability of the concept in every sector of the economy.

### 4.3 Interpretation

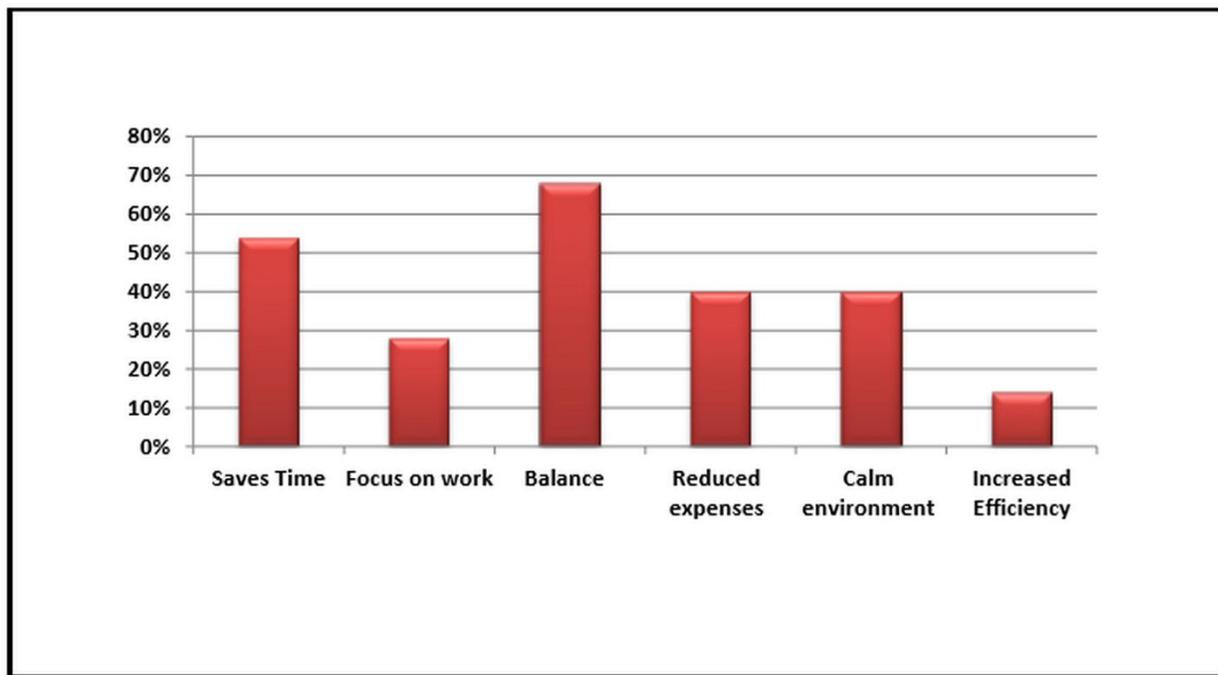
The respondents were asked what as per them the advantages of Work from Home are, among time saving, increased efficiency, focus on work with a quieter atmosphere, balance between family and work life, reduction of travel and oil expenses and less stressful environment. 68% of them said that work from home leads to balance between work and family life and 54% said that it saves time. Interestingly, only 14% said that it leads to increased efficiency and 28% found it to help focus on work. This shows that employees find the office environment more suitable to work productively and that working from home generally brings distractions.

### 4.4 Interpretation

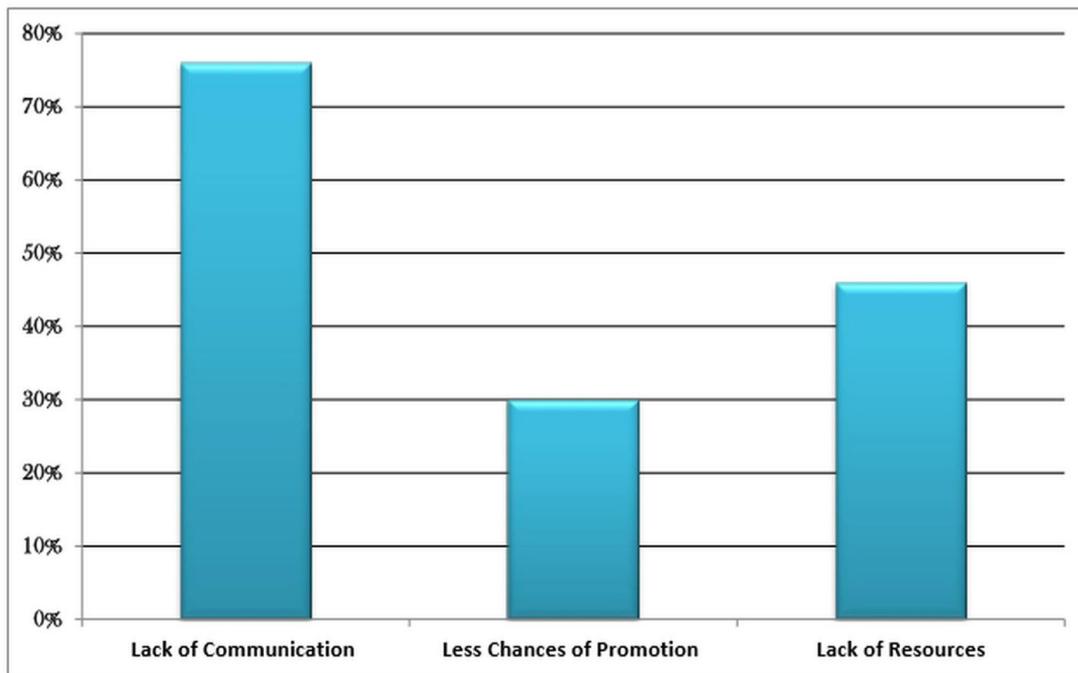
People were asked about what according to them are the disadvantages of working from home. They were given options like lack of direct communication with colleagues and superiors, less chances of promotion and lack of resources. 76% of them agreed that the greatest disadvantage of working from home is lack of communication and interaction with colleagues; whereas only 30% believed that it decreased their chances of promotion. The findings were unlike the popular notion that those who work from home are less likely to get promotions and better salaries. Some respondents also mentioned that lack of discipline; infrastructure changes and connectivity of the intranet network are some disadvantages.

### 4.5 Interpretation

People were asked what all they were ready to sacrifice to work from home. They were given options like reduction in salary, vacations, interaction with colleagues, innovation from team work and free resources available in office. 24% of them were ready to accept fewer vacations and 38% were ready to sacrifice free resources of office to work from home.



**Figure 3.** Advantages of 'Work from Home'.



**Figure 4.** Disadvantages of 'Work from Home'.

On the other hand, 28% were not at all ready to accept a reduction in their salary and 20% were not ready to sacrifice interaction with colleagues to work from home. Moreover, 26% were not willing to sacrifice

free resources of office to work from home. These findings adequately represent how work-oriented Indians are; being ready to sacrifice their vacations but not their salary.

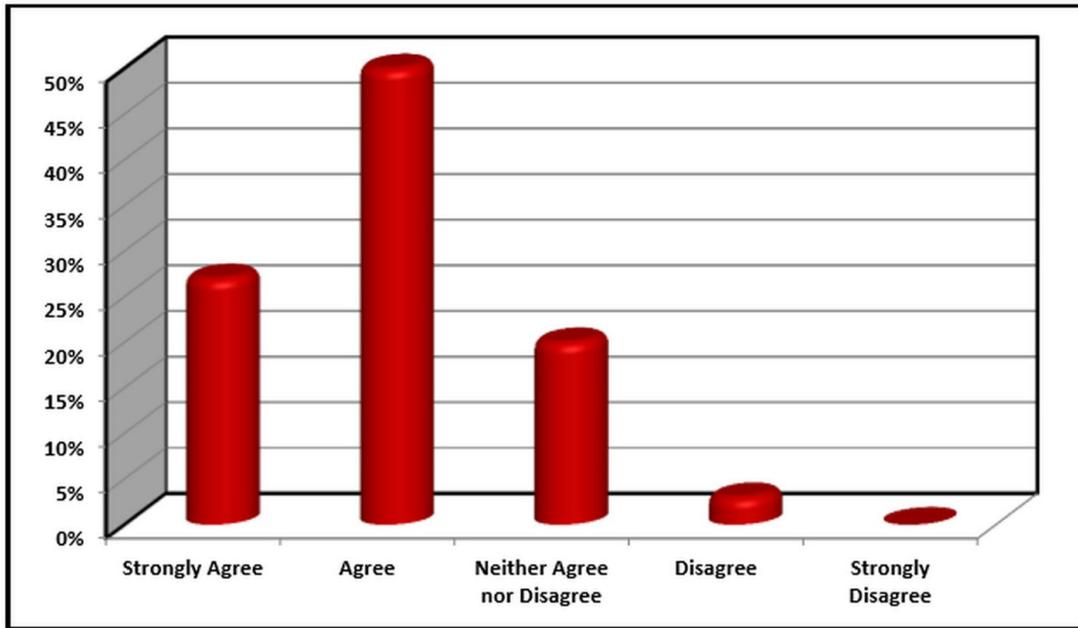


Figure 6. “Work from home” will eventually improve one’s quality of working life.

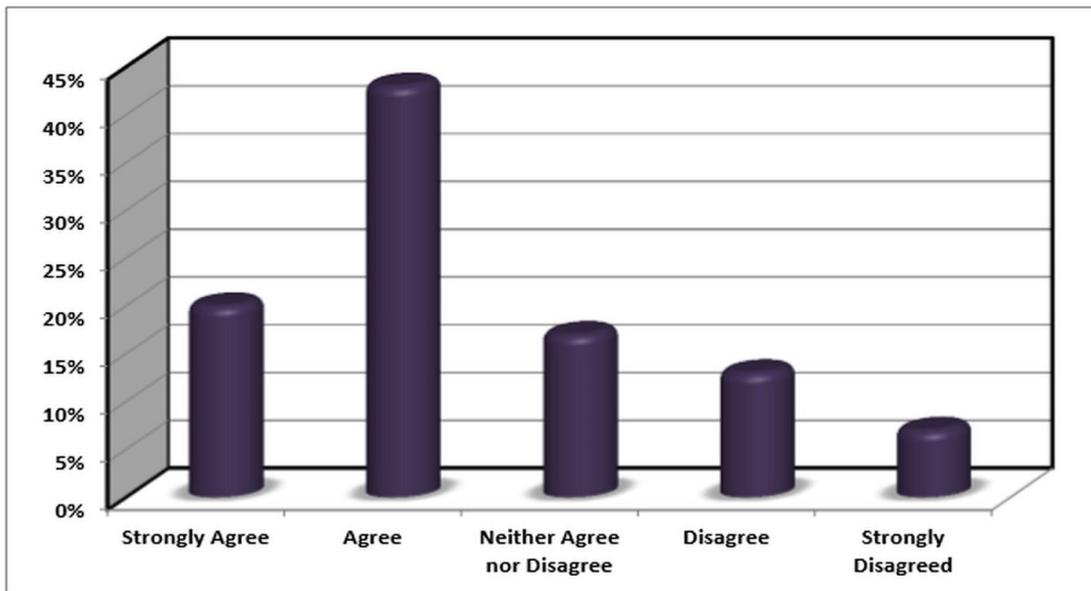


Figure 7. Work from Home concept will be suitable for the Indian working environment.

#### 4.6 Interpretation

The respondents were asked for their opinion on whether as per them “Working From home” would eventually improve one’s quality of life. 30% of them strongly agreed with the statement, and 50% agreed with it. Only 2% of them disagreed with the statement. Majority of them agreed that working from home would make them more productive in their work as well as maintain a balance between their work and personal life.

#### 4.7 Interpretation

People were asked whether they felt WFH will be suitable for the Indian Working Environment. 20% of them strongly agreed, and 43% agreed with the statement, whereas only 13% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. This shows that while majority of Indian employees are amenable to this concept, a significant number of them are also apprehensive towards it due to its supposed disadvantages like reduction in salary and promotions.

Employees also give more importance to interaction with colleagues and teamwork which makes them prefer working in the office.

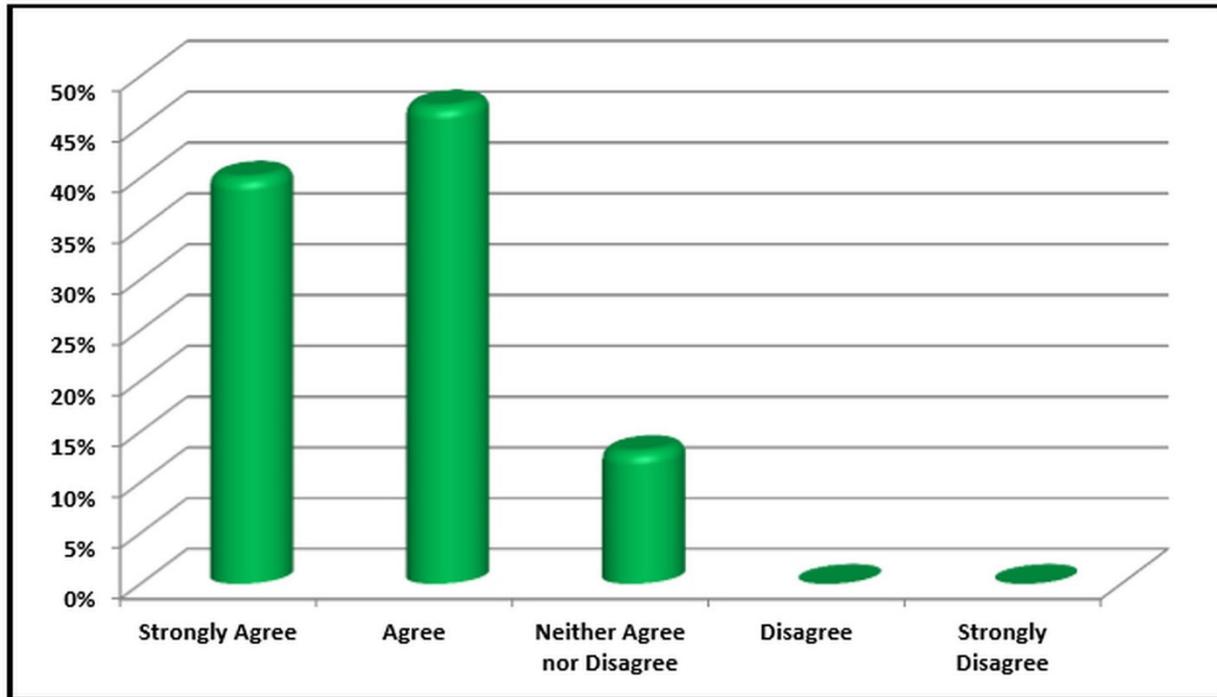


Figure 8. Working from Home would be preferable for married Indian women.

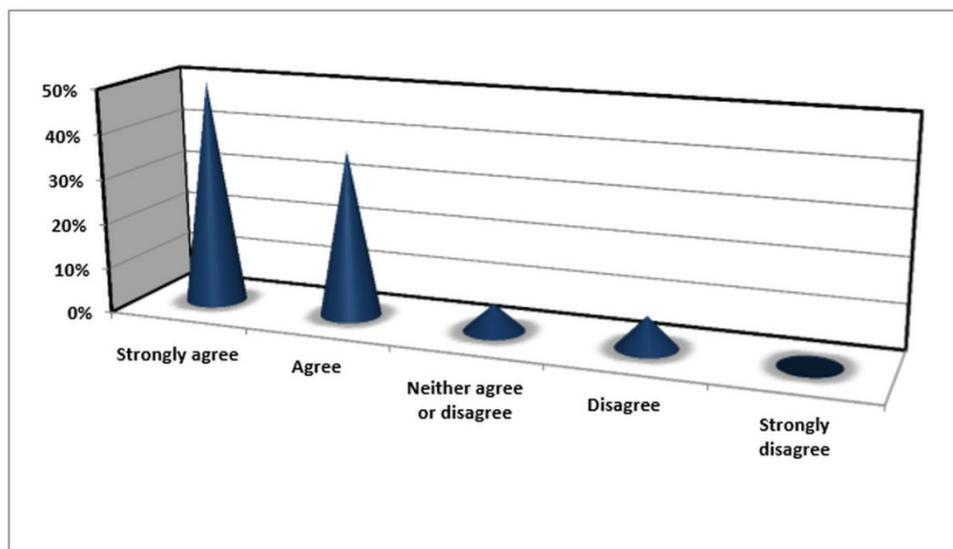


Figure 9. In today's fast track world Working from Home concept should be kept as an option for employees.

#### 4.8 Interpretation

When asked if WFH would be preferable for married Indian women, 40% of the respondents strongly

agreed and 47% agreed with the statement. It is interesting to observe that no one disagreed with the statement. Married Indian women are generally expected to manage their work along with their families.

Working from home would be a boon for them as it will help them maintain an effective balance between their work and family life<sup>9</sup>.

#### 4.9 Interpretation

One out of every two of the respondents strongly agreed that Working from Home Concept should be kept as an option for Employees and 37% agreed with the statement. It is noticeable that only 7% of the employees disagreed with it, which shows that they are well aware of the concept of Work from Home, and are ready to accept it despite preconceived notions prevailing about it.

### 5. Conclusion

With the help of this survey, we were able to ascertain the fact that the IT sector employees are in clear favor of incorporating the concept of 'working from home' into their organization structure and management practices. We were also able to establish that the employees were slightly similar to their western counterparts in balancing out the positive and negative impacts of telecommuting.

A majority of them preferred the concept because they believed that working from home would present them a better opportunity to successfully bring out a balance between their professional and personal lives and also saved them time that would have been spent on traveling and informal conversations with peers. They agreed to the fact that it is a 'green concept' as it inevitably led to lesser pollution and cleaner environment. The down-sides pointed out were the lack of communication and collaborative sessions with colleagues, superiors and subordinates that arises when one works from home. The employees were unwilling to sacrifice a part of the salary so that they could telecommute. To conclude, the technological advancements and aim for efficiency and less stress, makes it suitable for the current Indian Work environment and should be kept as an option in organizations where the type of work permits 'working from home'.

### 6. Recommendations

Working from home on all working days is not a prospect that we recommend. Instead, the type of work must be kept in mind when making this decision.

- The organization should keep this as an option so that the employees can make an informed decision, which in turn boosts work life satisfaction.

- The company must bring out a balance between working in office and telecommuting. What we recommend is the firm to set aside two to three days of a week for the employees to work from home and to bring them back to the office for the rest of the week. This gives the organization an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of both telecommuting and innovative collaborations arising out of teamwork and peer interaction.

### 7. Limitations and Future Scope

A lot of hindrances were met with during the course of writing this research paper.

- Firstly, many companies that were approached in order to conduct the survey reacted negatively and did not encourage the idea of distributing questionnaires among their employees.
- Secondly, the concept is not ideal for all types of firms, as certain types of work require one to mandatorily work in an office<sup>11,12</sup>. This limited the number of people analyzed through the questionnaire.
- Moreover, it is only companies with large resources and technological advancements that can implement this concept as working from home often requires a flawless network connection, as all communications are made through the virtual media. The future scope of this paper would be to conduct a similar survey in other parts of India, as this was mainly constricted to the city of Pune. In addition to it, employees from sectors other than Information Technology can be analyzed to compare and contrast the suitability of the concept in firms of different sectors.

### 8. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Symbiosis Law School for the opportunity and assistance provided during research. Last but not the least, this research would not have been possible without the support of people who work in different organizations, whose responses were recorded and used as base for the research.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire on Work From Home.

*Objective : The following questionnaire is solely for the purpose of a research paper included in our curriculum and the information provided will not be misused.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position in the organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age Group:**  20-25 years.  26-31 years.  32-37 years.

38-43 years.  43 and above years.

**Instructions :** In case of a circle choose one, in case of a box you can choose multiple options.

➤ Q1. Are you aware of the concept of work from home?

Yes  No.

➤ Q2. Is your job flexible enough to allow you to work from home?

Yes  No.

If yes, mention the approximate number of working days in a week you can Work from Home. → \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Q3. What according to you are the benefits of Working from home?

- Saves time.  Increased efficiency.  
 Focus on work with quieter atmosphere and not get disturb by office politics.  
 Balance between work and family life.  
 Reduction of travel and oil expenses.  
 Less Stressful environment.

➤ Q4. What according to you are the disadvantages of Working from home?

- Lack of direct communication with colleagues and superiors.  
 Less chances of promotion.  
 Lack of resources (Stationary, technology and electricity) others, specify. → \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Q5. Specify the **Order** in which you would be willing to sacrifice the following – to work from home. [1- having the highest will to sacrifice and 5 being the least ]

Would accept reduction in salary.

- Would accept reduction in vacation.
- Interaction with colleagues.
- Innovative and Creative inputs from team work.
- Free Resources available in office.

Other, specify → \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Q6. "Work from Home" will eventually improve one's quality of working life.

Strongly Agree  Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree.

Disagree  Strongly Disagree

➤ Q7. "Work from home" concept will be suitable for the Indian working environment?

Strongly Agree  Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree.

Disagree  Strongly Disagree

➤ Q8. "Working from home" would be preferable for Married Indian Women?

Strongly Agree  Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree.

Disagree  Strongly disagree.

➤ Q9. In today's fast track world, "Working from home" concept should be kept as an option for the employees?

Strongly Agree  Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree.

Disagree  Strongly disagree.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_