

**IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN ON
THE HEALTH AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF
THE INDIAN CORPORATE WORKFORCE
– A Study**

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease Outbreak

- November-December 2019
- Spreads through droplets (nasal/oral)



Positives:

- Slowing down of viral transmission in the community
- Employees can continue to work even during the pandemic

Negatives:

- Evidence of declining mental health
- Decreased physical activity
- Imbalance between work and personal life

- Government mandated lockdowns to prevent spread of the virus
- No public gatherings
- Mandatory masks

Corporate workforce instructed to work from home indefinitely

INTRODUCTION

Due to it being a solitary workspace, employees tend to feel lonely, which breeds mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, not to forget physical symptoms like joint pains

Many workers also complain that the boundaries between their work and home life have become blurred or even non-existent. This seems to be more so with people who do not have a designated home office, which is separate from their personal living space.

Attractive career milestones are another missing ingredient in the work-from-home setup, the lack of which translates to decreased productivity.

The expectation from an employee to dawn many hats while working from home, is another hurdle. From effective time management and virtual communication skills to technical jobs like IT troubleshooting, a worker is expected to solve myriad problems on a daily basis, which takes a toll.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the effects of work-from-home on the mental health of corporate workforce in India.
2. To study the effects of work-from-home on the physical health of corporate workforce in India.
3. To study the effects of work-from-home on the work-life balance of corporate workforce in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

[Jaiswal et al., 2020](#)

An increase in the number of working hours was reported by the respondents in the work from home setting. Respondents working in service sector who had technology-enabled work reported high levels of work-related stress. Contributing factors were many, including constant engagement in online meetings, telephone conversations, etc.

[Kumar et al., 2020](#)

Research suggested 52% of the responders agreed that they felt socially isolated due to lockdown due to being bound inside their home.

[Ince, Fatma, 2020](#)

This research conducted in Turkey clearly pointed out that working from home negatively impacted productivity of employees, with a decreasing level of perceived performance and wellbeing.

[Sayed et al., 2020](#)

Research suggested that work from home was beneficial to the employees.

[Joshi et al., 2020](#)

A study about the effects of lockdown on the Indian Economy said that HR heads of firms like EY, Cognizant, Deloitte viewed virtual workplaces are the future of work.

[Rehman et al., 2021](#)

Research showed that while students, researchers, teachers, and health professionals reported mild levels of stress, mental health professionals and employees in different corporate jobs were found to be in the normal range of stress, contradictory to the findings of the first two studies.

[Panchal et al., 2020](#)

53% of American adults reported having a negative impact on their mental health due to stress linked to the pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY

METHOD

cross-sectional, observational study

SAMPLING

TECHNIQUE

convenience sampling

STUDY

POPULATION

- Age group: 20-60 years
- working with corporate organisations pan-India

STUDY

TOOL

Self-prepared semi-structured anonymous questionnaire

The 'Google Forms' tool was used to capture data from a large number of audiences in a short amount of time. Questions were prepared keeping in mind the secondary research and discussions previously undertaken with relevant persons

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it did not ask for any personal information with which one could directly identify the respondent. A consent form was attached in the beginning which conveyed that the information collected would be anonymous and will not be passed on

Certain questions were designed with skips, keeping in mind the smooth flow of the questionnaire. For example, one of the questions asks whether or not the respondent suffers from any mental health issues.

- 'Yes': the tool takes them to the next question which asks if WFH contributed to aggravating this problem.
- 'No': the tool skipped the next question, and went straight to the one after that.

RESULTS

ANALYSIS

The collected data was transferred from google forms to an excel file format. To make it easier to handle and analyze, categorical data was given scores and converted into a quantitative form.

How would you rate your overall health?	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	In the past 4 weeks	How has your mental health changed in the last 4 weeks?	In the last 4 weeks	Gender	In the last 4 weeks	In the last 4 weeks	In your opinion, how has your work-life balance changed in the last 4 weeks?	In the last 4 weeks
1	2	3	-1	0	0	1	1	1	-1	0	0	1	-1	-1
2	3	3	-1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1
2	3	3	-1	-1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	-1	-1
4	3	3	0	0	2	2	1	-1	-1	0	0	1	0	0
4	4	3	-1	-1	2	3	1	-1	1	0	0	1	0	0
2	3	3	-1	-1	1	3	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
2	2	3	-1	-1	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
3	3	3	-1	-1	1	3	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	3	-1	0	1	2	1	1	-1	1	0	0	-1	-1
3	3	3	-1	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
3	3	3	-1	1	1	1	1	-1	-1	1	0	0	-1	-1
3	3	3	-1	-1	1	3	1	1	-1	0	0	2	1	1
3	2	3	-1	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
4	4	3	-1	-1	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
1	1	3	1	0	0	3	1	-1	-1	0	0	0	1	1
3	3	2	1	1	0	3	1	-1	-1	1	1	0	1	1
4	4	3	0	0	0	3	1	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	-1
4	1	2	1	1	0	3	1	-1	-1	1	1	0	0	0
3	3	3	1	1	1	2	1	-1	-1	0	0	1	-1	-1

PRIMARY ANALYSIS

The data collected through the questionnaire was presented in the form of pie charts. The responses were divided into 4 parts:

1. Demographic
2. Mental Health
3. Physical Health
4. Work-Life Balance

PIVOT

CHARTS

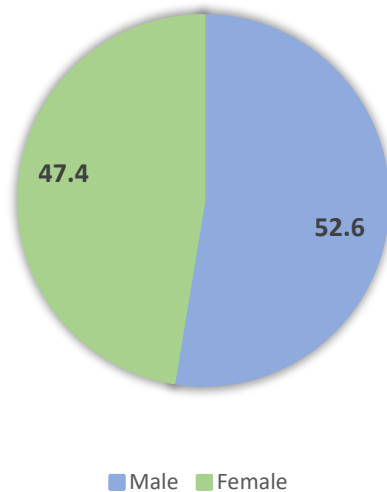
To analyse how mental and physical health variables vary with age and gender, selected variables were plotted against age and gender in MS Excel

REGRESSIO

N
To study the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable, a linear regression was run. The test was initially run keeping work-life-balance as the dependent variable and all others as independent variables

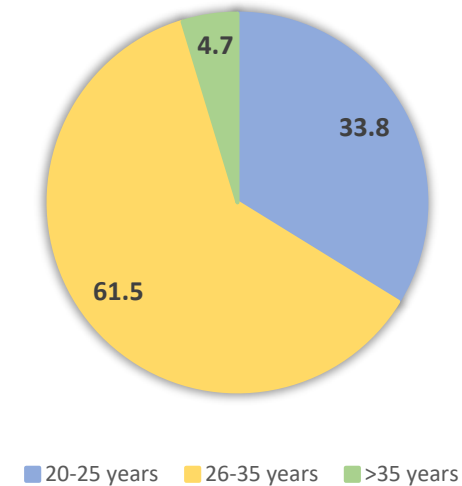
DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS

Gender



Almost half of the respondents (47.4%) identified as female

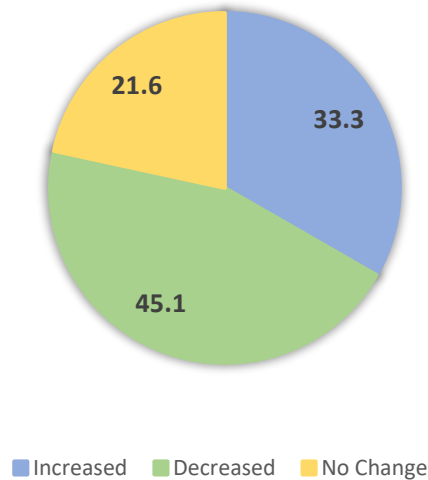
Age Group



Most of the respondents (61.5%) belonged to the 26-35 years age group, followed by 33.8% who were younger (20-25 years)

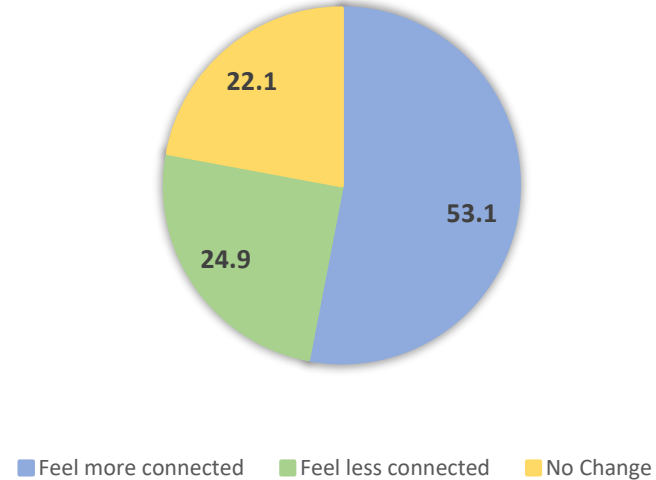
MENTAL HEALTH RESULTS

Change in inclination towards creativity during WFH



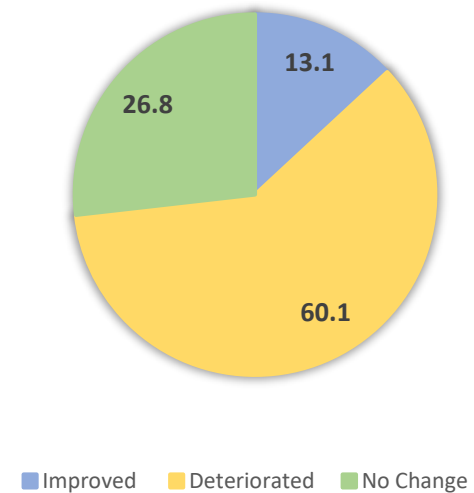
Inclination towards creativity decreased among the respondents during WFH. **45.1%** of them said they felt less creative

Change in attachment with friends and family during WFH



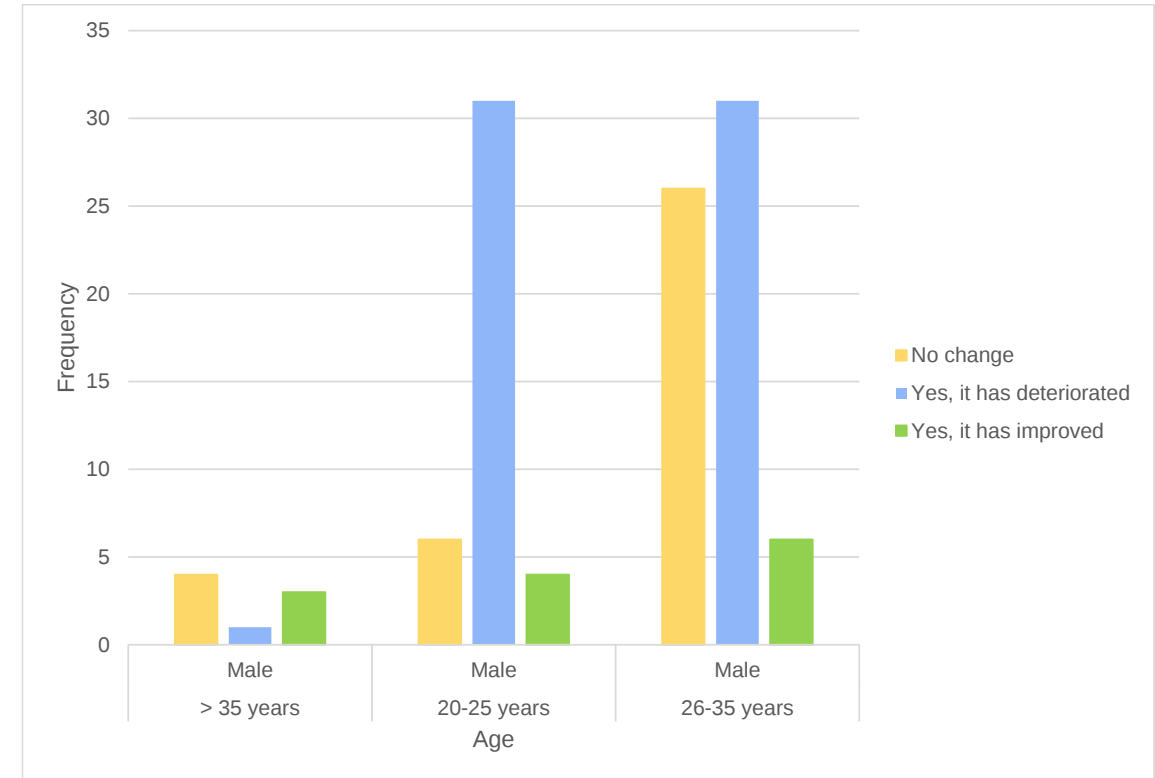
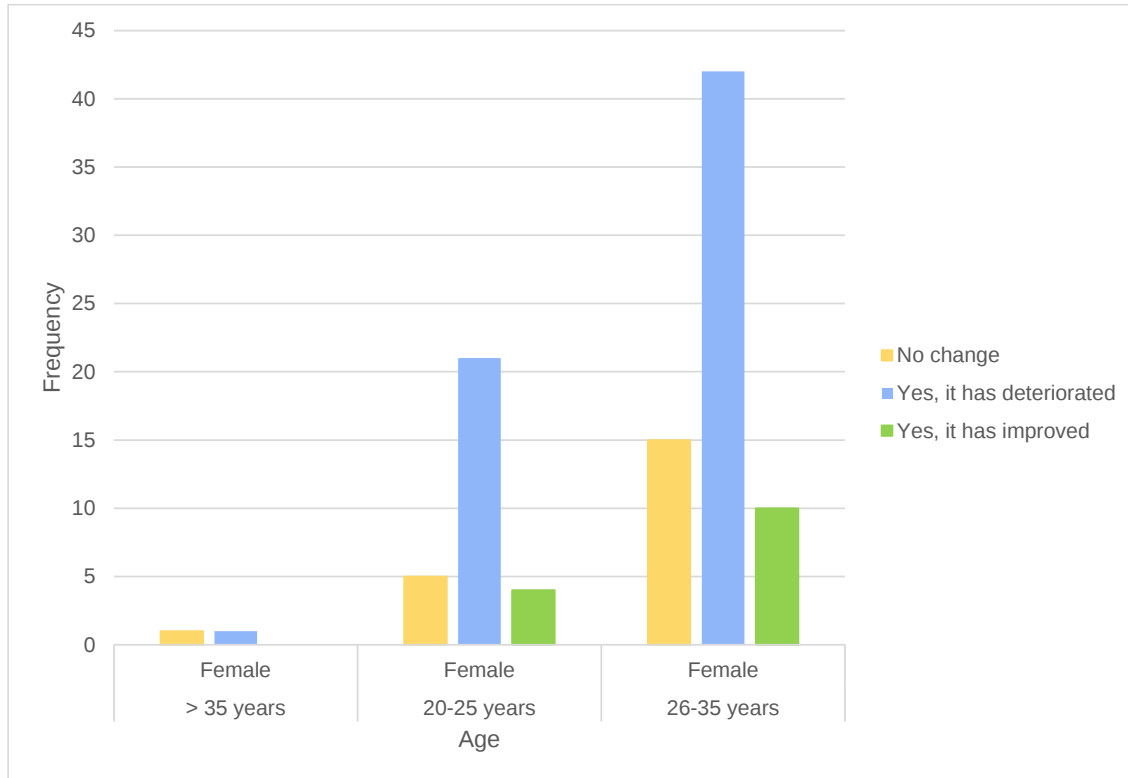
A question on mental health status during WFH revealed that about **60%** respondents felt their mental health had deteriorated during this period

Change in mental health status during WFH



On a positive note, almost half the respondents felt closer to their family and friends during the WFH period. This could be attributed to working professionals going back to their hometowns and living with their families

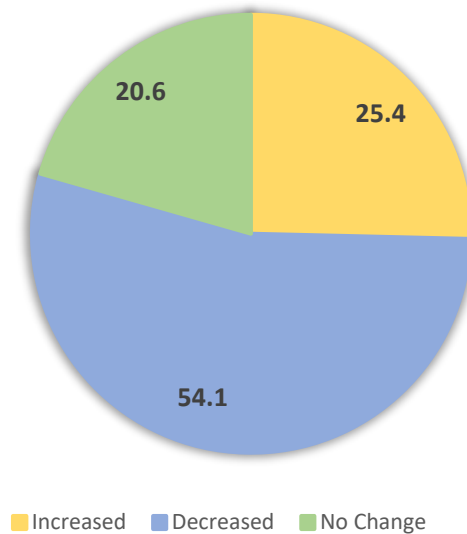
MENTAL HEALTH RESULTS



After plotting age and gender against change in mental health, it became apparent that most of the respondents, both male and female, in the 20 to 35 age group, experienced a deterioration in mental health during WFH.

PHYSICAL HEALTH RESULTS

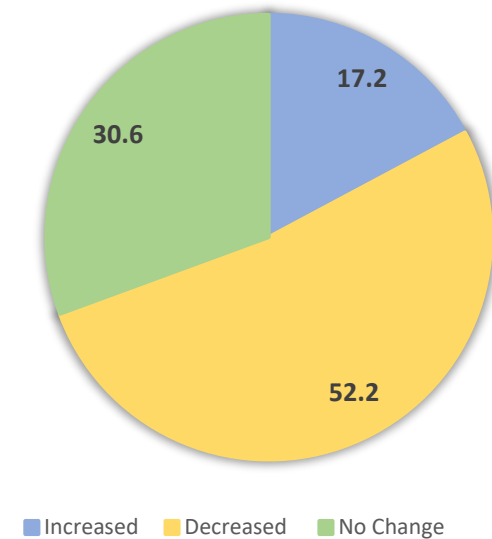
Frequency of consuming processed food in-between meals during WFH



54% respondents said that their frequency of consuming processed food in-between meals had decreased during WFH

However, physical exercise among 47.4% of the respondents was limited to less than 5 hours a week. Additionally, 24.9% said that they did not exercise at all.

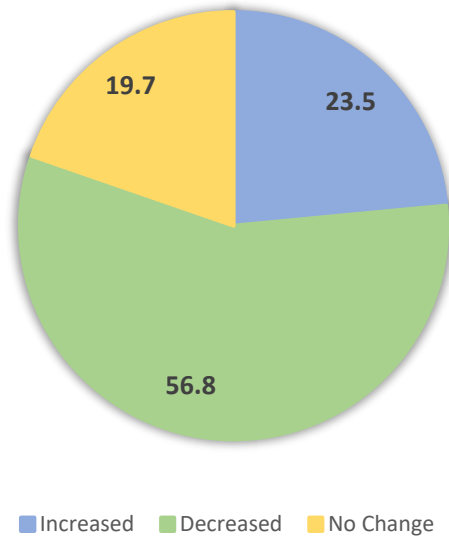
Frequency of consuming aerated drinks during WFH



Another 52% of them revealed that their frequency of consumption of aerated drinks had gone down

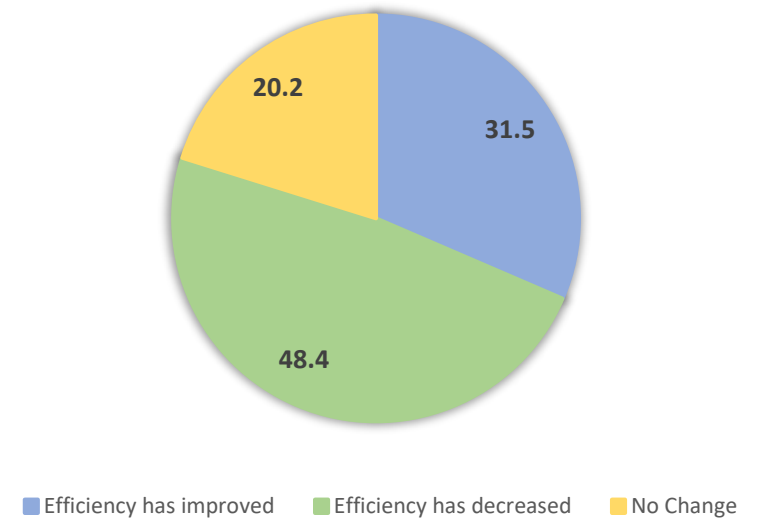
WORK LIFE BALANCE

Change in levels of optimism towards work during WFH



More than half of the respondents said that their levels of optimism towards work had decreased

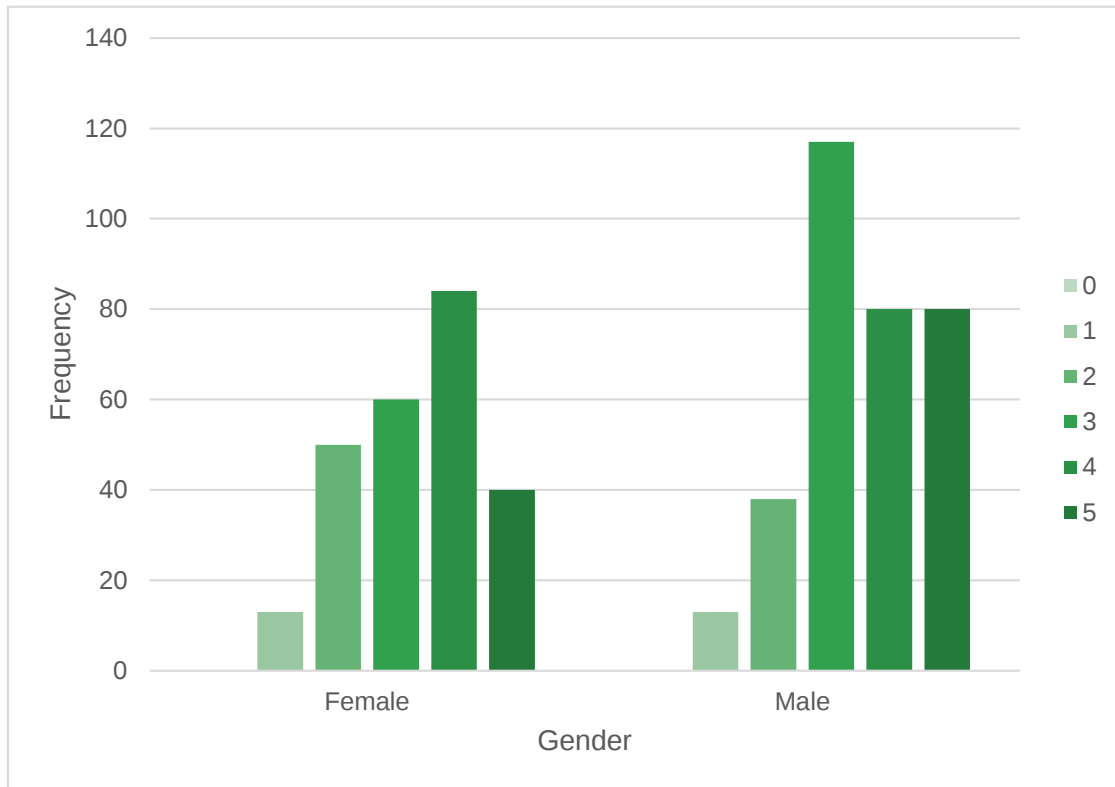
Effect of WFH on work efficiency



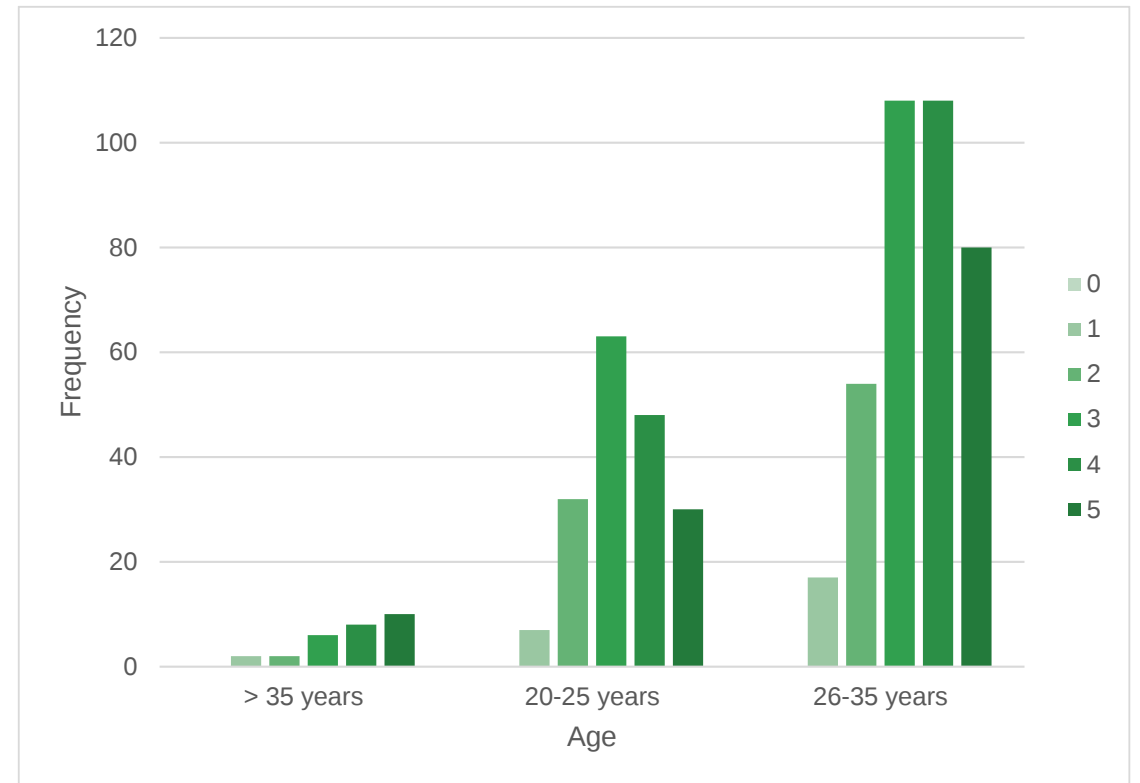
48.4% of the respondents felt that their working efficiency had taken a toll during to WFH

WORK LIFE BALANCE

The respondents were asked to rate their WLB during WFH. This was individually plotted against gender and age



The plot with gender showed that most females gave a lower score to their WLB, than most males



The plot with age most respondents in the 20-35 age group gave a score of 2 or 3 on a 5-point scale for WLB, where 0 represents no WLB

LINEAR REGRESSION

To study the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable, a logistic regression was run. The test was initially run keeping WLB as the dependent variable and all others as independent variables. The results were as follows:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.619 ^a	.383	.318	1.171

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	161.526	20	8.076	5.890	<.001 ^b
	Residual	260.531	190	1.371		
	Total	422.057	210			

- The result was significant ($p < 0.05$)
- R value was **0.619**
- Adjusted R square was very low, i.e., **38.3%**

This implied **2** things:

- 1) The number of values is less (N is less)
- 2) There are variables which are cancelling out each other and are not independent.

To remove this effect, the significance of each variable was checked.



LINEAR REGRESSION

It was found that several variables were not significant ($p > 0.05$).

In the subsequent test, another regression was run keeping the dependent variable same, but using only the significant independent variables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.581 ^a	.538	.518	.171

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	142.530	6	23.755	17.337	<.001 ^b
	Residual	279.527	204	1.370		
	Total	422.057	210			

The test was significant and the adjusted R Square was considerably high at 0.538, i.e., 53.8% of the dependent variable was defined by the selected independent variables

LINEAR REGRESSION

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.943	.200		19.730	<.001
In the past 4 months has your sleep cycle changed due to WFH?	-.509	.192	-.158	-2.651	.009
How has your sleep cycle changed during WFH?	.322	.115	.177	2.800	.006
In the last 4 months did you feel a difference in your energy levels?	.223	.138	.110	1.615	.108
In the last 4 months did you feel any change in your sense of attachment to family and friends?	.217	.098	.129	2.204	.029
In the last 4 months did you feel any change in your level of inclination towards experimentation and creativity?	.267	.112	.157	2.383	.018
In the last 4 months have you experienced increased mood swings at work?	-.799	.196	-.254	-4.084	<.001

The final result was:

- 6 independent variables were found to affect the WLB.
- Work life balance = $3.943 - 0.509$ (Sleep cycle change) $+0.322$ (Number of hours of sleep) $+0.223$ (Energy levels) -0.799 (Mood swings) $+0.217$ (Experiment and creativity) $+0.216$ (Family bonding).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fix work timings to ensure that the employee's work does not interfere with their sleep cycle. This could contribute to a healthy sleeping pattern, and possibly increased work efficiency.

Take initiative of including the employees' family and friends in the extra-curricular activities.

Limit the virtual work-related communication after office hours to ensure that the employees get proper family time, which could ultimately contribute to a healthy WLB and better work efficiency.

Come up with some creative exercises from time-to-time. This could include incentives for creative problem-solving, or other activities which promote creativity.

Create a platform on which employees, guided by a trainer, can exercise together virtually. This could include Cardio, Yoga, Meditation, Dance, and other forms of fitness activities.

Provide a point of contact for e-consultation (mental health trainers, psychologists, and other experts) regarding mental health issues faced by the employees. At the same time, the organization should ensure the confidentiality of the employees is maintained.

LIMITATIONS

Insufficient sample size for statistical measurement

Limited knowledge of SPSS

Time constraints, due to which the sample size was small

Responses on mental health could have been biased, due to the taboo around the topic

Limited access to data

Conflicts arising from cultural, social and personal situations

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