

Coping With Remote Work-Life Balance During Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 Pandemic has struck almost every country of the world including India, started from December 2019. The higher rate of infectivity, risk of death, a previously non immune population, inadequate treatment protocols and a non-available vaccine forced large scale lifestyle changes on entire populations of the world to prevent the spread of the disease. The previously unheard concepts of social distancing, lockdown, isolation, containment, quarantine became the new norm. Most countries of the world had forced different levels of restriction on human behaviour requiring people to stay at home and work from home. The current study has been conducted with the aim to study effect of remote work-life balance during Covid-19 Pandemic. The objectives were 1) to understand the factors affecting work-life balance during lockdown, 2) to study work life balance and its relationship with age and gender 3) to recommend effective coping strategies for maintaining work life balance during COVID-19 Pandemic. Total Sample of 54 individuals (27 males and 27 females) between the age group of 20-54 years working from home in varied professions was considered for the study. Data was analysed further which showed that behaviour patterns amongst educated men and women in urban areas are similar. Women had greater stresses arising out of their responsibility towards household chores and managing with work life. People respond similarly in times of crisis. The ability to adapt to changing work environment in times of crisis has been an important skill which has helped the wheels of economy in current times. Future studies on this subject can help develop a more efficient new normal.

Keywords: Remote Work-Life Balance, Challenges, Covid-19 Pandemic, Coping Skills

The Covid-19 Pandemic has struck almost every country of the world including India, started from December 2019. The higher rate of infectivity, risk of death, a previously non immune population, inadequate treatment protocols and a non-available vaccine forced large scale lifestyle changes on entire populations of the world to prevent the spread of the disease. The previously unheard concepts of social distancing, lockdown, isolation, containment, quarantine became the new norm. Most countries of the

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world have forced different levels of restriction on human behaviour requiring people to stay at home and work from home.

Digitalization, internet, social networking platforms have been a boon in these circumstances. Different professions have different requirements. some kinds of areas where social distancing is not possible for e.g., cinema halls, salons, public transport, national and international travel have been forced to shut down. This has hit the economy hard in all countries including India. Some professionals are attempting to work from home with maximum productivity. The current study has been conducted with the aim of understanding the spectrum of work from home across different professions, age groups and genders, its effectivity and mental stress of the lockdown.

Remote Work Life Balance

Work from home also known as telecommuting is an arrangement of work where the employees of an organization work outside the “office”. Employees work from homes or places close to homes like cyber cafes, coffee shops libraries, etc. It gives employees greater amount of freedom over their timings and location and handling their personal front like taking care of peoples children and needy family members. decrease in the time taken to reach the office particularly for employees living far away.

There are also many benefits to employers. Allowing workers to telecommute often makes them more productive, which benefits the company. Telecommuters are also likely to be happier in their jobs and are therefore more likely to stay with the company. Telecommuting even saves companies money in office expenses.

However, there can be downsides to working from home. You have to be extremely self-motivated or else you may get distracted easily. You also need to find a productive place to do work, such as a home office or coffee shop.

It is not a simple job to accomplish work-life balance in the present constantly changing world and quick paced business world. As we are increasingly associated with ever changing technology, it is turning out to be a difficult task to isolate work from our own lives. It is ordinary to browse messages at inconvenient times, accept business calls during supper and work on our workstations on Saturdays and Sundays.

The employers have many expectations from its employees which gives them stress to reach a prominent outcome. Therefore, this prompts longer working hours, and less time spent at home.

Keeping up a sound work-life balance isn't just significant for well-being and maintaining relationships, however it can likewise improve people's efficiency to work. At the point when we are pushed and over-worked, we risk endangering something beyond our social life – there is a threat to our physical and psychological wellness as well.

Some people also find remote work life to be a bit isolating because you are not around your co-workers. Routine meetings that use video chat can help alleviate this loneliness.

It's an obvious fact that when we are exhausted, worn out or focused – our wellbeing will endure. A poor work-life balance can prompt an assortment of manifestations which can influence our prosperity. This reaches from influenza to lifestyle disorders like strokes and respiratory issues.

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Analysing both, the advantages and the disadvantages we can say that remote work life has created work opportunities that are flexible for the employers and the employees along with a better work life balance. A comprehensive policy for remote work life will help the company and the workers gain the benefits and avoid the disadvantages for better productivity and communication keeping in mind workers mental health. Mindfulness is a point where we discover and continue a solid work-life balance. We get a better control over our productivity and efficiency on the work.

Work from home was usually meant for people who have a personal commitment at home like taking care of small children, needy family members etc. but due to this pandemic work from home is the need of the hour. We need to stay indoors in order to be safe and secure.

The pandemic has reached its tentacles into just about every area of life at this point. Far from wreaking just medical havoc, it's also affected many other realms—the economy, likely for some time to come, and mental health, as many have felt already.

In the current scenario, as we are amidst a pandemic telecommuting or remote work life has helped organizations too remain functional during this lockdown. It acts as the wheels of the slowly moving economy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adams-Prassl et al (2020) studied about the percentage of tasks workers can do from home. The findings indicate that the kind of work that can be done from home is variable. It was also noted that the number of people working from home during the pandemic has increased in every field of profession.

Churchill, F (2020) studied about individuals who were working remotely during lockdown. It was found that individuals are not happy with their work life balance. A sample size of 500 individuals were randomly selected. It was found that at half of th workers were unhappy with their current work life balance.

Dubey, A. D., & Tripathi, S. (2020) analysed the emotion regarding remote work experiences during CoVid–19 pandemic. Around 1,00,000 tweets regarding peoples experiences were studied. Findings suggest that the idea of work from home was positively taken by people. The sentiments were mostly of trust and anticipation.

Garbe, A et al. (2020) analysed parents experience with online classes during the pandemic of covid- 19. The results depicted that parent agreed with the school closure policy and were generally satisfied with the level of support provided by school districts whilst describing some areas of struggle. Parents described having difficulties with balancing responsibilities, learner motivation, accessibility, and learning outcomes

Kaur, T et al (2020) did research on women working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. A sample size of 44 respondents was randomly selected. The findings indicated that being a woman, it is more challenging to work from home. It was also noted that striking a balance between office work & household work all is challenging for working women.

Dutcher (2012) used perimental approach to study the effect of telecommuting on productivity. Results depict those environmental effects of work from home might have a

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positive impact on creative task's productivity whereas it has a negative impact on productivity in tasks that are dull and boring.

Ye, L.R. (2012) suggested work from home is a substitute to traditional arrangements by which workers or employees work and has witnessed growth in past years Telecommuting is favourable to workers as well as corporations. Telecommuting has a reasonable chance of success in coming years.

METHODOLOGY

Aim– Analysis of work from home and its relationship with age and gender during Covid-19 Lockdown.

Variables

Independent Variable: Age and Gender

Dependent Variable: Work from Home and Lockdown

Sample

Responses from 54 individuals (27 males and 27 females) in the age group Of 20-58 years were studied.

Procedure

- The questionnaire was made with the objective of collecting information about demographics, work life balance and work behaviour during lockdown.
- Responses were collected from 54 individuals who were working from home during Covid-19 Lockdown.
- Scoring Key was made and data was scored according to the Scoring Key.
- The data was analysed according to statistical methods. The study targets the age group of 20-58 years.

Table 1 Demographic Details of The Respondents

NO.	ITEM	CATEGORIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Gender	Males	27	50%
		Females	27	50%
2	Age	20-35	20	37%
		35-50	20	37%
		50-65	16	29.62%
3	Profession	Salaried Private	31	57.40%
		Salaried Govt	3	5.55%
		Self Employed	9	16.66%
		College Students	11	20.37%
4	Marital Status	Married	36	66.66%
		Unmarried	18	33.33%
5	Type Of Family	Joint Family	23	42.59%
		Nuclear Family	31	57.40%

RESULTS

Statistical Analysis

Mean For Work from Home Score on The Basis of Gender

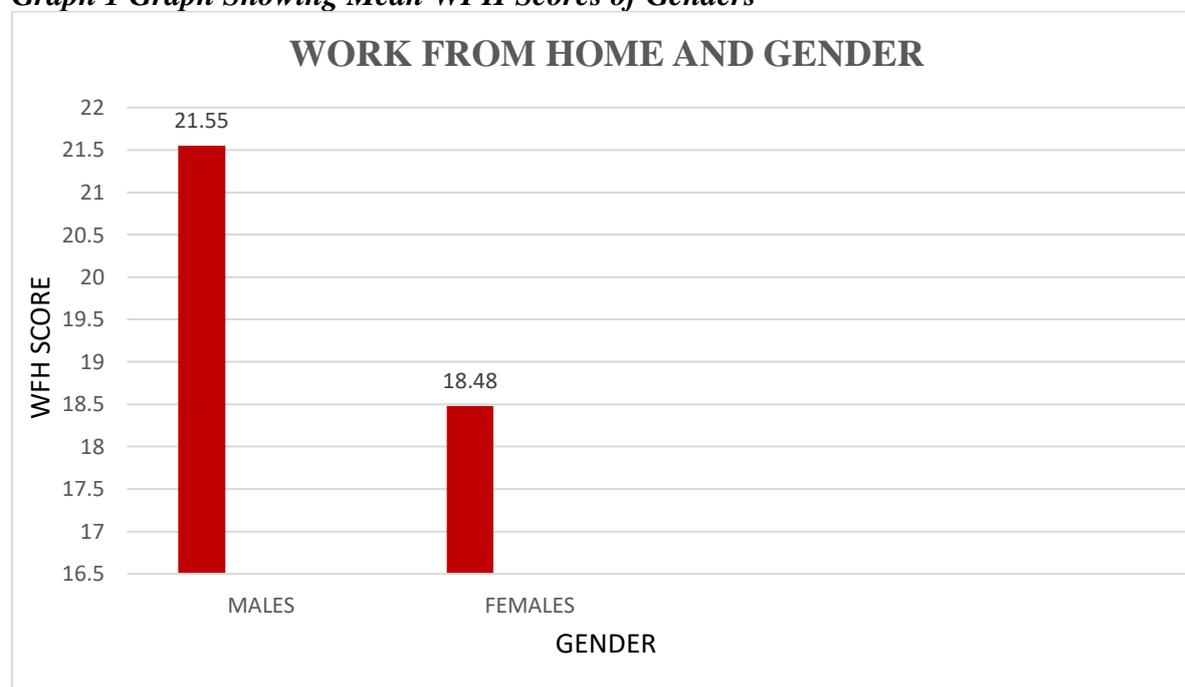
Table 2 Calculation of Mean for Work from Home Score of Females

Class Interval	Frequency	X (Mid Point)	F _x	Frequency	X (Mid Point)	fX
25-29	1	27	27	7	27	189
20-24	10	22	220	10	22	220
15-19	12	17	204	10	17	170
10-14	4	12	48	0	12	12
Mean			18.48			21.88

Table 2.1 Table Showing Mean WFH Scores of Genders

GENDER	MEAN WFH SCORE
Males	21.88
Females	18.48

Graph 1 Graph Showing Mean WFH Scores of Genders



MEAN FOR WORK FROM HOME SCORE ON THE BASIS OF AGE

Table 2.2 Table Showing Mean WFH Scores of Different Age Groups

AGE GROUP	MEAN WFH SCORE
20-35	20.55
35-50	19.65
50-65	21.28

Graph 2 Graph Showing Mean WFH Scores of Different Age Groups

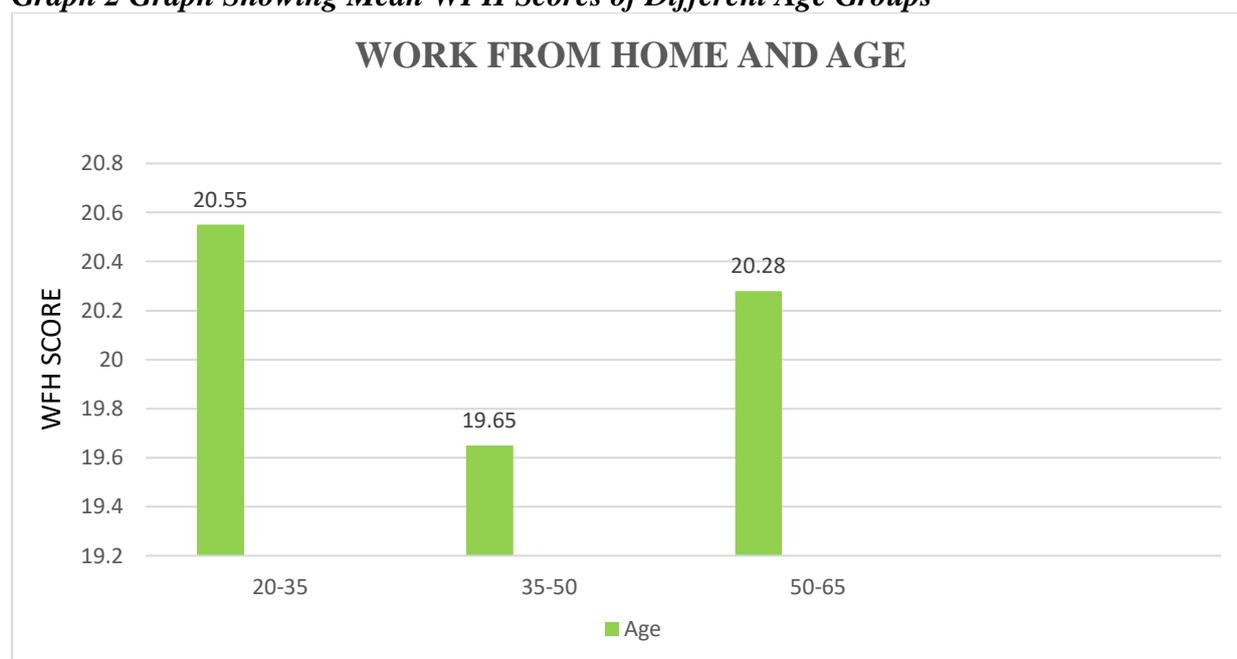
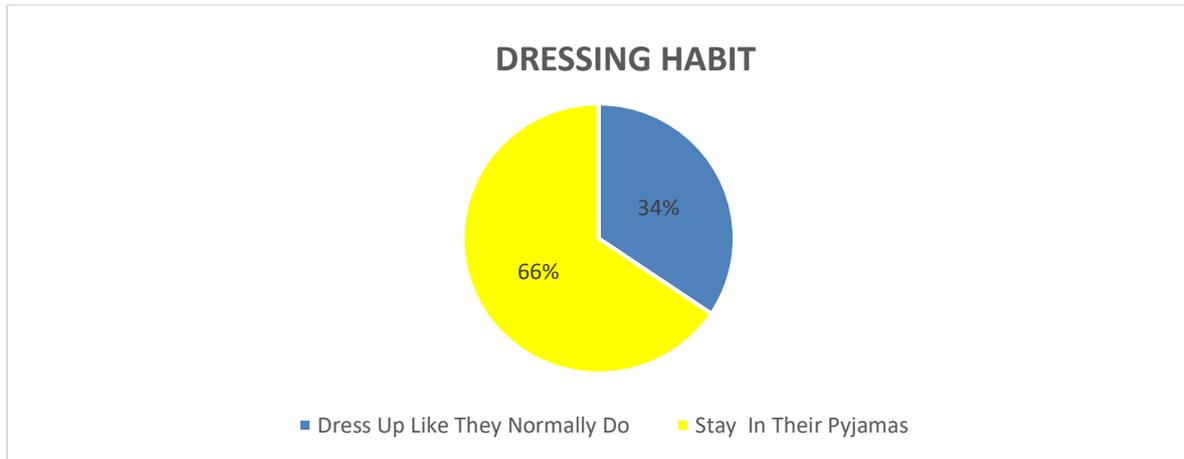


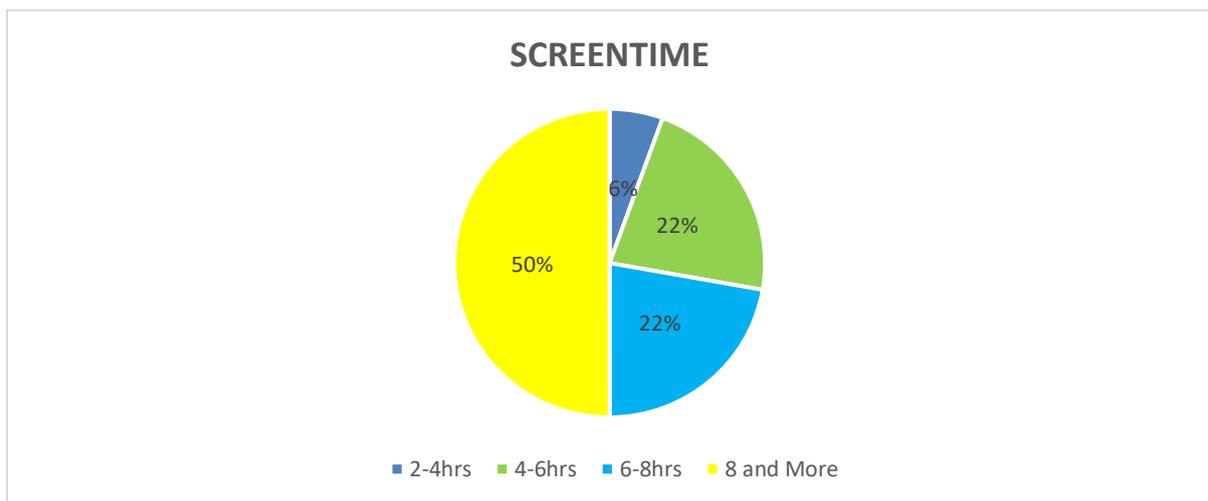
TABLE 3 Table Showing Behaviour Patterns in a Work from Home Setting

NO.	ITEM		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Dressing Habit	Dress Up Like They Normally Do	19	35%
		Stay in their pyjamas	36	66.66%
2	Screen time	2-4 hours	3	5.55%
		4-6 hrs	12	22.22%
		6-8 hrs	12	22.22%
		8 and more	27	50%
3	Non work related activity at the time of work	1-2 hrs	23	42.6%
		2-3hrs	12	22.22%
		3 and more	12	22.22%
		30 mins	7	12.96%
4	Break During Work	Yes	44	81.48%
		No	10	18.51%
5	Sleep Pattern Disturbed	Yes	11	20.27%
		No	43	79.62%

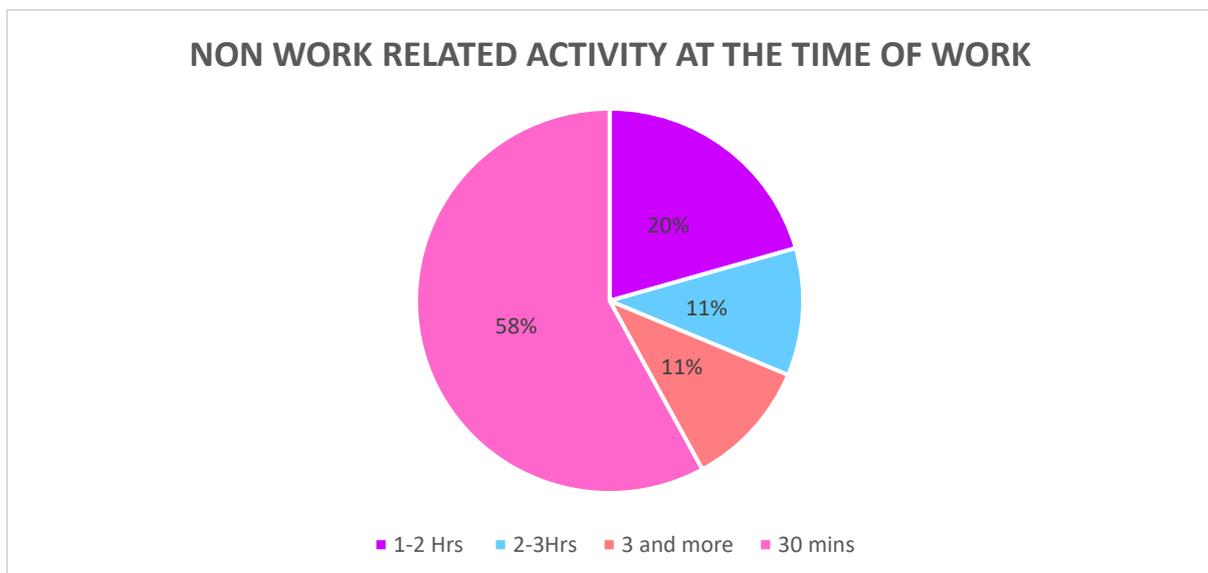
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GRAPH 3

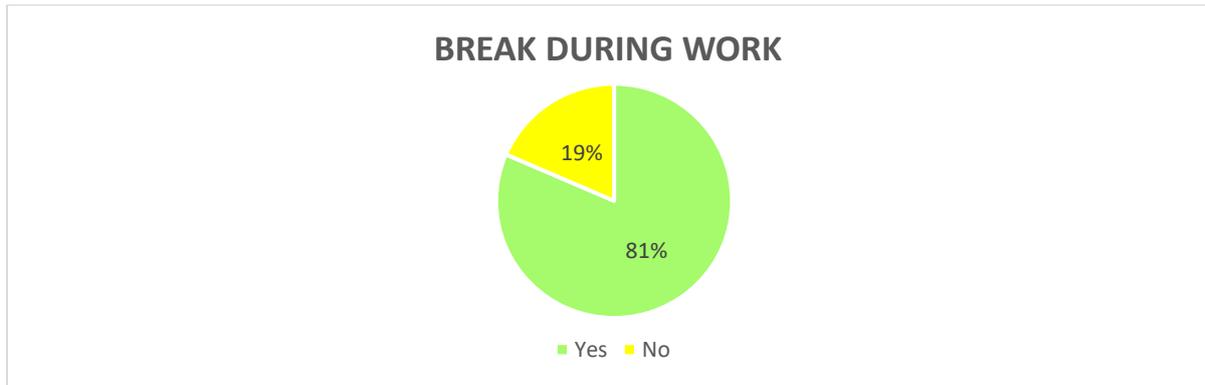


GRAPH 4



GRAPH 5

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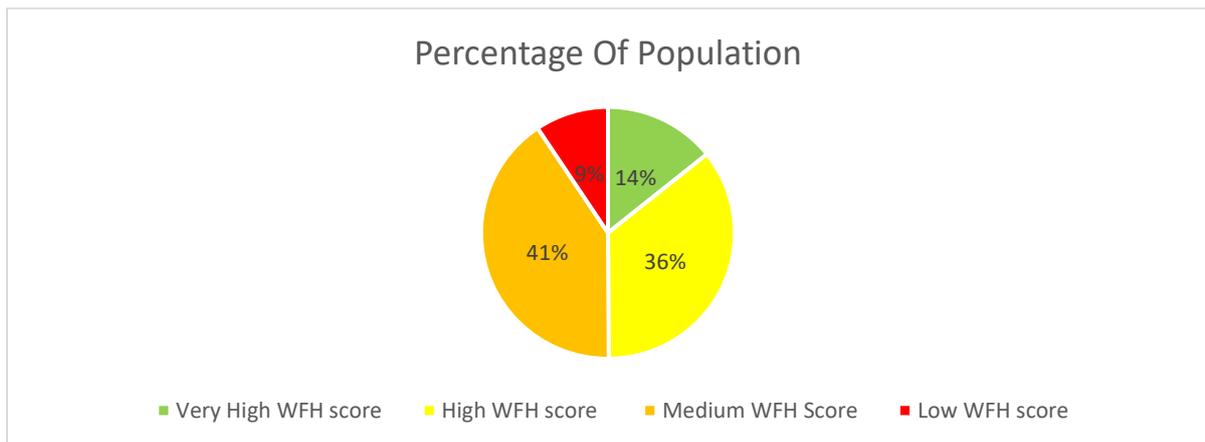
GRAPH 6



GRAPH 7

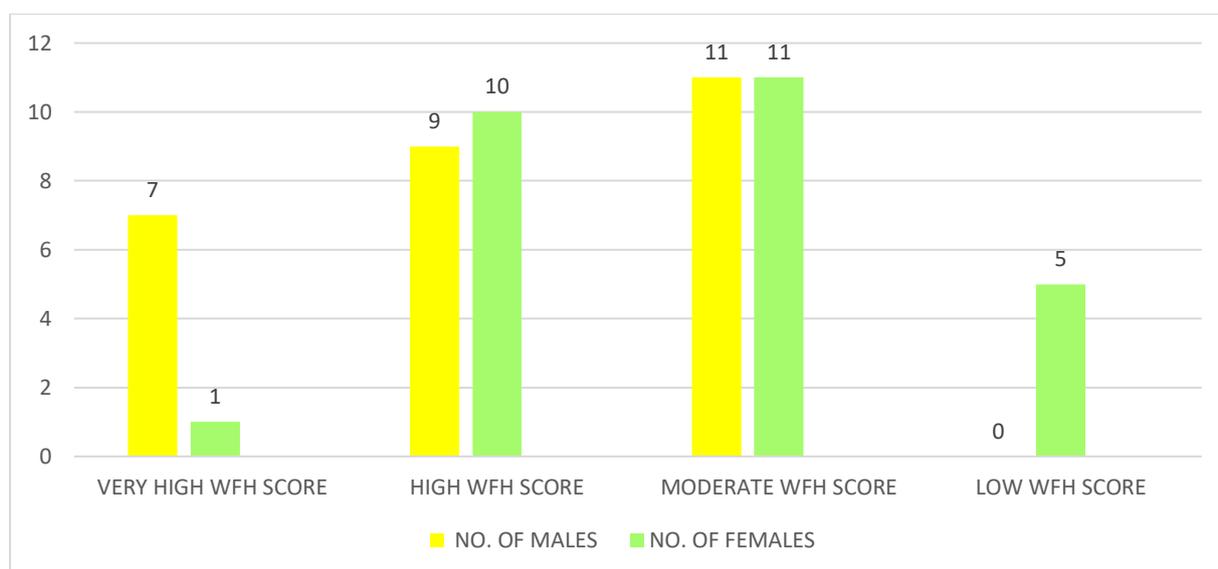
Table 6 Analysis of Work from Scores

WFH Score	Interpretation	Frequency (Out Of 54)	Percentage
10-15	LOW	5	9.25%
15-20	MEDIUM	22	40.74%
20-25	HIGH	19	35%
25- 30	VERY HIGH	8	14%



Graph 8 Analysis of Work From Scores

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Graph 9 Graph Showing No. Of Male and Females and Its Relationship with Interpretation on WFH Scores

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to analyse of work from home and its relationship with age and gender during Covid-19 Lockdown. An analysis of work from home patterns among 54 educated individuals living in urban areas was analysed. It included men and women in the age group of 20-54 years. A few striking similarities were seen in behaviour patterns amongst all age groups, gender and profession. People like to remain in casual clothes while working from home. Screen time whether work related or otherwise was high. Surprisingly most respondents did not reveal disturbances in sleep pattern.

Analysis of the work from home scores revealed that 35% population had a high work from home score and only 9% population had a low work from home score, notably all the respondents with low work from home score were females, additionally the mean work from home scores for males (21.88) was much higher as compared to that of females (18.). females revealed daily domestic chores and difficulty in time management as the most common stressor. The responses for stressors in males did not reveal a specific pattern. Fear of having Covid remained an important cause of stress amongst the group.

There were very minimal association between work from home score and age of the respondents. The private sector is emerging as a major employer of technical skill in urban areas.

The above data reveals that behaviour patterns amongst educated men and women in urban areas are similar. Women definitely had greater stresses arising out of their responsibility towards household chores, but the rest of the data did not reveal striking dissimilarities. People respond similarly in times of crisis. The ability to adapt to changing work environment in times of crisis has been an important skill which has helped the wheels of economy in current times. This group of men and women had high levels of education and technical skill and were conversant with the use of technology in current times.

Work from home brings with it the ease of working from the convince of ones homes and has the advantages like saving precious travel time and being available able to supervise the

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care of an elderly or a child. From the responses received from various respondents it also appears to have the advantage of flexible work hours. A number of respondents also commented on the longer working hours they were putting in while working from home.

Unprofessional work atmosphere at home, reduced efficiency for many. The need for multitasking and switching from domestic to professional work required considerable adjustment and coping skills. The initial relief of being able to work during the pandemic from a safe environment which kept the employment safe sometimes gave way to stresses associated with learning new digital skills, striking the right remote work life balance and coping up with odd/long working hours.

Every situation has its own advantages and disadvantages and there can never be perfect solution to any given situation. Change is the only constant.

Going forward this new found culture of remote work life brings with it a new set of advantages, disadvantages and requirement of new coping skills. Further studies on this subject in the future can help develop a more efficient new normal.

Recommendation individuals can keep in mind for a healthy remote work life balance, to be able to reap its benefits to the fullest.

- It is important to groom oneself before starting work in the morning. Individuals need not dress up as formally as they did, but just changing from pyjamas to pants gives a feeling that individuals are following a routine. Dressing up makes an individual feel confident and encourages them differentiate between work and being at home.
- Having A Proper Work Space – It is important to keep work life and personal life separate. Making the workspace comfortable where an individual can sit for 8-10 hours a day, having a good lighting and having a separate workspace encourages people to work.
- Work Hours Should Be Clearly Defined - There should be definite working hours. It helps an individual differentiate between when they are working or when they are not.
- It is encouraged to take breaks in between work hours as work from home requires an individual to stay on screen, then it is recommended take a break from screen. It can either be tea break or listen to some nice motivating music, one can also play games like carrom board, ludo etc.
- It is recommended not to get distracted by negative news while working from home
- It is recommended that individuals during work from home be in constant touch with office colleagues and office mates, this gives an individual a feeling of physically working in an office.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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