

A Comparative Study on Work from Office (WFO) and Work from Home (WFH), Benefits, Challenges Faced and Mode of Work Preferences

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Abstract

Purpose :

The research cardinally gives about the insights of the IT sector employees at Bengaluru Work From Home (WFH) and Work From Office (WFO) after the days of Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 being a global disaster provided an opportunity for renewed discussion about the work method (Jingling QU et al, 2022). The present study gathered the required data with a previously well know questionnaire. The study was conducted to know how far the demographics of IT employees affect on the WFH and WFO. Further, the study also conducted to know the advantages of WFH and WFO.

Design :

A pre-planned questionnaire was used and the required data was gathered. The data gathered by interviewing the IT employees who are working in different IT companies. The researcher met the IT employees and the purpose was well explained. Chi-square and weighted arithmetic mean, contingency co-efficient and Extent of Challenges Index (ECI) method were performed in order to present and interpret the data.

Findings :

The study found demographics impacting on WFH and WFO. The demographics include marital status, age, length of service and attitude of the boss. The marital status data reveals about the married respondents prefer to work from home. The middle aged respondents liked to work in both the types WFH and WFO. The beginners in the age group 21-30 years preferred to work from home. Further, the study reveals that if the boss is co-operative employees work from the office otherwise they prefer to work from home in case the boss is neutral. The employees with work experience < a year prefer WFO, and 3-4 years experienced employees prefer work from home. The study found the advantages of WFO includes, increased productivity, improved time management and identifying work life balance. The benefits of WFH which are ranked includes better work life balance, convenience and enhanced productivity. The study found challenges faced by WHO like little recognition, poor WLB and lack of transparency and challenges faced by WFH includes mental health challenges, lack of networking and isolation.

Keywords : IT, preference, attitude, convenience, WLB, WFH, WFO, job satisfaction, neutral, productivity, force, demographics.

Introduction:

Work from Home (WFH) was suggested as a modern Human Resource policy for organisation which was found to be a common practice after the outbreak of Covid-19. Millions of employees around the world have been forced to resort to remote work (Rogers, 2021) which led to the most significant social experiment of WFH emerging in human history (Zhang, Yu et al 2021). WFH enables the employees to be more productive through avoiding long commutes, skirting office policies, and giving more chance to develop WLB (Hopkins et al. 2019). But the other stream of scholars have put forth their argument that WFH is not alternative work routine and may even lead to poor employee performance (Fonner and Roloff, 2010). The importance given to the physical location of a work place has been gradually decreasing due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as growth of information technology (Sridevi et al. 2021).

Societies at global level saw unexpected trend of forced circumstance where organisations and companies have continued to work virtually while workers are separated at their homes (Jean Routh et al. 2021). WFH during Covid-19 pandemic caused a spurt in inequality since employees of minimum wage are required to be an work premises (Brusseovich et al. 2020). The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic boosted an un-precedent massive and rapid shift of people on work nature (Bartram, 2022; Yan, J. et al. 2021). Millions of employees are asked to shift from office to home (Bouzori et al. 2020; Hurley et al. 2021, Rogers, 2021).

Statement of the problem

Some of the IT companies still continuing WFH as there is a threat of repeat of Covid-19 variant. Some IT companies are practicing both in a week thereby employees partially attend work from home and office. In order to protect the health of the employees many IT companies still confined to WFH. WFH is characterised by the freedom from constraints associated with working in a formal and fixed workplace due to progress in ICT (Nakrosiene et al. 2019). Long before the Covid-19 pandemic, WFH had already been suggested is a modern human resource policy for organisations and it has resulted in a definite trend firmly deep seated in society (Illengems et al. 2021). Regardless of the favourability of WFH, the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered the world's biggest implementation of WFH (Yenna, 2020). WFO gives employees a relaxed environment and they achieve the target well in time and offers professional development. Increased productivity, improved time management are the benefits of WFO. The benefits of WFH includes better WLF, convenience and increased productivity. Employee prefer flexibility which is accommodated by WFO. Added to these benefits WFH offers environmental benefits. The IT managers should weigh the pros and cons and the severity of the unexpected problems and adopt the convenient method of work.

Review of literature

Benthey et al. (2016) stated that the feeling of social isolation experienced by remote worker can be overcome by rendering sufficient social support during work from home.

The study by Golden and Veiga (2005) indicated that the factor that impacts the success of work while telecommunicating is how employees must perform their work activities.

Kalra (2020) identified 4 factors like productivity and output, second factor innovative and creativity, culture and branding and employee engagement and satisfaction which can impact the degree to which working remotely in the pandemic and post-pandemic 19 world can impact IT sector.

Shareena & Shald (2020) contributed to the study of work from home during covid-19 about employees perception and experiences. In their study responses gathered from people working in different sectors who were working from home during pandemic found that people who had children at home, comfortable workplace, peaceful environment and good internet connectivity were more willing to work from home.

Jaiswal and Arun (2020) conducted a study on comparative study on WFH during Covid-19 about employees perception and experience. The researchers tried to analyse the quality of life women employees in lockdown period while working from home. They revealed that most of the women liked WFO rather than WFH.

Feelen Christy et al. (2021) found that respondents prefer work from a home model of working if they are having a good atmosphere to work from home. Further the researchers expressed that flexible working hours or fixed hours given to the workers that they feel do not tied to the computers and motivating them positively may increase the productivity of the employees.

Jingling QU and Jiagi Yan (2022) expressed that 74% companies plan to shift some of their employees to remote working temporarily. The researcher suggested a sustained and pragmatic WFH policy in terms of set working hours and taking regular breaks should be designed to reduce job demand like a time long intense concentration. Further, the employers may leave employees more empowerment on scheduling, enhance the quality among different hierarchy people and avoid lengthy and discussion commands. In addition as per the researchers social support is found to be critical bounding condition between WFH and job characteristics.

Golden Gajendra (2019) reported that there exist a positive association between WFH and the employee job based performance particularly for those employees who had very less social support at workplace. The feeling of isolation as per the another can be overcome by rendering sufficient social support during WFH.

Objectives

- To study demographics impacting on the study.
- To analyse advantages of both WFH and WFO.
- To study the challenges faced from WFH and WFO.

Hypotheses

- There exist no significant variation in the demographics and hence they do not impact on the study.
- There are no benefits from both WFH and WFO.
- There are no challenge faced by employees working from home and office.

Research Questions

- What are the reasons behind demographics not supporting the study?
- What are the advantages of WFH and WFO?
- What are the challenges faced by the employees working in office and virtual.

Research Methodology

The problem of this research compares the different types of work i.e., WFO and WFH. Further, the research also probe about the challenges faced by both the types of working. Research methodology is about the method followed in the research work. It is an array of conditions for the purpose of data collection. Research design is essential as it is going to facilitate smooth smiling of the different operations there by making research as efficient and aiming at gathering maximum data with least experience.

Questionnaire Design : A well manageable questionnaire with options of 3 and 5 point Likert scale. The researcher gathered the data by interviewing the respondents. Questionnaire contained open ended questions.

Participants : The participants of the study belongs to employees of IT companies at Bengaluru. The sample companies include.

Universe of the study: The present study confined to urban Bengaluru. All the sample employees working in different IT companies were met for the purpose of data collection.

Sample and sampling technique : The sample of the study is 200 and covers only IT software engineers convenient sampling technique was performed to gather the required data. Employees from CSM 64, WIPRO 64, Accenture 72 were interviewed.

Method of analysis : The study adopts x^2 , weighted arithmetic mean and extent of challenges Index

Variables Under Study: Demographics of the respondents constitute moderate variables. The dependent variables of the study are WFH and WFO and the all the factors driving WFH and WFO are the independent variables.

Extent of Challenges Index : The Extent of challenges Index (ECI) = $ECI_{SA} + ECI_A + ECI_{SWA}$

Where ECI_{SA} = Respondents strongly agree.

Over the statements framed in the table

ECI_A = Respondents agree for the same and

ECI_{SWA} = Respondents somewhat agree over the statements framed in the table.

Survey Findings:

Table-1 highlights that 29 respondents belongs to WFH and 21 to the WFO. The total single respondents unmarried stood at 13 and married 37. The age data is provided in Table-2. There are 37 respondents of both the type of work belonging to the age 21-30 years followed by 10 to the age group of 31-40 years and 3 to the 41-50 years. Table-3 reports that attitude of boss towards respondents. Very interestingly the table reveals that if boss is cooperative the respondents prefer to work in office otherwise, prefer remote work. Table-4 show about length of work and preferred mode of work. Out of 24 respondents who have put up an experience of 1-2 years, 14 prefer to WFH and 10 WFO. Further out of 12 respondents who have put up an experience of <9 year 4 preferred WFH and 6 WFO. Out of 8 respondents having an experience of 5-10 years 6 belongs to WFH and 2 WFO. All the demographics highlighted above significantly differ and hence the null hypotheses is not accepted (H_0) and the alternative (H_1) is accepted.

Table-5 let slip data about the benefits from the WFO. To measure the benefits from WFO, weighted arithmetic mean was performed. The bipolar expressions are defined as 'f' and weights as 'w'. The multiplication of opinions and weights is defined as 'fw'. The total of fw is the basis for declaration of rank. The total V divided by the sum of weights i.e., $174 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 15$. The ranks / benefits include increased productivity, improved time management, and the third bring identifying work life balance (WLB). The table reveals benefits like which are ranked increased productivity, improved time management and identifying WLB.

Table - 6 reveals data about advantages of WFO. Again to measure the benefits "WA" is performed. The ranked benefits include better WLF, convenience and increased productivity.

Table 7 and 8 speaks about challenges faced by WFO and WFH. To measure challenges faced Extent of challenges. Index was framed and 3 point Likert scale was preferred with correspondent's weights 3, 2 and 1. The expressions are multiplied by weights and the sum of frequency multiplied by weights is the concerned total and this is the basis for ranking the opinions of IT respondents. The ranked challenges include little recognition, poor WLB and lack of transparency in case of WFO. Similarly the challenges include in case of WFH mental health challenge, lack of networking, and isolation. All the χ^2 values show significant variation and "c" show high degree of relationship between the challenges factors and WFH.

Survey discussion: During covid-19 pandemic days employees work forced to switch over to WFH. But the minimum wages employees are required to work at office and this trend created inequalities among the employees. Work from home was rarely offered to the employees before pandemic (Kaksha Prasanna Waghmore, 2022). The study found that the demographics showing significant variation with high degree of relationship between the attitudes concerned. The benefits of WFO includes increased productivity, improved time management and identifying WLB and the benefits of WFH includes better WLB, convenience and increased productivity. The challenges faced by IT employees working from office includes little recognition, poor WLF and lack of transparency in leadership; Similarly the challenges faced by employees working WFH includes mental health challenges, lack of networking and isolation. The data gathered presented in the form of tables and data was analysed properly with the help of concerned qualitative techniques.

Conclusion: The study being explorative in nature contributes positively to the literature of WFH and WFO. The aim of present study is to how the impact of demographics on WFH and WFO. Further, the study also probed the preference of respondents about mode of work. 58% of respondents preferred WFH and 42% respondents liked WFO. The study found advantages of WFO like increased productivity, improved time management and identifying WLB. Similarly the study also found the benefits of WFO like better WLB, convenience and increased productivity. The challenges faced at work from office includes little recognition, poor WLB and lack of transparency on leadership. The study further found challenges faced at home like mental health challenges, lack of networking and isolation.

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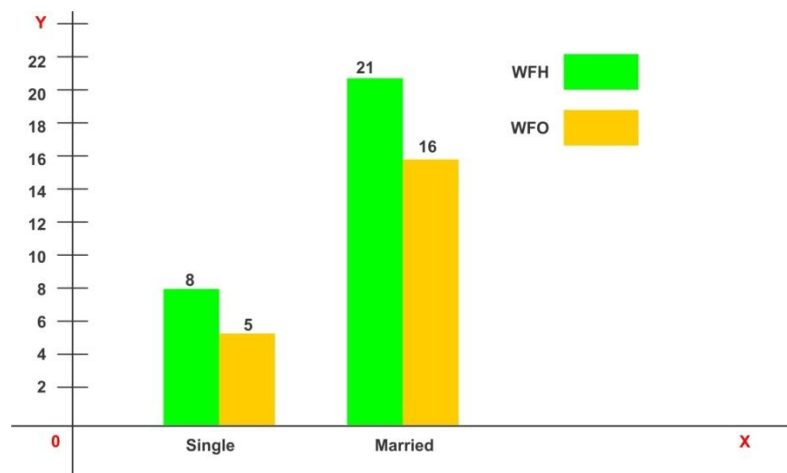
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Table-1 : Marital Status & Preferred Mode of work

Marital Status	WFH	WFO	T
Single	8	5	13
Married	21	16	37
Total	29	21	50

Source: Field Survey

Figure - 1 : Marital Status & Preferred Mode of work



Chi-square Table

Calculated value = 4.02, TV = 3.841

df = (2-1) (2-1) = 1 x 1 = 1

Hypothesis

H ₀	There exist no significant variation between marital status of employees working in WFH and WFO	Reject
H ₁	There exist significant variation between marital status of employees working in WFH and WFO	Accept

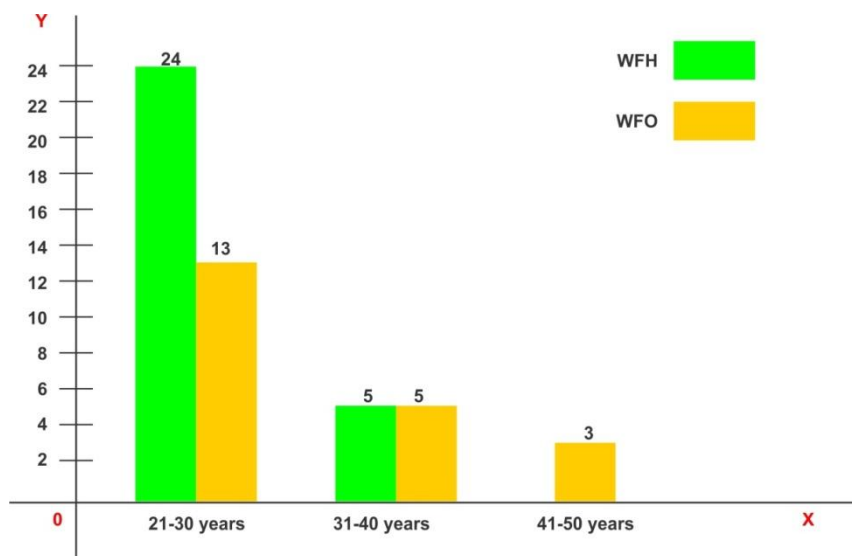
From the above chi-square table it can be seen that there is a significant difference between marital status and preferred mode of work. Single employees 13 from both prefer to work in both home and office. However married respondents prefer to work from home.

Table-2 : Age & Preferred Mode of work

Age in years	WFH	WFO	T
21-30 years	24	13	37
31-40 years	5	5	10
41-50 years	-	3	3
Total	29	21	50

Source: Field Survey

Figure - 2 : Age and Preferred Mode of work



Chi-square Table

Calculated value = 7.81, TV = 5.991

$df = (r-1)(c-1) = (3-1) (2-1) = 2 \times 1 = 2$

Hypothesis

H_0	There exist no significant variation in the age and preferred mode of work.	Reject
H_1	There exist significant variation in the age and preferred mode of work.	Accept

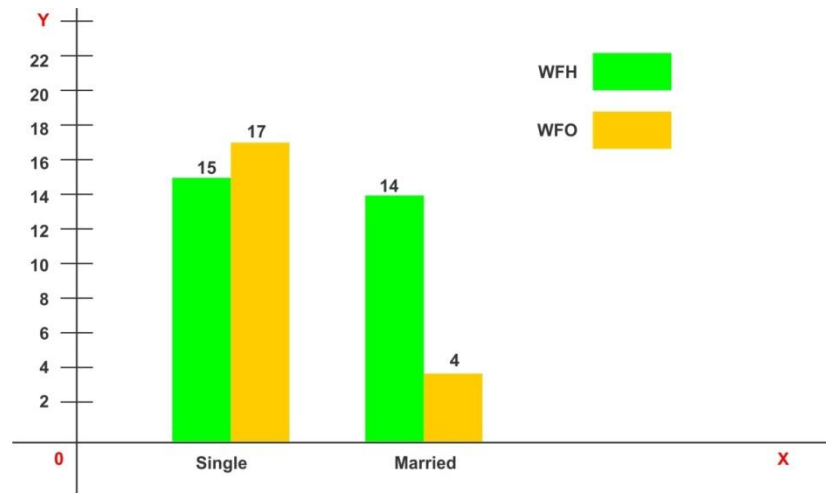
Table-2 highlights that employees aged between 31-40 years found similarly in working either at home or office. But the respondents belonging 21-30 years show much variation and 24 respondents prefer to work in home than office and 13 liked to working in office. Chi-square statistical technique however fails to accept null hypotheses and accepts the alternative.

Table-3 : Attitude of boss towards type of employee

Attitude of the boss	WFH	WFO	T
Cooperative	15	17	32
Neutral	14	4	18
Total	29	21	50

Source: Field Survey

Figure - 3 : Attitude of boss towards type of employee



Chi-square Table

Calculated value = 4.50, TV = 3.841

$$df = (r-1)(c-1) = (2-1) (2-1) = 1 \times 1 = 1$$

Hypothesis

H ₀	There exist no significant variation in the attitude of the boss and preferred mode of work.	Reject
H ₁	There exist significant variation in the attitude of the boss and preferred mode of work.	Accept

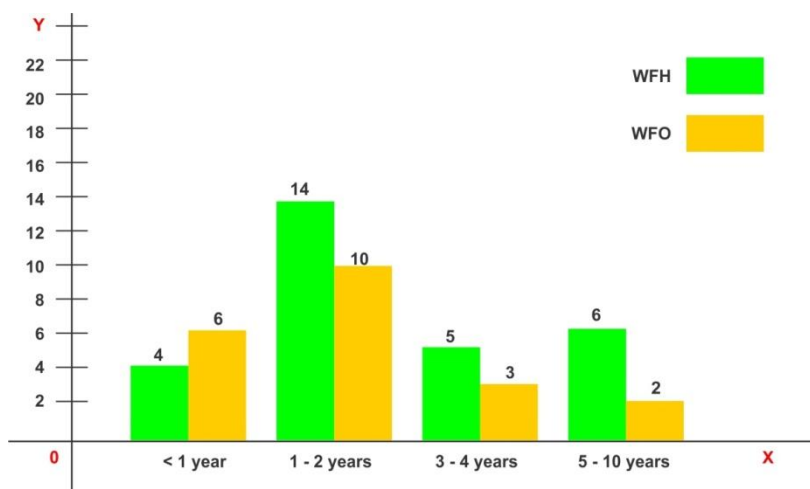
From the above chi-square table, it can be seen that there is a significant variation between the attitude of the boss and the preferred mode of work. It can be seen from the graph that respondents working in different organisations prefer to work in the office if the attitude of boss is cooperative and prefer to work from home if the attitude of the boss is neutral.

Table-4 : Length of work and preferred mode of work

Years of service	WFH	WFO	T
< 1 year	4	6	10
1 - 2 years	14	10	24
2 - 4 years	5	3	8
5 - 10 years	6	2	8
Total	29	21	50

Source: Field Survey

Figure - 4 : Length of work and preferred mode of work



Chi-square Table

Calculated value = 7.972, TV = 7.815

$$df = (r-1)(c-1) = (4-1) (2-1) = 3 \times 1 = 3$$

Hypothesis

H ₀	There exist no significant variation between employees working WFH & WFO.	Reject
H ₁	There exist significant variation between employees working WFH & WFO.	Accept

From the above chi-square values it can be seen that there is a significant difference between the length of work in organisations and preferred mode of work. It can be conferred from the graph that employees working in different organisations for <1 year prefer work from office and 3-4 years employees prefer work from home. However employees working in organisations between 1-2 years and 5-10 years prefer work from home.

Table-5 : Benefits work from office

Factors driving benefits of work from office	Weight	5	4	3	2	1	T	WA
	Likert	SA	A	N	DA	SDA		
No home disturbances	w	30	7	6	4	3	50	XVII
	fw	150	28	18	8	3	207	13.80
A more relaxed environment	w	31	6	3	4	6	50	XXI
	fw	155	24	9	8	6	202	13.47
Professional development	w	28	9	5	4	4	50	XIX
	fw	140	36	15	8	4	203	13.53

Collaboration and team work	w	30	8	6	3	3	50	XV
	fw	150	32	18	6	3	209	13.93
Behaviour and interpersonal skills	w	32	9	8	-	1	50	X
	fw	160	36	24	-	1	221	14.73
Boosts understanding	w	39	2	4	2	3	50	IX
	fw	195	8	12	4	3	222	14.80
Creativity & innovation	w	44	5	-	-	1	50	IV
	fw	220	20	-	-	1	241	16.06
Elevated company culture	w	40	4	2	3	1	50	VIII
	fw	200	16	6	6	1	229	15.27
Improved time management	w	46	3	-	1	-	50	11
	fw	230	12	-	2	-	244	16.27
Increased productivity	w	47	3	-	-	-	50	I
	fw	235	12	-	-	-	247	16.47
Mental health benefits	w	38	8	3	-	1	50	VII
	fw	190	32	9	-	1	232	15.47
Job security and advancement	w	41	7	2	-	-	50	V
	fw	205	28	6	-	-	239	15.93
Identifying work life balance	w	43	6	1	-	-	50	III
	fw	215	24	3	-	-	242	16.13
Increased satisfaction and employee engagement	w	35	8	2	3	2	50	X
	fw	175	32	6	6	2	221	14.73
Better communication culture	w	33	7	5	2	3	50	XII
	fw	165	28	15	4	3	215	14.33
	w	29	8	4	5	4	50	XIX

Better distribution of work place	fw	145	32	12	10	4	203	13.53
Feeling of purpose	w	38	8	3	1	-	50	VI
	fw	190	32	9	2	-	233	15.53
Access to resources	w	29	8	5	6	2	50	XVIII
	fw	145	32	15	12	2	206	13.73
Appropriate facilitated and office tools	w	32	9	-	5	4	50	XIV
	fw	160	36	-	10	4	210	14.00
Become more experienced	w	28	8	7	4	3	50	XIII
	fw	140	32	28	8	3	211	14.06
Networking opportunities	w	26	10	6	3	5	50	XXII
	fw	130	40	18	6	5	199	13.27
Professional Development	w	31	7	6	2	4	50	XV
	fw	155	28	18	4	4	209	13.93

Source: Field Survey

Note : Likert scale : SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, DA - Disagree, SDA - Strongly Disagree

Weights : 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 15

Weighted Average = Total / Sum of Weights

Table-6 : Benefits work from Home

Factors driving benefits of work from home	Weight	5	4	3	2	1	T	WA
	Likert	SA	A	N	DA	SDA		
Flexibility	f	39	7	2	1	1	150	VIII
	fw	195	28	6	2	1	232	15.47
Improved employee retention	f	37	9	2	1	1	50	XI
	fw	185	36	6	2	1	230	15.33
Attract new talent	f	35	10	5	-	-	50	XIV
	fw	175	40	10	-	-	225	15.00
Increased staff motivation	f	39	6	2	3	-	50	X
	fw	195	24	6	6	-	231	15.40

Increased productivity	f	44	5	-	-	1	50	III
	fw	220	20	-	-	1	241	16.07
Improved staff health and well being	f	37	7	-	2	4	50	XVI
	fw	185	28	-	4	4	221	14.73
Better WLB	f	48	2	-	-	-	50	I
	fw	240	8	-	-	-	248	16.53
Convenience	f	45	4	1	-	-	50	II
	fw	225	16	1	-	-	242	16.13
Technology makes it easier	f	41	5	3	-	1	50	XIII
	fw	205	20	1	-	1	227	15.13
Cost savings	f	43	3	1	2	1	50	V
	fw	215	12	3	4	1	235	15.67
Increased job satisfaction	f	41	5	2	1	1	50	VI
	fw	205	20	6	2	1	234	15.60
Greater work inclusively	f	37	10	-	2	1	50	XI
	fw	185	40	-	4	1	230	15.33
Reduced stress & commuting time	f	44	3	-	1	2	50	IV
	fw	220	12	-	2	2	236	15.73
Enhanced focus and concentration	f	38	5	-	4	3	50	XVI
	fw	190	20	-	8	3	221	14.73
Environmental benefits	f	39	5	-	3	3	50	XV
	fw	195	20	-	6	3	224	14.93
Customised workplace	f	33	8	1	5	3	50	XIX
	fw	165	32	3	10	3	213	14.20
Global opportunities	f	25	10	7	6	2	50	XXI
	fw	125	40	21	12	2	200	13.33

More work flexibility	f	36	6	2	3	3	50	XVIII
	fw	180	24	6	6	3	219	14.60
Location independence	f	39	8	-	2	1	50	VIII
	fw	195	32	-	4	1	232	15.47
Reduction in work absences	f	39	9	-	1	1	50	VI
	fw	195	36	-	2	1	234	15.60
Impact on sustainability	f	28	10	5	2	-	50	XXII
	fw	140	40	15	4	-	199	13.27
Lower sickness absence	f	31	12	-	3	4	50	XIX
	fw	155	48	-	6	4	213	14.20

Source: Field Survey

Note : Likert scale : SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, DA - Disagree, SDA - Strongly Disagree

Weights : 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 15

Weighted Average = Total / Sum of Weights

Table-7 : Challenges faced by WFO

Factors driving challenges	Extent of Challenges Index			ECI	R	X ²	Result of x ²	“c”	Result of “c”
	SA	A	SWA						
Insufficient training	27	20	3	50	X	70.04	Significant	0.76	High Degree
	81	40	3	124					
Schedule inflexibility	28	20	2	50	IX	80.18	Significant	0.78	High Degree
	84	40	2	126					
Poor WLB	43	2	5	50	II	224.64	Significant	0.90	High Degree
	129	4	5	138					
Lock of motivation	38	7	5	50	IV	165.13	Significant	0.88	High Degree
	114	14	5	133					
Lack of communication	37	7	6	50	VI	157.37	Significant	0.87	High Degree
	111	14	5	133					
Little recognition	45	3	2	50	I	238.96	Significant	0.96	High Degree
	135	6	2	143					
Staff conflict	40	2	8	50	V	197.08	Significant	0.89	High Degree
	120	4	8	132					
	35	8	7	50	VIII	137.52	Significant	0.86	

No potential growth	105	16	7	128					High Degree
Lack of technology	36	9	5	50	VI	147.08	Significant	0.86	High Degree
	108	18	5	131					
Lack of transparency in leadership	39	6	5	50	III	176.22	Significant	0.88	High Degree
	117	12	5	134					

Source: Field Survey

Note : χ^2 = Chi-square, c = Contingency co-efficient, df = 2, TV = 5.991

'c' = $\sqrt{(\chi^2 / \chi^2 + N)}$

C always near to 1. Closer to one shows high degree of relationship.

Table-8 :

Factors driving challenges	Extent of Challenges Index			ECI	R	χ^2	Result of χ^2	"c"	Result of "c"
	SA	A	SWA						
No work life balance - Hard to tell boss either away from computer and never away	37	10	3	50	VII	73.65	Significant	0.77	High Degree
	111	20	3	134					
Difficult to attain goals	38	10	2	50	IV	80.18	Significant	0.78	High Degree
	114	20	2	136					
Isolation	42	4	4	50	III	224.64	Significant	0.90	High Degree
	126	8	4	138					
Trouble communication & increased distractions	41	3	6	50	VI	165.13	Significant	0.87	High Degree
	123	6	6	135					
Lack of motivation	37	9	4	50	VIII	156.45	Significant	0.87	High Degree
	111	18	4	133					
Lack of networking	45	3	1	50	II	240.15	Significant	0.90	High Degree
	135	6	1	142					
Mental health challenges	48	2	1	50	I	268.82	Significant	0.86	High Degree
	144	4	1	149					
Navigating uncertainty	34	13	3	50	IX	122.93	Significant	0.84	High Degree
	102	26	3	131					

No enthusiasm	32	15	3	50	X	106.45	Significant	0.82	High Degree
	96	30	3	129					
Harder to build trust	28	10	12	50	XII	80.53	Significant	0.78	High Degree
	84	20	12	116					
Insufficient technological support infrastructure and digital tools	33	13	4	50	X	117.02	Significant	0.83	High Degree
	99	26	4	129					
Lack of support in decision making	38	10	2	50	IV	159.58	Significant	0.87	High Degree
	114	20	2	136					

Source: Field Survey

Note : χ^2 = Chi-square, c = Contingency co-efficient, df = 2, TV = 5.991

'c' = $\sqrt{(\chi^2 / \chi^2 + N)}$

C always near to 1. Closer to one shows high degree of relationship.