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SIGNIFICANCE OF A STRUCTURED WORK FROM HOME FRAMEWORK: EVIDENCE FROM CENTRAL KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Work from home (WFH) has become the daily reality for millions of people all around the world. The employees who used to go to office everyday to work for a fixed time are now stuck at home. Work from home has made it really difficult for the employees to understand where work ends and where personal life begins. Working from home during Covid pandemic can be more tiring as children would also be at home because of lockdown. The present study tries to understand the existence of a structured work from home framework and also how it is significant to an employer. Data is collected from employees working in various corporates in Central Kerala, in the districts of Kottayam and Ernakulam who work from home. One Way ANOVA is used to test the hypotheses. The study concludes that there is a need for employers to develop a proper work from home framework for their employees so that their working time is not extended and they are satisfied.

Key words: Framework, Work from Home, Covid, extended working time, frustration



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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic which began in the late 2019 quickly spread to majority of the nations around the world within the first 3 months of 2020. From there, lockdown began in several countries. In 2021, we are still struggling with the pandemic and are trying to live a normal life along with the virus. But work life has never been the same as before. The employees who used to go to work every day to work for a specific time are now required to work from home. Before the pandemic, work from home was a once in a while facility that was given to employees by multi-national companies. It was seen as a luxury during those days. But now, when everybody is bound to stay at home all throughout, work from home might have become lousy for some people at least. When it has become a routine to do work from home, employees might be finding it difficult as so many business organisations are exploiting their employees in the name of work from home during the pandemic.

When work from home was a luxury and were not granted so generously, it was considered a blessing. But now, with the new Corona virus breakout, when companies have given continuous work from home, the employees cannot enjoy work like the old 'work from home'. Today's work from home is the new 'regular' work. As they have to work from home like they did in the office setting, it might be difficult as they may not be able to differentiate between personal space and working space; also between personal time and working time. This could lead serious frustration in the employees.

The present study is on the significance of a structured WFH framework. Structured WFH framework here means a framework that directs an employee regarding when to start the work and when to get off of the work. It clearly sets due dates and due time. The employees are



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given clear guidelines regarding reporting; when and how to report. In short, structured WFH framework means any directives or guidelines that shall help an employee in balancing his/her personal and work life and help in work efficiently.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To find out whether the employees are provided with a structured work from home facility.
2. To understand the significance of having a proper structure regarding work from home in an organisation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of research: The study is empirical in nature.

Scope of the study: The present study tries to understand the significance of having a proper WFH framework for the corporate employees in Central Kerala. The study takes into account employees working in different corporates in the Kottayam and Ernakulam districts of Kerala.

Data Collection: Primary data relating to the study is collected through a structured questionnaire from a sample of 200 respondents between 1st December 2020 and 10th February 2021. The sample is formed through Convenience Sampling technique.

Sample: Of the 200 respondents, 101 are male and 99 are female. 66 respondents are below 25 years of age, 65 respondents belong to 25 – 30 age category, 29 to 30 – 35 age category, 20 respondents each to 35 – 40 and Above 40 age categories. As per the current family situation, 100 of the total respondents are single, 13 are single parent, 56 are married with kids and 31 are



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married with no kids. According to income level of the respondents, 21 belong to below Rs. 1,50,000 category, 34 to Rs.1,50,000 – Rs. 3,00,000 category, 59 to Rs. 3,00,000 – Rs. 5,00,000 category, 34 to Rs. 5,00,000 – Rs. 10,00,000 and 52 to More than Rs.10,00,000 category

Data Analysis: The hypotheses are tested using One-Way ANOVA. 0.01 is taken as the level of significance. The study also uses graphs for analysis.

HYPOTHESES

First Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant variation in the extension of working hours according to the existence of a structured work from home framework.

Second Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant variation in the level of frustration of employees from work from home according to the existence of a structured work from home framework.

FINDINGS

The following are the findings of the study from percentage analysis and hypotheses testing.

- The data shows that only 79 out of the 200 respondents have a proper work from home framework. Out of these 79 employees, only 33 employees have a framework that is provided by the employer. Remaining 46 employees have created a framework on their own to deal with the work imbalance during the pandemic time.



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FIGURE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES BETWEEN HAVING A STRUCTURED WFH FRAMEWORK AND NOT HAVING THE SAME

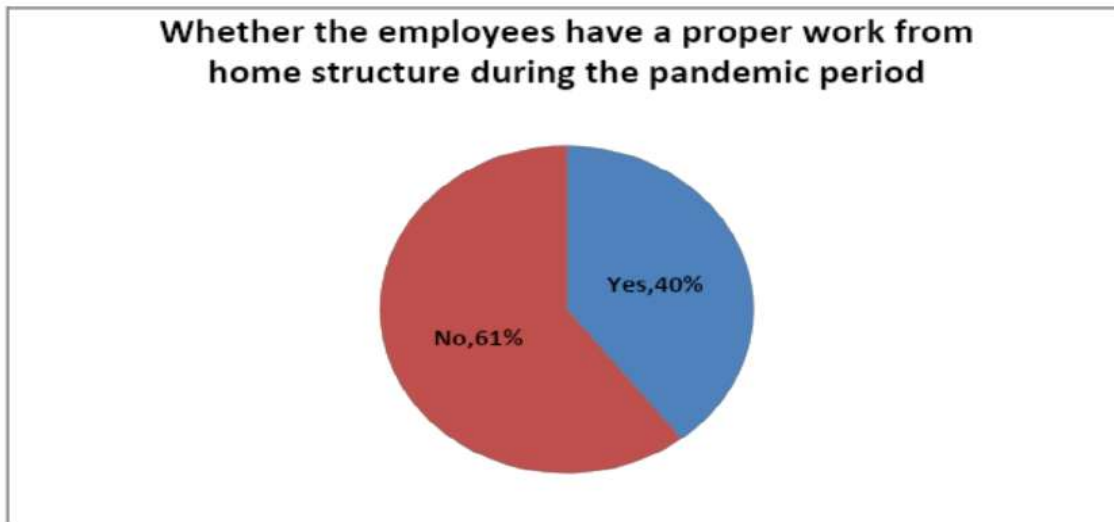
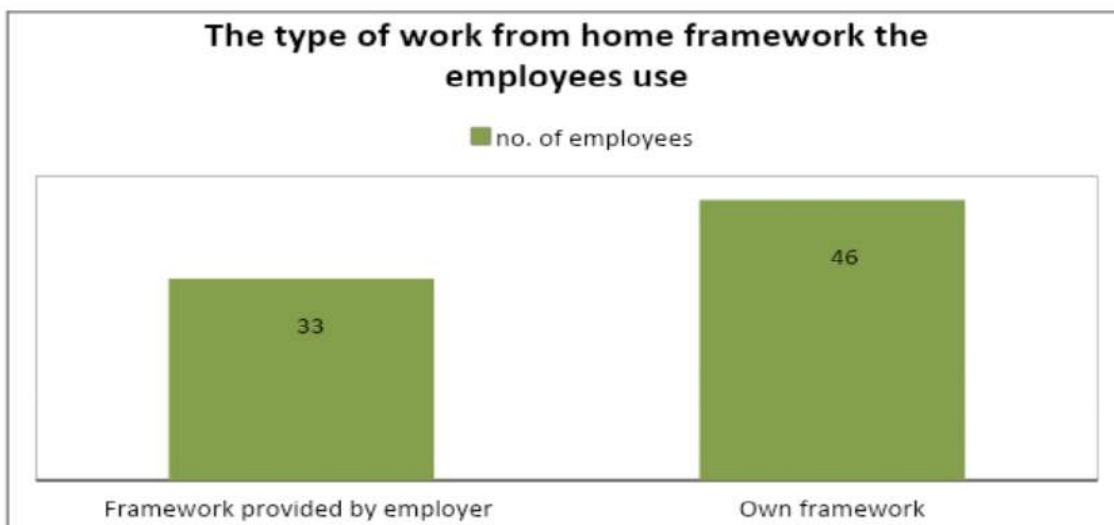


FIGURE 2

EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE A WFH FRAMEWORK BY THE EMPLOYER AND THOSE WHO HAVE CREATED A FRAMEWORK ON THEIR OWN





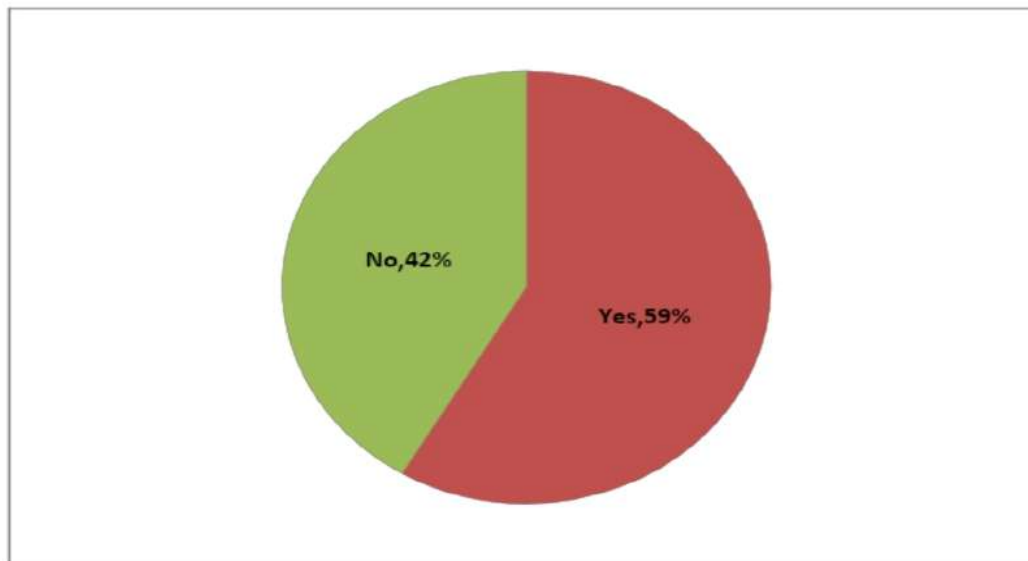
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- The data shows that 58% of the employees experience their working hours getting extended when they are working from home. It might be because they are not able to differentiate between personal time and working time when they work from home. It may also be because the employer is trying to get the maximum out of the employees through the overtime work, but cannot be called overtime as the employees are at home.

FIGURE 3

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES WHO EXPERIENCE EXTENDED WORKING HOURS WHEN WORKING FROM HOME



- 5 point scale is used to measure the level of frustration of employees when working from home with 1 being no or very low level of frustration and 5 being very high level of frustration Majority of the employees have chosen 4 as their rate of frustration from working from home (63 employees). 36 have chosen 5 as their rate of frustration which means very high level of frustration. At the same time, 41 people have given their frustration level as 1 which means very less or no frustration.

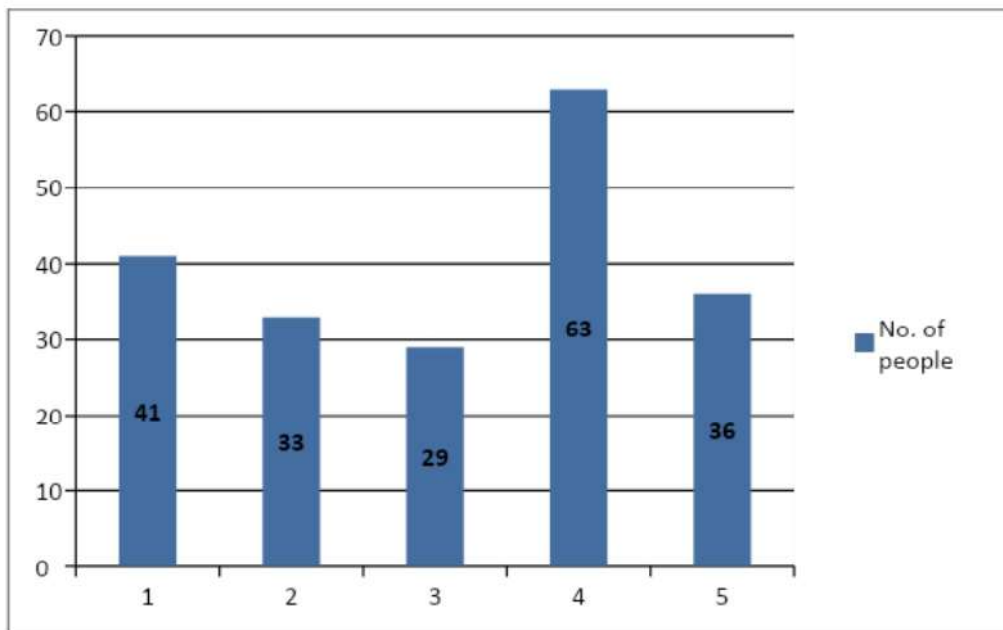


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FIGURE 4

LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION THAT EMPLOYEES FACE WHEN WORKING FROM HOME



Hypotheses Testing

1. First Hypothesis testing

H₀: There is no significant variation in the extension of working hours according to the existence of a structured work from home framework.



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TABLE 1

ANOVA TEST RESULTS OF FIRST HYPOTHESIS

	N	Mean	Std. Error	F	Sig.
Yes	79	1.75	0.049		
No	121	1.2	0.036		
Total	200	1.42	0.035		
				83.302	0.000

The ANOVA test shows that the p-value is 0.000. Since it is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant variation in the extension of working hours due to the existence of a structured work from home framework.

The table shows that the mean values of extended work hours when there exists a proper work from home framework is 1.75 and when there isn't a proper work from home framework is 1.20. 1 stands for the experience of extended working hours and 2 stands for no extended working hours. From the mean values it is clear that when there is a proper work from home framework, whether provided by employer or created on own, the experience of extended working hours is less (1.75 is closer to 2 which symbolizes NO for extended working hours). When there is no proper framework for work from home facility, the employees may experience extended or long working hours (the mean value for no proper framework is 1.20 which is closer to 1 which symbolizes YES for extended working hours).

2. Second Hypothesis testing



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H₀: There is no significant variation in the level of frustration of employees from work from home according to the existence of a structured work from home framework.

TABLE 2

ANOVA TEST RESULTS OF SECOND HYPOTHESIS

	N	Mean	Std. Error	F	Sig.
Yes	79	1.62	0.087		
No	121	4.07	0.065		
Total	200	3.1	0.099		
				523.808	0.000

The ANOVA test shows that the p-value is 0.000. Since it is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant variation in the level of frustration of employees from work from home according to the existence of a structured work from home framework.

The table shows that the mean values of level of frustration when there exists a proper work from home framework is 1.62 and when there isn't a proper work from home framework is 4.07. 1 stands for very less or no frustration and increases by each level. 5 symbolises very high level of frustration. From the mean values it is clear that when there is a proper work from home framework, whether provided by employer or created on own, the level of frustration of employees from work from home is less (the mean value for proper framework is 1.62 which symbolises pretty low level of frustration). When there is no proper framework for work from



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home facility, the employees are more frustrated (the mean value for no proper framework is 4.07 which symbolises high level of frustration).

SUGGESTIONS

The following are the suggestions derived at from the research:

- Less percentage of employees (79 employees) is found to have a proper work from home framework. Out of these employees, only some are found to be provided with a proper framework by the employer. Most of the employees out of these 79 employees have come up with a framework of their own to work from home better and to better balance their personal life. Not all individuals are able to come up with frameworks of their own. Hence it is the responsibility of the employer to develop a Work from Home framework and help employees to work better from home.
- The first hypothesis test shows that lack of a proper work from home structure may lead to extended work hours. It is better for the employer to make sure that the employees do not have extended work hours as it may affect their physical and mental health and ultimately organisation shall be affected.
- The second hypothesis test shows that lack of a proper work from home structure may result in a high level of frustration amongst. This is not good for both employer and employee. The frustration may affect the productivity of the employees. So the employer must come up with a suitable work from home framework.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that there is a need to provide a well structured framework for work from home to the employees by the employees. This will reduce the frustration level of



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employees and they do not have to work overtime. The study shows that most of the employees do not have a proper framework and they have high level frustration. It is essential for the employers to come up with a framework which suits them better so that both employer and employee benefits in the long run.

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