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Work life balance and challenges of women employees during lockdown in work from home

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***Abstract*---**The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 has affected the businesses and individual in varied degrees. This study has focused on the impact of pandemic on working life of women employees. To maintain balance between one's personal and professional life assumes greater importance for working women. Due to complete lockdown, the concept of Work from home has added more responsibility to working women managing two different environments which have distinct demands and time schedules. A structured questionnaire was prepared and circulated among women working in various fields based on age, educational qualification, employment status and no.of children. This study attempts to identify the shift in the working pattern due to work from home. Based on the review it is found that most women experience job spill over and forced to make situational sacrifices in each of the environments. It also throws light on the challenges faced by women employees working from home, stress levels and its impact on their productivity at job.

***Keywords*---**work from home, working pattern, job spill over, situational sacrifices, productivity.

Introduction

The social and economic impact of COVID-19 has affected the business in varied degrees. To tackle the current situation and the need for social distancing, companies are trying to operate through "Work from Home" mode using disruptive technology. Besides various advantages, work from home have posed enormous challenges in maintaining work life balance of individuals especially women. Due to the lockdown in India the whole work shifted inside the homes,

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many women reported their inability to differentiate between work (paid) and non-work (unpaid and of household). The inability to differentiate between work and life has been the reason for increased pressure on working individuals. (Fyhri&Hjorthol, 2009).All the additional household and childcare work during that period fell on women more, although men too helped but their help was majorly restricted to childcare activities and especially for their education. Working women who were having children aged 0–5 years have to struggle a lot to have a balance between work and home during COVID-19(Boca et al., 2020).The new norm of virtual work environment have burdened women with two full time jobs – at home and at office. This concept has caused changes in various aspects of women's life both physically and psychologically. If women is not able to maintain their work and life balanced, they will end up with a higher level of job stress and it can affect their job productivity

Review of Literature

El Akmal, M., Marpaung, W., Manurung, Y. S., & Mirza, R. (2021) in their research paper titled "Work from home during the pandemic & work-life balance: Married working woman perspective" aims to identify the relationship between work-life balance, marital satisfaction and job stress on married working women during the pandemic. The research was quantitative by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The results showed work-life balance has a negative relationship with Job stress. Job stress also had a similar significant negative relationship on marital satisfaction. On the other hand, Work-life balance had a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction.

Sundaresan, Shobha, in their research article"Work-Life Balance – Implications for Working Women" has developed two models of work life balance - role-analysis model and three factor model. They suggest to practice this model to enable working women to manage work life balance and to resolve the conflict caused by that. This study has revealed that the prime factors affecting work life balance of working women are burden of excessive work, not allocating time for their priority and the need to fulfil others expectations. It also revealed that women who had family support andflexible work schedule enjoyed better work life balance.

Jasrotia, Amithy, and JigyasaMeenain their study "Women, work and pandemic: An impact study of COVID- 19 lockdown on working women in India. The results showed that although the family members and spouses of these women respondents share some household responsibilities and managing children, the main role still vests on women's shoulders. The study also reveals though most of the women's families support their work; however, a considerable percentage of working women are still handling the challenges of household as well as professional work on their own. This may lead to increased stress, anxiety and depression among them.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the shift in the working pattern of women employees during lockdown.

- To find the effect of work from home on the personal aspects of women employees.
- To understand the challenges faced by women in balancing their work life.

Research Methodology

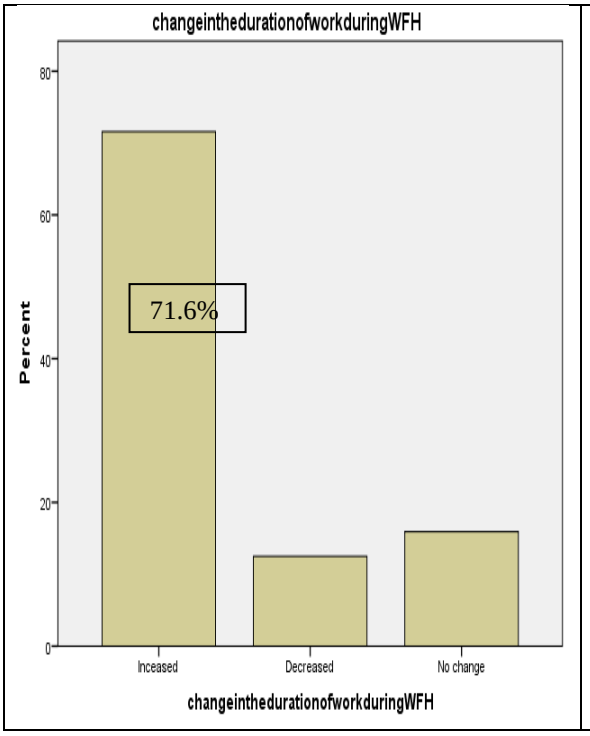
The present study is an Empirical study to analyze the work life balance and challenges of women employees during lockdown in work from home. For the purpose of the study both Primary and secondary data has been used. The primary data was collected from women of different employment status who have been working from home during the pandemic, through a structured questionnaire circulated Online. Measures were taken to rule out ineligible and inaccurate respondents. Secondary data was derived from journals published online, articles published online, and research papers. The sampling technique used for the study is convenient sampling. The sample size of the study is 100.

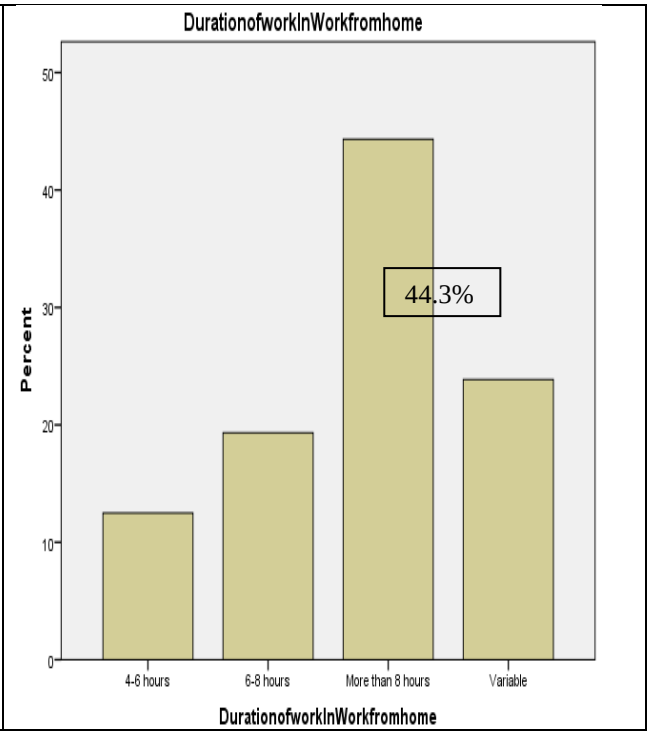
Analysis and Interpretation

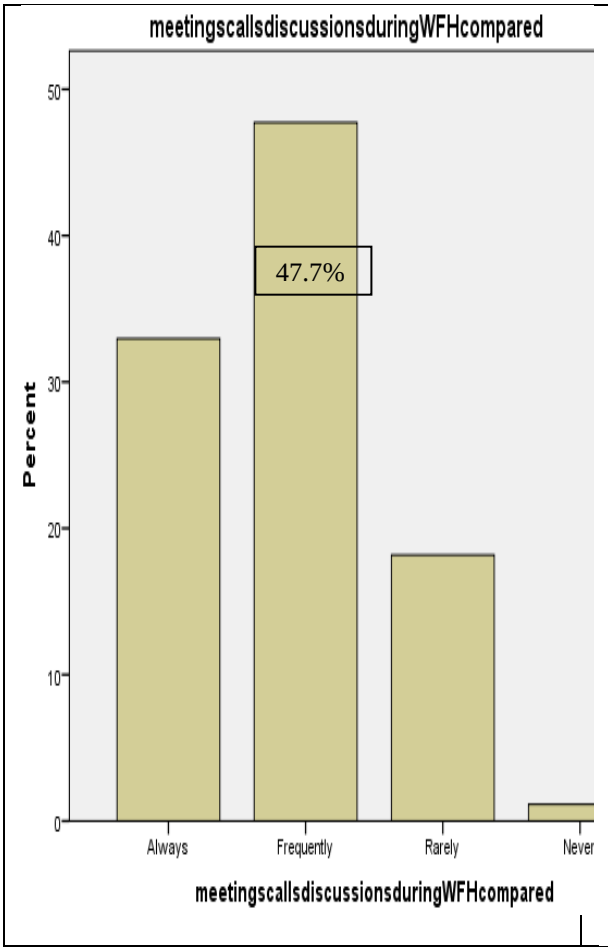
Reliability Statistics

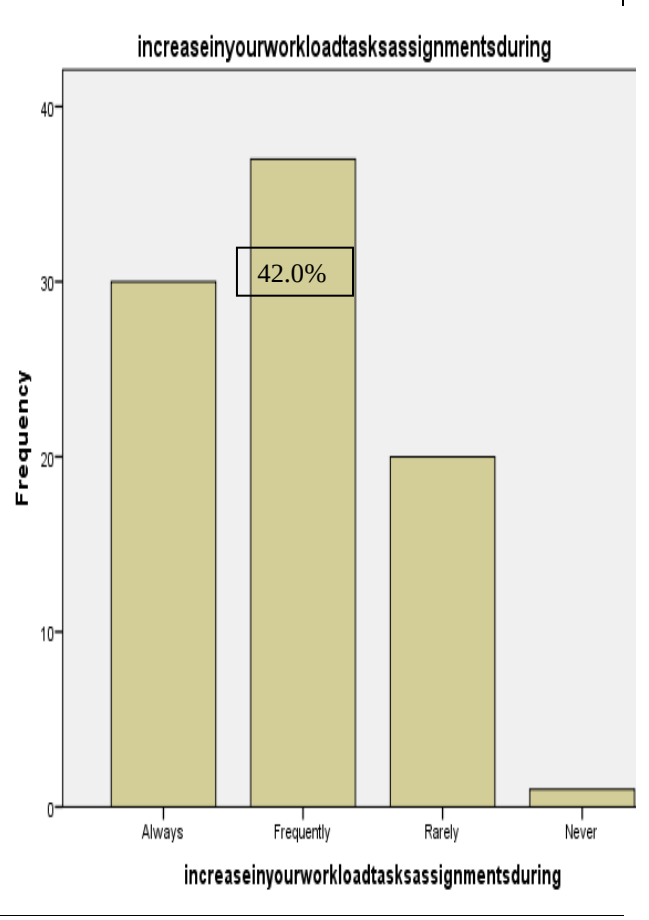
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.834	53

Shift in working pattern - Frequency Table:









Interpretation

From the above bar diagrams it is found that:

- 71.6% of the respondents have agreed that there is an increase in duration of work during work-from-home
- 44.3% of the respondents have said that they were working for more than 8 hours a day during work from home.
- 47.7% have responded that they had frequent meetings/call and discussions during this period.
- 42% agreed that they had an increase in the work load/tasks/assignments during work from home compared to usual.

Chi square table
Opinion on Work from home
(Insufficient work space/work setup at home*Marital status)

- H0: there is no significant relationship between sufficiency of work space/work setup and marital status

- H1: there is no significant relationship between sufficiency of work space/work setup and marital status

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**17.629[a]**	**8**	**.024**
Likelihood Ratio	17.742	8	.023
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.283	1	.070
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

From the above table it is evident that the P value (0.024) is lesser than the probability value (0.05). Hence (H0) null hypothesis is rejected. Thus it shows that there is significant relationship between the work space or work setup available at home and the marital status of the respondents.

Opinion on Work from home
(Insufficient work space/work setup at home*No. of children)

- H0: there is no significant relationship between sufficiency of work setup and the number of children
- H1: there is no significant relationship between sufficiency of work setup and the number of children

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**15.387[a]**	**8**	**.052**
Likelihood Ratio	16.321	8	.038
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.014	1	.156
N of Valid Cases	87		

a. 9 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.66.

From the above table it is evident that the P value (0.052) is equal to the significance level (0.05). Hence (H0) null hypothesis is rejected. Thus it shows that there is significant relationship between the work space or work setup available at home and the number of children for the respondents.

Personal aspects of Work-life-balance
(Spent ample time with children* MaritalStatus)

- H0: there is no significant relationship between spending time and marital status
- H1: there is no significant relationship between spending time and marital status

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**22.228[a]**	**8**	**.005**
Likelihood Ratio	24.502	8	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.725	1	.189
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

Personal aspects of Work-life-balance
(Spent ample time with children* No.of.Children)

- H0: There is no significant relationship between spending time and the number of children
- H1: There is significant relationship between spending time and the number of children

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**26.128[a]**	**8**	**.001**
Likelihood Ratio	29.249	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.173	1	.023
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.23.

From the above table it is evident that, the p values (0.005) and (0.01) are lesser than the significant value (0.05). Hence we reject the null hypothesis (Ho). Thus, it is clear that the respondents had ample time to spend with their children.

- H0: There is no significant relationship between reconnecting with friends and the number of children
- H1: There is significant relationship between reconnecting with friends and the number of children

Personal aspects of Work-life-balance
(Spent time / reconnect with friends* No.of.Children)

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.438[a]	8	.051
Likelihood Ratio	15.683	8	.047

Linear-by-Linear Association	.146	1	.702
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.84.

From the above table it is evident that, the p values (0.051) is lesser than the significant value (0.05). Hence we reject the null hypothesis (Ho). Thus, it is clear that there is a significant relationship between reconnecting with friends and number of children.

Difficulty in maintaining work-life balance

- H0: Number of children for the respondent does not impact the maintenance of work-life balance during work from home.
- H1: Number of children for the respondent does not impact the maintenance of work-life balance during work from home.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.309	.504		4.584	.000
	Age	-.133	.137	-.122	-.972	.334
	MaritalStatus	.147	.263	.075	.558	.578
	EmploymentStatus	.324	.174	.195	1.867	.065
	No.of.Children	**.357**	**.180**	**.278**	**1.983**	**.051**

a. Dependent Variable: lockdown of schools demanded more time with the children thereby effecting work time

From the above table, it is evident that the p value (0.051) for number of children is equal to 0.05. Hence the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Thus, the number of children a respondent has makes an impact on maintaining work life balance (lockdown of schools demanded more time with the children) during work from home.

- H0: Number of children for the respondent does not impact the responsibility to take care of infected family members
- H1: Number of children for the respondent does not impact the responsibility to take care of infected family members

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.337	.489		6.830	.000

	Age	-.066	.133	-.063	-.498	.620
	MaritalStatus	-.399	.256	-.213	-1.561	.122
	EmploymentStatus	.233	.168	.147	1.385	.170
	No.of.Children	**.412**	**.174**	**.338**	**2.365**	**.020**

a. Dependent Variable: Responsibility to take care of infected family members effected my work time.

From the above table, it is evident that the p value (0.020) for number of children is less than 0.05. Hence the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Thus, the number of children a respondent has makes an impact on maintaining work life balance (Responsibility to take care of infected family members) during work from home.
From the above two tables we can understand that number of children for the respondent did cause difficulty in maintaining work-life-balance during work from home. As mentioned in the tables the specific points of difficulties (dependent variable) were lockdown of schools leading to children being at home thereby requiring more time with them and at the same time taking care of the infected people at home and managing children.
Reasons for stress

- H0: There is no significant relationship between the marital status and management of home and work in the same space
- H1: There is significant relationship between the marital status and management of home and work in the same space
- H0: There is no significant relationship between the duration of work and management of home and work in the same space
- H1: There is significant relationship between the duration of work and management of home and work in the same space
- H0: There is no significant relationship between the frequency of official meeting/calls and management of home and work in the same space
- H1: There is significant relationship between the frequency of official meeting/calls and management of home and work in the same space
- H0: There is no significant relationship between the increase in work loan and management of home and work in the same space
- H1: There is significant relationship between the increase in work load and management of home and work in the same space

		Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
a)	Pearson Chi-Square	17.629[a]	8	.024
b)	Pearson Chi-Square	23.960[a]	12	.021
c)	Pearson Chi-Square	20.736[a]	12	.054
d)	Pearson Chi-Square	22.839[a]	12	.029

From the above table it is evident that, the p values (0.024), (0.021), (0.054) and (0.029) is lesser than the significant value (0.05). thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the management of work and home in the same space and marital status, duration of work, increase in workload and frequency of meetings.

- H0: There is no significant relationship between the stress due to official meeting/calls and its frequency
- H1: There is significant relationship between the stress due to official meeting/calls and its frequency

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.212[a]	12	.014
Likelihood Ratio	21.841	12	.039
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.806	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

From the above table it is evident that the p value (0.014) is lesser than the significance value (0.05) . Hence, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Thus, it shows that there is a significant relationship between the frequency of official calls/meetings and their stress level.

- H0: There is no significant relationship between the marital status and managing children with work time
- H1: There is significant relationship between the marital status and managing children with work time
- H0: There is no significant relationship between the number of children and managing them with work time
- H1: There is significant relationship between the number of children and managing them with work time
- H0: There is no significant relationship between the duration of work and managing children with work time
- H1: There is significant relationship between the duration of work and managing children with work time

		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
a)	Pearson Chi-Square	17.002[a]	8	.030
b)	Pearson Chi-Square	28.313[a]	8	.000
c)	Pearson Chi-Square	24.047[a]	12	.020

From the above table it is evident that the values (0.030), (0.000), (0.020) are lesser than the critical value of (0.05). hence we reject the null hypothesis(H0). Therefore, there is significant relationship between management of work and children and their marital status, number of children and the duration of work.

New work culture

- H0: There is no significant linear relationship between their mindset towards the new work culture and marital status.
- H1: There is significant linear relationship between their mindset towards the new work culture and marital status.

Correlations

		Age	Marital Status	Employment Status	No. of. Children
howdoyoufeelabtthenewworkculture	Pearson Correlation	.002	.323**	.072	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.985	.002	.507	.945
	N	88	88	88	88

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the above table it is evident that, the mindset of the women employees towards this new culture and marital status has a positive liner relationship (0.323) with a significance level of 0.002 which is lesser than 0.005. Hence we reject the null hypothesis (H0).

Findings

- From the analysis of shift in working patter, it found that majority of the women employees experience a major shift in their work pattern. The responses shows that the duration as well as the work load has increased to a large extend during this period.
- The respondents also have an opinion that there is no sufficient space or work set up for them to efficiently carry on their work at home. Demographic factors such as marital status of the respondents and the number of children for them plays a major role in this opinion.
- Nearly 51.8% of the respondents have felt that they were able to spend quality time with their children while 48.2% have felt that they found no difference in their time spent.
- Regarding the personal aspects and feelings of women employees, it was found that they spent ample time with their children and also reconnect with their friends, showing their agreeableness in maintaining work life balance.
- The regression analysis on the difficulties faced by women employees showed that the lockdown of schools demanded more time with the children and also they had added responsibility of taking care of the infected people at home.
- The results also showed that the employees felt stressful in managing home, children and work time within the same space. In addition, it also showed that the increased in the duration of work and work load demanded more time than usual.

Conclusion

The study attempted to understand the work life balance of women employees during lockdown. The overall results show that working women felt this work from home culture to be a boon as well as a bane. Although they had time to spend with their children and family than usual, it posed more challenges too. The traditional family set up places most of the household responsibilities on women. This lockdown has added few more tasks to their basket. The presence of

women is undeniable in most household chores. Personal and professional life demands two different roles at two different schedules. This work from home has made a huge shift in the working pattern leading to a huge shift in their work life balance. Therefore, most respondents have felt that they need a change of environment and also they prefer to have a separate work timing and space. Major factors contributing to this imbalance were found to be lockdown of organisations and educational institutions, which demanded more attention to take care of everyone at home. To conclude majority of the respondents have preferred to get back to normalcy in order to maintain a better work life balance.

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