



# Assessing the Effect of Work From Home on the Work-Life Balance of IT Employees

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to assess the effect of work from home (WFH) on the work-life balance of IT employees. The study investigated among 200 IT employees who were in full-time employment at two popular IT parks in India – Technopark and Infopark. Regression and multidimensional scaling ALSCAL (Euclidean distance model) were used for analysing data. The authors considered the significance of gender influence on the work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction on work-from-home (WFH). The research found a significant positive effect of WFH on the WLB and a positive relationship of WFH employees with work and family. They found irrespective of gender the employees of WFH had equal job satisfaction. They noticed a concern among the WFH women employees, as they have had to struggle to balance their personal and professional lives. The findings of the study have enormous policy implications in the IT sector across the globe. This paper has provided an early step in the direction of policymaking of WFH initiatives in the IT sector across the globe.

## KEYWORDS

COVID-19, IT Employees, Job Satisfaction, WFH, WLB, Work Culture, Work From Home, Work-Life Balance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of every organization is on developing and retaining the best possible human resources to achieve the overall objectives. To succeed in the long run, the management should seriously consider its employees' welfare in a broader way (Wei et al., 2020). Software development business is dynamic, and IT industry is using different methodologies to meet the new changes in the environment was created by Covid 19 (Butt et al., 2021). One of the leading factors that determine the success of an employee is having a justifiable work-life balance (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). Currently, the paradigm of the work environment has been shifting to a new culture of work, that is, work from home (WFH) (Bick et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has elevated WFH into mainstream work culture (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021).

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Globalization and technological advancement have enabled people to connect to their work remotely and allowed them to maintain a proper work-life balance (WLB) (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). This has facilitated the emergence of the WFH concept, and it refers to work that is done remotely, mostly at the employee's home. WFH is also called 'remote work' and 'telecommuting'. Covid-19 globally compelled almost all IT sector companies to be institute WFH model (De et al., 2020). Kim (2020) observed that the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic pushed all workers to observe social distancing and forced them to shift from the workplace to WFH. Bataineh(2019) suggested that WFH has gained significantly in the changed work environment. Companies are now planning to develop new hybrid models that integrate WFH with work from office (WFO) (Mariniello et al., 2021).

WFH is a new model of work that has become mandatory due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift of the workplace from office to home has resulted in many positive and negative outcomes (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). This paper attempts to conduct an inquiry on the WLB, job satisfaction of WFH of IT employees during the pandemic period. In brief, we mainly investigate the effects of WFH on the WLB of IT sector employees.

For adopting the structure of this manuscript, we modelled a systematic approach and step by step structure of research papers as rightly suggested by (Misra, 2021). The rest of the body of this paper is organized into eight major sections accordingly. Section 2 presents the literature review of study, section 3 consists of research questions, concept map, and research methodology, and section 4 describes the results and discussion, theoretical contributions, and policy implications and section 5 deals conclusions.

There has been a rapid shift in the work culture of IT sector companies due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Hern, 2020). The work culture of IT sector companies is comparatively different from that of other companies. IT sector companies implemented the WFH policy and their employees were supposed to start working from their homes (Gottlieb et al., 2021). Remote work raises a vast array of issues and challenges for employees and employers (McKinsey, 2020). On the one hand, the companies are pondering how best to deliver coaching remotely, while on the other hand, employees are struggling to find the best home-work balance and equipping themselves for working and collaborating remotely. With this critical importance, the current study focuses on the influence of work from home on the work-life balance of IT sector employees. Also, it is noted that studies that touched upon the IT sector employees who constitute the predominant sector in WFH during this pandemic period are very few. The absence of empirical studies to support the prevailing models of WFH is a real bottleneck in the present academic research. The present paper attempts to bridge the research gap by assessing the effect of WFH of IT employees based on an empirical investigation. This study can provide more insights into the feasibility and sustainability of the WFH model of IT companies.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Work From Home — Theoretical Contributions**

The job satisfaction of every employee depends upon factors like salary, work environment, and work flexibility. Employees are satisfied only when they have adequate facilities for work and enough support from their companies (Matzler & Renzl, 2007). The emergence of work from home has driven a paradigm shift in the work culture as well as work-life balance and has caused many other positive and negative outcomes in the economy (Gould & Gallagher, 2020).

WFH is a hybrid model of work that can be applied in the wake of the pandemic for a highly educated and well-paid workforce (McKinsey Report, 2020). Felstead & Jewson, (2002) opined that WFH is suitable for public sector companies and large establishments. Bick et al., (2020) found that individuals with high income and high education were successfully managed and maintained their potential employment with WFH. Shamir & Salomon, (1985) are of the view that the quality

of work life (QWL) has increased due to WFH arrangements. Employees in the WFH model are more productive, committed, and satisfied (Standen, 1997). Lack of awareness and support from management hindered the efficiency of WFH (Lim & Teo, 2000).

Work from home has not proved a good option for the majority of the workforce in Hong Kong (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). The effectiveness of WFH is closely associated with time, multi-tasking, schedule and flexibility, gender difference, and wages of workers (Powell & Craig, 2015). Dijkers et al. (2007) opined that the WFH culture is influenced by the demographic profile of workers and organizational characteristics. WFH arrangements should be enhanced with positive support for work-home interaction (Felstead & Jewson, 2002). Bellmann & Hübler (2020) found that job satisfaction and WLB have improved for those employees who are in WFH.

Ipsen et al., (2021) recommended the need for further studies to validate the opportunities and challenges of WFH for well-being and work performance. Even though WFH is more effective in the period of Covid-19, global IT companies have found this model successful in terms of the outcomes such as the incremental revenues generated. WFH in the IT sector is still in the experimental stage. We found only 34 papers while searching with the keywords “WFH” or “work from home” in the web of science index. Out of these, only the works of Xiao et al. (2021), Galanti et al. (2021), Bloom et al. (2015), Hallman et al. (2021), Zhang et al. (2021), Awada et al. (2021), Cuervo-Vilches et al. (2021), Choudhury et al. (2021), Beck & Hensher (2021), and Rachmawati et al. (2021) can be related with WFH.

Holts, (2013) outlined a theoretical framework of WFH. Value creation for capital is possible through the taxonomy of virtual work as observed. Crosbie & Moore (2004) found WFH an effective strategy to improve the flexibility of working hours. Bellmann & Hübler, (2020) have opined that WFH is a challenge for employees to maintain job satisfaction and WLB.

We have observed that the existing theories of WFH discuss only a narrow understanding of concepts. WFH is more predominant in the IT sector across the globe and the IT sector has proved that WFH is successful in terms of productivity and growth of IT companies. In this research, we have attempted to evaluate the WFH effects with a special focus on the employees’ WLB and job satisfaction.

## **2.2 Work-Life Balance — Theoretical Underpinnings**

Work-life balance (WLB) is a crucial indicator that influences the performance of employees. Bataineh (2019) investigated the relationships among the work-life balance of employees, performance, and happiness and found that WLB can significantly improve the performance of employees. The empirical study of Irawanto et al. (2021) states that work from home has a positive relation with work-life balance.

Divya & Suryanarayana (2017) identified the major issue in the WLB of the IT industry as the retention of present employees. Mas-Machuca et al. (2016) found that WLB is positively related to organizational satisfaction. Sirgy et al. (2016) identified the significant factors that have a direct impact on WLB: commitment, positive spillover role conflicts, and social attention. Haar et al. (2014) have also identified factors that influence WLB such as job and life satisfaction, individualism/collectivism, work stress, career growth, employee absenteeism, turnover, and competitive environment. Azeem et al. (2014) stated that both WLB and job satisfaction together lead to organizational commitment. WFH employees, especially IT employees, need to maintain WLB for better job satisfaction.

## **2.3 Theoretical Linkages Between Work From Home (WFH) and Work Life Balance (WLB)**

Nitzsche et al. (2013) opined a negative work home interaction associated positively with emotional exhaustion but the positive work home interaction had no significant effect. The direct and indirect relationship between WLB and emotional exhaustion has practical implications. Dockery & Bawa (2018) findings contribute to the evidence that WFH is conducive to families achieving a better WLB.

WFH does not aggravate the effect of the pandemic on women's mental and reproductive health in Indonesia as observed by Prabowo et al. (2021)

We have found that very few studies have explored the correlation between WFH and WLB. Also, we have found a deficiency of studies in the IT sector concerning WFH and WLB. Hence, the research has attempted to evaluate the effect of work from home on the work-life balance of IT sector employees. This paper provides an insight into whether WFH is positively or negatively influencing WLB and also examines the influence of gender on WLB of those working from home.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the theories discussed above, we strongly believed that this was a good time to conduct an empirical investigation on the effect of WFH on WLB. Hence the major research objective is to empirically examine the effect of WFH on WLB. We aim to address the following research questions:

**RQ1:** Is gender significant for the work-life balance and job satisfaction of WFH?

**RQ2:** Is there any significant positive effect of work from home on the work-life balance?

**RQ3:** Are the IT sector employees facing any challenges due to work from home?

#### 3.1 Evolving of Conceptual Mapping of WFH

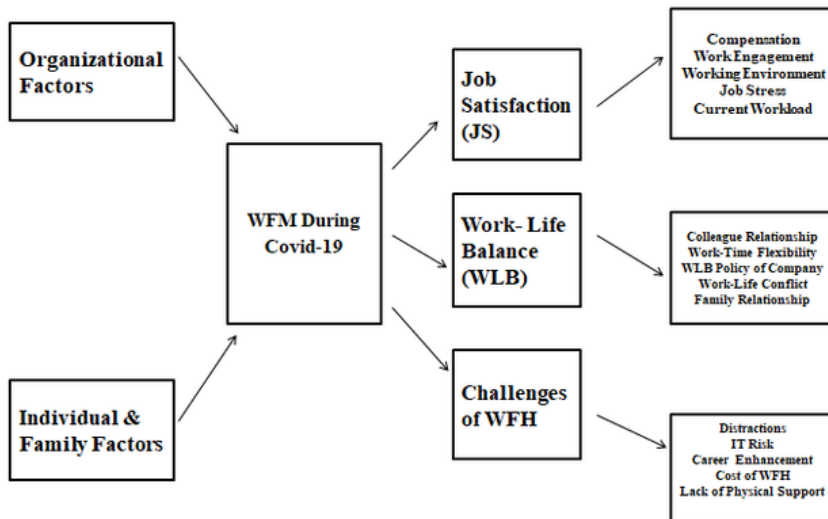
Our theoretical model of research has been modeled based on the work of Vyas & Butakhieo (2021). The authors found the relationship between WFH and various factors affecting WFH. We developed a conceptual framework in which we have adapted the theoretical model of Vyas & Butakhieo (2021). Our model explains two important factors: organizational factors and individual & family factors. The organizational factors are those that relate to the work of the employees and individual and family factors that influence the work of the employees. It is to be determined whether job satisfaction and WLB has been positively or negatively influenced after the advent of WFH. The model also incorporated the challenges of WFH. The WFH outcomes lead to enhanced productivity, increased job satisfaction, allows flexibility in work, and facilitates enlargement of work. Also, the work from home outcome on the family domain allows more work-life balance, increases job satisfaction, and leads to more family satisfaction. The model is represented in Figure 1.

Note: The proposed research model has been adapted from Vyas & Butakhieo (2021). We have taken the theoretical model of WFH. The variables considered in the model consist of gender factors, WLB, WFH, job satisfaction, and family influence. WFH leads to WLB, job satisfaction, and challenges of WFH.

#### 3.2 Research Methodology and Tools

The research design is descriptive as it follows a cross-sectional analysis of data collected from IT sector employees who were at WFH. For collecting data from the respondents, a well-structured questionnaire was distributed among 400 employees of who were engaged in WFH in the IT companies in Technopark and Infopark. Around 246 filled responses were received, and 200 employees completed the questionnaire. The response rate was 61.5 per cent. The study was undertaken during the first quarter of 2021. The companies that have a higher strength of employees who have been enabled to conduct work from home during the reference period were included as the sample companies. A Five-point Likert scale was used to determine the degree of agreement with the different questions in the questionnaire. The study has used inferential statistical tools: independent samples t-test, multi-dimensional scaling-ALSCAL (Euclidean Distance Model), and simple linear regression to test the hypotheses. A reliability test was conducted to check the accuracy and consistency of the research tools used in the study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire indicates good reliability (alpha value is 0.856).

Figure 1. The Concept Map of WFH of IT Sector Employees



## 4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Gender Analysis of IT Employees on Job Satisfaction

The past studies denoted that women are reporting equal or higher job satisfaction than men (Hodson, 1989). Covid-19 creates a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction (Feng & Savani, 2020).

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Gender factor has a significant positive influence on the WLB and job satisfaction of WFH.

We studied the gender factor of IT sector employees to check whether they are equally satisfied with the work from home initiatives of their respective companies. The male and female employees have the same level of satisfaction regarding work from home. The level of job satisfaction was captured through variables such as compensation for the work, easiness to manage the current workload, peaceful working environment, and satisfaction with the job performance. Table 1 reports the level of job satisfaction of male and female employees who are in WFH.

We noticed that the WFH employees working in the IT sector have enjoyed the same salary as in the case of work from the office. The employees felt less stressed to work from home and were able to manage their current workload. The employees have experienced a peaceful working environment and are more satisfied with their job performance. It can be concluded that irrespective of the gender, IT sector employees were satisfied with the new concept of WFH (reported in Table 1).

### 4.2 Gender Analysis of WFH IT Employees on WLB

We studied the work-life balance according to gender in the sample data set. We understand that there is a difference in the work-life balance between the male and female WFH employees. We considered the variables such as relationship with colleagues, amount of time spent with family, work-life balance

**Table 1. Job satisfaction level of male and female employees of WFH**

Independent samples t-test for equality of means						
		Compensation for the work	Easiness to manage the current workload	Stress on work from home	Peaceful working environment	Satisfaction with job performance
t		1.384	2.962	1.874	2.389	1.926
df		185.35	198	198	197	198
p value		0.168	0.003	0.062	0.018	0.056
MD		0.252	0.515	0.325	0.397	0.357
SED		0.182	0.173	0.1735	0.166	0.185
95% CI	Lower	-0.107	-0.172	-0.017	0.069	-0.008
	Upper	0.612	0.858	0.667	0.726	0.723

Note: t – t value, df – degree of freedom, P value – Probability value, MD – Mean difference, SED – Standard Error Difference

policy of the company, flexibility of working time, and personal attitude towards work-life balance by the employees as the constructs (reported in Table 2).

The mean score of male employees was 3.29 while that of the female employees was 2.90 and the significant P value indicates that the male employees of WFH have a better WLB than female employees of the selected IT Parks. The results of our study are supported by the work done by Ahuja (2002). Ahuja's model delineates the effects of social and structural factors which may act as barriers for women IT workers. From the two types of factors, social factors include social expectations, work–family conflict and informal networks, while the structural factors are occupational culture, lack of role models and mentors, demographic composition, and institutional structures. These factors are to be addressed while framing the WFH policies by the IT companies. The study specifies the requirement of a policy change in the WFH practices of IT sector companies. The existing strategies need to be modified and the policies need to focus more on a woman friendly WFH environment.

**Table 2. Comparing work-life balance of male and female employees of WFH**

Independent samples t-test for equality of means							
		Relationship with colleagues	Amount of time spent with family	Work-life conflict	Current WLB policy of the company	Work time flexibility	Personal attitude towards WLB
t		4.224	0.221	1.477	1.669	2.850	1.544
df		175	198	198	197.8	198	198
p value		0.000	0.825	0.141	0.097	0.005	0.124
MD		0.793	1.038	0.274	0.286	0.480	0.276
SED		0.188	0.173	0.1860	0.171	0.168	0.179
95% CI	Lower	0.423	-0.304	-0.052	-0.058	0.148	-0.076
	Upper	1.164	0.380	0.625	0.631	0.813	0.630

Note: t – t value, df – degree of freedom, P value – Probability value, MD – Mean difference, SED – Standard Error Difference

### 4.3 Challenges of WFH Through Multi-Dimensional Scaling

ALSCAL (Euclidean Distance Model) model proposed by Takane et al. (1977) was applied to capture the challenges of WFH of the IT sector employees. ALSCAL model is suitable to capture the individual differences in perception & cognition and geometric models.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** IT sector employees are facing significant challenges during the WFH period.

In feature models, stimuli are represented as lists of features, which may be organized in a tree structure. Carroll & Arabie, (1998) discuss relationships between ALSCAL model and empirical investigations. The procedure optimizes the fit of the model directly to the data by alternating least squares procedure, which is convergent, very quick, and relatively free from local minimum problems. The procedure is found to be robust in the face of measurement error, capable of recovering the true underlying configuration in the Monte Carlo situation, and capable of obtaining structures equivalent to those obtained by other less general procedures in the empirical situation (Takane et al., 1977).

Table 3 presents the model summary of the EDM model. It has provided a stress value of 0.05787 and RSQ of 0.97804. RSQ explains the variability of data. The RSQ value explains that there is a 97 per cent variability in the data but the stress value is very small and lies within the cut-off of 0.06. Hence, the present model is fit and can bring out the facts regarding the challenges perceived in the WFH model of IT sector employees.

Note: Two stimuli have a positive coefficient in both dimensions (distractions and complex task) and the other five stimuli have negative coefficients in either one dimension or both dimensions.

Table 4 shows the results of Multi-Dimensional Scaling indicating the major challenges of work from home. Stimuli that have a positive coefficient in both dimensions are shown in table 4. Stimuli one and six have a positive coefficient in both dimensions. Hence, we can conclude that the WFH

**Table 3. Euclidian distance model summary**

Stress	RSQ
0.05787	0.97804

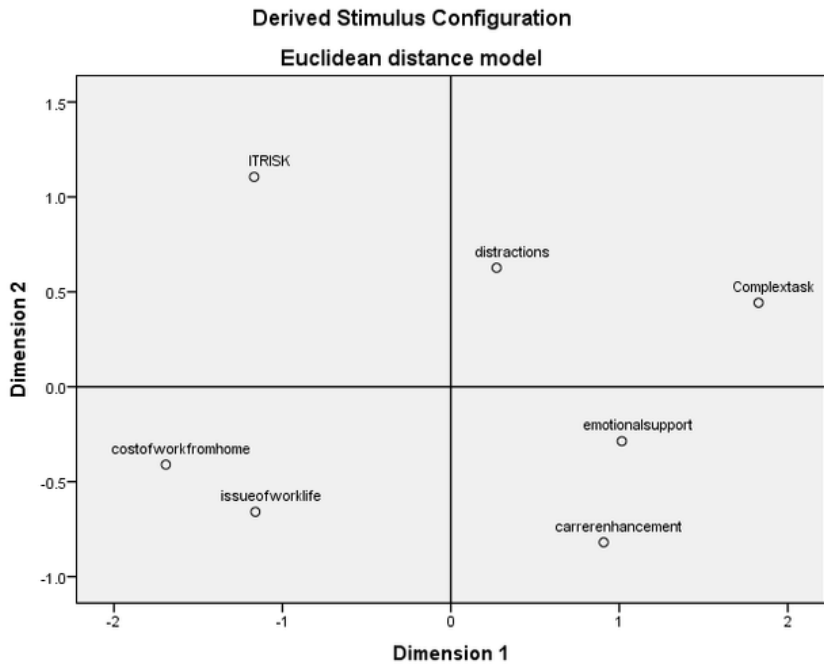
Note: Stress – Stress is the goodness-of-fit statistic that Multi-Dimensional Scaling tries to minimize, RSQ – Represents the R-Squared value and denotes how close the data are to the fitted to the model.

**Table 4. Configuration derived in two dimensions stimulus coordinates**

St. No.	Stimulus Name	Dimensions	
		1	2
1	Distractions	0.2714	0.6264
2	Cost of work from home	-1.6919	-0.4099
3	IT Risk	-1.1678	1.1054
4	Issue of work from home	-1.1601	-0.6587
5	Emotional support	1.0150	-0.2866
6	Complex tasks	1.8264	0.4427
7	Career enhancement	0.9072	-0.8192

Note: Stimuli numbers one and six have positive coefficients and two and four have negative coefficients in both dimensions. Also, stimulus number three has a negative coefficient in the first dimension and stimuli five and seven have negative coefficients in the second dimension.

Figure 2. ALSCAL Model (Takane et al., 1977)



employees in the IT sector are facing distractions in the home environment. We identified that the insufficiency of physical support of co-workers in complex tasks acts as a major challenge during WFH.

**4.4 Relationship Between WFH and WLB**

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** WFH has a significant positive influence on the work-life balance of IT sector employees.

For testing this hypothesis, WLB is the dependent variable and WFH is the independent variable. The regression model summary is used for predicting the work-life balance of IT sector employees who are in WFH status. The result reports in Table 5 show that R-value is 0.677, which shows a high correlation between predicted value (work-life balance) and observed value (work from home). The R Square value 0.459 indicates that 45.9 per cent of the variance in the improvement in work-life balance is explained by the four predictors i.e., easiness to manage current workload, satisfaction with job performance, compensation for work from home, and peaceful working environment (see table 5).

Table 5. Regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.677 <sup>a</sup>	0.459	0.436	0.597

a. Predictors: (Constant) easiness to manage current workload, satisfaction with job performance, compensation for work from home, and peaceful working environment

b. Dependent variable: Work-life balance



Table 6 shows the influence of WFH on the WLB of employees. The predicted value of the WLB of IT sector employees is constant at 1.089 when all other predictors are zero. Compensation for WFH coefficient is 0.120, which indicates that with every unit increase in compensation of IT employees, a 12 per cent increase in WLB of IT sector employees occurs while simultaneously holding all other variables constant. The peaceful working environment coefficient is 0.118, which indicates that for every unit increase in the peaceful working environment at WFH, there is a 11 per cent increase in the work-life balance of IT sector employees holding all other variables constant. Satisfaction with job performance coefficient can be explained as an 18 per cent increase in the work-life balance of IT sector employees holding all other variables constant. The coefficient for easiness to manage current workload is 0.170. This indicates that for the increase of every unit of easiness in managing the workload, a corresponding 17 per cent increase will occur in the work-life balance of IT sector employees.

#### 4.5 Theoretical Contributions

Our research finding could be a notable one as it is against the theories of WFH given by Hodson (1989) and Feng & Savani (2020) on the opinion of gender influence on the level of job satisfaction from WFH. Our research proves, the IT sector had an equal job satisfaction irrespective of the gender with WFH policy which is prevailing in the IT organizations. However, we have a finding that the male IT sector employees have better WLB from WFH than female IT employees in consistent with the theory. Hence the IT companies could enable women friendly WLB policies while implementing WFH. The research also contributed a finding to the WFH theory that the employees of the IT sector to effectively utilize their time at work when they are at WFH, and they are getting sufficient time to engage in more productive activities and hobbies during this WFH period.

#### 4.6 Policy Implications and Future Research Agenda

Finally, we are forwarding suggestions for improved policy decisions on WFH in the IT sector. Better policy guidelines by the respective governments will enhance the WFH model and render it more feasible among IT employees. IT companies could attempt to set up a virtual platform for recreation and entertainment for employees for avoiding isolation. IT sector companies could also enable a hybrid model of work by integrating work from office (WFO) and WFH to conveniently fix the time shifts and work schedules for increasing the WLB of employees. IT sector companies can utilize the amount saved out of paying electricity charges, rent, and other expenses, etc. from WFH by giving allowances and perquisites to the employees (Seethalakshmi & Shyamala, 2021). IT sector companies

**Table 6. Simple linear regression coefficients**

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Model	(Constant)	1.089	0.247		4.411	0.000
	Compensation for work from home	0.120	0.058	0.193	2.066	0.042
	Peaceful working environment	0.118	0.057	0.193	2.062	0.042
	Satisfaction with job performance	0.179	0.050	0.279	3.565	0.001
	Easiness to manage current workload	0.170	0.052	0.301	3.285	0.001

a. Dependent variable: Work-life balance

should be cautious about the future work culture and prepare themselves to meet uncertain situations that can occur at any time. Therefore, preparing the workforce to meet future challenges is essential to sustain IT companies in the global market. This paper has provided an early step in the direction of policy making of WFH initiatives in the IT sector across the globe.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The inadequacy of power and power failures during working hours was a concern raised by the IT sector employees who are in WFH. On the other hand, the employees saved a lot of time and money, which were used earlier for transportation to and from the workplace. We have a finding against the theories of WFH by Hodson (1989) and Feng & Savani (2020) with regard to the difference of opinion between male and female workforces on the level of job satisfaction in WFH. There is a difference in opinion between the genders about the job satisfaction derived from WFH according to these previous studies. But our research found that irrespective of gender, employees of the IT sector had equal job satisfaction with the WFH policy.

WFH has also improved the relationship of the IT sector employees with their families and helped them to build strong networks with their friends during the period of WFH. We have also found that male IT sector employees have better work-life balance than female IT employees. This shows that female employees are struggling to have a good work-life balance during the work from home period. Being the primary homemakers, they must meet the challenges of working on their job as well as caring for their family. They need support from the family to maintain a proper WLB.

The major challenges of WFH are distractions in the home office and the absence of physical support of co-workers for handling complex tasks. The study revealed a major concern on the part of female employees of the IT sector regarding the difficulty of balancing their work and life due to more family duties. To mitigate this issue, IT companies could enable women-friendly work-life balance policies and the family members should also support them for a proper work-life balance for women employees working in the IT sector (Sharma & Vaish, 2020).

WFH does not increase the working hours of IT sector employees, which means it does not result in any additional duties and responsibilities to the employees. It also enables the employees of the IT sector to effectively utilize their time at work and to engage in more productive activities and hobbies. Employees working in the IT sector have raised their uncertainties regarding the guarantee of jobs and quality of payments (Nam, 2019). We have selected samples from the IT parks where major MNCs having branches across the globe are represented, so that our findings can have more applicability and generalizability across the globe. The research also suggests that IT employees anticipate operating their businesses with a hybrid model.

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