

# Exploring The Effects Of Remote Work On It Employees In Tiruchirappalli District During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Dr. M Prabavathy<sup>1</sup>, Dr.T.Kumuthavalli<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Centre for Differently Abled Persons Bharathidasan  
University Tiruchirapalli.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Lifelong Learning, Bharathidasan  
University, Khajamalai Campus, Tiruchirapalli -620 023

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the perspectives of employees with regards to their physical work surroundings. Maintaining employee retention in the absence of a physical workspace poses a significant challenge for organisations. Minimising interpersonal communication and physical interaction is deemed imperative in contemporary society. In order to effectively recruit and maintain personnel, an establishment must cultivate a robust work-life equilibrium. The concept of remote work, commonly referred to as 'Work from Home', represents a significant departure from the conventional attributes of employment. This concept is being widely employed across various industries, including information technology and education. Personnel within an organisation may encompass novices, seasoned professionals, and those with extensive expertise. A significant proportion of individuals are currently undergoing their initial experience of remote work. The present study endeavours to investigate the perspectives of distinct cohorts of information technology (IT) personnel regarding remote work vis-à-vis on-site work, with particular emphasis on Tiruchirappalli District. The study is centred on the effects that arise for IT personnel and their inclination to engage in remote work.

## **KEY WORDS:**

COVID-19 pandemic, Employees, Work from Home, Interpersonal communication, Physical interaction, Work-life equilibrium, Recruitment, Personnel, Education, On-site work, Effects of remote work, IT personnel.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Contemporary society is undergoing significant transformations that are leading to substantial alterations in both professional and personal lifestyles. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the necessity of adapting and achieving equilibrium in daily life. The

current trend in many organisations is the implementation of the 'Work from Home' method. This approach enables employees to work in a safe environment without any disruptions to the organisational objectives. Consequently, a significant number of individuals commenced remote work without adequate prior arrangements or options. In the past, certain organisations held the belief that flexible working arrangements were not feasible due to concerns regarding task completion.

The significance attributed to the geographical proximity of a workplace has been progressively diminishing in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the expansion of information technology. The growing trend of remote work has been observed to positively impact the rate of employee retention. In the past, there was a prevailing belief that the work from home model was exclusive to corporate sectors. The current pandemic has altered individuals' perceptions regarding remote work, resulting in employees across various industries being compelled to work from home.

The Indian Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, implemented a nationwide lockdown on March 24th, 2020, with the aim of curbing the transmission of the virus. Subsequently, the entire nation was subjected to a sequence of regulatory measures and enforcement actions aimed at safeguarding the well-being of its populace. Since the commencement of the lockdown, approximately 90% of the Indian labour force transitioned to remote work. The adoption of a flexible workforce model has had a significant influence on the Indian information technology (IT) sector, enabling the preservation of employee productivity levels amidst the ongoing pandemic.

As numerous industries and sectors encountered difficulties, the IT industry was among the first to initiate the concept of remote work, thereby facilitating a reboot. According to Nicholas Bloom, a professor at Stanford University, remote work led to a 13% increase in performance and a reduction in attrition rates. In contemporary times, and in light of present circumstances, the sole adaptable approach available to an organisation is the implementation of a remote work policy. The results of this model have the potential to yield favourable or unfavourable consequences. The benefits of remote work arrangements encompass decreased commuting time, financial savings, and potential relief from childcare responsibilities for working parents. In contrast, the adverse effects comprise inadequate inter-colleague communication, health concerns, and insufficient in-person assistance.

Many IT companies have incorporated work-from-home options into their employee leave policies as a means of enhancing productivity. The objective of this research is to comprehend the effects of remote work on information technology industry workers, with a particular focus on the Tiruchirappalli District.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

Sustaining the overall levels of productivity poses a significant challenge for organisations, particularly in pandemic scenarios such as the Covid-19 outbreak. The maintenance of a work-life balance is a crucial consideration for both the workforce and the organisation. The work

from home model is widely regarded as the most popular approach for maintaining productivity levels while also ensuring safety.

For many employees, the experience of working remotely in the IT industry within an urban centre such as Tiruchirappalli represents a novel occurrence. This phenomenon may yield both advantageous and disadvantageous consequences. The propensity to engage in remote work may vary depending on various factors such as temporal considerations, contextual circumstances, and individual differences. The present investigation endeavours to scrutinise the aforementioned issues.

Does the practise of remote work have an impact on the overall productivity of employees?

What is the level of employee receptiveness towards the concept of remote work?

From the perspective of an employee, what types of support can an employer provide during this circumstance?

### **NEED AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY:**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the perspective on labour. Consequently, it has significantly altered the manner and location of work execution. The employees have been compelled to expeditiously adjust to a novel work paradigm, irrespective of any antecedent training or orientation. Nevertheless, remote work has not been an effortless task. Certain individuals encounter difficulties due to insufficient expertise, inadequate residential space resulting in complications, and unsuitable working environments leading to health-related concerns. Therefore, it is crucial to ascertain the willingness and productivity levels of employees with regards to remote work. The perspectives of employees regarding remote work and its resultant effects are crucial factors that influence their productivity, while also affording employers the opportunity to identify areas of deficiency.

Many sectors are realising slowly that work can be something else. An official workspace is not necessary to make people do their job. This can be a boon or a bane. Remote work will probably be the most followed workstyle in the years to come. Many companies will introduce cost-saving techniques by hiring remote-first employees. On the other hand, talented people will start to look for jobs anywhere on earth, with the best companies, as distance no longer plays a role. The scope of the study is that it helps to understand how IT employees are being impacted by the work from home concept and how to best support them by analysing their productivity during their remote work.

### **RESEARCH METHDOLOGY:**

The present investigation is founded on the feedback provided by a sample of 111 participants who are employed in the Information Technology industry and have been working remotely amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The data was obtained within the timeframe of February and March of the year 2021. The study's sample population primarily consists of first-year students. The data set comprises of feedback provided by information technology (IT) personnel operating within the Tiruchirappalli region. The Google Forms application was employed to

automate the questionnaire and disseminate it via social media platforms. Secondary data was collected from a variety of sources, including journals, websites, and newspaper reports.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) conducted a study on the impact of work from home on overall life satisfaction, highlighting the varying outcomes depending on the interaction between work and personal life. They found that employees value the flexibility of working some hours from home, which is generally associated with greater job satisfaction. However, for those who work the majority of their hours from home, there is lower satisfaction with the number of hours worked.

Go (2016) focused on the challenges of work from home, including cultural differences faced during webinars and the communication gap between supervisors and subordinates.

Stadtlander, Sickel, La Civita, and Giles (2017) emphasized that virtual workers can enhance their work satisfaction by establishing a separation between their work area and family home area, or by creating boundaries based on time. Understanding the needs of virtual workers can help employers provide a controlled and secure work environment, leading to higher job satisfaction and productivity.

Barrero, Bloom, and Davis (2020) presented evidence that respondents reported higher efficiency while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic than they initially expected.

Gajendra and Harrison (2007) highlighted the challenges of monitoring workers' effort at home, particularly with interruptions from personal responsibilities and family members. Studies in the USA have also shown a correlation between high income levels and access to high-speed Internet, making work from home easier for wealthier individuals (Chiou and Tucker 2020).

Bonacini, Gallo, and Scicchitano (2021) found that increased feasibility of working from home is associated with higher average labor income, likely due to increased productivity.

According to a survey by Airtasker (2019), working from home benefits employees by eliminating daily commutes, increasing productivity, and leading to healthier lifestyles. However, it can also come at the cost of work-life balance.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

The objective of this study is

1. To assess the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on information technology (IT) workers in the city of Tiruchirappalli.
2. To assess the level of work performance exhibited by information technology personnel amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. To examine the difficulties encountered by information technology (IT) employees when working remotely from home.

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

**TABLE:1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS**

<b>S.no</b>	<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSE (IN%)</b>
1	Age Group	20-30	72.1
		31-40	18.9
		41 and above	9
2	Gender	Male	36.9
		Female	63.1
3	Marital Status	Married	51.4
		Unmarried	48.6

### **INTERPRETATION:**

From the table 1, it can be observed that the majority of the respondents are in the age group of 20-30, accounting for 72.1% of the total. The age group of 31-40 constitutes 18.9% of the respondents, while those aged 41 and above make up 9% of the respondents.

In terms of gender distribution, females form a higher percentage at 63.1% compared to males at 36.9%.

Regarding marital status, the respondents are almost evenly split, with 51.4% being married and 48.6% being unmarried.

These demographic details provide a snapshot of the background characteristics of the respondents involved in the study, which can help contextualize and understand the findings or analysis related to the research topic.

### **FINDINGS:**

The findings indicate that a majority of the participants, comprising 82% of the total 111 responses, are currently undergoing their initial experience of remote work, while the remaining 18% have prior experience in this regard. A significant proportion of the participants reported having engaged in remote work as a result of the circumstances stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the findings of the study, a significant proportion of the participants, particularly females, approximately 43.2 percent, allocate a duration of approximately 3 to 6 hours for engaging in meaningful activities with their family. On the other hand, 34.2 percent of the respondents spend less than 3 hours in such activities.

### **TABLE 2:**

S.no	VARIABLE	CHARACTERISTIC	RESPONSE (IN%)
1	Time taken to travel to the office	1 to 2 hours	81.1
		2 to 3 hours	13.5
		more than 3 hours	5.4
2	Money spent on travelling	0	13.5
		Less than Rs.100	47.7
		Rs.100- Rs.500	34.2
		More than Rs.500	4.5
3	Is work from home helping in time management	Yes, to a great extent	26.1
		Yes, to some extent	47.7
		No	26.1
4	Availability of equipment	Available	65.8
		Not available	34.2
5	Comparative measure of productivity	Less productive	27
		Equally productive	50.5
		More productive	22.5

The table2, provides information on respondents' perceptions and experiences related to various factors associated with work from home. The responses are presented in percentages.

1. Time taken to travel to the office:

- 81.1% of the respondents reported a travel time of 1 to 2 hours to reach the office.
- 13.5% of the respondents took 2 to 3 hours to travel.
- 5.4% of the respondents spent more than 3 hours on their commute.

2. Money spent on traveling:

- 13.5% of the respondents reported spending no money on traveling.
- 47.7% of the respondents spent less than Rs. 100.
- 34.2% of the respondents spent between Rs. 100 and Rs. 500.
- 4.5% of the respondents spent more than Rs. 500.

3. Is work from home helping in time management:

- 26.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that work from home helps in time management.
- 47.7% of the respondents somewhat agreed that work from home helps in time management.

- 26.1% of the respondents disagreed that work from home helps in time management.
4. Availability of equipment:
- 65.8% of the respondents reported that the necessary equipment for work from home is available to them.
  - 34.2% of the respondents indicated that the required equipment is not available.
5. Comparative measure of productivity:
- 27% of the respondents considered themselves less productive while working from home.
  - 50.5% of the respondents believed their productivity remained the same while working from home.
  - 22.5% of the respondents felt more productive while working from home.

Interpretation: Based on the table, it can be inferred that a significant majority of the respondents (81.1%) used to spend around 1 to 2 hours traveling to the office. The majority of respondents (47.7%) also reported spending less than Rs. 100 on traveling.

In terms of time management, almost three-fourths of the respondents (73.8%) agreed to some extent that work from home helps in managing time effectively.

Regarding the availability of equipment, the majority of the respondents (65.8%) reported having the necessary equipment for working from home.

In terms of productivity, the responses were relatively balanced. Approximately half of the respondents (50.5%) felt their productivity remained the same while working from home, while a significant proportion (22.5%) believed they were more productive.

**TABLE 3:**

S.no	VARIABLE	CHARACTERISTIC	RESPONSE (IN%)
1	Was Able to learn and Grow	Strongly agree	12.6
		Agree	30.6
		Neutral	45.6
		Disagree	7.2
		Strongly Disagree	3.6
2	Preference towards work from home	Yes, even if I have the chance to go to the office	28.8
		Yes, if there is no other choice	39.6
		No, I prefer working in the office	31.5

The table 3, presents respondents' perceptions and preferences related to learning and growth opportunities as well as their preference towards working from home. The responses are presented in percentages.

1. Was Able to learn and Grow:

- 12.6% of the respondents strongly agree that they were able to learn and grow.
- 30.6% of the respondents agree that they were able to learn and grow.
- 45.6% of the respondents feel neutral about their learning and growth opportunities.
- 7.2% of the respondents disagree that they were able to learn and grow.
- 3.6% of the respondents strongly disagree that they were able to learn and grow.

2. Preference towards work from home:

- 28.8% of the respondents prefer working from home, even if they have the chance to go to the office.
- 39.6% of the respondents would choose to work from home if there is no other choice.
- 31.5% of the respondents prefer working in the office rather than working from home.

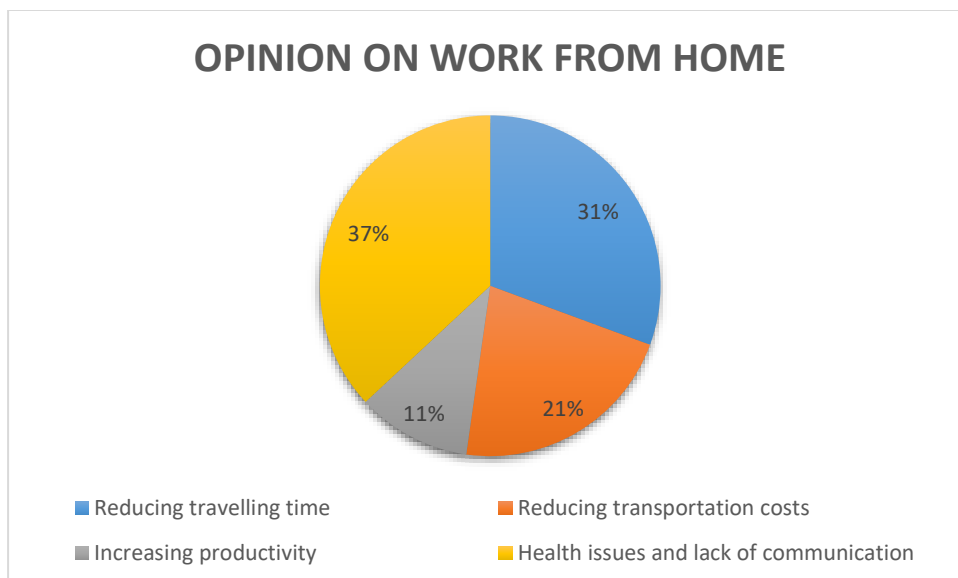
Interpretation: Based on the table, it can be observed that a significant proportion of the respondents (43.2%) either strongly agree or agree that they were able to learn and grow while working from home. However, a substantial portion (45.6%) expressed a neutral stance regarding their learning and growth opportunities.

In terms of the preference towards working from home, a combined majority of the respondents (68.4%) either prefer working from home even when they have the option to go to the office or would choose it if there is no other choice. On the other hand, 31.5% of the respondents expressed a preference for working in the office.

These findings highlight that while a notable number of respondents perceive learning and growth opportunities while working from home, a significant portion remains neutral. Additionally, a majority of the respondents either prefer or are open to the idea of working from home, although there is still a significant proportion that prefers the traditional office setup.

The graph (created from Table3) reveals that the respondents who preferred to work from home even if there was a chance to work at the office are highly satisfied that they were able to learn and grow during their experience.





The study reveals that (from the pie chart above), 37 percent of the respondents feel that there are health issues and a lack of proper communication due to work from home concept. However, the opinion of 31 percent of the respondents is that work at home has helped to decrease their traveling time and also the cost for the same (also referring to table 2 above).

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time spent with family	111	1.0000	4.0000	2.000000	.9629500
Time spent to travel to the office	111	1.000	3.000	1.24324	.542992
Time management at home	111	1.00	3.00	2.0000	.72614
Cost on travelling	111	1.00	4.00	2.2973	.75792
Opinion on work from home	111	1.00	4.00	2.5405	1.27053
Learn and grow	111	1.00	5.00	2.5856	.92901
Availability of equipment	111	1.00	2.00	1.3423	.47665
Preference to working from home	111	1.00	3.00	2.0270	.77997
opinion	111	1.00	3.00	1.8919	.70519
Comparative opinion	111	1.00	3.00	1.9550	.70566
Amenities from the employer	111	1.00	5.00	2.0811	1.10483
Biggest challenges	111	1.00	4.00	1.6667	1.05601

Valid N (listwise)	111				
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The upper and lower bounds are 5 and 1 correspondingly. The aggregate quantity of values is 111. The arithmetic average of all the characteristics is situated within the range of 1 to 3. The attribute of work from home exhibits the greatest deviation from the mean, while the availability of equipment displays the lowest deviation.

The variables pertaining to employer-provided amenities, significant obstacles encountered, amount of time spent with family, and degree of personal development exhibit the greatest deviations from the mean. It can be inferred from the context that there exists a considerable degree of variation in the attributes across different responses. The attributes of time management and travel cost exhibit the lowest degree of deviation. Therefore, it can be inferred that the majority of the responses share a similar perspective regarding those characteristics.

### ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Opinion on work from home	Between Groups	.515	2	.258	.157	.855
	Within Groups	177.052	108	1.639		
	Total	177.568	110			
Measure of Growth	Between Groups	2.983	2	1.491	1.752	.178
	Within Groups	91.954	108	.851		
	Total	94.937	110			
Preference toward work from home	Between Groups	.417	2	.208	.338	.714
	Within Groups	66.502	108	.616		
	Total	66.919	110			
Opinion	Between Groups	1.115	2	.557	1.123	.329
	Within Groups	53.588	108	.496		
	Total	54.703	110			

Comparative opinion	Between Groups	.725	2	.362	.724	.487
	Within Groups	54.050	108	.500		
	Total	54.775	110			
Amenities by the employer	Between Groups	.361	2	.180	.145	.865
	Within Groups	133.910	108	1.240		
	Total	134.270	110			
Biggest challenges	Between Groups	4.157	2	2.079	1.894	.155
	Within Groups	118.510	108	1.097		
	Total	122.667	110			

A significance level of 0.5 has been adopted. The variables pertaining to the perception of remote work, relative efficiency, and primary obstacles encountered, were found to possess a level of statistical insignificance. Therefore, the hypothesis is deemed acceptable. The responses exhibit a high degree of similarity to one another. The results indicate that the attributes of preference, measure of growth, and amenities offered by an employer have a statistically significant impact. Therefore, the hypothesis is deemed invalid.

### **SECONDARY REFERENCE:**

In recent months, a number of studies have indicated that remote work from home may lead to higher levels of productivity compared to working in a traditional office environment. On average, individuals who engage in remote work exhibit a reduction of 10 minutes in daily unproductive time, an increase of one additional workday per week, and a 47% increase in productivity. According to a research conducted by Stanford University, spanning over a period of 9 months and involving 16,000 employees, it was observed that remote work led to a 13% increase in productivity. The enhanced performance can be attributed to an increase in the number of calls made per minute, which can be attributed to a more peaceful and convenient working environment. Additionally, the employees were able to work for longer periods per shift due to a reduction in the number of breaks and sick days taken. In the aforementioned study, it was observed that employees experienced an enhancement in their job satisfaction, and the rate of attrition was reduced by 50%. Nathan Schultz, a senior executive at Chegg, was interviewed by The New York Times regarding the productivity of the company's workforce amidst the current shelter-at-home measures. Initially, the individual's inclination was to frequently monitor the workforce. However, upon relinquishing this approach, there was a noticeable increase in productivity, with employees accomplishing tasks in advance of the

established timeline. Recent productivity statistics for remote work in 2021 have yielded surprising results.

### **SUGGESTION:**

The findings of the study indicate that employees face significant obstacles in working from home due to their limited experience and inadequate access to necessary equipment.

The majority of participants hold the perspective that there exists a communication deficit among colleagues. Efforts to address the issue of communication barriers could potentially enhance employee motivation to engage in remote work and improve their overall work output. A significant proportion of the participants expressed a desire to resume their professional work setting due to the challenges posed by working with limited expertise, resources, and information.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

The scope of this research is limited to the information technology (IT) personnel employed within the geographical boundaries of Tiruchirappalli district, situated in the southern state of Tamilnadu, India. The research is founded on a sample of 111 participants from various locations within the urban area. This study has the potential for further exploration, particularly in light of the numerous changes that have emerged as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The mindset of employees exhibits variability both across different circumstances and over time.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Benefits and constraints are two interrelated aspects of a given phenomenon. Research indicates that the implementation of remote work arrangements has the potential to enhance productivity. However, maintaining this approach over extended periods of time may potentially result in adverse effects on the employee. The efficacy of the factors that bolster productivity and foster a positive attitude towards remote work is greater in comparison to the obstacles and difficulties encountered. Henceforth, the notion of remote work may gain greater prominence in the forthcoming times.

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