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**POSTGRADUATE (MASTER'S)
DISSERTATION**

Remote work - A new norm or just another firework?

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Open University of Cyprus

Faculty of Economics and Management

Postgraduate (Master's) Programme of Study
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Summary

The purpose of this study is to analyze the main change that happened in peoples' life after the COVID-19 outbreak of the pandemic, by introducing a new working method; the remote working and whether this teleworking is here to stay.

This empirical study is based on a methodological approach, taking into account a survey conducted from a sample size of 136 employees that are currently working in Cyprus (either in a hybrid or other work from home system) and how it affects employees' life. In addition, it is examined whether teleworking is in favour of employees and employers. Finally, with the aid of a literature review which was examined as well, this study will try to respond as accurate as possible to the below question.

Remote work – A new norm or just another firework?

Περίληψη

Στόχος της παρούσας μελέτης, είναι η ανάλυση της βασικής αλλαγής που επήλθε στη ζωή των ανθρώπων μετά το ξέσπασμα της πανδημίας COVID-19, με την εισαγωγή της νέας μεθόδου εργασίας, μέσω της εξ αποστάσεως εργασίας, και κατά πόσο αυτή η τηλεργασία ήρθε για να μείνει.

Αυτή η εμπειρική μελέτη βασίζεται σε μια μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη μια έρευνα που διεξήχθη από ένα μέγεθος δείγματος 136 εργαζομένων που εργάζονται σήμερα στην Κύπρο (είτε σε “υβριδικό” είτε σε άλλο σύστημα τηλεργασίας από το σπίτι) και πώς επηρεάζει τη ζωή των εργαζομένων. Επιπλέον, εξετάζεται κατά πόσον η τηλεργασία είναι υπέρ των εργαζομένων και των εργοδοτών. Τέλος, με τη βοήθεια της βιβλιογραφικής ανασκόπησης που εξετάστηκε επίσης, αυτή η μελέτη θα προσπαθήσει να απαντήσει όσο το δυνατόν ακριβέστερα στην παρακάτω ερώτηση.

Εξ αποστάσεως εργασία – Μία «καινούρια συνήθεια» ή απλώς ένα ακόμα «πυροτέχνημα»?

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I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely son, George.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	How COVID-19 pandemic started and brought work from home in our lives?.....	1
1.1.1	How are the things nowadays?.....	2
1.1.2	Research Questions.....	3
1.1.3	Master’s dissertation structure.....	4
2	Literature Review	5
2.1	Introduction	5
2.1.1	Employees benefits while working from home	6
2.1.2	Employees drawbacks while working from home.....	8
2.1.3	Relationship between employers and employees.....	9
3	Methodology	12
3.1	Introduction	12
3.1.1	Context	12
3.1.2	Research procedure, validity and reliability.....	13
3.1.3	Data collection tools and analysis.....	14
3.1.4	Ethics.....	14
4	Results Analysis	15
4.1	Introduction.....	15
4.1.1	1st Part of Survey – Demographics.....	15
4.1.2	2 nd part of Survey – General Opinion.....	21
5	Analysis and discussion	33
5.1	Introduction.....	33
5.1.1	Hybrid / Work from home option?.....	33
5.1.2	Work & Personal life.....	35
5.1.3	Performance of employees while working from home.....	38
5.1.4	Flexibility of working from home.....	42
5.1.5	Mutually beneficial relationship between employees-employers.....	43
6	Conclusion	48
Appendices		51
A	Survey’s questionnaire.....	50
A.1	Questionnaire	50
References		57

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. How COVID-19 pandemic started and brought work from home in our lives?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home was considered a non-common or even rare option to be provided. Most of the companies, were not even considered providing this option to its employees.

A decade ago, employers did not even think the idea of their employees working from home regularly. One of the major concerns was the lack of productivity. But the pandemic showed that employees could work on their own (Hamingson, N., 2023). Worldwide, among employees, 2.9% were working exclusively or mainly from their home before the hit of COVID-19 pandemic (Bonnet *et al* 2020).

Since January 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak of pandemic spread out from China, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, has caused severe public health crises in many countries. The pandemic emerged in mid-January 2020 and peaked in early February 2020, gradually receding as the epicenter moved to the rest of the world (Ge *et al* 2022). By January 2020, the World Health Organization announced the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. In the following weeks, the virus spread worldwide, bringing the beginning of “lockdowns”.

By March 9, 2020, COVID-19 outbreak of pandemic hit Cyprus as well, and by March 24 2020, a general lockdown was announced, and making work from home a necessary method of working, for the employees to remain well and healthy as much as possible (Theodoulou 2022).

In March 23, 2020, a survey of 250 large firms in Argentina found that 93% had adopted teleworking as a policy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bonnet *et al* 2020). By April

2020, as many as 37% of Americans were working from home full-time (Gulliksen *et al* 2022: 3). Three years after the COVID-19 pandemic has emerged, people have suddenly been forced to adapt to the “new normal”: to introduce work from home to their lives (Corpuz 2021: 344).

The pandemic therefore created the opportunity for a significant experiment (Williamson, *et al* 2022: 2). Apparently, following the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the practice of work from home has been increased since March 2020 (Morikawa 2021: 1) to nowadays.

A lot had changed in two years with the main change leading to a massive work re-organization throughout the world. Lots of companies are attempting to adjust to this new world of work, by remote, work from home business model (Mehta 2021: 1).

1.1.1. How are the things nowadays?

COVID-19 pandemic brings in our life the “new norm” of work from home option – an important opportunity for change of work life. It is considered as once in a lifetime opportunity to change the way we are working and live (O’Rourke 2021: 554). It gives the flexibility to the employees, to work from their own space, at their own time, balancing in this way their work and personal life.

Work from home could be defined as telework or in other words as remote work, a method of flexible working arrangement that allows employees to work from remote location outside of corporate offices. In addition, another flexibility that the work from home lifestyle provides, is that employees can *work at their own time*. This way, workers can adjust the work life with their personal life duties, based on their responsibilities throughout the day.

Work from home is a new routine for most of the employees in Cyprus, since the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It is the first time that most of the employees are facing this new routine in their life. And even though, after the pandemic, the employers see that this *new work routine is actually working*, and that the employees can work remotely with the same results or even better, continuing to offer the work from home option. Employees seem also to prefer this option, for their own benefits, mainly to improve their work-life balance, happiness, productivity, avoiding traffic and other factors that will be

discussed and analysed later in the text.

However, for a number of employees, the *work from home option is not ideal*. Employees may not have their own space to work from home, or the gadgets that needed to be able to work efficiently. Another reason could be a psychological one, the loneliness and the isolation they feel, since they do not have direct contact with their colleagues anymore. They may also feel non-productive enough. By seeing other colleagues working, they keep get motivated and be more productive. Also, it could be that their employers may do not trust them and feeling reluctant with the idea of working from home, making employees feeling insecure to continue working from home.

This Master's dissertation study, starts with a literature review of the examination and consideration of the post-pandemic work from home model, along with a survey conducted based on a Cyprus work from home model. It will state the benefits and drawbacks for employees to work from home and whether this method should continue and remain as a new norm in employees' lives. Also, it could provide an idea of a good study for other organizations in Cyprus and worldwide, to re-think the work from home model.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the companies reorganize their work, and consequently shifted to work from home model. It seems that this new norm brings autonomy, convenience and well-being to the workers. Even after the pandemic, the work from home is here to stay (Mehta 2021: 9). However, lots of organizations are still reluctant to accept and introduce the work from home model as an option to the employees.

1.1.2. Research questions

The main focus of the Master's dissertation questions is about:

- Perceptions, beliefs and preferences of employees in reference to working from home model (through the survey's questionnaire)
- Discussion of various benefits that work from home brings to employees while working from home (through the Literature review)
- Discussion of various drawbacks that work from home method brings to employees' lives (through the Literature review)
- Whether the work from home model is in favour of the employers and employees (through the Literature review)

1.1.3. Master's dissertation structure

Following the introduction, the next chapter (Chapter 2) will focus on the literature review, providing a general idea of the world in relation to the work from home as a new routine. This provides, the necessary background that was needed, to structure the questionnaire/survey and also to help along with the survey results to have a better understanding and analysis of the results.

Chapter 3 is focussing on the Methodology used, including the research procedure that was followed and where the survey's questions focus on. It also analyses the data collection tools used to get the results of the survey.

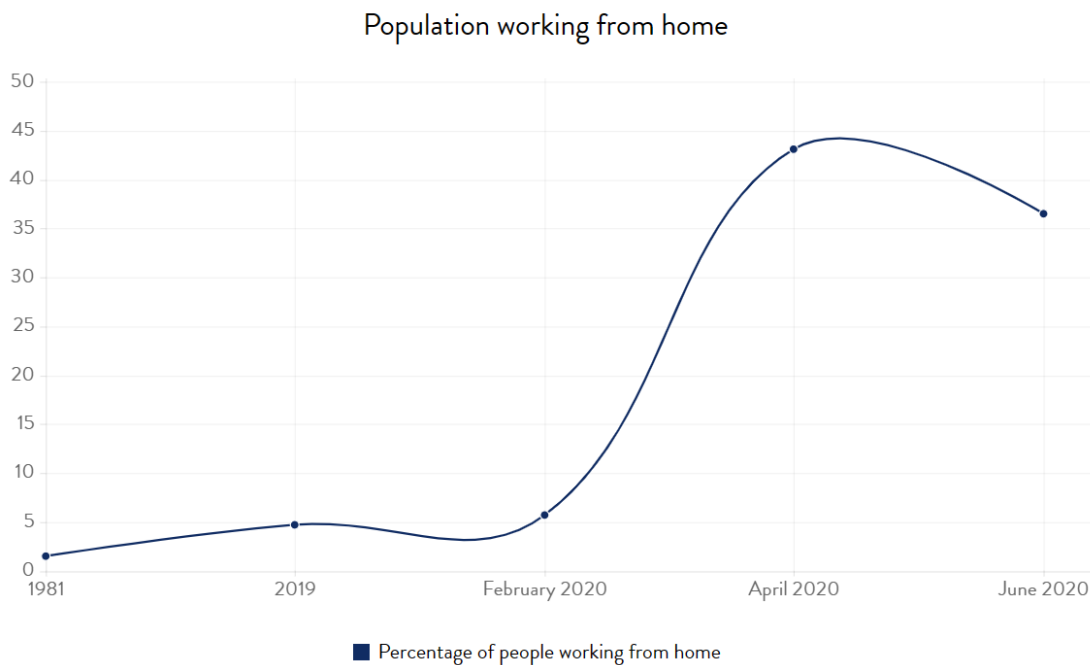
Chapter 4 is describing and analysing the results of the survey and Chapter 5 describes in a deeper analyses the results, outcomes and findings along with an extensive literature review. Last but not least, Chapter 6 concludes the fundamental outcomes of this study, including various thoughts for an upcoming and deeper study in the near future.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Work from home model is a phenomenon that existed prior to 2020, however it was “used” as the exception, not the rule. The following diagram comes from a survey in UK and it shows how the population of employees changed the way of working throughout the years.



This chapter focus on analysing the main research questions of the survey based on the literature review. Extensive analysis of the questions, while gathering different resources from articles, e-journals, books and world wide web.

Work from home or telecommuting, can eliminates most of the traditional aspects of going to work, like commuting and dressing in business attire, while reducing social interaction and standard means of accountability. However, it depends on employee’s preferred work style and culture priorities, meaning that it could be either a beneficial or detrimental thing (Herrity, J., 2023).

Below, an extensive literature review has been taken into consideration, comparing work from home option, from different aspects showing dissimilar views, based on different surveys conducted in the world, after the pandemic has started to evaluate as much as possible the work from home option.

2.1.1. Employees benefits while working from home

Autonomy, flexibility, adaptability, collaborating across locations, independence, work-life balance, online and virtual world, are the drivers of the re-invention of how, where and when employees work. Therefore, employees can work from where, when and how they are most productive (O'Rourke 2021: 556, 560).

Work from home can provide ***autonomy and independence*** which might be absent in a physical workplace. It can provide self-discipline and motivation, increased focus, enough to manage time responsibly and complete jobs tasks (Herrity 2023).

Flexibility is quite important factor as well. Allowing employees, during the day, to manage their out-of-work but important meetings, like medical appointments. Also, this opportunity gives employees (and especially the ones with family responsibilities) a huge advantage, by who can schedule to accommodate along with medical or other important meetings. In addition, it gives the opportunity, if employees are sick or their children are, employees can work from home and take care of themselves and their family. (Herrity 2023). With the aforementioned, employees can work from home not only to take care of themselves, but others as well. In this way, they can avoid the contact with others, by protecting their colleagues and keep them safe and healthy.

Avoiding traffic – it is a critical factor (especially in Cyprus), since researchers shows that lots of employees want to avoid traffic and save time (O'Rourke 2021: 558). Even if employees need to drive a half hour each way to their jobs, they are losing one hour per day – on which they can enjoy themselves or with their families or going to the gym or by start working earlier.

Work from home results to the benefit of ***avoiding expenses*** (reducing fuel and transportation expenses). Specifically, in Cyprus, where the most desirable transport method is by car, the transportation expenses are even more. Apart from that, employees

will not have to worry for work's clothing, meals, and even childcare.

Gaining of personal **productivity, and balancing work and personal life** (Williamson *et al* 2022: 4). It seems that, with the struggling to fulfil personal, family responsibilities because of pressing job demands and working hours, work from home is here to balance work and personal life as much as possible, leading to a significant impact on employees' well-being (Darouei *et al* 2021: 1). Employees are feeling more comfortable to take breaks whenever they feel that they need one. Employees while working from home, are feeling more energized and have better tools for re-charging during the day. They can avoid office's interruptions and most probably ad-hoc meetings (Shaner 2022).

Improving technical skills is another way to consider it beneficial for employees from telecommuting, which might include online meetings, communication and team collaboration platforms. This could also make employees' work faster, through emails, telephone calls or video calls, chats in messaging platforms or group chatting.

Office distractions will be avoided as well. Open plans offices, sharing the office with co-workers, affect employees' concentration, wasting more time to concentrate and finalize a task. Offices' related stress from other employees and interruptions will be avoided as well. If remote work is an option, then organizations will not be **constrained by geography**. With improvements in technology and high-speed internet, many business service jobs can now be done remotely (Althoff *et al* 2022: 3). As long as deadlines get met, invoices get paid and Zoom or Microsoft Teams backgrounds are sufficiently professional looking, geography has come to mean very little to some managers (Case 2021).

"I do not think it matters where our team members are working from," said Jonathan Hanson, co-founder and chief creative officer of the agency Unconquered, which has done work for brands like Nike and Lululemon. Living in the city *"has an effect on my personal identity, but not the business,"* he said, adding that his company was created *"around a clear set of brand values, not a physical city"* (Case 2021).

"Covid-19 has taught us some valuable lessons, and companies have realized that location is no longer a flag bearer of identity," Dave Nilsson stated, founder and director of the SEO firm ConvertedClick.

Last but quite important, is that remote job open up more job opportunities for individuals with **limitations to work in traditional office work**. For example, people with disabilities can be benefitted from this work from home option, providing the opportunity to work comfortable from their own space (Herrity 2023).

2.1.2. Employees drawbacks while working from home

Home isolation, non-socializing, no commute, increased home office costs, distractions and risk of overworking resulting to challenges of balancing work-life-family.

Work from home might **increase isolation**, if employees are spending all day by themselves. They can lose company's culture, cohesion or relationships. That could be a reason why employees are not feeling too much close or connected with their employers or colleagues and make them easier to change job. The same thing could happen with the employers by leaving their employees to go, because they have weaker relationships. Especially, employees that starting a new job remotely, they will have very little socialization, which is generally happens in-person and easier to happen and built (Shaner 2022).

Although work from home might increase productivity as above-argued, it may be a challenge as well to **remain focused and productive**. Taking breaks whether you have a need to, it might take longer to concentrate again easily (O'Rourke 2021: 557). A survey in UK, held in 2021 in the public sector organization showed that, productivity at home was lower than that at the office premises. It seems that, the productivity is higher when teammates are in the same room (Morikawa 2021: 3).

Work from home solution has generated **increased stress and a reduction in overall well-being** for many, due to claims of longer work days, always being "on", more and bigger meetings (O'Rourke 2021: 557). On a study conducted in 2021, from Portuguese AESE Business School, 143 full-time teleworkers were participated. This study showed a negative impact to workers, who were assessed for anxiety and depression (29%), which might have resulted from the social isolation of the employees (Afonso *et al* 2021).

Another fundamental matter to consider is the **risk of "overworking"**. Working more hours

and being always “available”. Employers should not take advantage on this, and employees should not be “tricked” in this way. Work from home, is a key challenge for managers to make sure that employees who come into the office are not “advantaged” over the employees who are “out of sight, out of mind” (Williamson *et al* 2022: 6).

Studies showed that work from home format, can be a source of ***conflict between work and home responsibilities*** (Mehta 2021: 2). It may also distract employees’ productivity and motivation, while working from home. Some studies showed that telework brings work-family conflict. Another thing to consider, is the realistic picture of how the work from home policy is used in practice (Darouei, Pluut 2021: 2).

Based on a survey conducted of 7,857 employees within 814 German establishments, found that extension work from home is associated with lower psychological well-being, higher turnover intentions and higher conflict between work and family (Greco 2023).

2.1.3. Relationship between employers and employees

Upon considering pros and cons of work from home method, it can be seemed that it depends on each employee separately how is going to take this work from home option and make it happen into practice. Hybrid system could work in a way that each employee can evaluate where he or she can work more effectively from, be more proactive, productive and feeling better.

Yang from the Industrial and Labour Relations (ILR) Review said, that “based on the evidence collected about how the work from home can bring benefits to employees and employers, but only when work from home is correctly applied and not overuse, an important next step is to determine how new labour standards and management practices may help guard against extension work from home,” (Greco 2023). Therefore, work from home could work, for the benefit of both employers and employees, as long as a strong engagement and a policy is in place, in order not to aggravated anyone.

For instance, based on Yang, in 2016, France passed a law that gives workers the option to disconnect from workplace communication devices to ensure that work – life balance is maintained. Equally, in Australia, the unions of the public sector are bargaining at the moment with the employers of the public to include the right to disconnect in upcoming

collective bargaining agreements (Greco 2023).

Furthermore, Yang stated that in the US, managers have the opportunities to counteract implicit “always on” expectations and develop new routines that welcome both teleworking and clear boundaries between work-life balance. “In the context of a tight labour market, employers may be more open to encourage temporal boundaries to avoid worker burnout and limit turnover” (Greco 2023).

Some employees seem to have a “fear” of work from home model, since they believe that these diminished promotion opportunities and weakens ties with their employers and colleagues (Williamson *et al* 2022: 4). They also believe that this work from home model would lost opportunities of socialising with others.

On a different view, others believe that work from home increases productivity. The Productivity Commission (2021) notes that, as hybrid working evolves, innovations and identification of useful tactics that enable work from home to limit the risks of lower productivity. It was also showed during the survey conducted in Australia in 2020, that, the work from home model did not decrease productivity, but instead was increased, reporting 70% of workers with increased or high levels of productivity while working from home (Williamson *et al* 2022: 5).

Important thing to consider, is that through a survey conducted, while participants joined from 24 different countries, found that 40% of managers expressed low confidence in their ability to manage remotely (Williamson *et al* 2022: 5). Employers are having trust issues, and this is the main reason why we see managers reluctant to introduce the work from home benefit. Perhaps, this concern, makes employees hesitate to be benefited from work from home option. This may bring fear and insecure to the employees to take the initiative and work from home.

Poor management should be treated, by setting down goals, regulations and policies to the employees, knowing that employees should continue follow the policies while working from home. Managers need to learn new skills of delegation and empowerment to provide their employees, with greater autonomy over their work methods and the timing of their work, which in turn will promote worker motivation, health, and performance (Parker *et al* 2020).

The relationship between the manager and their teams is a fundamental factor, that needs to show mutual trust between them. This is quite important-key factor, since it all starts with the managers. If managers show collaboration and trust to their teams, then employees will feel better and motivated to work from home (Williamson *et al* 2022: 5).

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This Master's dissertation, provides useful insights on how employees in Cyprus, who are working in different sectors such as financial institutions, retail industry, insurance companies, audit firms etc. are satisfied or not with this new norm of working from home routine, whether they would like to continue working from home, and how it affects their personal and business life.

It is highly important to indicate, that prior COVID-19 pandemic, there was not a work from home option on the employees or either a hybrid system of work. The results of this Master's dissertation study hopefully will give a light to the wish of employees and can be used to boost other employers as well to introduce or not this work from home/hybrid option to their employees.

In essence, this chapter will emphasize of the context of the research questions as analysed in the previous chapter, how the research questions are being structured and the relevant methodological approach.

3.1.1. Context

The survey aimed to approach employees that are currently have the option to work from home in Cyprus. It approaches mainly employees from financial and banking institutions, insurance companies, audit and accounting firms, retail industry, and other.

The way it structured, it will show, what is the preferable way of employees to work, and whether more businesses in Cyprus and worldwide going forward, they should think to adopt or not the option of work from home. It could suggest a more approachable way that

both employees and employers could be benefited from the work from home model.

3.1.2. Research procedure, validity and reliability

In a descriptive and detailed way, the relevant survey/questionnaire prepared along with a literature review.

Particularly, the survey prepared, designed and structured in a way to understand clearly and **first of all**, if employees are positive with the idea of work from home/ hybrid model and whether they wish to continue to work from home as a new norm in their work life.

Secondly, the survey is structured in such a way in order to help the readers understand whether the work from home model works the same and brings the same or even better results to their jobs. Whether the work from home routine brings new challenges, difficulties to the employees.

In addition, it is quite important to understand whether the employees' work is appreciated by their employers and what the employees believe about that.

Finally, it will be realized whether work from home is or not considered to be an advantage to their personal life.

All questions to the survey were required to be answered, to have a whole integrated picture of the employees' thoughts and opinions on the subject matter.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were considered, whilst a sample of participants were asked to complete the survey and provide feedback as to whether the questions were asked are reasonable, understandable and simple. In addition, it was asked whether the time to complete the questionnaire was accurate (as suggested), and if it was straight forward to complete it. The sample of participants provided, was a really useful feedback to improve and make some minor but important adjustments. After that, the sample of participants were re-asked to complete the questionnaire to re-assess the final draft of the questionnaire. As soon as, there was no additional feedback, the final questionnaire was ready to be sent to a number of participants.

3.1.3. Data collection tools and analysis

The selected tool for data collection in this Master's dissertation study was a structured questionnaire/survey as appeared in *Appendix A* below. The collection of data was carried out between the middle of November until the end of December and received feedback across the country (Cyprus).

The questionnaire was prepared along with literature review, using the Microsoft forms, for the creation of an online survey. The survey includes the total amount of twenty-nine (29) questions. The first section of the form contains nine (9) general demographic questions. The second part of the survey contains of twenty (20) general questions seeking employees' opinions and thoughts.

In regards to the first part of questions, the method used is the five scale points, by choosing one of them. In the second part, the same method used – however the following options of responses were available: 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neither Agree or Disagree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree'. As soon as the survey was completed, 136 surveys were collected.

Microsoft forms allows for each group of answers to be graphically presented with a relevant chart and comparisons are between charts when needed, using different colours to provide an easier and understandable picture of the results.

3.1.4. Ethics

All participants completed the questionnaire anonymously and their participation was voluntarily and by their consent.

Chapter 4

Results Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter presents in detail the graphs and diagrams of the results of the survey, received by Cypriot employees who are currently working from home. All questions were required to be completed and responded anonymously. The first part of the survey was in reference to 9 general questions (gender, age, family situation, education, years of working experience, work area, industry they are working on, how many days during the week employees are working from home, if there is a written work from home policy etc.). The 10th question refers to the second part of the questionnaire which includes 20 general questions asking for each respondent's personal opinion and thoughts in regards to the work from home model. The participants should be rating each statement with: 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree'. The total respondents of the questionnaire were 136.

4.1.1. 1st Part of Survey - Demographics

The majority of the participants were women. 63% were women (86 participants) and 37% of the respondents were men (50 participants) as appeared on the following Figure 1.

1. Gender

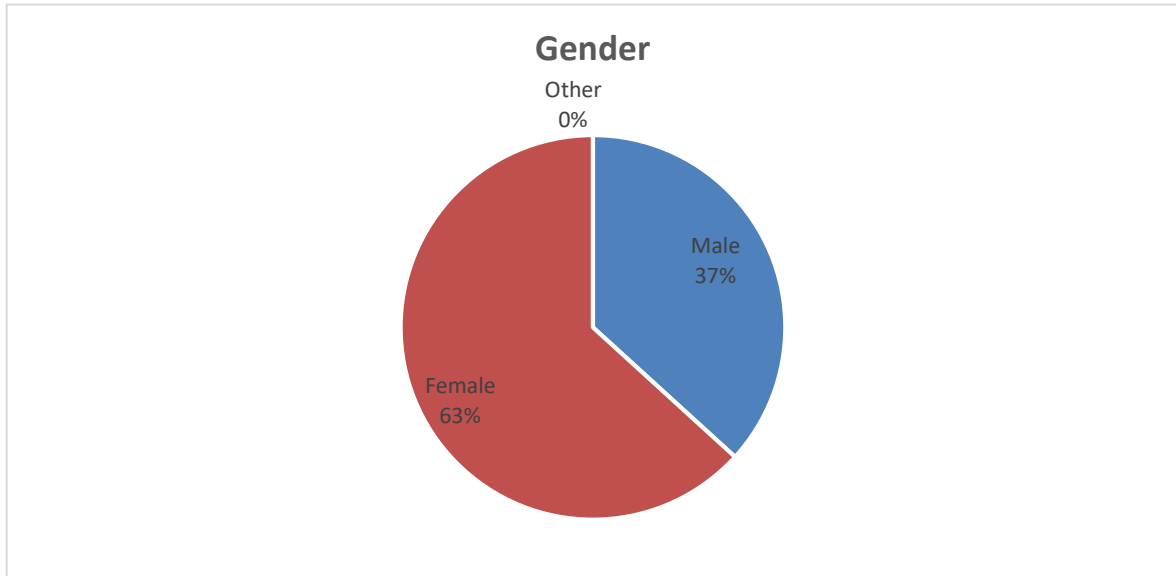


Figure 1

2. Age Group

Participants were asked to identify the age group they belong to, as appears to the below Figure 2. The vast majority of the respondents belong to the **age group of 25-34 (55%, 75 respondents)**. Then, 21% belongs to the age group of 35-44 (29 respondents). 16% belongs to the age group of 45-54 (22 respondents). A small percentage of 6% belongs to the age group of 18-24 (8 respondents). Only 1% belongs to the age group of 55-64 (2 respondents).

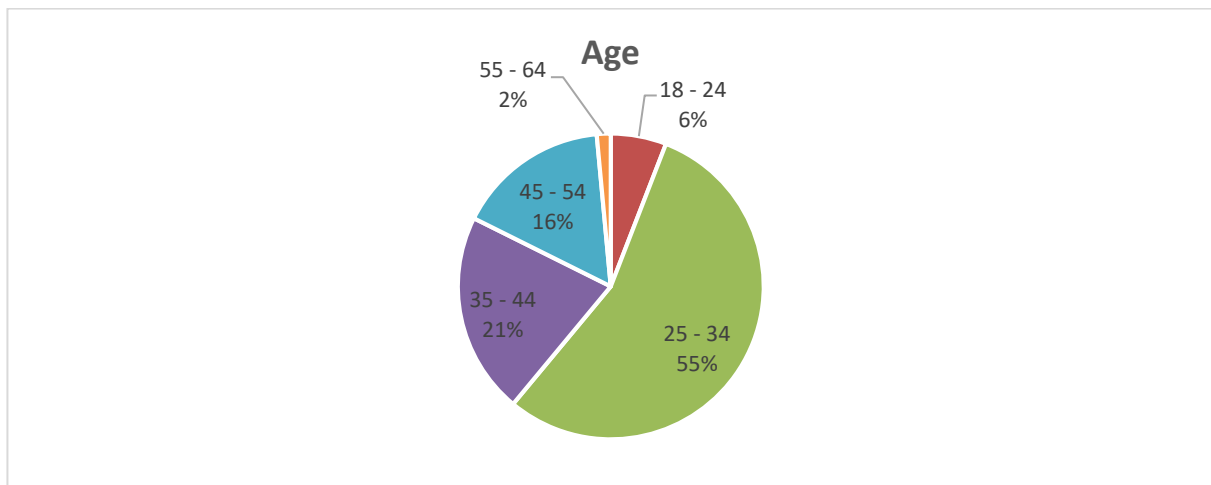


Figure 2

3. Children

The following figure shows whether the participants have children or not. As stated below, the majority of the respondents (58%, 79 respondents) do not have children, whilst 42% (57 in person) of the respondents do have children. Having a family while working from home can be tricky, since it can help if there is a sick kid in order to be able to take care of it, but it can also be a detrimental factor of how sufficient the job will be performed. In contrast, if a participant resides with a partner or living alone while working from home could be much more centred in the performance of the job, although sometimes working from home with a partner and staying a considerable amount of time in the house can also affect each one's psychology.

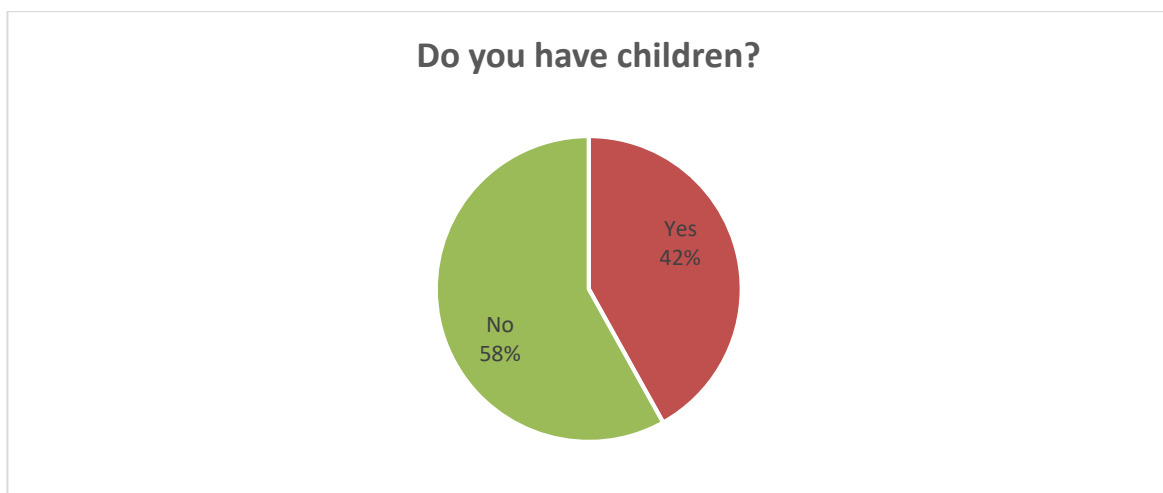


Figure 3

4. Education

Another demographic variable was the education of each participant (Figure 4). The majority of the respondents do have a **master's degree (49%, 67 participants)** or a bachelor's degree (34%, 46 participants). A small amount of participants has finished the high school (8%, 10 participants) or received other education (7%, 10 participants) like professional qualifications of AACA, ACA, Cyprus Bar Association Qualification, CIPP/E. And an even smaller percentage (2%, 3 participants) do have a PhD or higher qualification.

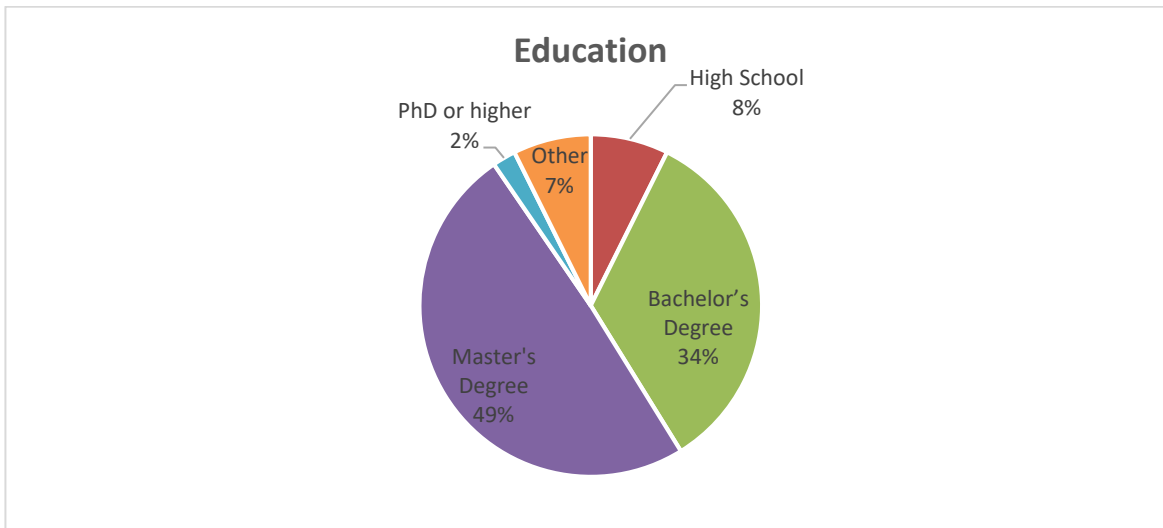


Figure 4

5. Years of working experience

Most of the participants have a **working experience of 2-5 years, meaning the 34%** or 46 participants (Figure 5). Then it follows by 23% (32 participants) that they do have 11-20 years of working experience. Then, with the same percentage of 23% (31 participants) of the respondents that they do have 6-10 years of working experience. A smaller percentage of 16% (22 participants) have more than 21 or more years of working experience. And finally, an ever smaller percentage of 4% (5 participants) have the maximum of 1 year of working experience.

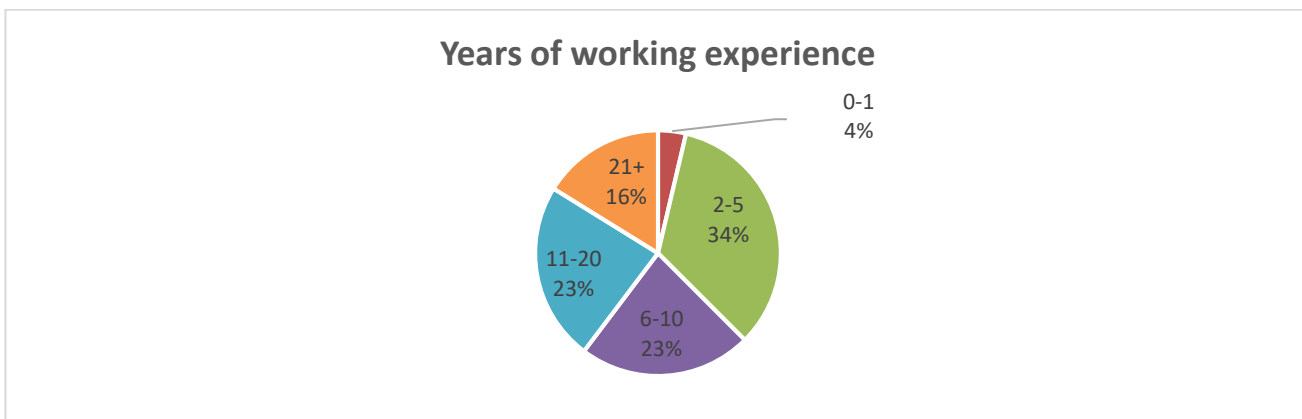


Figure 5

6. Work Area

The respondents who are working in the private sector are the 88% of the total population who participated in this survey (Figure 6). Only a 9% (13 participants) are working in a semi-government organization and just 1% is working in the government (1 participant), are self-employed (1 participant) or working in other organizations (1 participant)

respectively. This shows that the results of this questionnaire will be influenced mainly from people who are working in the private sector and this will need to be taken into account in the analysis of the findings.

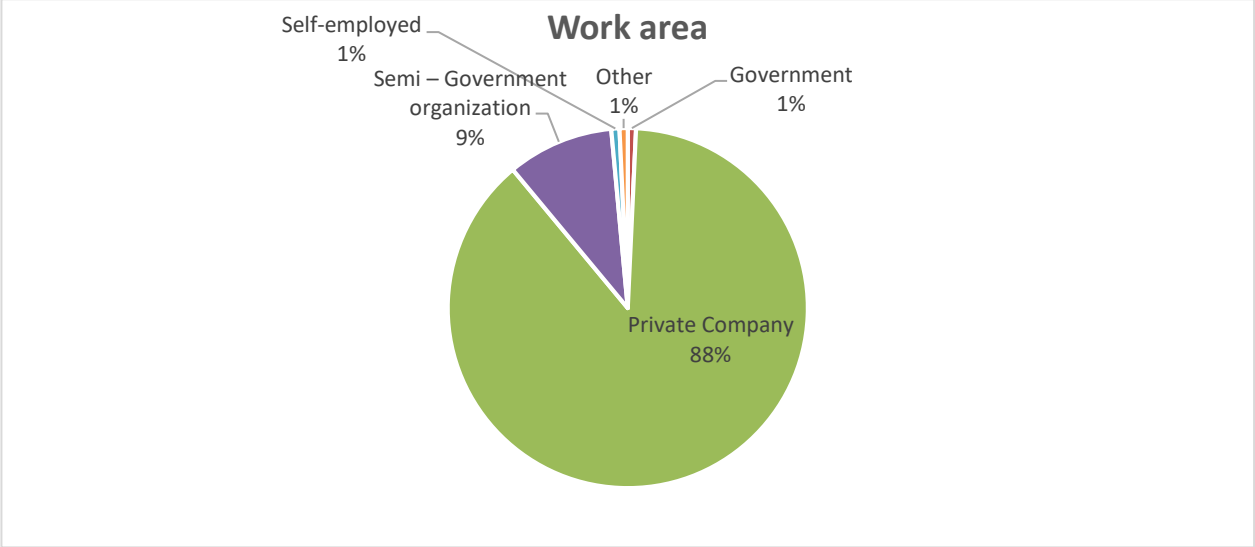


Figure 6

7. Firm/Office/Company you work at

Most of the respondents are working in a bank/financial institution (42% or 57 respondents) (Figure 7 below). 18% (24 respondents) are working in a different/other sector like Electronic Money Institution, Law Firm, Research Centre, Distribution, Accounting Firm, Telecommunications, HR, Data Analyst, Media, Payment Solutions Provider, Insurance Company, Audit Firm. 17% (23 respondents) are working in an IT/Technology company. 11% (15 respondents) are working in a retail company. 6% rounded down (9 respondents) are working in a sales/marketing company as well as only 6% (8 respondents) are working in a consulting company.

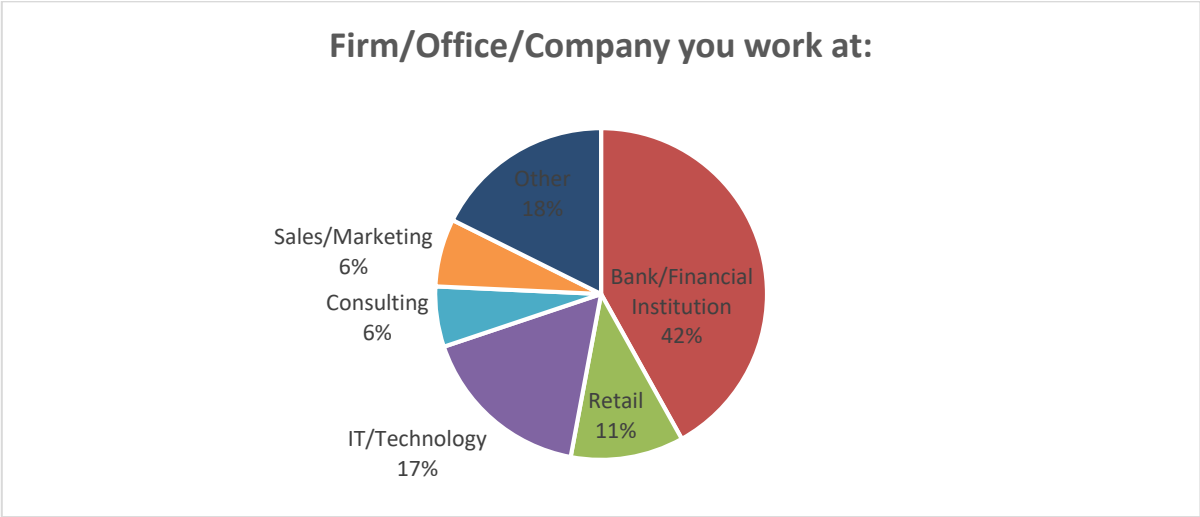


Figure 7

8. Days you are working from home during the week

The majority of the participants are working from home 1 day per week, meaning 41% (55 participants) (Figure 8). Furthermore, 52 participants which constitutes the 38% of the population stated that are working from home almost every day, 4-5 days per week and the rest 21% (29 participants) of the participants are working from home 2-3 days per week.

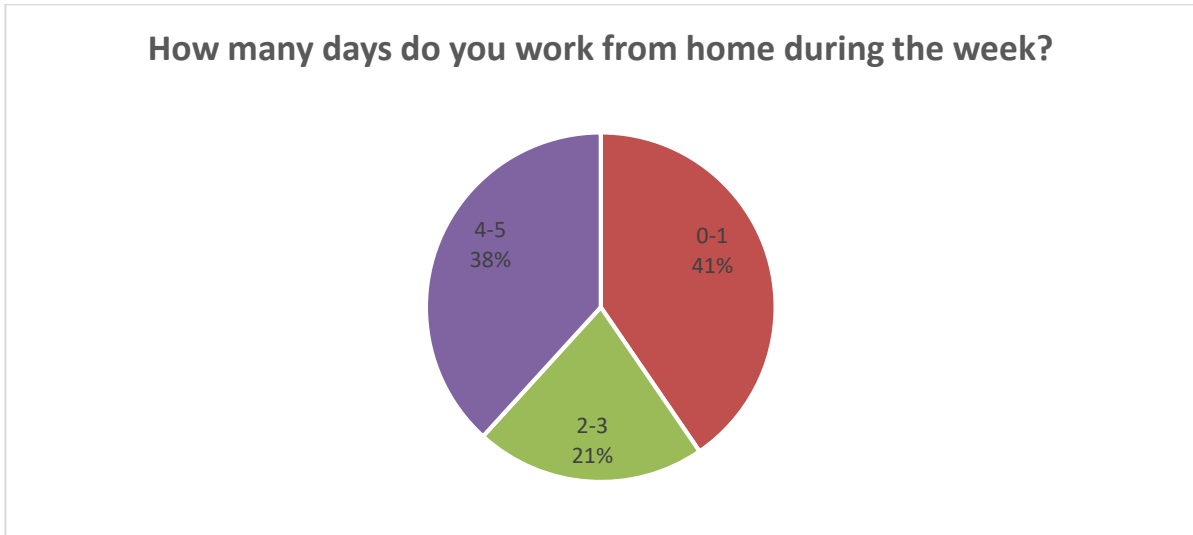


Figure 8

9. Does your employer have a written working from home policy?

As appeared below, more than half (51%) of the participants, have a work from home model which is documented in writing as a policy, while the 17% of the applicants who are working from home did not receive any policy (Figure 9 below). Also, 32% of the respondents have only been informed verbally on this working from home policy.

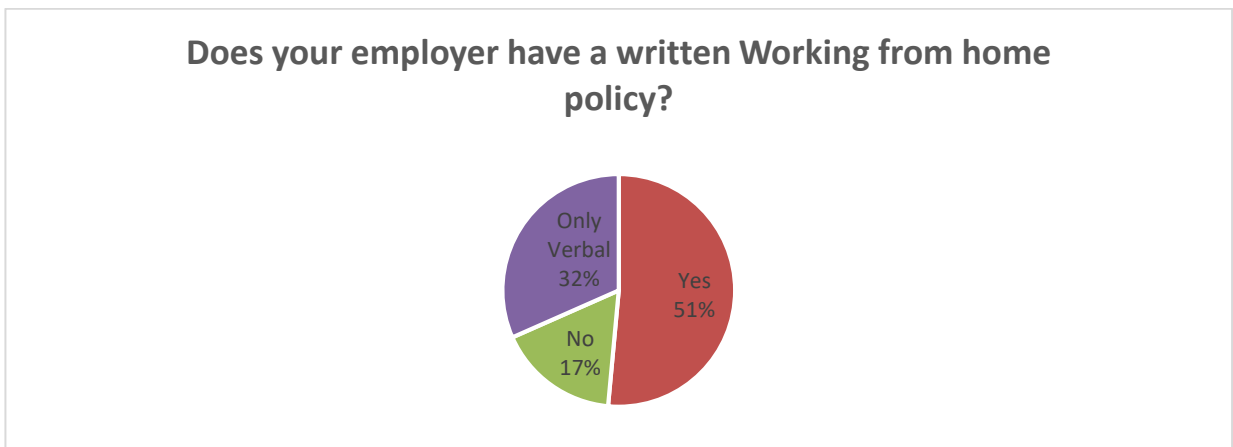


Figure 9

4.1.2. 2nd Part of Survey – General Opinion

The second part of the survey was in relation to each participant's opinion, whether participants strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree or strongly agree with each of the following statements. All statements were required to be answered. The second part includes 20 questions/statements.

1. Easy adaption – Working from home (WFH) model

Most respondents have been **easily adapted to the working from home model (strongly agree: 48%, agree: 39%)** with a total of 87% agreeing to this statement (Figure 10 below). A 10% of the respondents have neutral opinion. Only 3% stated that they were not able to easily adapt the working from home model (disagree: 1%, strongly disagree: 2%) which shows that most respondents are eager and able to work from home easily.

10. Please state the level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements.

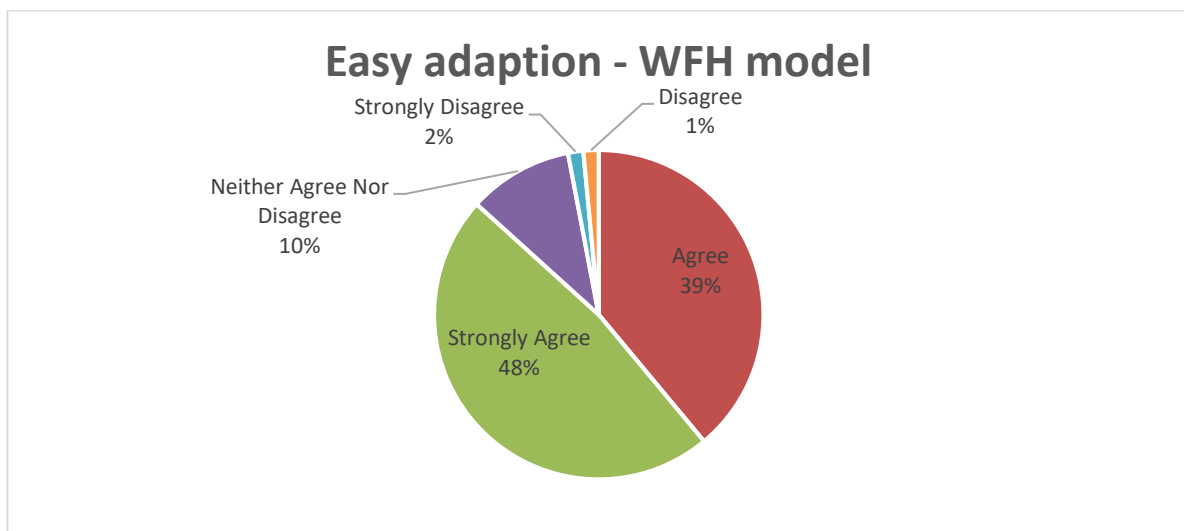


Figure 10

2. Job is sufficiently accomplished with WFH model

The respondents that agree with the statement «my job is sufficiently accomplished using WFH model» which shows that they can fulfil their work adequately from **home is the 83% of the respondents (strongly agree: 49%, agree: 34%)**. Whilst, the 14% of the respondents have a neutral opinion, and only the 3% of the respondents strongly disagree with the above statement (Figure 11). This shows that the vast majority of the respondents can sufficiently accomplish their job while working from their home.

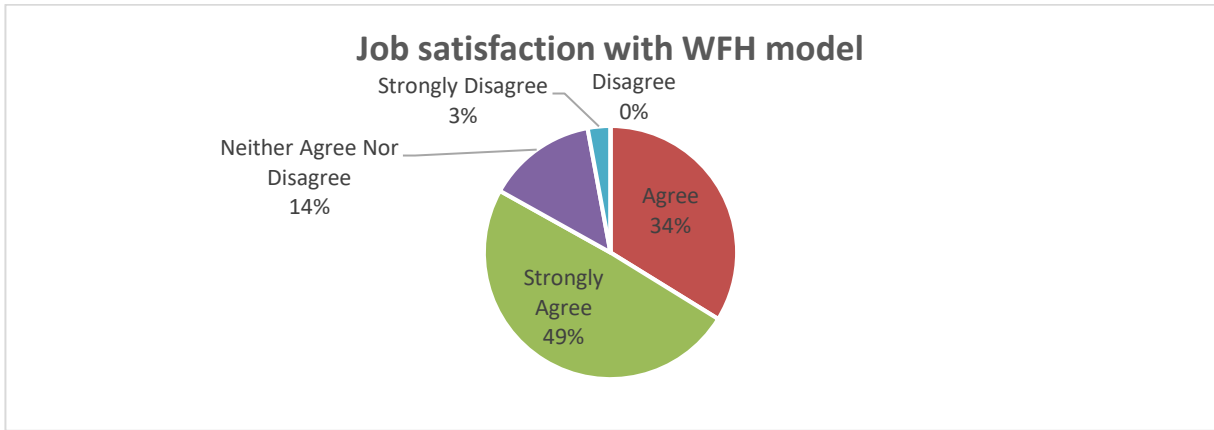


Figure 11

3. WFH – full time?

The respondents who have a negative reply on this question amounted to the 36% (strongly disagree: 9%, disagree: 27%) (Figure 12). The attendants who responded positively to this statement amounted to the 33% (strongly agree: 15%, agree: 18%) whilst the 31% remain neutral. This shows that although the negative replies were more, the respondents were in fact not sure since they were divided between agreement, disagreement and the neutral approach.

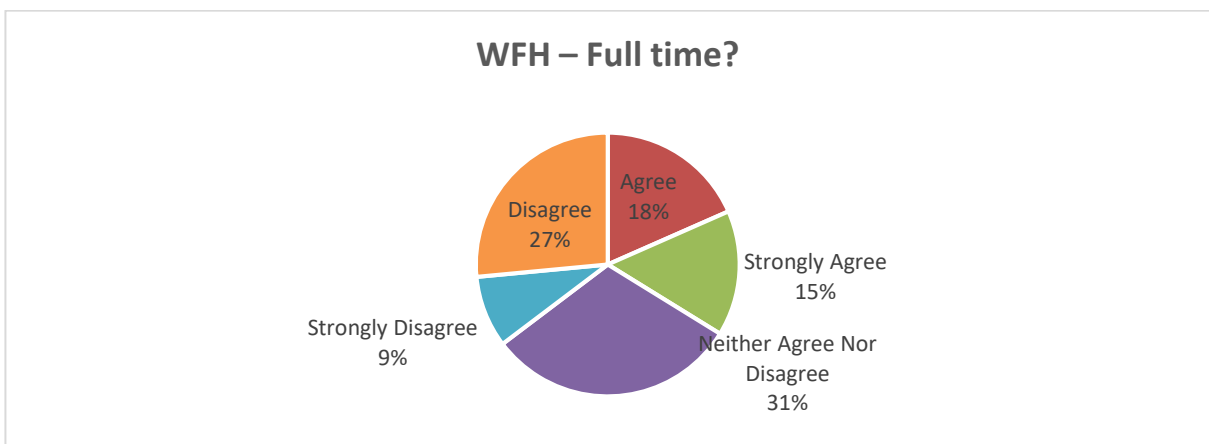


Figure 12

4. Hybrid System preference?

As emphasized to the below Figure 13, the respondents who replied positively to whether they would prefer to work under the hybrid system were 84% (strongly agree: 49%, agree: 35%). Only 11% of the respondents remain neutral with this idea and just 5% disagree of working in a hybrid system. This illustrates that more than 8 out of 10 people who took the questionnaire, they prefer the hybrid system.

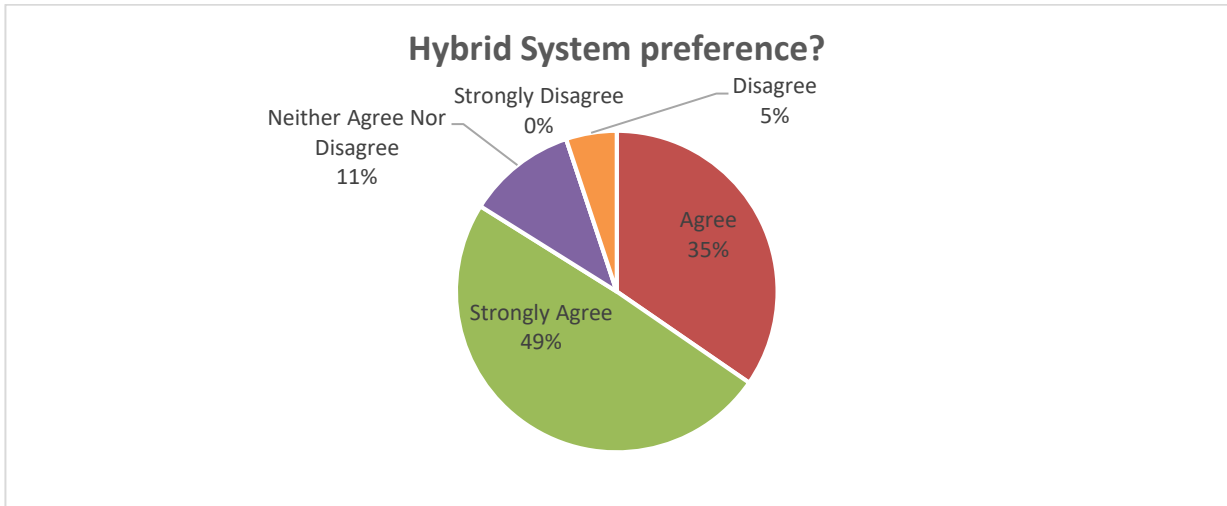


Figure 13

5. Demonstrate of qualifications/skills while WFH

The respondents who **agreed with the below statement (strongly agree: 29%, agree: 48%) were in total 77%** of the population. In addition, only 17% remain neutral and 6% of them disagree as showed below (Figure 14). Basically, this states that the people who participated in this questionnaire are confident that they do not need to have a physical interaction with their managers in order to demonstrate their skills.

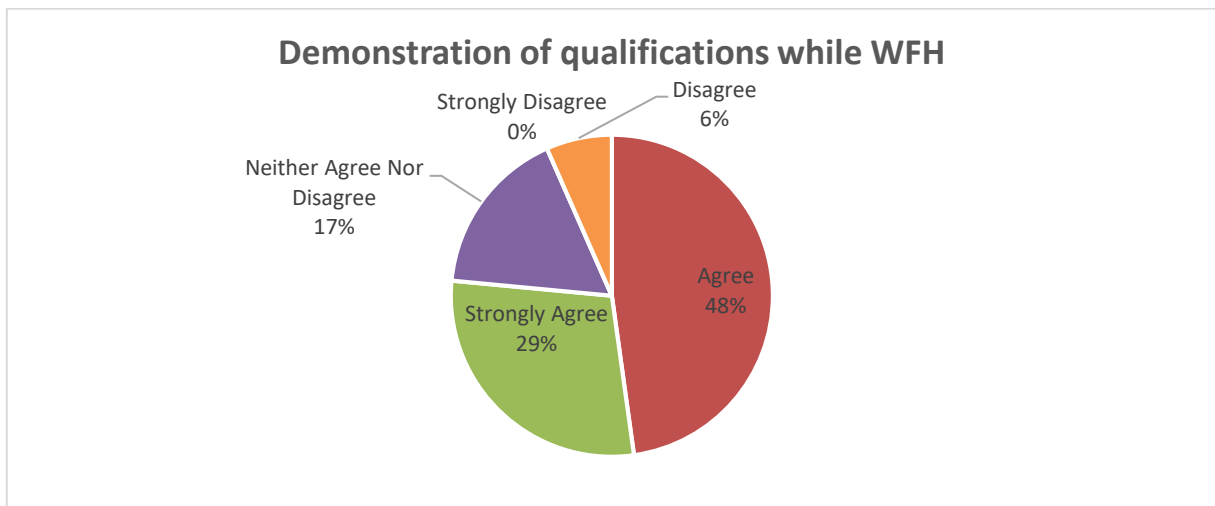


Figure 14

6. Flexible working hours

As it can be seen below, the respondents who **agreed with working more flexible hours while working from home were the 61% of the survey's population (strongly agree: 18%, agree: 43%)**. However, the ones who did not agree neither disagree with that statement were the 16% of the population who participated in the survey, whilst the persons who replied negatively were in fact 23% (strongly disagree: 4%, disagree: 19%)

(Figure 15). These results demonstrated that the majority of the respondents agreed to the flexible hours while working from home.

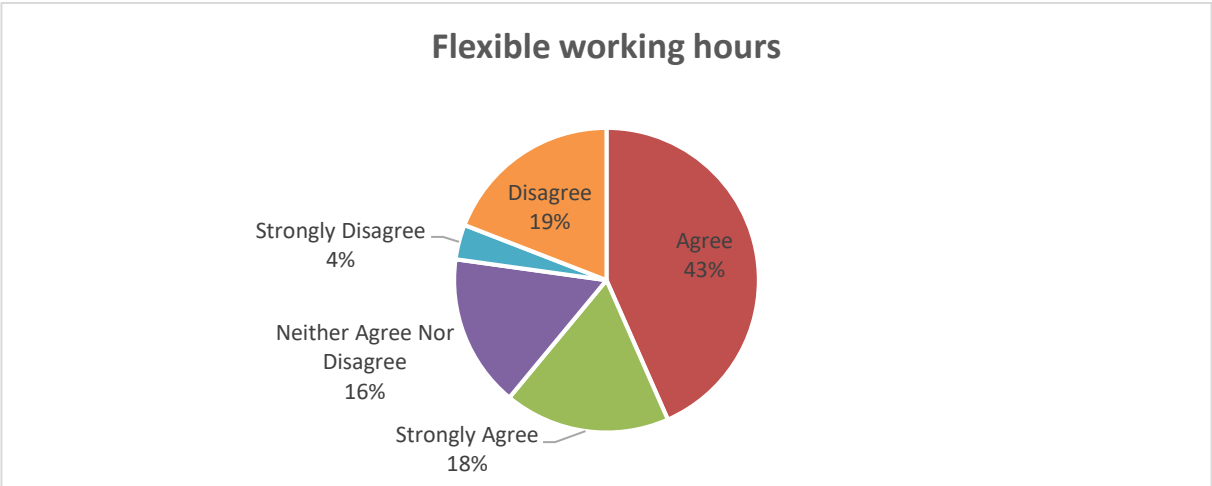


Figure 15

7. Personal life while WFH

Based on the below findings, the respondents who **agreed with this statement (strongly agree: 27%, agree: 34%) were the 61%** (Figure 16). In addition, almost one third of the sample (30%) of the respondents remain neutral and a much smaller percentage (9%) of respondents disagree with this statement (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 7%). These results indicate that most of the people in this questionnaire believe that the fact that they are working from home improves their personal life.

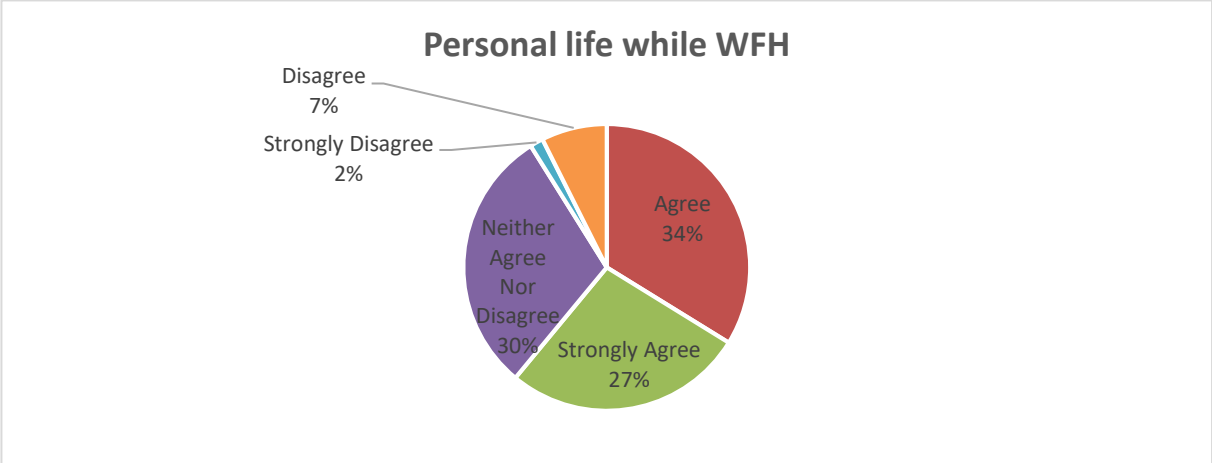


Figure 16

8. Work-performance

The respondents who **agreed with this statement were the 50% of the population who participated in the questionnaire (strongly agree: 18%, agree: 32%)**. At the same time, the 38% of the respondents are neither in agreement nor in disagreement with this

statement and a smaller percentage of the participants amounted of 12%, do not agree (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 10%). Therefore, based on the aforementioned results and the below figure 17, it is extracted that half of the population who took part in this survey believe that while working from home their performance is improved and just about the 12% of the respondents believe that working from home does not help their performance.

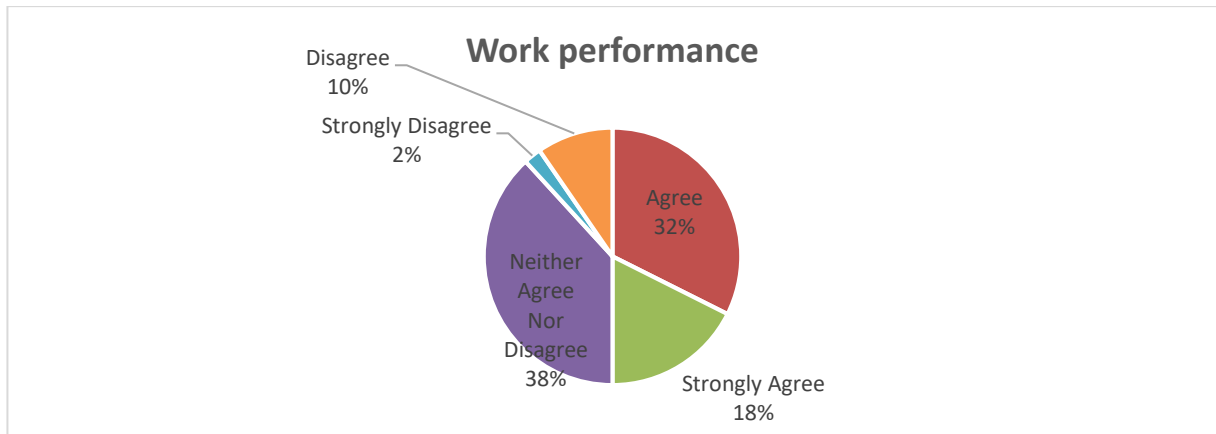


Figure 17

9. Working more hours while WFH

According to the below figure 18, the respondents who **agreed with this statement constituted the 64% of the survey's population (strongly agree: 28%, agree: 36%)**. Also, the neutral respondents were the 23% of the population and a small number of the respondents who disagreed with this statement were 13%. This shows that although the majority of the respondents believe that the work from home improves their performance and their personal life, they are working more hours than the hours they should have worked if they were at the office.

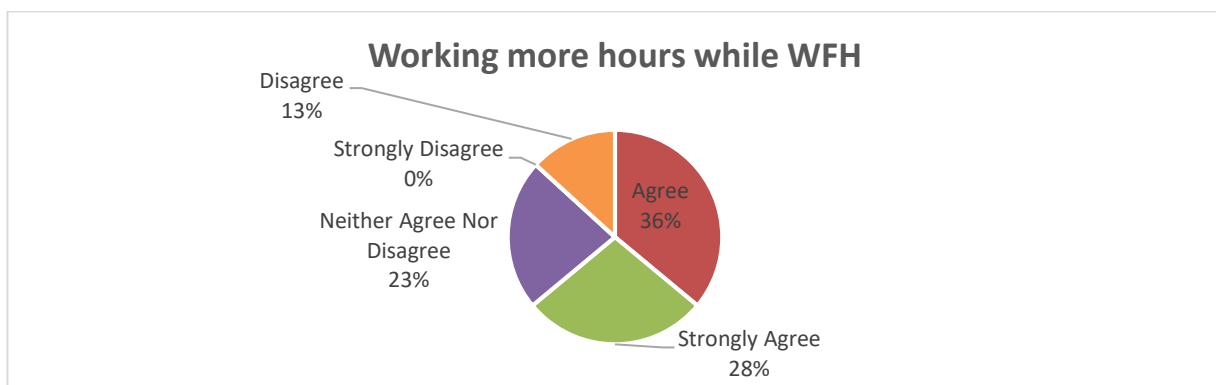


Figure 18

10. Concentration while WFH

The respondents who **agreed with this statement are the 62% of the survey (strongly agree: 26%, agree: 36%)** (Figure 19). At the same time, the neutral responses occurred at

the 27% and a small amount disagreed with this statement which constitutes the 11% (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 9%). These findings demonstrate that most of the respondents are concentrated better while they are working from home. This comes in line with the fact that half of the respondents believe that their performance is improved while working from home and that 62% of the population stated that their personal life is improved.

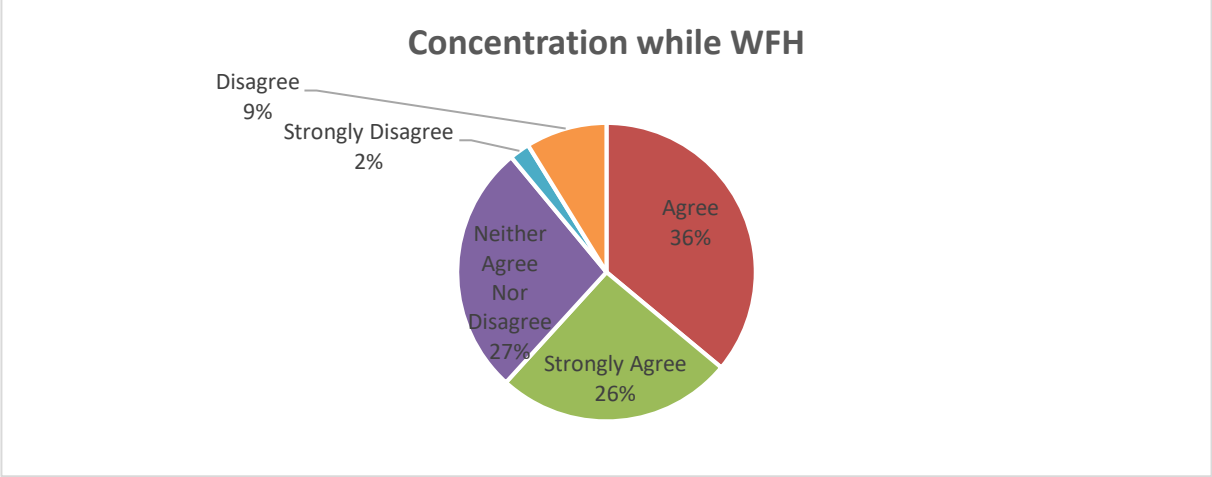


Figure 19

11. Communication with colleagues remains the same while WFH

It is quite important to indicate specifically that **56% of the respondents agreed with this statement, of whom almost the one sixth stated that they are strongly agree with this** (Figure 20). Then, a smaller quantity which is 24% of the respondents disagreed and even smaller quantity of responses strongly disagree (2%). Neutral responses received the percentage of 18%. These findings show that more than half (56%) of the respondents believe that the communication while working from home is not worse than it is while working from the office.

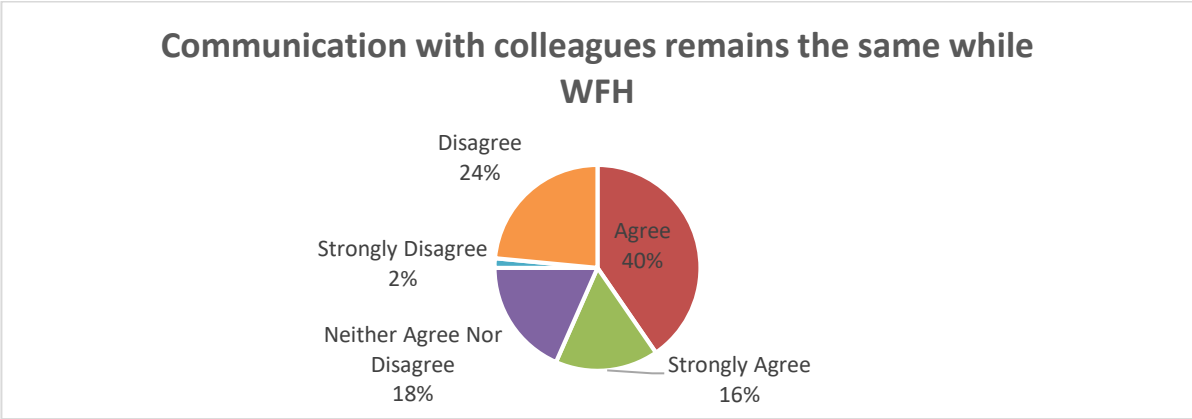


Figure 20

12. Receiving the same support from colleagues/managers while WFH

The respondents who were in **agreement with this statement were the 68% of the study** (Figure 21), of them the ones who **strongly agreed were the 19%**, following with the neutral responses of 19%. The participants who were in disagreement of this were the 13% (strongly disagree: 1%, disagree: 12%) of the survey. These results can be interpreted that the majority of the people who took this survey keep receiving the same support from their colleagues / managers while working from home comparing with the times they are working from the office.

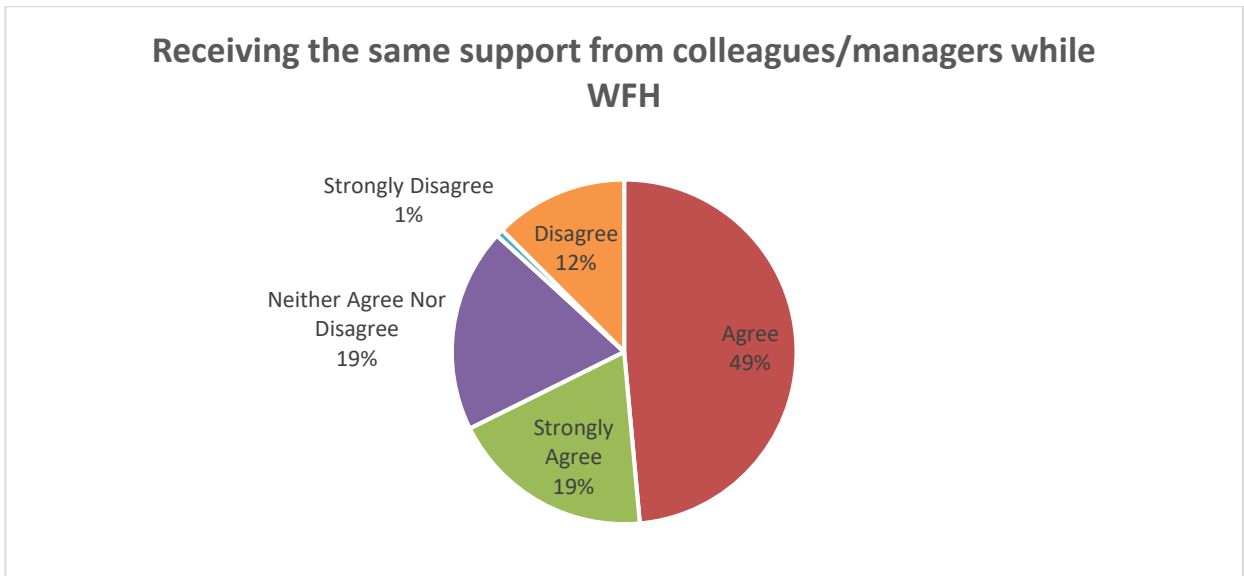


Figure 21

13. Miss socializing while WFH

The applicants who actually **miss socializing with their colleagues while working from home is the 67% (strongly agree: 31%, agree: 36%)** (Figure 22). While, neutral responses took a 26% and a disagreement amounted to a smaller percentage of 7% in total (strongly disagree: 1%, disagree: 6%). Based on this, it is crystal clear that although people may prefer working from home because it improves their work-life balance, they miss socializing with their peers which is only possible through the physical contact.

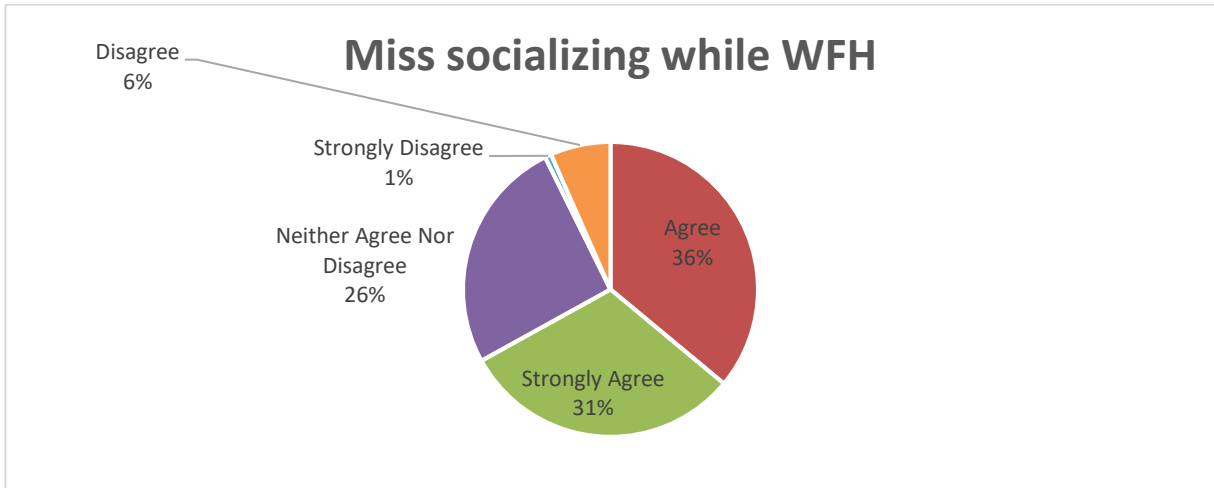


Figure 22

14. Prefer WFH, as there is no distraction by colleagues

The respondents who have a **neutral opinion on this statement were the 34% of the total people who were interviewed** (Figure 23). The 32% in total, was in disagreement with this statement (strongly disagree: 5%, disagree: 27%) and more of the respondents, 34% to be exact, agree with this statement (strongly agree: 10%, agree: 24%). It is obvious that the participants were divided in this question and this could be due to the fact that the participants do not leave alone, for example many of the participants have children (42%) as indicated above, others could be just with a partner which means that there may not be the distraction from colleagues but there could still be a distraction caused by these factors.

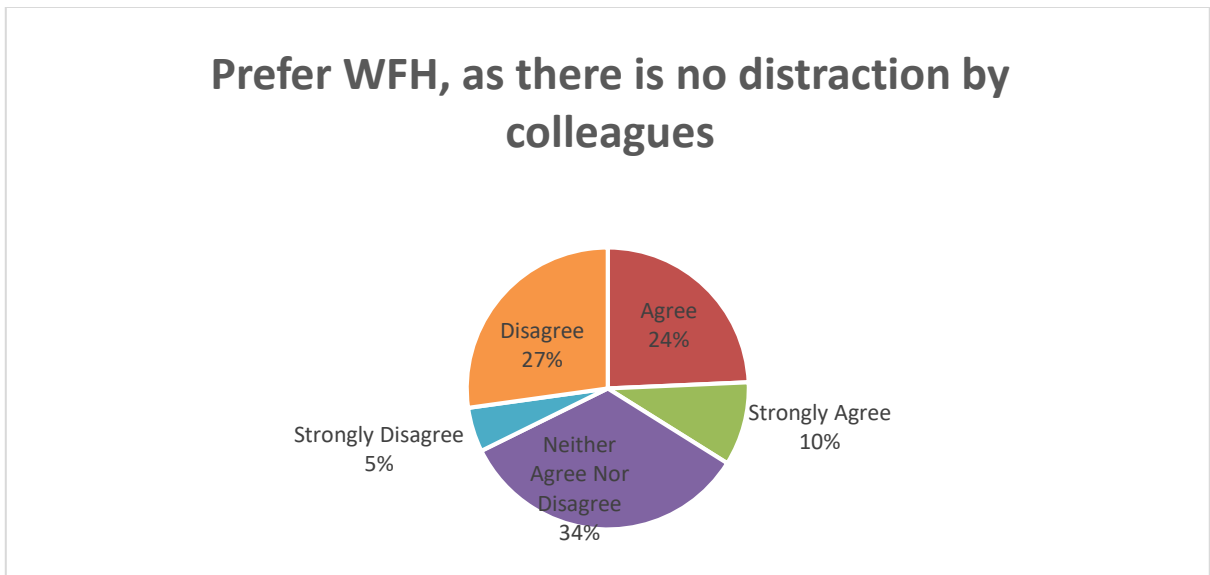


Figure 23

15. Avoiding traffic while WFH

The participants who were in **agreement on this statement were the 85% of the population (strongly agree: 48%, agree: 37%)** (Figure 24). A quite small amount of respondent was in disagreement in the amount of 8% (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 6%) while only the 7% of the respondents were neutral. Based on this findings, it is more than obvious that one of the basic reasons why work from home became so popular mainly in Cyprus, it is the fact that by staying and work from home, someone can avoid traffic and together with it the fuel cost as well the price of which, is thriving in our days.

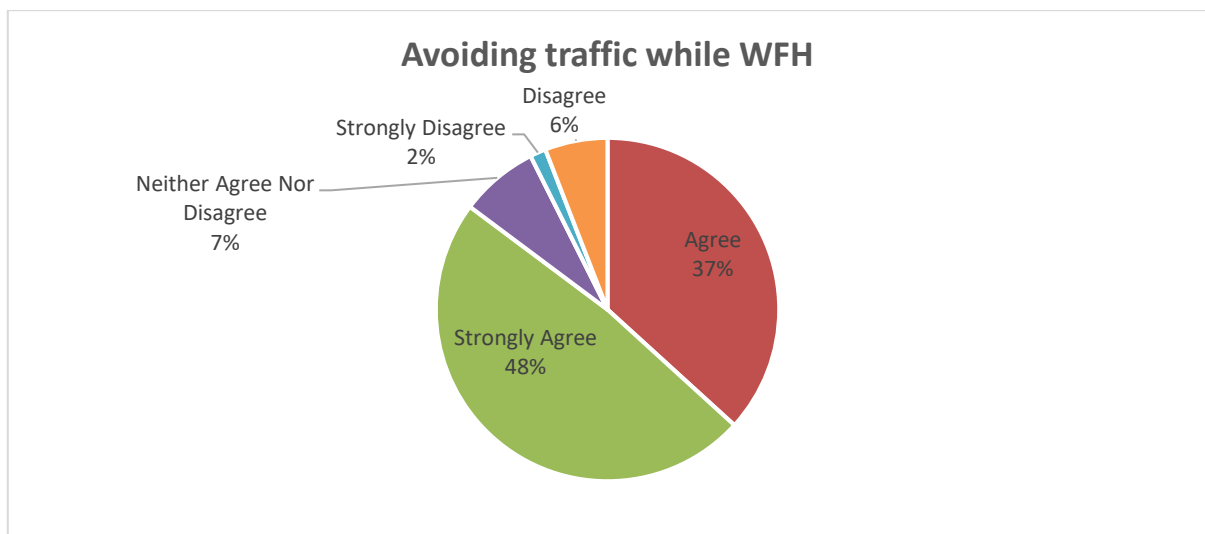


Figure 24

16. Relaxed and motivated while WFH

The majority of the participants have a neutral position on this statement 35%, while the ones that agree with this statement were in total 51% (strongly agree: 23%, agree: 28%), following by a smaller percentage of disagreement 14% (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 12%) (Figure 25). Although, a substantial percentage of the participants remained neutral, it seems that relaxation and motivation is not affected for the worse while working from home than working at the office. A crucial amount of 51% of the participants agreed that by working from home, they are feeling more relaxed and motivated. This helps them avoiding stress and pressure that might working at the office brings them.

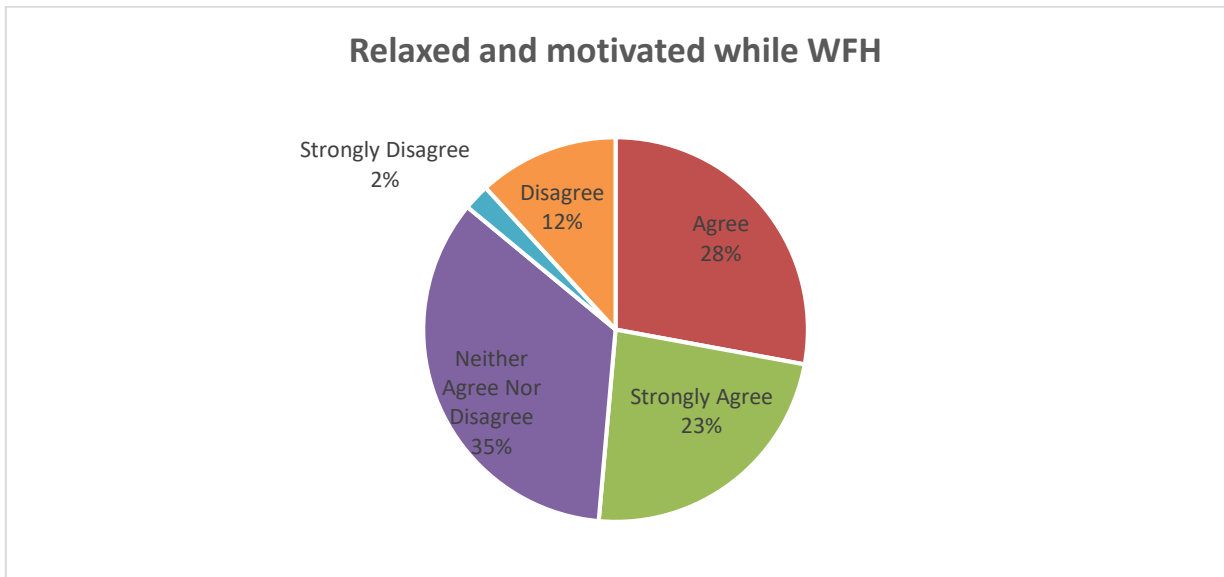


Figure 25

17. Work - life balance

An important amount of 56% of respondents was in **agreement with this statement (agree: 34%, strongly agree: 22%)** (Figure 26). Some respondents remain neutral (29%), while a smaller proportion amounted to 15% of the participants was in disagreement with this statement (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 13%). These results indicate that working from home improve the quality of life and eventually helps the work – life balance to be maintained. Furthermore, this of course helps the employees to perform better in their jobs, which is consistent with the findings above, where half of the participants stated that they performed better while working from home.

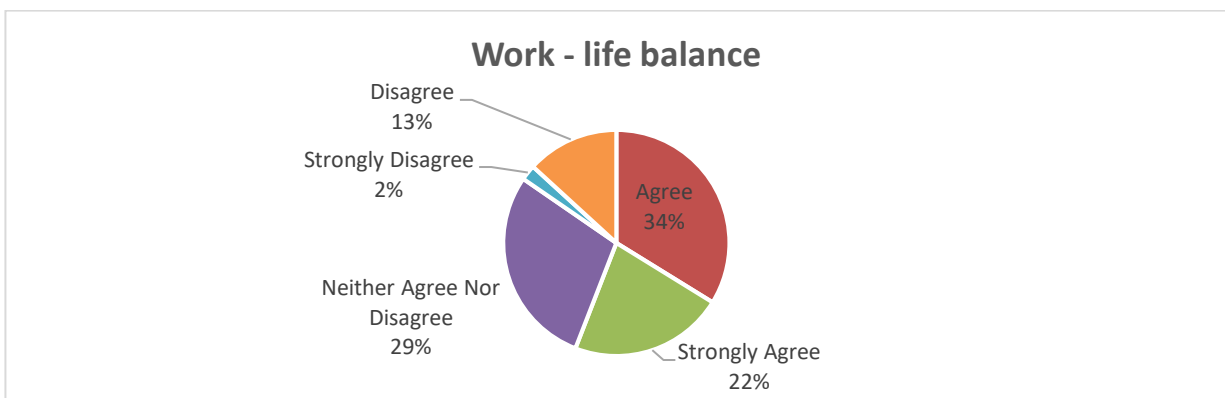


Figure 26

18. Adequate equipment to WFH

Most applicants are in **agreement with this statement since the 84% of the population responded positive to this question (strongly agree: 46%, agree: 38%)** (Figure 27). However, there is still a small proportion of participants in the amount of 10% responded that they neither agree nor disagree and a smaller percentage of 6% who were in

disagreement, with this statement. These results depict clearly that most of the applicants have the adequate equipment in order to perform sufficient their job while they are working from home.

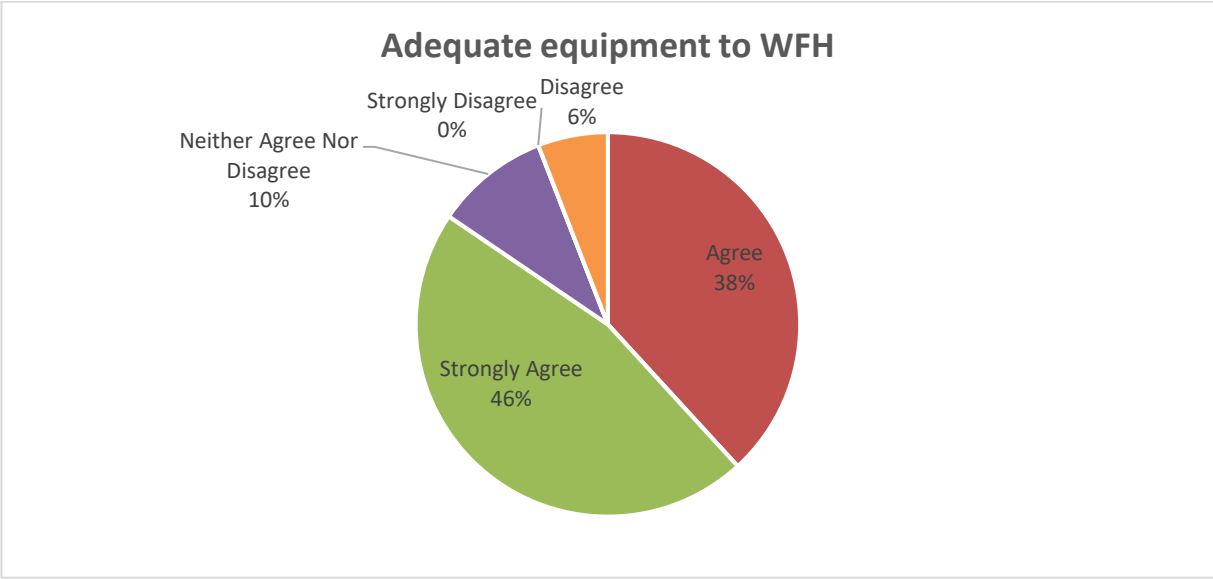


Figure 27

19. Accepting lower salary while WFH more than 2 days

In this statement, the applicants who were in a **disagreement with this statement were unsurprisingly 78% (strongly disagree: 43%, disagree: 35%)** (Figure 28). However, the fact that 14% of the respondents preferred the neutral response which indicates that they could consider it and a small proportion which is not negligible of 8% stated that they could agree for a lower salary in order to work from home more than 2 days (agree: 7%, strongly agree: 1%) could make the employers reconsider their hiring approach.

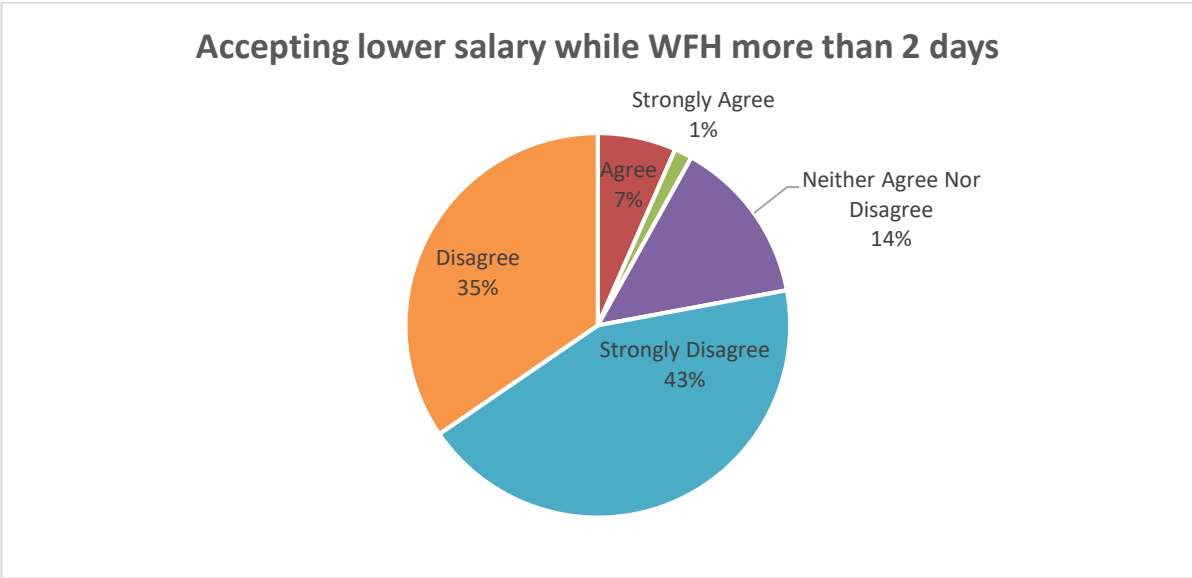


Figure 28

20. No job opportunity will be considered without WFH

The respondents who were in agreement with this statement were the 39% of the survey whilst the ones that keep a neutral opinion on this statement were the 36% stating in essence that they were not sure and maybe more factors could have been considered as well (Figure 29). In addition, the 25% of the applicants in total disagreed with this statement and of those, the 7% basically stated that they did not consider working from home as a major factor for a new job opportunity. As it can be extracted from the responses of the applicants, approximately 40% will consider the work from home model for sure and for the 15% of those working from home could be essential to the new job.

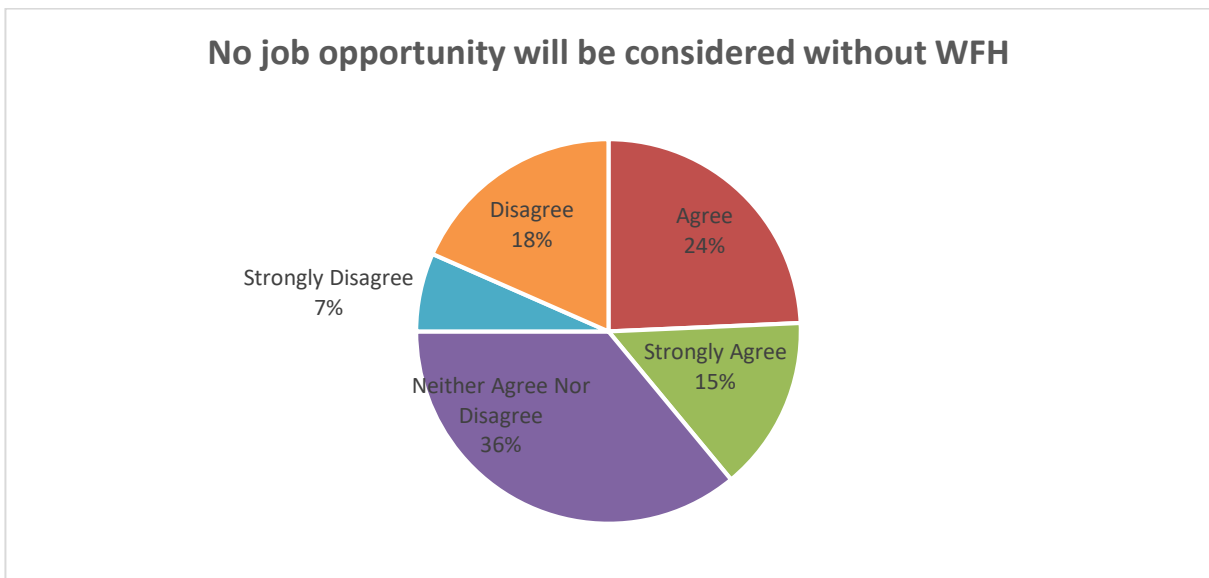


Figure 29

Chapter 5

Analysis and discussion

5.1. Introduction

The first and fundamental question remains: do we really need to be together, in an office, to do our work? (Choudhury 2020). The first response, was received during the pandemic lockdowns. After that, the companies and organizations worldwide continue to offer this option of work from home. What is happening after the pandemic?

Several studies showed numerous of benefits that work from home brings to employees' life, such as flexible working hours, how and when to schedule work around home demands may lower employees' work-to-home conflicts, reduce commute time, lower the frequency of work breaks, result in fewer reported sick days, and offer the convenience of a quieter work environment (Mehta 2021: 1-2).

This chapter is focussing on the analysis of the survey's results as presented on Chapter 4. The results will be considered and analysed along with a literature review.

5.1.1. Hybrid / Work from home option?

Do employees want a *hybrid / work from home option*? Based on the survey conducted in Cyprus, receiving feedback from 136 respondents, appears that, there is an agreement of 84% (or strongly agree: 49%, agree: 35%) with this statement. Whereas, when they have been asked on a *full-time basis to work from home*, the respondents were mostly negative of this idea (35% or strongly disagree: 9%, disagree: 26%). It is important to mention though, that positive feedback received is followed by 33% or (strongly agree: 15%, agree: 18%) which was close enough to 35%.

It seems that employees are willing to work in a hybrid system, where they have the choice to work either permanently from home or at the office. It offers them the autonomy to choose to work wherever and however they are most productive and feeling comfortable

with. Therefore, the option to continue working from the office at least one day per week is still there. This seems to be in an agreement, when the participants asked on their opinion for a full-time basis work from home option. As appears, employees do not wish to work only from their home. They want to have the availability to choose whether to work from home or at the office.

In parallel, a survey happened in UK in 2021 showed the following results. There's a mixed reaction to the future of work from home in the UK in 2021 - but a trend is emerging for "hybrid working", where employees are keen to split their work between home and the office. Jack, S. 2020, from BBC news said that, 50 of the biggest UK employers have said that, they have no plans to return all staff to the office full-time in the near future (Jack 2020). 21% of applicants did not wish to work from home in 2022. 19% of respondents want to work from home 5 days a week in 2022 (Mizen, P. Taneja, S., Bloom, N., 2021). Participants over the age of 55 are the most likely to want to work from home permanently, whilst participants between 16-24 year olds prefer to work from office full-time. 85% of employees currently working from home, want a 'hybrid' approach of both home and office working in future.

It appears that employees have a clear preference to the hybrid system of work. In this way, it helps employees retain their jobs, without making them think of searching for new jobs, offering the work from home benefit (Williamson *et al* 2022: 6). An IT services company's study showed that, by the year 2025, only one-fourth of their employees will be working from the office (Mehta 2021: 2).

Another research made from PwC in 2021, showed that 45% of workers seems a preference to the work from home model, while only 10% favouring to the 'traditional' work environment (Williamson *et al* 2022: 3).

On a survey conducted in New South Wales state in Australia (2020), it seems that a preference is made for a hybrid system of work by working 2-3 days per week from home (Williamson *et al* 2022: 3).

Pursuant to Liu, J., 2022 and the findings from Pew Research Centre (January 2022, 5, 889 participants), 61% of people are working from home and they are doing so because they

want to, even though their office is open, and even though they less concerned about COVID risks. While 38% say their office is closed. It's a reversal from October 2020, when 64% of employees were working from home because their office was closed, and 36% were doing so out of preference (Liu 2022).

Based on the Ivanti survey (4,510 office workers, and 1,609 IT professionals across the United States, UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, and Australia), found that early 9 out of 10 (87%) survey respondents do not want to work from the office full-time. Nearly half (45%) would be happy to never step foot in an office again, while 42% indicated that they prefer a hybrid model that splits time between home and office. One shocking percentage of 71% stated that they would choose to be able to work from anywhere over a job promotion or compensation increase (Brandley 2022).

Generally, main reasons of the need of work from home based on a survey conducted back in 2020 in Australia including *saving money* (40%), *less time commuting* (48%), a more *flexible schedule* (43%), and *better work-life balance* (43%) (Williamson *et al* 2022: 5).

5.1.2. Work & Personal Life

Considering now the results found on whether *personal life is being affected positively while working from home*, there was an agreement with this statement of 61% (or strongly agree: 27%, agree: 34%). Apparently, the work from home option helps a lot of workers to be able to balance their personal life along with their work life, and being able to manage a personal life during the work day, without the hassle of having to get permission or explain their activities to others. It also helps to spend “equal time or priority to personal and professional activities” (Thomas 2022).

Based on a survey conducted at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), 78% of those who worked from home in hybrid model stated that, working from home gave them the opportunity to improve their personal life as well as their work life. 47% of workers recorded improved well-being from working from home in some capacity (Choudhury 2020). Other reason that work-life balance actually works is that, some employees said that being closer to their families improved their overall happiness (Choudhury 2020).

On the other hand, work from home could lead to work more hours comparing while employees that are working at the office. Based on the survey conducted, it seems that the majority of the responses agreed with the statement of working more hours while working from home (64%). Neutral respondents have 23% and a small amount of respondents disagree with this statement (13%).

Therefore, the work-life balance, is tricky sometimes, and employees have to control and manage their work time and their personal time.

Along with the above-mentioned, another important statement to be considered is whether employees are ***feeling relaxed and motivated while working from home***. Here, there is an agreement of 51%, following by a neutral statement of 35% - this could mean that this percentage of people are feeling the same while working from home or from the office. A survey held back in May 2020 in TATA consultancy services in India, found that work from home increased satisfaction to the employees. While two thirds of respondents with a percentage of around 65%, believed that work from home improved work-life balance (Mehta 2021: 2).

According to a report in 2021, by the State of Remote Work Report from Owl Lads, it appeared that the 90% of the 2,050 full-time remote employees surveyed said that, they were as ***productive or more productive working remotely***, compared to when they toiled in the office. Another 74% of workers after the pandemic said that, work from home is ***better for their mental health*** (Robinson 2022).

It seems quite impressive the fact, that work from home is being considered as part of the ***benefits that a company/organisation can provide to its employees***. Although the majority keep a neutral opinion on this statement (36%), the general agreement of almost 40% (39% to be exact) of the respondents gives organizations/companies food for thought to add work from home as a benefit to attract more and more employees. Another important fact is that 15% specifically were strongly agree with this statement, meaning that this kind of employees will not possibly considered any job opportunity without work from home option available.

Ragu Bhargava, CEO at Global Upside, agrees with the latest research that workers will

continue to quit in high numbers, if companies do not evolve with the needs and wants of their workers. He also states that the ones who still view work from home as a temporary solution instead of a complete transformation in how the companies should work and continue the “old way of doing things”—risk losing staff and no longer being competitive as the workplace evolves around them (Robinson 2022).

Based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 24 million American employees quit their jobs during the period April - September 2021. With the entrance of the new year in January, 2022 Human Workplace Index insists the decisions employers make, will be critical to their team, and around 82% of employees are feeling more motivated and secured to hold their managers accountable for a better workplace. Over half (56%) said that, they would only wait 30 to 60 days for employers to make needed changes before they consider leaving (Robinson 2022).

Many respondents to the survey held back in 2021 by PwC, indicated that the employees were likely to leave their organisation if required to move back on-site, with 52% of employees preferring a flexible work from home model. Another important fact, is that there is a strong preference for remote work model from those with caring responsibilities (Williamson *et al* 2022: 3). From a survey conducted in 2021, with 2100 employees, appears that they will look for a new job, if they are not able to continue working from home, specifying that work options are really significant factor in evaluating any new job (Williamson *et al* 2022: 3).

Pursuant to The Prosperity Project's Canadian Household Perspectives research in 2022, 50% of the Canadian women stated that they would rather quit their jobs than return back to the office full time (Bjornson 2023).

After the pandemic, a significant number of employees globally have changed and individuals are increasingly being asked to work from home. With many companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Fujitsu announcing plans to make remote work a permanent option even after the pandemic, the future of working life seems to be, to a great extent, remote. This move is slowly transforming both the standard week and the workday (09:00-17:00), with work and personal life mixing up. However, meaningful work done remotely is challenging as less opportunities exist for important prerequisites of meaningful work, such

as building interpersonal relationships and developing connectedness (Magrizos *et al* 2022: 1-2).

It seems that this work method is actually working. From employers' side, is reducing or eliminating real estate and other costs, hiring talented employees globally, while mitigating immigration issues, gaining productivity. From employees' perspective, they are getting flexibility, eliminating commutes and reporting better work/life balance (Choudhury 2020). However, this working method brings some concerns like communication affection, socialization, brainstorming and problem-solving, and maybe performance evaluation and compensation (Choudhury 2020).

Based on the survey results of the Cyprus Master's dissertation study, seems that **communication** might not be a concern, while specifically the percentage of 40% of the respondents that agree and a 16% are strongly agree that communication with colleagues remain the same while employees are working from home. Then, a smaller quantity of responses disagrees 24% and even smaller quantity of responses strongly disagree (2%). Neutral responses received the percentage of 18%.

It is impressive that 49% of the respondents are in agreement and of those that are strongly agree (19%), in a total of **receiving the same support from colleagues/managers** while working from home.

5.1.3. Performance of employees while working from home

When participants have been asked whether their **work-performance is better while working from home**, the general majority of the respondents was a total of 50% (strongly agree: 18%, agree: 32%). While a 38% of the respondents are neither agree nor disagree, a smaller percentage did not agree (12% or strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 10%). It seems that both working ways (either at the office or from home) can offer same or even better results (since 50% of respondents were positive that their general performance is better while working from home).

Going back, in 2015, a study showed that when employees are working from home, their productivity increased by 13%. At the same survey, when nine months later, the same employees were given the chance to choose between working from home or returning to

the office, the ones that continuing working from home, saw even further improvements by 22% more productive than they had been before the experiment (Choudhury 2020).

Employees are more concentrated while working from home, based on the survey conducted. Impressively, the majority agree with this statement (61%). Neutral responses occur the 27% and a small amount disagree with this statement (11%). Since employees are more concentrated, their productivity will increase resulting in providing better results for their employers/company.

Also, employees are keeping a neutral opinion, on which they may be distracted by their colleagues while working at the office. They are keeping a **neutral opinion on this statement (33.8%)**, Following by a disagreement (32%). Then, a smaller amount of respondents was on an agreement with this statement (34%). It is important to consider that employees that agreed on this statement as well have a neutral opinion, could be benefited by the work from home option.

On a question of whether ***qualifications/skills can be demonstrated while working from home***, most respondents agree with that statement 77% (strongly agree: 29%, agree: 48%). Others remained neutral (17%) and a few of them was in a disagreement (6%). This shows, the belief from the educated people that they can demonstrate their skills whilst working at home and not been at the same place with their employer, which makes sense given that the respondents job is mainly process data through a computer. The results could have been different if there were respondents from other industries that require more physical interaction such as the construction industry.

Furthermore, those with jobs involving intensively routine and manual tasks requiring low or mid-levels of skill were not able to work remotely. As a result, they were more likely to face income and possibly job losses. In most cases, their jobs require them to be present at a specific location or interact with clients and/or co-workers in person. Another consideration is the employees in temporary jobs, who are less likely to have jobs that can be performed from home (Sanchez *et al* 2021: 70).

On a question asking the participants whether their ***job is sufficiently accomplished through a work from home model***, most of the respondents replied that are able to work

from home sufficiently (83%) (or strongly agree: 49%, agree: 34%). 14% of the respondents have a neutral opinion. While only 3% of the respondents disagree with the above statement. This is impressive as well, since it keeps more organizations/companies to introduce the work from home model, without having the fear of whether employees can accomplish their job duties.

The future of work, as with all things related to business and especially technology, there are two major factors to consider: One is the performance and productivity, and the other is security. Employees need both (Brandley 2022).

A survey in Indonesia conducted, receiving feedback from 482 employees, showed that participants felt satisfied while working from home and had relatively high self-reported productivities despite the potential barriers during this pandemic. (Purwandini *et al* 2022: 23).

Pandemic flipped everything of the idea of hybrid and remote working. Organizations have found that employees can work remotely, and they can be pretty efficient working remotely (Shaner 2022).

Apparently, work from home can help improve productivity, performance, demonstrate qualifications/skills of the employees and employees are able to work in a sufficient way to accomplish their job duties/responsibilities.

In regards to the question whether employees can ***accept lower salary if the company offer work from home more than 2 days per week***, there was a disagreement of 78% (strongly disagree: 43%, disagree: 35%). The neutral responses were 14%. And a smaller amount of agreement 8% (agree: 7%, strongly agree: 1%).

It is quite important though, that even this small percentage of participants, by offering work from home option, can affect their salary expectations (considering salary as one of the main reasons to work). For instance, a business can save a lot of money from payroll if roughly 10% of their employees are willing to get paid less if they work 3 days from home. For those that they reply with a neutral response, again, it seems that, they might consider accept a job position which offering work from home and lowering salary expectations. Work from

home became a really strong factor to be considered.

On a report in 2021 by the State of Remote Work Report from Owl Lads, it appears that 84% reported that working remotely after the pandemic would make them happier, with many even willing to take a pay cut (Robinson 2022).

Based on different surveys examined, seems that more and more organizations are increasingly promoting work from home model to enable employees to integrate work and home roles. Important to note that, some studies showed that employees are willing to accept a lower salary in exchange for the convenience of working remotely (Mehta 2021: 2). In reference to the **work - life balance** statement and whether this **have been improved** through work from home model, a significant amount of respondents was in agreement with this statement (56%) (agree: 34%, strongly agree: 22%). Some respondents were neutral (29%) and a smaller quantity was in disagreement 15% (strongly disagree: 2%, disagree: 13%). It is of vital essence that employees believe that their work-life balance is been improved through work from home method, since both personal and work life are two important factors in peoples' lives and both should be treated as much as possible in an equal way.

Avoiding traffic is a huge issue for employees/employers especially in Cyprus and a huge benefit of working from home. There was an agreement on this statement (85%). A quite small quantity of respondents was in disagreement (7%), while a few respondents remain neutral (7%). Minimizing the time that can be saved while driving to and from the office, it could be spent while getting more sleep, be more relaxed, go to the gym, spend time with the family, and many other numerous ways.

Ragu said that *"The pandemic revolutionized the workplace and expedited an already growing need for remote workers. The pandemic served as a massive wake-up call, teaching us not only that work was more than capable of being completed from home, but showing the need for flexibility for employees to take control of their own schedules—a necessity for those with long commutes, pricey childcare arrangements and those who simply wanted to spend more time with their families."* (Robinson 2022). Remote employees report better work-life balance, and more productivity, because they have been relocated away from their jobs (Liu 2022).

5.1.4. Flexibility of working from home

When participants have been asked if they are *working flexible hours while working from home*, most of the respondents agreed with this statement (61%) (or strongly agree: 18%, agree: 43%). Others remained neutral with this statement (16%). A smaller amount of respondents replied negatively (23%) (or strongly disagree: 4%, disagree: 19%).

It seems that more and more employees are looking for flexible working environments. Recent studies showed that 91% of survey respondents enjoyed working remotely, with *flexibility listed as the biggest benefit* (Buffer's 2023 State of Remote Work survey). Another survey in 2022, McKinsey, surveyed 25,000 employees, and it showed that flexible working environments is the third reason why people search for new jobs (better pay/hours and career opportunities are the others). Remote work is such a large priority for workers that 87% of the respondents said that when offered the chance to work remotely, they would take it (Hamingson 2023).

It is not weird that lots of famous companies, have work from home options available to their employees. Some of them include, *Microsoft* – global information technology company, offers flexible working schedules, *Johnson & Johnson* (health care organisation) offering remote work to its employees, *Dell Technologies* (multinational company) offering flexible and remote work options, and lots of other companies like, *Baker Tilly*, *FexEx Services*, *KPMG*, *PwC*, *Visa*, *Philips*, *NBCUniversal* (Eads 2023).

However, providing flexible working hours may be overworking to its employees. In '*Working from Home and Worker Wellbeing: New Evidence from Germany*', in the Industrial and Labour Relations ('ILR') Review, Yang and her co-authors focus on the distinction between working from home during regular work hours – which they refer to, as working from home outside of regular hours, might result to an extension of work from home.

Are all-remote or majority-remote organizations the future of knowledge work? Is *work from anywhere* here to stay? (Choudhury 2020). While traditional work from home programs offer the worker temporal flexibility, work from anywhere programs offer both temporal and geographic flexibility. This transition resulted in a 4.4% increase in output without affecting the incidence of rework (Choudhury *et al* 2020: 655).

Microsoft in 2021 has drawn their own conclusions from the research, claiming that *'flexible work is here to stay'*. The data is clear: extreme flexibility and hybrid work will define the post-pandemic workplace (Gulliksen *et al* 2022: 3).

It is an agreement that most of the respondents they ***do miss socializing with their colleagues while working from home*** (67%), (strongly agree: 31%, agree: 36%). Neutral responses took a 26% while disagreement took a smaller percentage (7%), (strongly disagree: 1%, disagree: 6%).

On a survey held in 2022 in the United States, collecting feedback from 5,889 employees, 60% of remote employees found out that they feel less connected to their colleagues (Liu 2022).

With that said, comparing the above-mentioned two arguments, Parker says *'when you look at the fact that a vast majority want to continue working from home in the future, you can see people are making trade-offs in their minds and are seeing flexibility as more valuable than co-worker connection'* (Liu 2022).

5.1.5. Mutually beneficial relationship between employees-employers

What is happening in cases where organizations are not willing to introduce the work from home option, because they are afraid of 'not be able to control' their employees?

Some employees said that they returned to the offices because they **feel worried about losing work opportunities** while at home (14%) and **feeling pressured to from their bosses or colleagues** (9%) (Liu 2022).



Figure 30 (O'Rourke 2021: 565)

A mutually beneficial relationship should be developed (Figure 30) between the employer and its employees, which employees' performance will be based on trust, time flexibility, well-being accountability and freedom of choice, allowing employees to work from where, when and how they are the most productive and comfortable with.

An important finding on the survey conducted in Indonesia in 2022, is that younger and older employees reported the same job satisfaction and work performance levels. A possible consideration of this finding is that virtual working characteristics, such as flexibility and job autonomy, were not seen in a different way by various demographic groups since the remote work at the moment is not voluntary, ignoring of how appropriate the occupation for the remote work is. Being married did not seem to have any influence on telework outcomes. Whereas, working from home and taking care of their children, was found to be significant on work performance, between the difficulties in managing work-family balance (Purwandini *et al* 2022: 23-24).

Having a work from home mode can also help businesses save money by removing the need of paying a lot of money for expensive offices whilst allowing employees to generate a more flexible schedule and at the same time work from their own home. It can be a win-win situation (Hamingson 2023).

For work from home option to actually work in practice, and for more organizations to adapt

this method of working, it is important to measure the quality and quantity of work. Trust is an important component of remote work (and work more generally). It is developed mutually over time as a product of the way that work processes are designed (e.g. how they respect worker autonomy) (Gould *et al* 2023).

Instead of fighting the change, companies should try and improve their work from home model. If the organisations are worried about their productivity and performance due to the ability of the employees to work from home, Lambert proposes the generation of a key performance indicators ('KPIs') for both managers and employees. If the right KPIs are in place, the remote team members are aware of employees' expectations, and their performance can be easily reviewed. It's just like traditional in-office work, but from a distance (Hamingson 2023).

It is more likely that businesses which have adapted well the work from home system, will continue to employ this format in the future. It seems that, remote work will be the future workplace. Studies showed that employees feel more engaged with their work because work from home affords them autonomy, safety, and convenience due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this work engagement leads to happiness (Mehta 2021: 9).

Most respondents have been ***easily adapted to work from home model*** (87%), (strongly agree: 48%, agree: 39%). A 10% of the respondents have neutral opinion. Only 3% were not be able to easily adapted by the work from home model (disagree: 2%, strongly disagree: 1%). Considering the results, it is impressive the fact that although throughout the years, employees were working from the office regularly, and suddenly with the adaption to the work from home model was quite easy for them. A reason for that could be that this change/opportunity might be needed to their lives. They wanted this change, without even knew it yet.

Returning back to office work, it would not be easy. More and more people are getting use to the idea of working from home, make new routines with their partners or family, and the idea of getting back, may need to provide the employees with psychological support, to be transported easily to this new routine again (Orbach 2022). Also, the idea of returning back to office work, it will not be the same and most of employees will not be willing to accept that, and most probably they will be start looking for jobs offering work from home options.

Generally speaking, with many worldwide companies (*Apple, Google*) providing the remote work as an option, it would be much harder for a company (not offering work from home option) to approach new applicants (Shaner 2022).

In reference to whether ***employers provide employees with the adequate equipment to be able to work from home***, there was an important agreement with this statement (84%), (strongly agree: 46%, agree: 38%). While it follows by a smaller amount of neutral responses (10%) and a disagreement of 6%. This is quite positive; it seems that employers trust their employees to use the tools provided by the company at their own houses.

However, it should be considered what is happening in organizations where they want to introduce the work from home model, however they are not able to. Once the measures of the lockdown were in place, employees in developed countries with high levels containing jobs of non-routine analytical and interpersonal tasks could make arrangements to work from home and thereby to keep their jobs. Their jobs can be carried out almost anywhere, if there is a reliable internet access. This is the case even for people with managerial responsibilities that require intensive interpersonal interactions, since most of their tasks can be carried out via online communication (Sanchez *et al* 2021: 70).

Provide the teleworkers with company equipment that employers can control and that can only be used for work. After all, employers are used to provide employees with the same equipment at the office. Employers need to just allow them to take that equipment home (Moschovitis 2021: 344).

There is no going back. Organizations need to accept that, so they can ensure they have the right tools in place to manage and secure it effectively (Brandley 2022). In order for remote work to actually work, and employers need to trust their employees, they first need some face-to-face interactions or even online meetings. As soon as employer trust its employees, then employees can feel trusted and flexible to schedule their work schedule based on their personal responsibilities as well. For instance, someone who wants to put their kids on the bus every morning might get up early, do some work for a while and then have that breakfast time with their kids and the pre-school time, get them off to school, then start working again. Or they might stop working at 3 when the kids get home from school and then pick work

back up between 8 and 10 that night because that really works for them, and they're catching up on all their emails that came in during that time and setting things up for people to start on the next day (Shaner 2022).

But in order for this to happen, a baseline of trust is required. And that, would be one of the hardest part to establish if there is no face-to-face time or at least some structured online time where the employees are developing that relationship based on honest and transparent about what their needs are and how things can work (Shaner 2022).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Some people believe that working from home is here to stay whilst others argue that it is just a temporary fashionable solution which will eventually stop. According to the findings of this Master's dissertation study, working from home is efficient and if used correctly, it can benefit both the employees and the employers. The nature of the business as well as the employees should be examined before it is implemented, in order to assess how it will be implemented. Hybrid system, seems to be the ideal for all employees according to the questionnaire conducted (Cyprus case) in order to give to the employees the option to choose where (work from home or at the office) and when to work (flexible working hours).

The future of work seems to be the work from home model and it makes sense since, employees want it more and more and in some cases they are prepared to get paid lower salaries for it, according to this survey's questionnaire (Cyprus case). Since March 2020, especially in Cyprus more and more companies, even the ones who traditionally were operating with check in/out cards for their employees and used to have their employees working from many hours' overtime, are starting to adopt a hybrid work from home model as their permanent model of work.

At this point, it has to be clarified that this study has its drawbacks. Therefore, it cannot represent the whole population of Cyprus since, the sample of the respondents did not characterise everyone. This is because, there are people with different demographic characteristics such as ages, gender, income and education who were not interviewed. Furthermore, in reference to the job's occupations, people who are working in specific industries such as construction industry or delivery industry were not participated in this survey, and if they were, then maybe the outcome of this survey could have been different. There is a need for another study to be conducted in order to cover more industries and demographic characteristics regarding the working from home model.

Also this new survey can include the comparison of people with and without parenting obligations. It is important to understand and 'categorise' in this way, whether people that are having childcare are willing and being in preference to work from home in order to be able to spend more time with their family.

In addition, a consideration for a new survey would be to compare each gender's preferences, to have a clearer picture of who needs work from home more. Some studies, are examining the fact that women are more willing to work from home than men. And this appears to bring discrimination issues, since women 'should' take care of their family, children, house, etc.

Furthermore, age differences might be an important factor to consider as well. The vast majority of the respondents (55%) in this survey were between the ages 25 – 34 for example. If a research can be conducted and the majority of people could be older than 50 years old, the results could be different. For instance, it could show that people working more than 30 years, to finally be able to work from home, be more relaxed and enjoy working peacefully or the opposite, as they could be reluctant of change. On the other hand, young persons, just finishing their studies, ready to get a job and start knowing and communicating with other colleagues, making new friendships and partnerships, work from home might not be the best option for them to start with. Missing face-to-face interconnections, miss-socializing in their young age, could make them feel isolated.

However, in addition to the above, this new study could consider whether this new generation, starting their first jobs, could be easily be trained remotely, and can gain the same knowledge and experience that is required to grow up on their occupation. A study could compare young people starting their jobs while working from home and on the other hand, persons that working on site.

Now, based on this Master dissertation's survey, the findings suggest that providing good working conditions and addressing work from home challenges may lead to higher job satisfaction and improved performance. This exercise provides an opportunity for companies to assess what worked and what did not work as well as, the ways that working from home could be best managed to benefit both workers and organizations (Purwandini *et al* 2022: 24).

Working from home is subject to learning-by-doing (Jones *et al*, 2021: 5189). Apparently, the ideal as per the results founded, would be for organizations to introduce hybrid system, by giving employees the option to choose when and where to work, providing flexibility and balancing as much as possible their personal and work life.

What the future brings - Whilst the format of the remote work may continue to improve, this **flexible business model** is here to stay. The transition to “control” remote employees might be scary, but with the right technology and willing employees, it can be a smooth procedure. In the long run, since many employees now expect remote work opportunities, it’s important to embrace workplace innovation (Hamingson, N., 2023).

In addition to the above, especially in our days, some businesses are starting to promote the **work from anywhere** model, which encourages the employees to work from anywhere they want and feel more comfortable. Please note that another survey should be conducted regarding this, because this questionnaire does not cover this relatively new and riskier way of working.

According to Robinson, B., it seems that work from home is here to stay based on his article in 2022, 25% of all professional jobs in North America will be remote by the end of 2022, and **remote opportunities will continue to increase** through 2023. Remote opportunities leapt from under 4% of all high paying jobs before the pandemic started, to about 9% at the end of 2020, and to more than 15% by 2022. As CEO Marc Cenedella from Ladders said, it’s the largest societal change in America since the end of World War II (Robinson, B., 2022).

The best solution for the companies in order to better adopt in this new technological era, is to plan an increased teleworking society, since the benefits are too many too be ignored, by carefully planning and understanding the limits between personal and professional boundaries. This way, both employees and employers will be kept protected and benefited. Last but not least, like most new things that implemented so forceful in such small amount of time to the world, it will be loved by some and maybe hated by others, however the reality is as James Baldwin well said: “The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you can alter, even by a millimetre, the way people look at reality, then you can change the world” (Moschovitis 2021: 356).

Appendices

Survey's questionnaire

A.1. Questionnaire

Working From Home - Questionnaire

This questionnaire is carried out as part of my Thesis' research for my Master degree in Business Administration (MBA) at the Open University of Cyprus. The subject of the Thesis is to evaluate the work from home experience as the new norm in our lives.

If you are currently working from home, I would sincerely appreciate your participation in completing the following questionnaire. It would take 3 minutes of your time to complete it. Your responses are voluntary, anonymous, will remain confidential and will be solely used for academic purposes.

Thanking you in advance for your help.

Marianna Iosif

1. Gender *

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. Age *

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64

3. Do you have children? *

- Yes
- No

4. Education *

- High School
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Master's Degree
 - PhD or higher
 - Other
-

5. Years of working experience *

- 0-1
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21+

6. Work Area *

- Government
 - Private Company
 - Semi – Government organization
 - Self-employed
 - Other
-

7. Firm/Office/Company you work at: *

- Bank/Financial Institution
- Retail
- IT/Technology
- Consulting
- Sales/Marketing
- Other

8. How many days do you work from home during the week? *

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5

9. Does your employer have a written Working from home policy? *

- Yes
- No
- Only Verbal



10. Please state the level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements. *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have been easily adapted to the working from home (WFH) model.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My job is sufficiently accomplished using WFH model.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I prefer to work from home full time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I prefer to work in a hybrid system (flexibility to either work from home or on-site).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. I can demonstrate my qualifications /skills while WFH.

6. I am working flexible hours while WFH.

7. Work from home affects positively my personal life.

8. My work-performance is better while I am WFH.

9. I am working more hours while WFH.

10. I am better concentrated while WFH.

11. Communication with my colleagues remains the same while WFH (using calls, video calls and emails).

12. I receive the same support from my colleagues/managers while I am WFH.

13. I miss socializing with my colleagues while WFH.

14. I prefer WFH, so I will not be distracted by my colleagues.

15. I prefer WFH to avoid traffic.

16. I feel more relaxed and motivated while WFH.

17. WFH improved my work – life balance.

18. My employer provides me with all necessary equipment or remote tools to be able to work from home.

19. I could accept a lower salary if the company offers work from home (two or more days per week).

20. I would never consider another job opportunity without offering a work from home benefit.

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Last Page

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