

## **EFFECTS OF WORK FROM HOME ON EMPLOYEES DURING COVID – 19 PANDEMIC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of ‘Work From Home’ (WFH) is hinged on the notion that employees are permitted to perform their job responsibilities from the confines of their homes or any other remote location convenient to the employee. Whilst the WFH existed prior to Covid-19 pandemic, more companies found it reliable for the sustenance of their business as the need for continuous economic activities became apparent despite the restriction of movement caused by the need to limit the spread of the virus. However, the adoption of WFH has thrown further concerns on the need to align the interest of parties to employment contracts particularly in a bid to protect employees from possible adverse effect of continuously working from home.

This study therefore investigates the general and specific effects of the Work From Home arrangement from the employee perspectives using an empirical methodology. With the use of questionnaires, relevant information were retrieved from 265 respondents in respect of whether the respondent would like WFH to continue and whether the said WFH has so far had an adverse effect on the respondents. The study found that more employees consider WFH convenient and would like it to continue. The study equally confirmed that the productivity of a company is not limited by WFH, but that more employees are experiencing adverse effects as a result of continuous WFH. As recommended by this study, more policy changes would be required to align the interest of the employers with that of the employees.

**Keywords:** Work From Home, Remote Work, COVID19, WFH, Work, Employees, Effects

## INTRODUCTION

### *Background to the study*

The traditional work environment is one where employees report to their employers on each workday at specified locations and at agreed times<sup>i</sup>. In addition, the employer was responsible for provision of work, conducive work environment, employee health and safety as well as other operating expenses related to working at the specified locations<sup>ii</sup>. The daily real time interactions afforded by the physical presence of the employee also provides a clear avenue to measure efforts as well as results<sup>iii</sup>. This work model was however disrupted for many employers and employees on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 when the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Coronavirus (“COVID-19”) a global pandemic<sup>iv</sup>.

To survive, employers of labor had to take critical look at their cost profiles and adopt new ways of delivering their services after the pandemic led to restriction of movement within several countries. The measures adopted in Nigeria, included reduction in their staff counts, which resulted in an increase in unemployment rate from about 23% in 2018 and estimated to reach about 30% by the end of 2020 as identified by Price Waterhouse Coopers<sup>v</sup>. Another measure was the switch requiring a good number of the retained employees to work from home and attending several online meetings, a practice now referred to as “the new normal”.

Employees on the other hand, have had to adopt the new working conditions to maintain their own safety of physical health on one hand and in terms of job security on the other. Aside the obvious operating costs that the work from home model shifts to the employees, the model also forces new risks and challenges on such employees that span across physical health, mental and emotional health as well as relationships with family and loved ones<sup>vi</sup>.

Whilst the covid-19 scare is far from over, most countries have now eased lockdowns and Covid-19 vaccines are now being made available to mitigate the spread of the disease. Nonetheless, the business world continues to harp on the new normal as the work model going forward indicating their lack of preference or faith in the sustainability of the traditional working culture. This traditional working culture delineates the roles and responsibilities of

employers and employees and is supported by the existing legal framework that protected the employees including the Labour Act<sup>vii</sup>, Trade Union Act<sup>viii</sup>, Employee Compensation Act<sup>ix</sup> and the National Industrial Court Act<sup>x</sup>.

The proposed change in work cultures to the new normal can change the interpretation of the roles and responsibilities of employers and employees as currently defined in applicable laws and given the balance of power in the negotiation process and the fear of unemployment, the voice of the Nigerian worker may be unheard as the society makes the change to the new normal whereas lack of recognition has been shown as a factor that limits employee productivity<sup>xi</sup>. Although the new normal holds significant promise of economic growth, there is a need to fully recognize its likely impacts on employees if the full benefits of the new normal are to accrue to the economy.

There is also the part that employers may not necessarily have thought through the effect of work from home on the confidentiality of official communications and trade secrets, which presumably can pose a serious negative issue on the employers' brands and policies. The new normal working culture, as currently being touted, has the tendency to blur the assignment of roles as intended by current legislation which can have the effect of making the laws ineffective in protecting workers as initially intended. With the imminent change in general work behaviour and patterns, there is a need to ascertain areas where the employees may be adversely affected and whether employees would prefer to continue working from home notwithstanding any adverse effect. This study will focus on the effects of the switch to working from home on Nigerian employees and whether employees prefer this to be the new work culture going forward. Thus the aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of change in work culture occasioned by Covid - 19 on employment contracts and to assess whether working from home is beneficial to employees. Specifically, the study will:

- i. Evaluate whether employees want remote work to continue in Nigeria
- ii. Identify whether remote working has had an adverse effect on employees in Nigeria

Following the above, the study will address the above objectives empirically by adopting the following hypothesis:

- i. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Employees want the work from home programme to continue  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Employees do not want the work from home programme to continue
- ii. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Covid 19 work from home has not had an adverse effect on employees

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Covid 19 work from home has had an adverse effect on employees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***An Overview of Work From Home***

The use of Information and Telecommunications Technology (ICT) in the work space has increased over the years owing to the increased production of smart phones, tablets and the existence of the internet. The increased use of smart devices in the work place also encouraged telecommuting/Work From Home which according to Messenger and Gschwind was promoted by California based companies particularly Yahoo far back as the 1980.<sup>xii</sup> This exposes the fact that remote work has been around for many years<sup>xiii</sup> although the magnitude of use of remote hearing by companies may have increased with time. A review of literature confirms the existence of remote work in the 70s and the 80s just as Blount had asserted.<sup>xiv</sup> However, the structure of such remote work as expected develops as technology evolves. Remote work was earlier reflected as a decentralized work place<sup>xv</sup> or an ‘organisational work performed outside the normal organisational confines of space and time’.<sup>xvi</sup> With the impact of technology, the definition of remote work began to take a different shape with DeSanctis expressing that telecommuting is ‘working at home with the aid of telecommunication systems’.<sup>xvii</sup> Notwithstanding the above understanding about remote work/Work From Home, it needs to be emphasized that remote work may not necessarily have eliminated the traditional work space but compliments the existing traditional work structures. However, the restriction in mobility in a bid to limit the spread of the Covid -19 prompted many organisations to re-awaken the remote work to sooth modern day reality during the pandemic. It is this shift in economic activities which led to Work from Home (WFH) that Fraja, Matheson and Rockey<sup>xviii</sup>, referred to as Zoomshock, Work from Home (WFH), remote work, telework or telecommuting etc.

### ***Work From Home and Productivity***

The traditional office presents a situation whereby the employer can monitor the work of employee and appraise how much effort the employee has put in to deliver on the key performance indicators. With the WFH, organizations were more worried about employee productivity and ensuring that employees do not take WFH as a working holiday. How would an organization appraise the responsibilities of employees without the capacity to imagine the

total outlook of the employees? This leaves the organization with no other way than to assess strictly results clearly seen in terms of numbers. This framework comes at the detriment of the non-profit making staff who could easily pass of as doing nothing from home if care is not taken. Notwithstanding, remote work is adjudged by Bloom, Liang, Roberts and Ying to have the capacity to improve productivity especially as more employees would travel to work less and have less sick days application.<sup>xix</sup> Company Productivity may also be influenced by the amount of cost savings as a result of the adoption of WFH. WFH further presents a situation where the employee is responsible for the workspace and expends certain sums to give comfort to the work. Cost of rent is an integral part of personal space especially as the WFH can only be carried out effectively if the employee has a decent accommodation. In some cases, WFH would require purchase of office supplies such as internet data, telephone air time, printing paper, pens etc. In the United Kingdom, these costs have been estimated to average about £70 per month<sup>xx</sup>. Naturally, the provision of these supplies would vary from organization to organization. In a traditional office, office supplies would typically have been provided by the employer. There is therefore the question as to whether the shift to WFH represents a major change requiring re-negotiation of existing labour contracts.

### ***Adverse Effects of Work From Home***

Now with WFH, workers have become more flexible as typical driving and traffic time can easily be converted into productive use for the organization. An average employee in Nigeria for instance experiences traffic congestion daily between the hours of 6:00am – 9:30am and 4:30pm – 9:00pm as expressed by Bailey and Aliu<sup>xxi</sup> and this can be provoking and stressful. This is asides the culture of few employees waking up early to beat the traffic. It would appear that employees who decry traffic stress are more likely to vote for WFH.

Another important aspect of the traditional work setting is the observance of break time and the traditional closing time which are minimum stipulations by the Labour Act<sup>xxii</sup>. Closing time is a normal part of work life especially as the office is not an extension of the home where the employee is expected to pass the night. With WFH, new vista of arguments around how the observance of break or closing time would compare with traditional office arises. The responsibility to ensure close of work or observance of break time falls squarely on the employee but is it truly the case that these are observed by employees while working from



home? Certainly, WFH has opened vista of work practices probably not within the contemplation of the Labour laws which this study is set out to test.

With WFH, there are noticeable changes in the style and way of life of employees including sleeping and eating habits, it is unclear to what extent those habits may be detrimental to the health of the employee. What one could presume is that an employee working remotely would be at liberty to plan the totality of time available to include exercise time, family time, leisure time, work time etc. Evidently, planning personal life while working from home would largely depend on the pressure from the organization. With high work targets and the need to deliver, employees can deploy time normally apportioned to other personal events for office work. This can cause stress not envisaged by the employer to the employee. WFH, has the capacity to increase stress on weekdays, weekends and holidays as identified by Song and Gao<sup>xxiii</sup> and that the only positive effect of remote work is the reduction of tiredness of week days. Employees would certainly react to stress differently and one of the negative impact of WFH as noted by Giovanis & Ozdamar<sup>xxiv</sup> is the fact that WFH has a negative impact on mental well-being. Equally, compared to the traditional office, WFH meant that the employees would be responsible for their personal space, which would have ordinarily been the responsibility of the employer. Noting particularly, the reward for land is rent, there are more interesting questions around the whether the use of the employees' personal space should impact certain concession in form of a monetary allowance.

The new normal now requires long hours of stay with the computer system and on many occasions extending beyond the regular work hours. On a number of occasions, employees may find themselves responding to tasks via emails, in the middle of the night. Work days have virtually become everyday affairs as deadlines are the new emphasis.

On the part of the employer, confidentiality of official communication is key. How will the WFH arrangement instill the discipline of confidentiality amongst employees? This is even more so as official communication now occur within the personal space of employees. Personal space comes in different sizes; small, large, medium just as the employee may due to his current resources share home space with a number of friends and family.

## METHODOLOGY

This study examines whether Covid 19 work from home had an adverse effect on employees. Whilst noting that there might be possible impacts of WFH on the employer, the satisfaction of the employees with WFH has a huge role to play in the workability of the WFH process. The nature of the methodology adopted is empirical. To collect primary data of employees specifically working from home, the specific criterion of the enumerator had to be respondents who were in employment and had cause to be working from home. This study therefore adopted a purposive self-selection sampling/ non-probability sampling technique. This technique allowed respondents to self-nominate themselves to respond to the questionnaire even though everyone with internet access were invited to participate. The questionnaire was created through the Google Forms Application and circulated through the mail/online and social media platform. This was done between February 14, 2021, and February 26, 2021. This use of the online platform/ mailing systems of circulating questionnaires is apt in this circumstance since the targeted respondents were supposed to be employees who are/were/ or had been working from home during/after the Covid Lockdown and therefore have access to online facilities. The questionnaire had 44 questions including consent of the respondent to participate. No question was asked about the name, nationality, or residence of the respondents to preserve confidentiality of responses. A total of 284 people responded to the questionnaire.

## DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND FINDING

This section summarizes the results of the findings based on the responses to the questionnaire administered. This section begins with the description of the nature of respondents and also deals with whether or not the respondents have experienced working from home. After establishing the experience of the respondents with WFH, the section progresses to test the hypotheses based on the opinions of the respondents.

### *Description of The Respondents*

There were a total of 284 respondents to the questionnaire. Of this number a total of 281 respondents identified their gender. About 51% of the respondents to the gender question were male while about 49% were female. This confirms that the respondents sample was not gender

biased and the results are not likely to be overly influenced by factors that only affect a particular gender.

Furthermore, 281 respondents provided some confirmation as to whether they were employed or not at the time of responding to the questionnaire. About 87% of the respondents were employed while only 13% were unemployed. Although the questionnaire responses may be affected by persons who were not employed, the impact on the findings is not likely to be significant given the overwhelming majority of the sample (almost 90%) were actually in employment. The sample of respondents were spread across over 23 sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy increasing the chances that the sample can be fairly representative of the general population of Nigerian workers in the major commercial centres of the nation.

Figure 1 - Gender

■ Male ■ Female

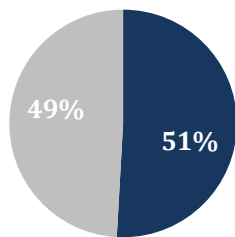


Figure 2 – Are you employed?

■ Yes ■ No

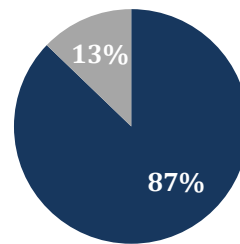
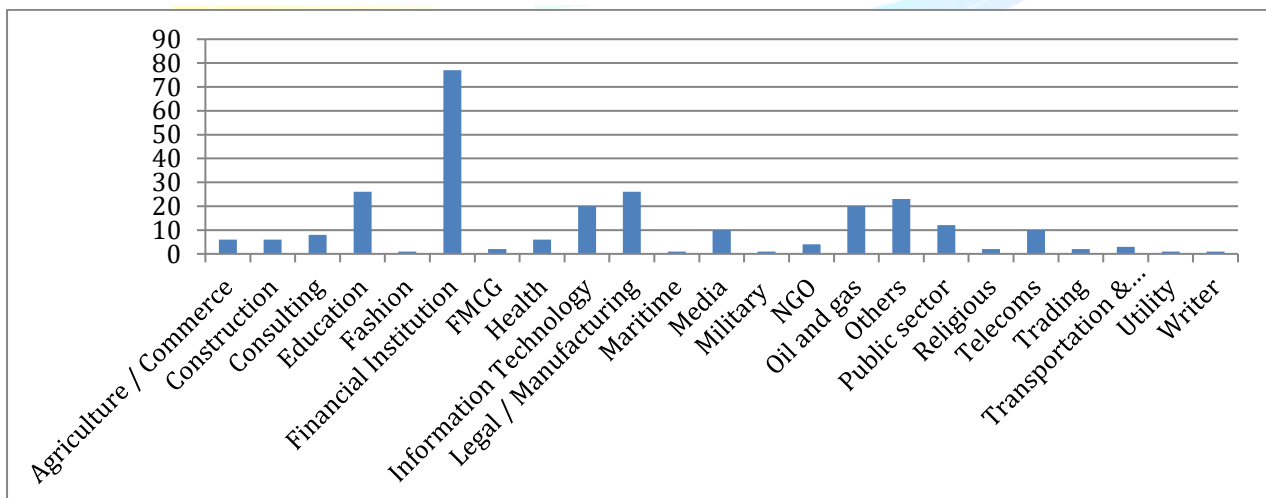


Figure 3: Number of employees working in various sectors





To further assess the breadth of the eventual sample size, the respondents were also asked to provide an indication of the size of their places of work. About 53% of the respondents worked for places that employed over 100 people giving an indication of good inclusion of structured employments. The balance 43% indicates good representation of small and medium enterprises as well. About 89% of the respondents were full time staff while about 11% were employed as casual staff as at the date of responding

Figure 4: How many people work in your company?

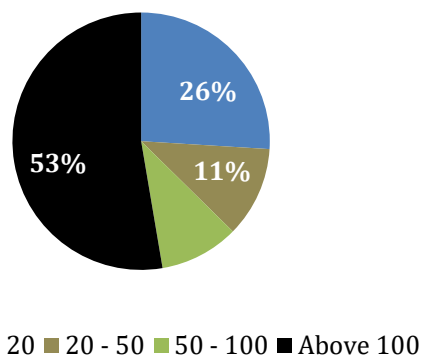
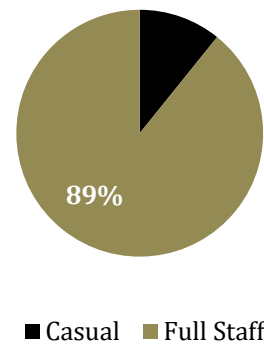


Figure 5: Status of employment



### ***Work From Home Experience***

The questions in this section of the questionnaire sought to ascertain whether the respondent actually had work from home experience and what occasioned that experience. Respondents were also asked to confirm if they currently work from home and how frequently they worked from home if they actually did work from home at the time of responding to the questionnaire.

An overwhelming 85% of the respondents had worked from home at some point or the other prior to responding to the questionnaire so a majority of the respondents had first-hand experience of WFH and as such can somewhat speak to it at least to the tune of the questions they provided responses for. Interestingly, 98 out of the respondents (about 38%) had been working from home before the Covid-19 lockdown. The number of respondents who had started working from home ahead of the Covid-19 lockdown did not affect the reliability of the results since the research was focused on the impact of the WFH policy and not on impact of Covid-19 per se. There was a 59% : 41% between those working from home and those working from the office at the time of responding to the questionnaire.

Figure 6: Have you ever worked from home?

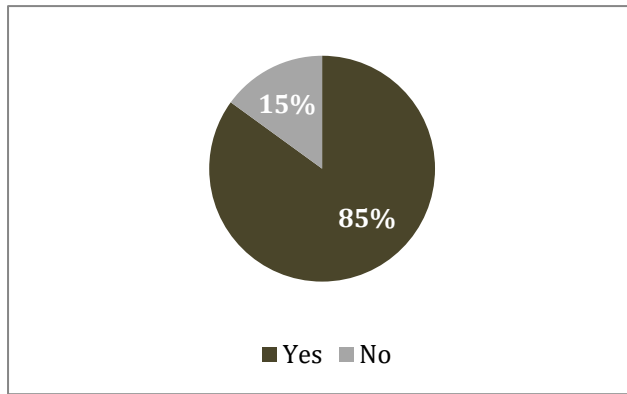


Figure 7: Are you currently working from home?

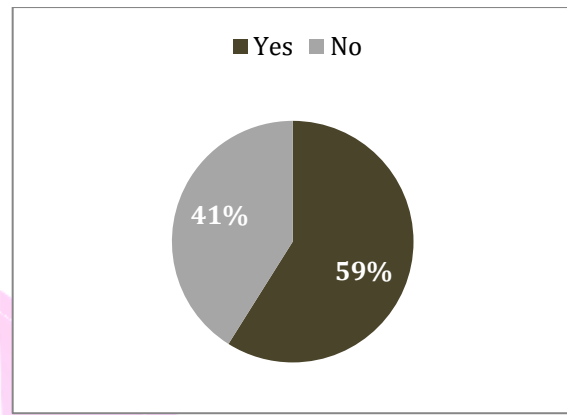


Figure 8: When did you start working from home?

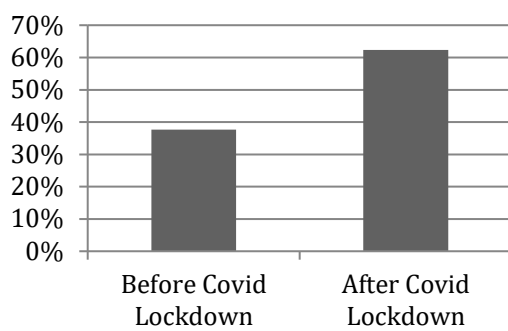
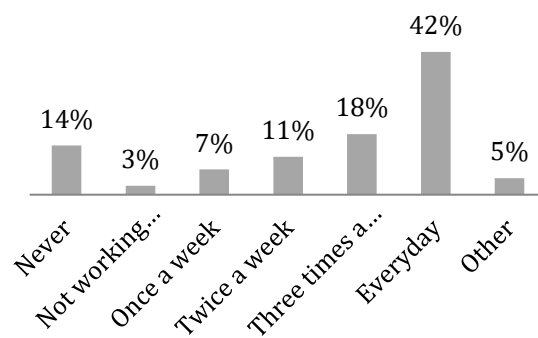


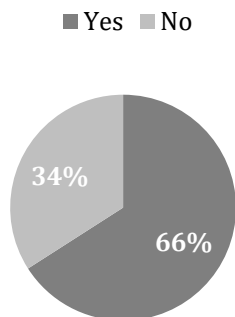
Figure 9: How frequently do you work from home?



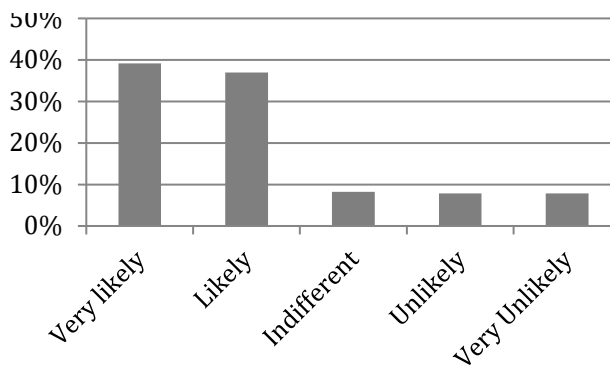
### ***Impact of Work From Home on Health***

In terms of impact of working from home, only about 30% posited that they had not felt any adverse bodily impact as a result of working from home. For the others, a range of hazards were identified including, increased back pain from long sitting hours, air and noise pollution from generator usage, eye pain due to extended usage of computers etc. A whopping 76% of the respondents believe that it is likely for employees working from home to experience the above listed side effects. The above lends some credence to the expectation that an overwhelming work from home policy can increase health hazards on employees that was not originally envisaged in the existing legal frameworks for employment contracts. In addition, about 66% of the respondents reported that they incur further costs working from home. Employers will also need to be mindful of this when setting remuneration packages under the work from home regime.

**Figure 10: Do you incur extra costs working from home?**



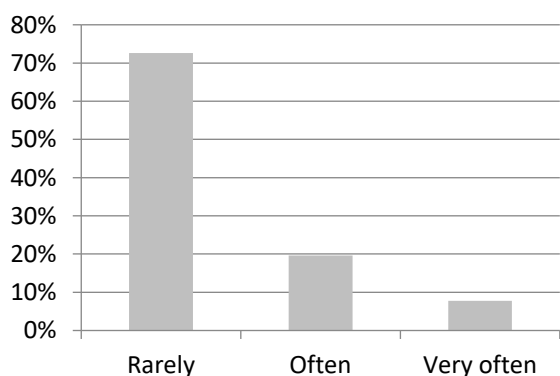
**Figure 11: How likely is it to experience side effects?**



**Changes in Lifestyle**

The questionnaire also sought to address whether the work from home model can result in changes in lifestyle patterns of employees. This was assessed with questions targeted at assessing how much work is done on weekends, sleeping patterns, exercise routines, time for recreation while watching TV and whether working from home has affected eating habits of the employees.

**Figure 12: Change in exercise habits**



**Figure 14: Change in eating habits**



About 61% of the respondents engage in office work over weekends and about 64% report a decline in time spent watching television indicating a decline in recreation since the advent of the work from home system. More intriguing is the point that as much as 73% of the respondents report that they rarely exercise while working from home while only 22% report that they now get more sleep. About 36% of the respondents confirm that they now watch more television. All these beg the question what do the people who are now at home then do with their time if they do not get more sleep, more exercise or even more television or recreation time. One consideration indicated from the respondents is that more time may actually be allocated to work than originally contemplated or than even employers realize. This is at least

corroborated by the fact that about 61% of the respondents now work over the weekends, a time that was previously presumed to be preserved for rest and relaxation with family.

Figure 14: Change in time spent on TV

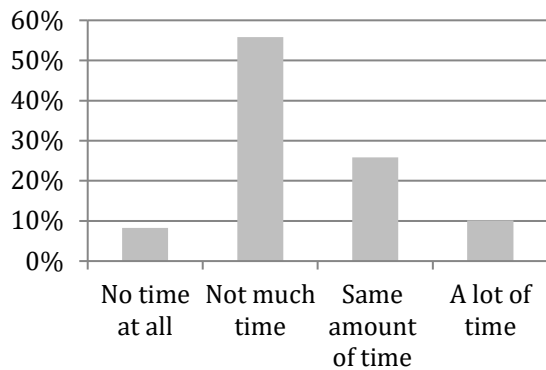
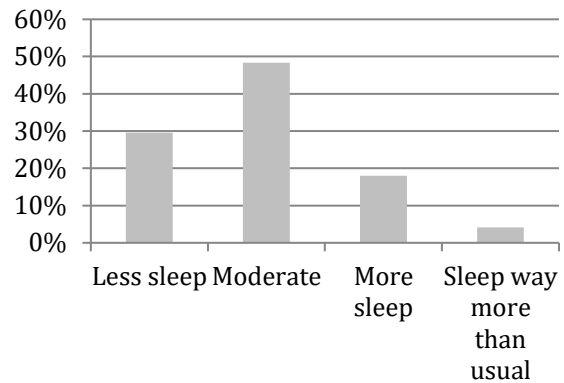


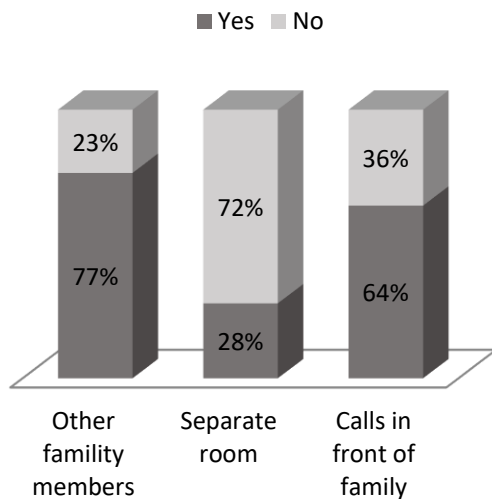
Figure 15: Change in time spent sleeping



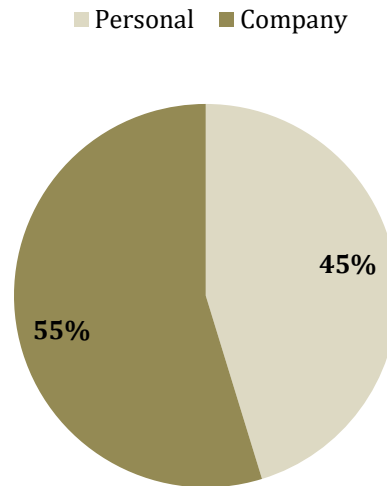
### ***Confidentiality Considerations***

With the work from home programme, the questionnaire was also concerned with how much efforts are required to maintain the confidentiality of employers' data while working from home. Up to 82% of the respondents access information they consider confidential from home. About 77% of the respondents lived with family and despite the general belief that it is better for people to have a separate work space at home, only about 28% of the respondents actually have same. The result is that about 64% of the respondents make calls in front of other people including family members. The challenge to confidentiality of information is further exacerbated by the fact that up to 45% of the respondents are constrained to using their private computers for their office work.

**Figure 16: Challenges to confidentiality**

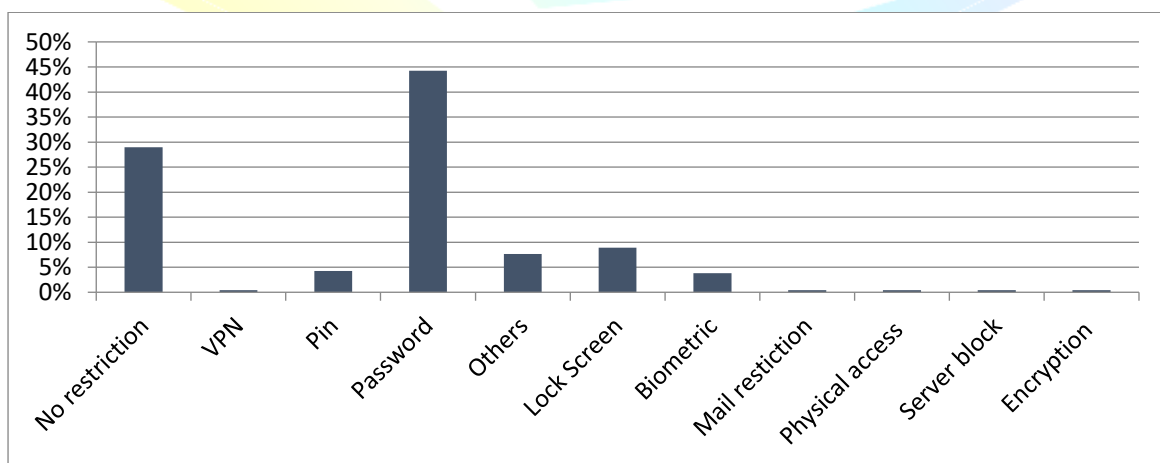


**Figure 17: Ownership of computer**



An overwhelming majority of the respondents neither send office work from their family and friends nor send work files from cyber cafes which may be comforting. About 94% of the respondents store office information on their computers. Interestingly, about 70% of the respondents believe that the official information stored on their computers cannot be hacked. While it may be argued that the optimism about the protection of office data is based on restrictions and protections, this position may be challenged by a consideration of the actual restrictions put in place. About 44% of the respondents rely on passwords and about 29% have no restrictions at all. Only about 8% have adopted PINs or biometric restrictions. The above data suggest that confidential information in the hands of employees working from home are exposed to some risk of unauthorized access.

**Figure 18: Description of restriction to confidential information**





**Hypothesis Testing**

The hypotheses set out for this research work are as follows:

- i. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Employees want the work from home programme to continue  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Employees do not want the work from home programme to continue
- ii. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Covid 19 work from home has not had an adverse effect on employees  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Covid 19 work from home has had an adverse effect on employees.

**Hypothesis 1:** whether workers want the work from home programme to continue.

Two questions were selected from the questionnaire to test the hypothesis on whether workers want the work from home programme to continue. The questions selected and their rationales are described below:

Question 1: How convenient has working from home been for you?

This question was selected because it comes closely enough to representing how the respondents feel about the Covid-19 programme. It is expected that only persons who want the work from home programme to continue will conclude that the work from home programme is convenient.

The responses were given on a 3-tier scale of “Not convenient”, “Indifferent” and “Very Convenient”. To analyse the responses for testing, weights were assigned to the responses ranging from 1 for not convenient, 2 for indifferent and 3 for very convenient. If workers consider the work from home model to be convenient, they will overwhelmingly select very convenient which is weighted 3. The a priori expectation therefore is that the mean score will at least be equal to 2 being the rating for indifferent. Our hypothesis test is therefore set out as follows:

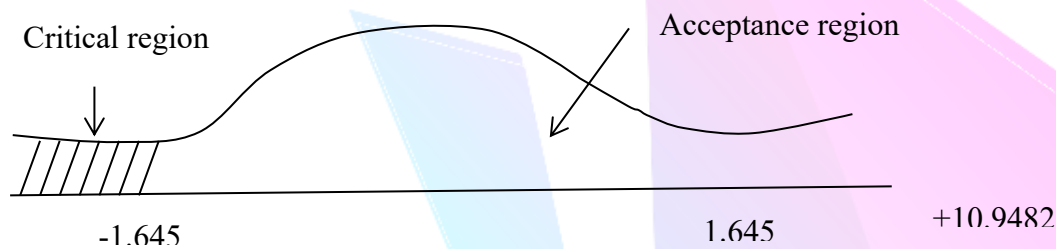
$$H_0 : \mu = 2$$

$$H_1 : \mu < 2$$

The analyses of the responses are as follows:

Response	Weight (x)	Frequency (f)	Fx

Not Convenient	1	35	35
Indifferent	2	67	134
Very Convenient	3	163	489
		265	658
Sample mean			2.483019
Standard deviation			0.718198
Z cal			10.9482



Given that the sample size is more than 30, the z-normal distribution test was adopted for the test. The z-tab at 5% level of significance is 1.645 for a one directional or one-tailed test. Accordingly the null hypothesis will be rejected if the z cal falls below -1.645. The z-cal was however predominantly greater than -1.645. The null hypothesis that workers find the work from home convenient is therefore accepted at 5% level of significance.

**Question 2:** Would you want the work from home programme as you currently have it to continue?

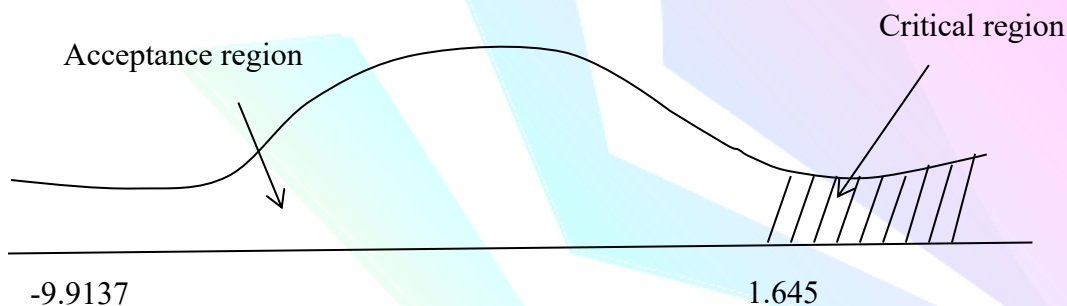
This question specifically addresses the willingness of the workers for the work from home to continue. The possible responses were given on a 5-point likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” ranked from 5 to 1 respectively. Respondents who were indifferent were assigned a ranking of 3. The expectation was that workers who want the work from home to continue will choose Agree or Strongly Agree rated 2 or 1. The apriori expectation therefore is that the population mean response will be less than 3. Our hypothesis formulation is therefore as follows:

Ho  $\mu = 3$

H1  $\mu > 3$

The analyses of the responses are as follows:

Response	Weight (x)	Frequency (f)	Fx
Strongly Disagree	5	19	95
Disagree	4	22	88
Indifferent	3	68	204
Agree	2	74	148
Strongly Agree	1	92	92
		275	627
Sample mean			2.28
Standard deviation			1.204372
Z cal			-9.91376



The z-normal distribution test was adopted for the test. The z-tab at 5% level of significance is 1.645 for a one directional or one-tailed test. Accordingly the null hypothesis will be rejected if the z cal falls above 1.645. The z-cal was however predominantly less than 1.645. The null hypothesis that workers want the work from home programme to continue is therefore accepted at 5% level of significance.

***Hypothesis 2: whether covid-19 work from home has an adverse effect on employees***

This question was tested by singular question on the questionnaire which asked “How likely is it for an employee to experience an adverse effect while working from home?” The possible responses were given on a 5-point likert scale from “Very likely” to “Very unlikely” ranked from 1 to 5 respectively. Respondents who were indifferent were assigned a ranking of 3. The expectation was that respondents who believe that work from home has significant adverse

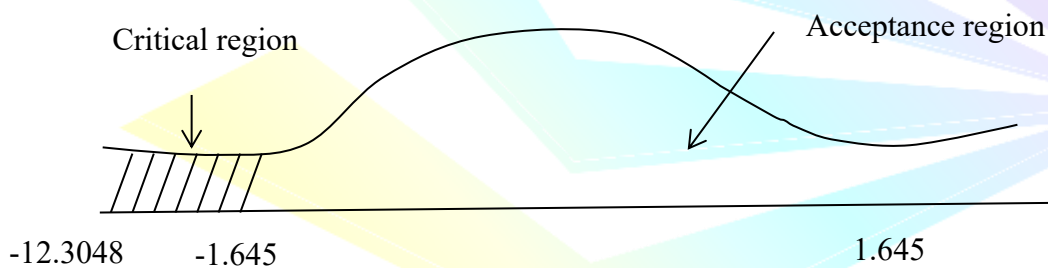
effects will select likely or very likely rated 2 or 1. If majority of respondents feel there are no adverse effects, one would expect the mean rank to be greater than 3. The a priori expectation therefore is that the population mean response will be greater than 3. Our hypothesis formulation is therefore as follows:

$$H_0 \quad \mu = 3$$

$$H_1 \quad \mu < 3$$

The analyses of the responses are as follows:

Response	Weight (x)	Frequency (f)	fx
Very likely	1	105	105
Likely	2	99	198
Indifferent	3	22	66
Unlikely	4	21	84
Very Unlikely	5	21	105
		268	558
Sample mean			2.08209
Standard deviation			1.221214
Z cal			-12.3048



The z-normal distribution test was adopted for the test. The z-tab at 5% level of significance is -1.645 for a one directional or one-tailed test. Accordingly the null hypothesis will be rejected if the z cal falls below -1.645. The z-cal is less than -1.645 and falls outside the acceptance region. The null hypothesis that Covid-19 work from home will not have an adverse effect on employees is therefore rejected at 5% level of significance.

Following the above, this study finds and concludes that workers find the work from home convenient and would like it to continue is at 5% level of significance. The study also exposes the fact that the work from home experience is very likely to have an adverse effect on employees, again at 5% level of significance with some of the possible adverse effects noted spanning through medical issues such as back pain, eye pain, stress due to more work load, lack of sleep and exercises to the employees incurring more out of pocket cost without reimbursement.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION**

To test the validity of the first hypothesis, this study sought to test how convenient it is to work from home and whether employees would like the work from home regime to continue, a question that had been put to the respondents in the questionnaire. The responses on the former were given on a 3-tier scale of “Not convenient”, “Indifferent” and “Very Convenient” to which weight ranging from 1 for not convenient, 2 for indifferent and 3 for very convenient were assigned. As it were, if workers considered the work from home as convenient, they will overwhelmingly select very convenient which is weighted 3, leaving the mean score to be at least equal to 2. The hypothesis,  $H_0 : \mu = 2$  and  $H_1 : \mu < 2$  at 5% level of significance was formulated and the statistical test carried out showed that z-cal of +10.9482 was however predominantly greater than -1.645. The null hypothesis that workers find the work from home convenient is therefore accepted at 5% level of significance. In the case of the later question on whether employees want the work from home regime to continue, possible responses were given on a 5-point likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” ranked from 5 to 1 respectively. Respondents who were indifferent were assigned a ranking of 3. The expectation was that workers who want the work from home to continue will choose Agree or Strongly Agree rated 2 or 1. Therefore, the a priori expectation is that the population mean response will be less than 3. This study formulated the hypothesis  $H_0: \mu = 3$  and  $H_1: \mu > 3$ . The z-tab at 5% level of significance is 1.645 for a one directional or one-tailed test. The z-cal at -9.9137 was however predominantly less than 1.645. The null hypothesis that workers want the work from home programme to continue is therefore accepted at 5% level of significance.



The validity of the second hypothesis on whether the work from home has an adverse effect on employees was equally tested. The possible responses were given on a 5-point likert scale from “Very likely” to “Very unlikely” ranked from 1 to 5 respectively. Respondents who were indifferent were assigned a ranking of 3. The a priori expectation was that respondents who believe that work from home has significant adverse effects will select likely or very likely rated 2 or 1. Therefore, if majority of respondents feel there are no adverse effects, it is expected that the mean rank will be greater than 3. The a priori expectation therefore is that the population mean response will be greater than 3. To this end, the hypothesis formed was  $H_0$ :

$\mu = 3$  and  $H_1: \mu < 3$ . The z-tab at 5% level of significance is -1.645 for a one directional or one-tailed test. Accordingly the null hypothesis will be rejected if the z cal falls below -1.645. The z-cal at -12.3048 was less than -1.645 and fell outside the acceptance region. The null hypothesis that Covid-19 work from home will not have an adverse effect on employees was therefore rejected at 5% level of significance.

Flowing from the above, the study at 5% level of significance found that employees find working from home convenient at 5% and would like it to continue. However, the current work from home regime has had an adverse effect on employees as WFH comes with less recreational time, less sleep, less exercises, less TV time etc. The study further revealed that WFH does not inhibit productivity but more employees tend to work overtime during WFH without overtime payments. Besides, more employees incur un-reimbursed out of pocket expenses while working from home. More importantly, a number of employees access confidential and official information from home without specifically having a designated work space. The vast majority of the respondents, agreed that the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic was one that reordered the work place philosophy and work ethics. It is also the consensus of the respondents that WFH experience was a new normal which though laden with manifest adverse implications for the employee, is a development that they are willing to live with. It is further agreed by the majority of the respondents that the WFH experience comes at higher cost to the employees who many times would have to put in extra time, use private/personal power generating sets, systems and other infrastructure etc for official assignments with its consequent and or attendant costs and health challenges. The study also found among others that the WFH experience exposes official files and information to the risk of leakage and or unlawful divulgence and canvasses that these issues should be well

considered in the formulation of policies for the WFH experience which has become a new normal in Nigeria and the world.

As observed from the outcome of the research, more employees find working from home convenient and would want it to continue except for the possible adverse effects of working from home. The essence of this study being to create an awareness on the possible effects of working from home and how the lacuna in the law can be taken care of to allow for a decent work from home policy by employers will set out to make recommendations as have been deduced from the findings in the study. As revealed from this study, adverse effects recorded by respondents include back pain from extended sitting hours, air and noise pollution due to generator usage, eye pain from continuous computer screen time, insufficient sleep, skipping personal hygiene, change in eating and sleep patterns, out of pocket expenses etc. These adverse effect are indications of what the employer, employee and the government should be doing going forward. Employers for instance, should be more sensitive how these changes in lifestyle occasioned by WFH are affecting their employees in terms of time, cost, health and management of confidential information. Overtime payments should be increasingly implemented for work done after closing time which may have been required by the employer as a matter of urgency.

Equally, a robust health insurance scheme should be taken up by employers to allow for comprehensive general check-up of the employees. Policy makers should generally incorporate health insurance policies for staff as part of the conditions to be met by the employer once recruiting. This way, early diagnosis of potential health problems can be resolved as early as possible. There should also be health and well -being training by the employer's health consultants and registration of employees for aerobics activities for the purpose of exercising.

More must be done on the part of the employer in respect of management of confidential information during the WFH. Employers must invest in a robust security system beyond the use of passwords and pin solely and further provide all work equipment necessary to execute the responsibilities assigned to the employee during the WFH regime.

On the part of the government, a review of the Labours laws are necessary particularly the Employee Compensation Act to allow for consideration and proof of injury whilst working from home and not only in respect of a traditional working system. Provisions regarding payment for overtime and how same can be accessed in respect of employees working from home must be made and provisions for reimbursement or impress in the case of out of pocket cost made by employees whilst working from home such as electricity, internet cost, A4 papers, pens etc. These provisions must be incorporated into the laws and not left to the employers to handle at their whims and caprice and at the expense of employees.

## CONCLUSION

In all, WFH is an expression of some level of advancement and has come to stay. However, healthy employees make healthy nations, hence the need to ensure the wellness of the employees whilst working from home. Since many employees would prefer to work from home as revealed by this study a robust framework must be put in place specifically for the work from home regime which must include how issues of employee compensation, provision of work space, reimbursement of cost incurred while working from home, introducing a robust health insurance scheme amongst other recommendations made. This research has thrown to the fore of intellectual discourse the new employee-employer work model which is presently considered as the new normal. The requirement of the laws applicable to this relationship is presently inadequate to cater for the changing roles of the parties to this work from home employment model. The questions yet to be answered include but are not limited to how to ensure better protection for both parties to an employment contract in a WFH arrangement and what compensation packages are available to carter for the adverse effect of WFH.

It is therefore recommended that a review of the extant laws be conducted in order to accommodate the new model and redefine compensation claims and packages available to remote working employees. That being said, employers should begin to redefine work hours, draw up policies that not only favours the bottom-line but the health requirements of the employees. In essence policy makers should not only pay attention to reducing operating costs and ensure that there is adequate provisions to mitigate the adverse effect of the new WFH model on the employee and its connectors.

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## ENDNOTES

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