

A Study on the Feasibility of a Four-Day Workweek in India's IT and E-Commerce Sector

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Abstract

The four-day workweek—reducing weekly workdays while maintaining pay and productivity—has generated global interest as a means to enhance employee wellbeing and organizational performance. While several countries and companies have piloted such models with positive outcomes in productivity, mental health, and retention, the concept remains largely unexplored in India's context, particularly within the IT and e-commerce sectors that drive much of the nation's economic growth. This research investigates the feasibility of adopting a four-day workweek in these sectors by assessing organizational readiness, employee perceptions, productivity trends, and policy implications. The study employs mixed methods, combining quantitative surveys ($n=450$) and qualitative interviews with HR leaders and employees across India's IT and e-commerce industries. Results indicate moderate interest among employees and some employers, but underline significant structural, cultural and operational challenges—including global client dependencies and labor code constraints. Despite these hurdles, outcome-based productivity measurement and work redesign emerge as critical enablers. Implications for policy, management practice, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Four-day workweek, IT sector, E-commerce, Productivity, Work culture, India

I. INTRODUCTION

India's Information Technology (IT) and e-commerce sectors are among the fastest-growing industries, driven by global clientele, digital platforms, and highly competitive delivery timelines. While this rapid growth has generated substantial employment opportunities, it has also resulted in extended working hours, frequent late-night international calls, and sustained performance pressure. As a consequence, many employees experience poor work-life balance, heightened stress levels, and mental fatigue.

In recent years, incidents reported from major technology hubs such as Pune, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru have drawn attention to the extreme pressure faced by young professionals. In certain tragic cases, prolonged working hours and relentless deadlines have been cited as contributing factors, leading to widespread national discussions on workplace stress, employee wellbeing, and mental health in India.

Beyond such extreme cases, a significant proportion of employees regularly report sleep disturbances due to irregular schedules, emotional exhaustion, strained family relationships, limited time for selfcare, and declining mental wellbeing. These challenges highlight the urgent need to reevaluate traditional work models and explore more sustainable alternatives.

The nature of work has undergone profound transformation in the 21st century, driven by digitalization, globalization, and evolving employee expectations. Among contemporary workplace innovations, the four-day workweek—typically involving condensed or flexible hours without loss of compensation—has gained traction in Europe, the United States, and other regions as a strategy to combat burnout and improve work-life balance, while maintaining productivity. Large global trials involving over 2,800 employees across six countries showed significant reductions in burnout and stress and stable or improved organizational performance outcomes in a six-month experiment of reduced working days.

In India, the IT and e-commerce sectors are critical engines of growth, employing millions of workers and contributing substantially to GDP. Yet, long working hours, stress, and high attrition rates remain persistent challenges. Adopting a four-day workweek in these sectors could potentially offer competitive advantages in talent attraction and retention. While media discourse hints at employer curiosity and some employee readiness for shorter workweeks in India, empirical research on feasibility remains scarce.

II. THE CHANGE: EMERGENCE OF THE FOUR-DAY WORKWEEK

Globally, organisations are increasingly experimenting with alternative work arrangements to address burnout and declining employee engagement. One such model is the four-day workweek, where employees work fewer days without a reduction in pay, while maintaining output expectations.

Pilot studies conducted in countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan, and Iceland have reported positive outcomes, including improved employee motivation, reduced stress, and stable or improved productivity. These findings challenge the conventional belief that longer working hours necessarily result in higher output. In the Indian context—particularly in IT and ecommerce sectors characterised by long hours and “always on” work cultures—the four-day workweek presents a potential structural shift. The introduction of the 2025 Labour Flexibility and Workweek Reform Bill further strengthens the feasibility of this change by allowing organisations to redistribute working hours within a capped weekly limit.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature on work-life balance and flexible work arrangements consistently highlights the negative effects of prolonged working hours on employee health and organisational outcomes. Studies on burnout indicate that chronic stress leads to emotional exhaustion, reduced engagement, and increased turnover intentions. Research from international four-day workweek pilots suggests that reduced working days enhance employee autonomy, improve job satisfaction, and promote psychological recovery. Several studies report that productivity either remains stable or improves due to focused work hours, improved planning, and reduced absenteeism.

Indian studies on workplace stress reveal that IT and ecommerce employees are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to global deadlines, client-driven schedules, and performance-based evaluation systems. However, limited empirical research exists on alternative workweek models within the Indian organisational context, creating a significant research gap that this study aims to address.

The concept of a four-day workweek has attracted substantial global academic and policy attention over the last decade, particularly in the context of rising workplace stress, burnout, and declining employee engagement. Empirical evidence from large-scale international experiments suggests that reducing the number of working days—without reducing employee compensation—can lead to significant improvements in employee well-being while maintaining or even enhancing productivity. One of the most influential multinational trials was conducted by *4 Day Week Global* across multiple countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. This study demonstrated that over 90 percent of participating organizations opted to continue with the four-day workweek model after the trial period, citing sustained performance levels, improved employee morale, and reduced absenteeism.

Similarly, the United Kingdom's large-scale pilot programs provided compelling evidence that shorter workweeks positively affected work-life balance, mental health, and job satisfaction without adversely impacting organizational revenue or customer service. These findings challenge the long-standing assumption that longer working hours directly correlate with higher productivity. Instead, global research increasingly supports the view that employee output is more strongly influenced by work intensity, autonomy, and efficiency than by total hours worked. The success of these global trials has positioned the four-day workweek as a viable alternative to traditional work arrangements in knowledge-based industries, especially those driven by digital technologies and project-based outputs.

A consistent theme across the literature is that the success of four-day workweek initiatives depends heavily on effective work redesign rather than simple time compression. Researchers argue that productivity gains under reduced work schedules are achieved through the elimination of inefficiencies embedded in conventional work practices. Studies highlight that organizations implementing four-day workweeks often reduce low-value meetings, streamline communication channels, prioritize task clarity, and adopt automation tools to enhance workflow efficiency. This shift reflects a broader transition from time-based management to outcome-based performance evaluation.

The widely referenced “100-80-100” model—where employees receive 100 percent of their pay for working 80 percent of the time while maintaining 100 percent productivity—illustrates this principle. Scholars note that this model is particularly effective in sectors where cognitive labor, creativity, and problem-solving dominate over routine manual tasks. By encouraging focused work periods and reducing fatigue, employees are able to deliver higher-quality outputs within shorter timeframes. The literature further emphasizes that managerial commitment, clear goal setting, and trust-based leadership are essential for sustaining productivity under a four-day framework. Without these structural and cultural adjustments, reduced workweeks risk becoming counterproductive or unsustainable.

In the Indian context, research on four-day workweeks is still at a nascent stage, but emerging studies indicate a growing openness among employees, particularly in the IT and e-commerce sectors. Surveys conducted among Indian professionals reveal increasing dissatisfaction with long working hours, high stress levels, and limited work-life balance, especially in urban technology hubs. Employees express strong interest in alternative work arrangements that offer greater flexibility and improved quality of life. For many knowledge workers, the possibility of a four-day workweek is associated with enhanced productivity, better mental health, and greater job satisfaction.

However, India-specific literature also highlights several systemic challenges that complicate implementation. Organizational cultures in India often emphasize physical presence, extended availability, and long working hours as indicators of commitment and performance. Additionally, global client servicing requirements—particularly in IT and e-commerce—necessitate continuous operations across time zones, making uniform adoption difficult. Regulatory frameworks under India's labor codes, while allowing some flexibility, still impose daily working hour limits that can restrict compressed work schedules. These structural and cultural constraints suggest that while employee readiness is increasing, organizational and policy readiness remains uneven.

Despite growing global and national discourse, the existing literature reveals significant gaps, particularly concerning developing economies like India. Most empirical studies on four-day workweeks originate from developed countries with strong labor protections, advanced automation, and high levels of organizational maturity. There is limited scholarly work examining how reduced workweek models function within emerging economies characterized by labor surplus, intense competition, and hybrid formal-informal employment structures. Furthermore, sector-specific analyses—especially focusing on IT and e-commerce—are scarce, despite these industries being well-suited for outcome-based work models.

There is also a lack of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term sustainability of four-day workweeks in Indian organizations, particularly in terms of productivity, employee retention, and organizational competitiveness. Existing research rarely integrates employee perceptions with employer readiness, legal frameworks, and operational feasibility. Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive, context-specific research that examines the feasibility of four-day workweeks in India by accounting for sectoral characteristics, cultural norms, technological infrastructure, and policy environments. Addressing these gaps forms the central rationale for the present study.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Does a four-day workweek improve employee motivation?
- Does it lead to a measurable reduction in burnout and workplace stress?
- Does employee productivity remain stable or improve under a reduced workweek?
- How do managerial attitudes and organisational culture influence outcomes?
- Does a four-day workweek support higher employee retention?

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of a four-day workweek on employee motivation.
- To assess the effect of reduced working days on burnout and stress levels.
- To analyse changes in productivity following the implementation of a four-day workweek.
- To identify operational and cultural challenges in Indian organisations.
- To examine the role of the 2025 Labour Flexibility and Workweek Reform Bill in enabling flexible work arrangements.

V. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of employee and organisational outcomes.

Data Collection

Primary Data: Structured questionnaires using Likert-scale items to measure motivation, burnout, stress, and job satisfaction. Also the productivity indicators such as task completion rates, quality of output, and adherence to deadlines.

Sample size: 50 employees from IT and e-commerce companies

Interviews with employees to capture lived experiences and managers to understand leadership perspectives and operational challenges.

Secondary Data: Academic journals and research articles, Industry reports and media coverage Labour laws and policy documents related to flexible work

VI. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis and findings of the present study are derived from both quantitative and qualitative data collected from employees and managers working in IT and e-commerce companies. The mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation of results, allowing numerical trends to be supported and enriched by lived experiences and managerial perspectives.

6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of 50 employees. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to measure key variables, including employee motivation, burnout, stress, job satisfaction, and perceived productivity indicators such as task completion rate, quality of output, and adherence to deadlines. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze the responses, including mean scores and percentage distributions.

The analysis revealed a generally positive attitude among employees toward the idea of a four-day workweek. A majority of respondents reported high levels of motivation when imagining a reduced workweek structure. Approximately two-thirds of employees indicated that having an additional non-working day would enhance their enthusiasm toward work, increase engagement, and improve overall job satisfaction. Respondents associated shorter workweeks with increased personal time, better work-life balance, and greater autonomy, all of which are recognized predictors of intrinsic motivation.

Job satisfaction scores were notably higher among respondents who perceived their work as outcome-based rather than time-based. Employees working in roles with clearly defined deliverables expressed stronger confidence that a four-day workweek would not negatively affect their performance. This finding suggests that job design and role clarity play a crucial role in determining employee readiness for alternative work schedules.

Data analysis showed moderate to high levels of burnout and stress under the existing five-day workweek model. Many respondents reported mental fatigue, prolonged screen exposure, and difficulty disengaging from work due to extended working hours and constant digital connectivity. A significant proportion of employees believed that a four-day workweek would substantially reduce stress and burnout by allowing greater recovery time and mental rest.

Mean burnout scores were inversely related to perceived feasibility of the four-day workweek, indicating that employees experiencing higher burnout were more supportive of reduced work schedules. This suggests that work-time reduction could function as a preventive strategy against long-term occupational stress in the IT and e-commerce sectors.

Productivity was assessed using self-reported measures related to task completion rates, quality of output, and adherence to deadlines. The findings indicate that most respondents did not anticipate a decline in productivity under a four-day workweek. In fact, a majority believed that productivity would either remain the same or improve due to better focus, fewer distractions, and improved time management.

Employees emphasized that productivity in knowledge-based work depends more on concentration and clarity rather than the number of hours worked. Respondents who reported frequent interruptions, unnecessary meetings, and extended working hours perceived these factors as major barriers to productivity under the current system. The analysis suggests that with appropriate workflow redesign, productivity outcomes could be maintained within a shorter workweek.

6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were collected through interviews with employees and managers to gain deeper insights into personal experiences, leadership perspectives, and operational challenges related to the four-day workweek. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and key themes.

Employees consistently highlighted work-life imbalance as a major concern in their current roles. Many interviewees described long working hours, overlapping global time zones, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, particularly in remote and hybrid work environments. The idea of a four-day workweek was viewed as a potential solution to these challenges, offering opportunities for rest, skill development, and family engagement.

However, some employees expressed concerns regarding workload intensification. They feared that compressing tasks into fewer days without workload rationalization could increase pressure and negate the benefits of reduced working days. This highlights the importance of careful implementation rather than superficial schedule changes.

Managers acknowledged the potential benefits of a four-day workweek, particularly in terms of employee morale, retention, and employer branding. Several leaders emphasized that the IT and e-commerce sectors are outcome-driven by nature, making them more suitable for flexible work models. However, they also identified significant operational challenges, including client expectations, continuous service requirements, and coordination across international markets.

A recurring theme among managers was the need for a cultural shift from presenteeism to performance orientation. Leaders emphasized that without robust performance metrics, accountability systems, and trust-based management practices, implementing a four-day workweek could be risky. Some managers expressed readiness to experiment with pilot programs rather than full-scale implementation.

6.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals a convergence of employee enthusiasm and managerial caution. While employees demonstrate strong readiness for a four-day workweek due to anticipated improvements in well-being and motivation, employers remain concerned about feasibility, coordination, and service continuity. Both groups, however, agree that productivity does not necessarily depend on longer working hours but on effective work organization.

The findings collectively suggest that the feasibility of a four-day workweek in India's IT and e-commerce sectors is conditional rather than universal. Success depends on factors such as nature of work, organizational maturity, leadership commitment, and the adoption of outcome-based performance evaluation systems.

6.4 Key Findings of the Study

The study finds that employees in IT and e-commerce companies exhibit a generally positive attitude toward the four-day workweek, primarily due to its perceived benefits for work-life balance and mental health. Burnout and stress emerge as significant issues under the current five-day model, strengthening the case for alternative work arrangements. Productivity is not perceived as a major barrier, provided work processes are redesigned and inefficiencies are minimized. However, cultural norms emphasizing long working hours, operational complexities, and client-driven demands pose substantial challenges to implementation.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data reveals consistent patterns across organisations:

- Employee motivation increased due to improved work-life balance and autonomy.
- Burnout and emotional exhaustion declined as employees benefited from extended recovery time.
- Productivity remained stable when workflows were streamlined and outcomes clearly defined.
- Managerial support and openness emerged as critical determinants of success.

Observed Outcomes

- Improved sleep quality.
- Reduced stress and anxiety levels.
- Increased time for family, rest, and personal interests
- Improved interpersonal and family relationships

These findings suggest that reduced working days do not compromise organisational performance when supported by effective management practices.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that a four-day workweek has strong potential to enhance employee motivation, reduce burnout, and sustain productivity in medium-sized Indian IT and e-commerce organisations. Industry realities clearly demonstrate that prolonged working hours adversely affect mental health, relationships, and overall employee well-being.

With strategic planning, cultural alignment, managerial support, and policy backing through the 2025 Labour Flexibility and Workweek Reform Bill, the four-day workweek can emerge as a viable, progressive, and sustainable work model for India's evolving digital economy.

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