The Mediating Role Of Organizational Commitment In The Adoption Of Work-From-Home Arrangements After COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between perceived WLB and organizational commitment as antecedents to desire to remain with the organization under a WFH arrangement, when alternative work arrangements become worldwide embraced due to COVID-19. Further, it is speculated that organizational commitment mediates the connection between WLB and involvement in one's work. It is a cross-sectional study through PLS-SEM to predict relationship amongst work engagement, WLB, organizational commitment and intention to stay, among employees in ICT sector. The results show that when companies use WFH, employees report higher levels of WLB and job engagement and higher levels of commitment and intention to stay with the company. This research provides strong evidence that job satisfaction plays a key role in determining employee loyalty at work. By allowing employees the option of working from home and providing round-the-clock service, WFH increases efficiency, responsiveness, and customer happiness.

Keywords – Work-life balance, Organizational commitment, Intention to stay, Work engagement, Work-from-home, Alternate work arrangement, COVID-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current pandemic caused by COVID-19 has shut down the normal working of governments, offices, schools and colleges, recreational centers- basically every outdoor event and activity across the world(Li et al., 2020). With the pandemic infliction, the organizations are now inclining towards alternate work arrangements that are safe from the risk of the widespread contagion. Some prevailing options are compressed work weeks, part-time working, telecommuting, and leave of absence. Among these, work-from-home (WFH) systems have been thriving in practice. The large-scale digitization of work and life over the past decade has made it easier to find employees who have the capacity to adopt this work practice without great hassle (Pennington &Stanford, 2020; Nakrosiene et al., 2019).

Working-from-home is a practice that has existed peripherally even before COVID-19 gripped the world (Nakrosiene et al., 2019; Hill et al, 2003). In many workplaces, it was often seen that an employee carried unfinished or extra work to be completed at home at the end of the day. Even responding to e-mails, or scheduling meetings and making presentations, was often be completed from the comfort of home rather than

occupying office hours(Eldridge &Pabilonia, 2010). However, a much smaller percentage of working population completed the entirety of their jobs from home itself. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been brought into focus that jobs at several levels in the modern corporate world can be redirected to be carried out through remote working alone. A large number of modern corporate jobs do not have need for office infrastructure, or physical presence for collaboration with colleagues. These include managerial and professional categories of work, and also several administrative or clerical jobs. The work from home arrangement works optimally for those employees who have independence and autonomy in performance of their duties, and whose work is strongly tied to their computers and other digital devices (Reshma et al., 2015). For other departments also, such as sales or technical jobs, a large number of employees can find the arrangement to be feasible and sustainable, with few hiccups expected in the transition to working from home.

The benefits to work-from-home are vast and multidimensional. The expansion in digitization has led to making work-from-home an open option for nearly any employee who is not associated with physical work. For organizations, having a group that telecommutes implies that there are no worries with respect to office area while recruiting new talent. A work-from-home setup is also economically viable to organizations. The businesses no longer need to pay for office space or power charges, chopping overheads down incredibly (Purwanto et al., 2020; Nakrosiene et al., 2019). Among employees, things like an adaptable timetable, the ability to work from any area, and no commute hassles, are the topmost advantages of the new arrangement. Since schools have also been shut during the lockdown, work environment adaptability is especially welcome for employees who have kids (Lapierre et al., 2015). Typically,

there is lesser number of interferences at home, since employees can control their environment according to their preferences (Eldridge & Pabilonia, 2010).

With the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic still overpowering economies and organizations worldwide, the need for innovative and sustainable solutions to retain and enhance productivity, and improve workplace flexibility is extremely high. Even though it has been well over 8 months since WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020), it carries on blighting organizations. In this scenario, the corporate world has increasingly realized that the road to recovery might be long and they must strive to embrace the new normal (Seetharaman, 2020; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020).

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of perceived work life balance and organizational commitment as antecedents to intention to stay with the organization in a work-from-home (WFH) arrangement. It is further hypothesized that organizational commitment acts as a mediator between perceived WLB and perceived work engagement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance in its fundamental meaning, is creating and maintaining a characteristic equilibrium condition in an equivalent form between professional life – Work – and individual or personal life – Life – by contributing and investing energy and time between them both(Gyanchandani, 2017). Equilibrium here shows the effective synchronization and management between Work and Life (Chawla & Sondhi, 2016).WLB implies establishing an acceptable combination of work and life (Thornthwaite, 2004).It is aimed at attaining an acceptable balance, generally by confining one domain–commonly work, to

generate more time for the life domain(Gregory & Milner, 2009; Kelliher et al., 2018). The constitution of balance is always under examination (Voydanoff, 2005). Some academicians portray balance between work and life as merely equivalent distribution of commitment, time and energy (Greenhaus et al., 2003), whereas others address the balance as lack of conflict between the two domains (Bulger, 2014);or they state balance in a situational way in which balance depends solely on the individual perspective and environment – idiosyncrasies(Reiter, 2007). This approach focuses more on the individual satisfactory level pertaining to work-life balance instead of the predefined aspect of balance (Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

Theoretically, the concept of work-life balance is simple to comprehend; yet there are many ongoing literature debates about the suitable terminology and extent of use. Some scholars prefer the traditional, Work-Family Balance(Rex L. Facer & Wadsworth, 2008) or Work-Life Fit and Balance (Voydanoff, 2005) or more recently, Work-Life Interface(Kelliher et al., 2018)but in all scenarios the core essence of work-life balance remains constant.

21st Century is witnessing various work-life balance concerns due to social and demographic variations ensuing formation of an immensely diverse workforce (Pradhan et al., 2016). The world is witnessing a steady growth in the number of educated women seeking employment in the organized urban sector. In spite of the increasing numbers of women in the workforce, breadwinning is essentially still considered to be the man's domain whereas household management falls under the woman's domain. Thus, women carry on the dual responsibility at household management and workplace. This makes work-life balance, particularly finding personal time, quite challenging for women (Bharat, 2003).

Studies show that work-life balance has a positive association to both personal as well as organizational outcomes(Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010). Research also shows that experiences and activities in the life domain can have a great influence on work domain(Rex L. Facer & Wadsworth, 2008).

Work-Life Balance & Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is referred as the strength of an employee's psychological attachment, involvement, attitude and identification towards the organization (Porter et al., 1974). Organizational commitment defined in terms of a model comprises of three main components: affective commitment (desire) – An employee's belief and goal alignment in the organization leading to a positive emotional attachment; continuance commitment (need) – An employee's need for getting the best in any situation, gains versus losses of being employed in the organization; and normative commitment (obligation) – An employee feeling indebted and obligated towards the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Organizational commitment is a factor which is reciprocal in nature. The loyalty, sincerity and commitment of an employee towards an organization are reciprocated by the support and enhancement in lifestyle the organization provides and vice versa (Schein, 1996). The formation of an implicit contract, psychologically, between the employee and the organization, takes place when the organizations seem more supportive(Rousseau, 1995). This further enhances the employee's work-life balance while increasing the sense of organizational commitment. This is termed as Social Exchange – a fair and mutual exchange – where an organization is considered to be fair and supportive and in turn, the employee's desire to

reciprocate is enhanced via higher organizational commitment(Alvesson, 2012).

It is observed that a mutually beneficial relationship between the employee and the organization would aid in enhancing the organizational work culture as well as the employee's sense of wellbeing. This will in turn reduce the tendency to leave – lowering the rate of employee turnover (Rex L. Facer & Wadsworth, 2008).Organizational commitment and work-life balance have been reported to be interdependent. The increase in commitment to work at an organization leads to increase in levels on achieving work-life balance and vice versa (Chawla & Sondhi, 2016).Many of the studies show existence of strong relationship between decrease in work-family conflict – increase in work-life balance levels, and development of favorable attitudes amongst the employees with respect to both, the job as well as the coworkers, effectively strengthening the organizational commitment(Shockley & Allen, 2007; Tippins & Stroh, 1993).

H1 – Work-life balance has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment.

Work-Life Balance & Intention to Stay

The thought of quitting or leaving an organization, or the inclination to pursue another job in a new organization is turnover intention and the opposite is termed as intention to stay (Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019). Employers try to make sure to surge the level of intention to stay within all of their employees, because when the turnover intention converts into an actual turnover, it becomes tremendously expensive for the organization owing to all the costs related to recruiting, on boarding, training, developing and retaining them(G. R. Lee et al., 2020).The intention to leave can be attributed to low work-life balance, poor work engagement and low productivity (Ahuja, 2016; Heikkeri, 2010).

Scholars have shown that intention to leave is associated with actual act of leaving (Brigham et al., 2007). Research amplifies the fact that job satisfaction and organizational commitment have a huge impact on intention to stay(Deery& Jago, 2009; Villanueva & Djurkovic, 2009).Further, it has been stated that by achieving satisfactory work-life balance, the organizational commitment increases with the increase in work engagement, this leads to the rise in the intention to stay amongst the employees(Puteh& Arshad, 2015). An organization devoid of work-life balance will lack organizational commitment and consequently, intention to stay will be difficult to achieve (Mohd Noor, 2011).

H2 – Work-life balance has a significant positive impact on intention to stay.

Work Engagement

The earliest, reliable definition of work engagement says that it is a quality which rests entirely on achievement of three psychological needs or conditions: availability, safety and meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990). Some scholars state that work engagement depends on individual employee's enthusiasm, participation and satisfaction(Harter et al., 2002). On the contrary, some studies say work engagement is multidimensional – trait, behavioral, cognitive and emotional – in nature with experience playing a key role (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Research shows classification of employees based on their work engagement levels – engaged employees (work with maximum effort, enthusiasm, passion and commitment), not engaged employees (work by putting in the required effort only, with no enthusiasm and moderate commitment) and actively disengaged employees (work just for the sake of it, are unhappy with the work they are doing, and have a negative influence on the workplace)(Gallup, 2001; Heikkeri, 2010; Perrin, 2003).

Work engagement is a crucial component and is treated as a top priority in majority of the organizations as it displays a strong association with performance (Merrill et al., 2013). Studies also show that work engagement portrays a positive relationship with employee efficiency, employee retention, intention to stay and organizational commitment(Buckingham & Coffman, 2014; Fleming et al., 2005; Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019). Engaged employees tend to be more flexible and open minded as well as productive(Ahuja, 2016; Tims et al., 2013).Research shows that work enrichment helps in developing and enhancing work engagement (Augustine et al., 2013). Organizations with apt work engagement parameters have sufficient competitive advantage that is difficult to casually imitate (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

A good work-life balance acts as a precursor for employee work engagement. Elements like giving priority to employee interests, caring about their needs, aligning their goals and flexibility act as predictors of work engagement (Golden & Metros, 2006). It is also witnessed that employees that have positive feelings and vibes from their personal life to work life or vice versa tend to exhibit considerably higher levels of work engagement (Montgomery et al., 2003).

Work Engagement & Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is an employee's attitude, welfare concern and attachment towards an organization; whereas work engagement is not an attitude but can be described as a state of being wherein it shows the level of an employee's awareness and absorption towards their work (Saks, 2006). While, it is perceived that organizational commitment is reasonably steady over time, work engagement varies as employees

deal and interact with environmental stimuli at the workplace (Kahn, 1990).

Work engagement acts as a significant predictor of organizational commitment by showing a positive association (Saks, 2006). Engaged employees are termed as a synonym for committed employees (Fleming et al., 2005; Gallup, 2001). The level of passion and hard work an employee brings along and their intention to stay in that organization is a result of the employee's organizational commitment (Ahuja, 2016)**.**

H3 – Work engagement has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a complex and continuous, multi-dimensional construct associated with a wide range of variables with many underlying implications(Robinson et al., 2004).Organization commitment plays a key role in improving an organization's functioning by acting as a lubricant in its social machinery and consequently, promoting employees' attitude towards the organization(Pathardikar& Sahu, 2011). According to the Social Exchange Theory, when employees are treated well by their organization, they tend to involve in organizational citizenship behaviour which in turn increases the employees' organizational commitment(Blau, 1964).

Organizational Commitment & Intention to Stay

Organizational commitment is referred to the employee's attitude with respect to their organization or employer (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Research shows that organizational commitment is strongly linked to occupational commitment as well as intention to stay (K. Lee

et al., 2000; Major et al., 2013; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1993; Meyer & Tett, 1993).

H4 – Organizational commitment has a significant positive impact on intention to stay.

Organizational Commitment as Mediator

Numerous studies have been carried out where organizational commitment acts as a mediator in a variety of work-related factors. Organizational commitment has been found to mediate the relationship between leadership behaviour and job satisfaction and performance(Darwish A. Yousef, 2000), work ethic and organizational change (Danvish A. Yousef, 2000) and job insecurity and turnover intentions (S. H. Lee & Jeong, 2017) Organizational Commitment is seen as a core necessity for any organization to flourish (Robinson et al., 2004).Affective commitment with Work-Life Balance as a precursor has a strong positive impact on employees' performance and productivity (Burney & Widener, 2007; H. K. Kim, 2014; Mohd Noor, 2011).

H5 – Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between work life balance and intention to stay.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Ever since the world has been stunned by COVID-19 pandemic, the organizations across the globe are searching for alternative work arrangements, so that the health of the employees is not compromised and organizational work also remains unhampered. Work-from-home (WFH)

may provide the organizations such an alternative.

Previous studies have found WFH as having a positive relationship between productivity. However, these studies are limited to pre COVID-19 times. The aim of the present study is to explore the perception of employees towards the work-from-home alternate work arrangement during COVID-19. The study hypothesizes that work life balance and work engagement that an employee will experience shall have a significant impact upon organizational commitment. The study further hypothesizes that organizational commitment will mediate the relationship between work life balance, work engagement and intention to stay.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is carried out with following objectives in mind:

1. To investigate the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment as per WFH during COVID-19
2. To investigate the relationship between work-life balance and intention to stay as per WFH during COVID-19
3. To investigate the relationship between work engagement of WFH during COVID-19 and organizational commitment
4. To investigate the mediating role of organizational commitment of WFH during COVID-19 between work life balance, work engagement and intention to stay.
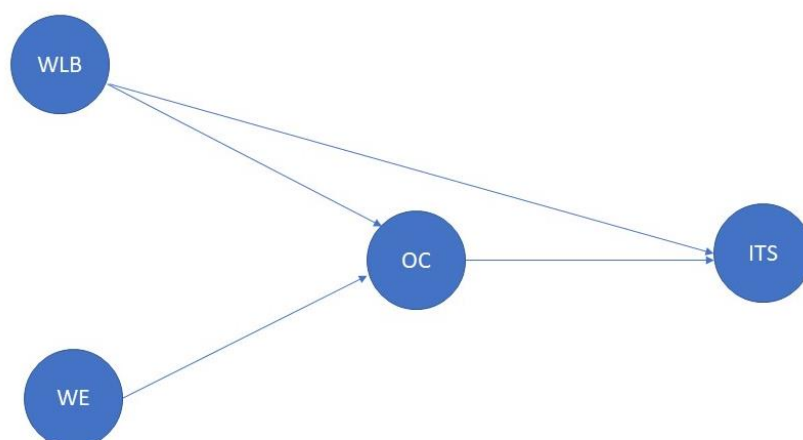
Figure 1: Proposed Model

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A properly conceptualized research design is essential to operationalize the conceptual plan and to ensure that research is effective and leads to reliable outcome (Aaker et al., 2000; Kumar, 2014; Thamilasaran, 2015).

Research Approach – Since this research is being carried out with specific objective in mind, descriptive research with cross-sectional study is being adopted to investigate the relationship between dependent and independent constructs (Bajpai, 2013; Pannerselvam, 2016).

Data Base – The study is based on the primary data collected from ICT professionals from across India.

Time Frame – Data collection was carried out between September and October 2020.

Variable Identification and Design of SurveyInstrument– The survey instrument comprised of 14 items measuring work engagement, work life balance, organizational commitment and intention to stay. The items corresponding to all of the above factors were adapted from established measures – items related to work engagement were adapted from shortened version of Utrecht work engagement scale (Seppälä et al., 2009), items measuring work-life balance were adapted from shortened work-family enrichment scale (Kacmar et al., 2014) and items corresponding to organizational commitment and intention to stay were adapted from organizational commitment questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979) and intention to stay scale (Ghosh et al., 2013). Certain items from original scales were deleted or modified as per requirements of the study.

Sampling Design

Sample Size – Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and it was clearly stated that responses will be used purely for academic purposes. Since, study uses PLS-SEM for analysis of data minimum sample size is based on '10 times' rule (Hair et al., 2016). According to this rule, minimum sample size is equal to 10 times the maximum number of arrows converging on any latent variable. In the present study,the maximum number of arrows converging on any latent variable is 4, so minimum sample size is 40. After excluding incomplete survey instruments the dataset comprised of 295 respondents. The sample

comprised of 62% female and 38% male respondents, 65% of the respondents were unmarried and 35% were married and 71% were in the age group of 20-34 years, 15% in the age group of 35-49 years and 14% were above the age of 50 years.

Sampling Technique

The situation due to COVID-19 does not permit venturing out and therefore data for the research was conducted through online mode. Snowball method of sampling was used for collection of data through online survey questionnaire, which was accessible for three weeks (September – October, 2020). Further, as it is not possible to know the exact number of professionals associated with ICT sector, convenience sampling using snow ball method, which is non-probability-based collection of data on "hit and miss" manner was adopted for data collection. (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2005) Convenient sampling though, considered to be a not so good a method of sample collection, has some inherent advantages like, inexpensiveness,

easiness of data collection. Further use of PLS-SEM for analysis of data negates the requirement of normal distribution (Hair et al., 2016). Earlier studies too have combined non-probability sampling with parametric tests for data analysis (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2019).

Data Collection

Data for the study was collected through online survey questionnaire which was accessible for three weeks (September-October 2020). The survey instrument consisted of 14 items measuring work engagement (WE), work life balance (WLB), organizational commitment (OC) and intention to stay (ITS). After excluding incomplete survey instruments the dataset comprised of 295 respondents. The sample comprised of 62% female and 38% male respondents, 65% of the respondents were unmarried and 35% were married and 71% were in the age group of 20-34 years, 15% in the age group of 35-49 years and 14% were above the age of 50 years.

Table I: Descriptive Statistics (N = 295)

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	112	38.0
Female	183	62.0
Age (in years)		
20-34	208	71.0
35-49	45	15.0
50 & Above	42	14.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	193	65.0
Married	102	35.0

Construct Measures

The study uses PLS-SEM to predict the relationship amongst work engagement, work life balance, organizational commitment and intention to stay. The study also tries to investigate the role of organizational commitment as a mediating variable between work life balance and intention to stay. Survey instrument comprised of factors adapted from constructs of shortened version of Utrecht work engagement scale (Seppälä et al., 2020), organizational commitment questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979), intention to stay scale (Ghosh et al., 2013) and work-family enrichment scale (Kacmar et al., 2014).

Certain items from original scales were deleted or modified as per requirements of the study. Exploratory factor analysis was performed to check the item loadings. All the items had loading above 0.5 and were found to be loaded significantly on the respective factors (Table II). The survey instrument was examined for common method bias and the variance extracted was found to be less than 50%. Reliability and validity analysis were carried out for the entire scale as well as for individual constructs. Exogenous constructs WLB, WE were measured formatively while mediating construct OC, endogenous construct ITS were measured reflectively using a five-point Likert scale. All the parameters with regards to the construct were found to be within acceptable ranges.

Table II: Factor Loadings – Measurement Scale

	1	2	3	4	5
WLB1		.732			
WLB2		.666			
WLB3		.681			
WLB4		.735			
WE1	.724				
WE2	.654				
WE3	.643				
WE4	.600				
ITS1			.719		
ITS2			.768		
ITS3			.767		
ITS4			.737		
OC1					.691
OC2					.698

6. ESTIMATION PROCEDURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

Since, PLS-SEM supports predictions and prediction oriented result assessment (Hair et al., 2016) it is used in the present study for investigating the between exogenous, mediating and endogenous constructs. WLB, and WE were measured formatively while mediating construct OC and endogenous construct ITS were measured reflectively using a five-point Likert scale.

Estimation Procedure – Measurement Model

The measurement model comprised of two formatively measured constructs – WFH perceived-work life balance and WFH perceived-work engagement and one reflectively measured construct – WFH perceived-organizational commitment. As such quality statistics – construct reliability and validity – were first evaluated for the measurement model.

Formatively Measured Constructs

Work Life Balance (WLB), and Work Engagement (WE) were measured formatively, convergent validity, collinearity and significance of outer weights were evaluated beforehand.

Validity and Item loadings

Convergent validity of a formatively measured construct is evaluated on the basis of its correlation with same construct measured reflectively (Hair et al., 2016). The construct Work Engagement was operationalized through "I perceive that work-from-home will make the work more meaningful and purposeful to me" and the construct Work Life Balance was operationalized through "I perceive that work-from-home will be more beneficial for my health".

A path coefficient of 0.7 and above between the same construct measured formatively and reflectively is acceptable to establish convergent validity (Hair et al., 2016). Convergent validity of all the formatively measured constructs was established as path coefficient between formative and reflective measurement of the same construct was found to be greater than 0.7. Similarly, items corresponding to all the constructs were having Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values less than 5 and outer loadings greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2016). In PLS-SEM, VIF values less than 5 indicate absence of collinearity and common method bias (Hair et al., 2016), refer Table III for validity statistics.

Table III: Validity Statistics – Formatively Measured Constructs

Constructs and Items	VIF Values	Outer Loadings	Convergent Validity	
			Path Coefficients	R^2
Work life Balance			0.744	0.55
WLB1	1.560	0.700		
WLB2	2.416	0.874		
WLB3	2.817	0.907		
WLB4	2.787	0.903		
Work Engagement			0.726	0.527
WE1	2.229			

WE2	2.046			
WE3	1.856			
WE4	1.802			

Reflectively Measured Constructs

Endogenous constructs organizational commitment (OC) and intention to stay (ITS) were measured reflectively. Both the constructs were examined for item loadings and it was found that all the items had loading above the threshold level of 0.70. Average variance extracted and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio for both the constructs was above the threshold value of 0.5 and 0.90 thus establishing convergent validity and discriminant validity respectively. Composite reliability although on the higher side was below the unacceptable level of 0.95 (Hair et al., 2016). Cronbach's alpha for both the constructs was above the threshold level of 0.7. The statistical parameters of the reflectively measured constructs are presented in Table IV.

Table IV: Reliability and Validity: Reflectively Measured Constructs

Constructs	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	HTMT Ratio	Outer Loadings
Intention to Stay (ITS)	0.804	0.942	0.918		
Organizational Commitment (OC)	0.854	0.921	0.829		
OC→ITS				0.754	
OC1→OC					0.922
OC2→OC					0.926
ITS1→ITS					0.922
ITS2→ITS					0.890
ITS3→ITS					0.895
ITS4→ITS					0.877

Estimation Procedure – Structural Model

Two exogenous constructs namely work engagement (WE) and work life balance (WLB), one mediating construct – organizational commitment (OC) and one endogenous construct – intention to stay (ITS) make up the structural model (Figure 2).
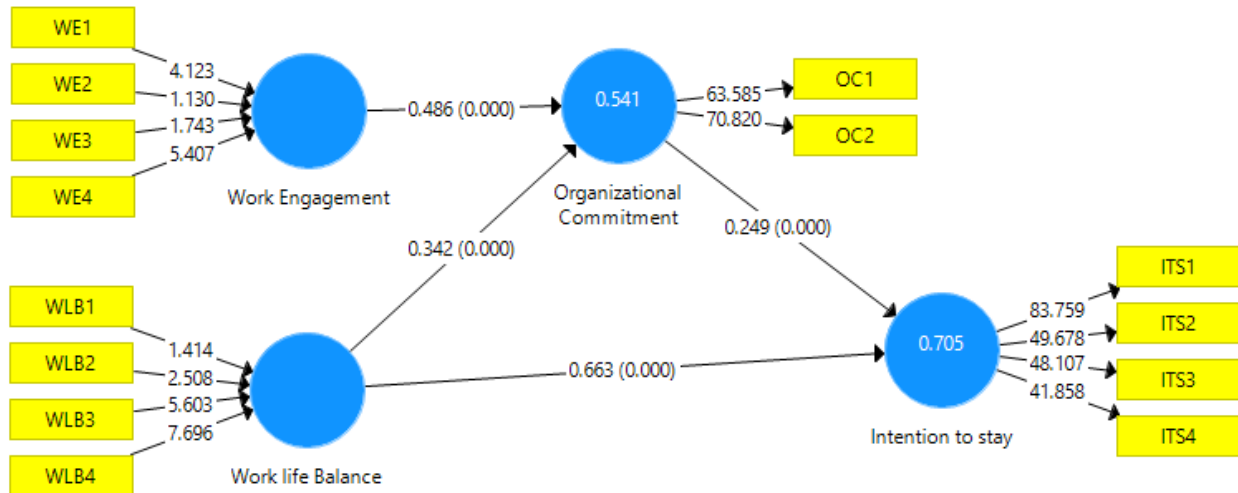
Figure 2: Final Model

The final model confirms the hypotheses that perceived work life balance and work engagement on account of work-from-home has a significant impact upon organizational commitment. The construct organizational commitment in turn exhibits simple mediating effect between work engagement and intention to stay, while in case of work life balance it exerts a complementary mediating effect (Table VI).

The path coefficients, total effects, total indirect effects and specific indirect effects for both the exogenous constructs were significant at 95% level of significance. Table V represents the values corresponding to these parameters. The bias corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping procedure was used with 1000 subsamples and "no sign change" option (Hair et al., 2016). As it is evident from table VI that none of the 95% confidence intervals includes zero for any of the parameters – path coefficients, total effects and R^2 values – therefore all the

hypotheses are accepted. The variance R^2 explained by the model is one of the key criteria for evaluating the quality of the structural model.

In the proposed model organizational commitment together with work life balance predicts 70.5% variance on intention to stay in the organization in case of work-from-home mode of working. Work life balance and work engagement as antecedents are able to predict 54.1% variance in organizational commitment. Further f^2 values corresponding to relationship between all the constructs were found to be statistically significant at 95% level of significance. Significant f^2 values indicate the relative importance of exogenous construct in predicting the variance in endogenous construct (Table V). In order to assess the predictive relevance of the model, blindfolding procedure was used to obtain Q^2 values ($Q^2_{ITS} = 0.558$; $Q^2_{OC} = 0.449$)

Table V: Structural Model Statistics

Path Coefficients						
	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Significant/Non significant (P<.05)
OC -> ITS	0.249	0.244	0.051	4.93	0.000	Significant
WE ->OC	0.486	0.488	0.054	9.068	0.000	Significant
WLB -> OC	0.663	0.668	0.047	14.254	0.000	Significant
WLB -> ITS	0.342	0.342	0.055	6.273	0.000	Significant
Total Indirect Effects						
WLB-ITS	0.085	0.084	0.026	3.309	0.000	Significant
WE-ITS	0.121	0.118	0.025	4.764	0.000	Significant
Specific Indirect Effects						
WE -> OC -> ITS	0.121	0.118	0.025	4.764	0.000	Significant
WLB -> OC -> ITS	0.085	0.084	0.026	3.309	0.001	Significant
Total Effects						
OC -> ITS	0.249	0.244	0.051	4.93	0.000	Significant
WE -> ITS	0.121	0.118	0.025	4.764	0.000	Significant
WE -> OC	0.486	0.488	0.054	9.068	0.000	Significant
WLB -> ITS	0.748	0.752	0.03	25.246	0.000	Significant
WLB -> OC	0.342	0.342	0.055	6.273	0.000	Significant
F-Square Effect						
OC -> ITS	0.131	0.131	0.053	2.473	0.014	Significant
WE -> OC	0.351	0.368	0.098	3.586	0.000	Significant
WLB -> ITS	0.924	0.969	0.228	4.045	0.000	Significant
WLB -> OC	0.174	0.182	0.062	2.815	0.005	Significant
R-Square						
ITS	0.705	0.709	0.037	19.257	0.000	Significant
OC	0.541	0.548	0.046	11.783	0.000	Significant
Q-Square	Q^2					
Q^2_{ITS}	0.558					
Q^2_{OC}	0.449					

Table VI: Hypotheses Testing

R^2 **Adjusted**						

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Bias	2.50%	97.50%	Hypothesis accepted/not accepted
Intention to stay	0.703	0.707	0.003	0.625	0.766	Accepted
Organizational Commitment	0.538	0.547	0.009	0.432	0.614	Accepted
Path coefficients						
Organizational Commitment -> Intention to stay	0.249	0.246	-0.003	0.159	0.364	Accepted
Work Engagement -> Organizational Commitment	0.486	0.492	0.006	0.365	0.579	Accepted
Work life Balance -> Intention to stay	0.663	0.665	0.002	0.534	0.739	Accepted
Work life Balance -> Organizational Commitment	0.342	0.341	-0.001	0.239	0.449	Accepted
Total effects – Mediating effect						
Organizational Commitment -> Intention to stay	0.249	0.246	-0.003	0.159	0.364	Accepted
Work Engagement -> Intention to stay	0.121	0.12	-0.001	0.076	0.176	Accepted
Work Engagement -> Organizational Commitment	0.486	0.492	0.006	0.365	0.579	Accepted
Work life Balance -> Intention to stay	0.748	0.75	0.002	0.666	0.799	Accepted
Work life Balance -> Organizational Commitment	0.342	0.341	-0.001	0.239	0.449	Accepted

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The world of work as we have known in the past was violently disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The organizations across the globe are searching for an alternate work arrangement that ensures the safety and welfare of the employees as well as continuity of the organizational business. The concept of work-from-home is not new (Reshma et al., 2015). It involves merging of a working environment into the household borders to allow for greater flexibility of responsibilities (Pennington&Stanford, 2020). Literature shows that the practice of bringing some percentage of work to home was not uncommon among the employees during the pre-pandemic times as well (Eldridge and Pabilonia, 2010).In the COVID-19 era, Work-from-home ensures a lower risk exposure to contagion for the employees (Pennington&Stanford, 2020).Work-from-home has been reported to be associated with increase in productivity (). In the present scenario it might be an alternative work arrangement that provides some respite to both – employees as well as employers to overcome the devastating impact of COVID 19 on business.

The study investigated the direct relationship between WLB and intention to stay as well as the study of the same relationship being mediated by organizational commitment. Work life balance has been researched widely and previous findings have reported that workers have been adopting selective working from their homes or some other alternate work arrangement that avoids working in a standard-corporate-setup manner(). However, in many of the cases the alternate work arrangement was a requirement from the employer rather than exercise of choice by the employee (H. B. Presser, 1995; G. Staines & Pleck, 1983) and this lack of flexibility was reported to be the reason for family conflicts (Kingston & Nock, 1985; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). When employees were provided the flexibility to choose the work timings, it led to some degree of harmony between work and life (Negrey, 1984; G. L. Staines & Pleck, 1986).

No matter how it originated the concept of alternative work arrangement is fast catching up owing to COVID 19 crisis. The organizations world over are exploring various work arrangements that ensure the safety and security of their employees and continuity of their operations. The findings from this studysuggest that perceived work life balance that employees envisage on account of work-from-home may lead to increased organizational commitment and enhanced intention to stay. These findings echo with earlier findings linking WLB with organizational commitment (J. S. Kim & Ryu, 2017; Shockley & Allen, 2007; Tippins & Stroh, 1993), and intention to stay(Mohd Noor, 2011; Puteh & Arshad, 2015).

Another dimension of the study focuses on the impact of work engagement on intention to stay, mediated by organizational commitment. While some studies treat work engagement as comprising both the elements of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Heikkeri, 2010), others have regarded these as two distinct constructs (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). In the context of the present study, work engagement is hypothesized as antecedent to organizational commitment and conceptualized as positive, affective-motivational, work related well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).Organizational commitment as a construct in the present study is referred to as a relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a specific organization (Mowday et al., 1978). The study on the basis of f^2 values points towardssignificant role of work engagement in predicting variance in organizational commitment. These results synchronize with earlier findings that have associated work engagement with organizational commitment(Fleming et al., 2005; Saks, 2006).

While a significant impact of WLB and work engagement on organizational commitment is anticipated, the relatively high value of R^2 is surprising, as also is the R^2 value for intention to stay. While it can be visualized that work-from-home may lead to increased perception towards to WLB and therefore lead to high R^2 value of organizational commitment. Enhanced perception of work engagement can either be attributed to 'Halo effect' arising out of aura created regarding job losses and impact upon business of COVID 19, affecting the attitude of people towards work. Literature reveals the 'Halo effect' can lead to unconscious alteration of judgements (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) or to the findings that bad events have greater impact upon our behavior as compared to good events 'Bad is Stronger than Good' (Baumeister et al., 2001). The uncertainty in the world of work due to COVID 19 appears to be having an impact upon the psyche of the employees making them more aware and involved with their work, thereby impacting organizational commitment and intention to stay.

The study further elaborates that during COVID-19, employees' intention to stay is influenced by

WFH perceived-WLB and WFH perceived-WE mediated by WFH perceived-OC. While WLB has a direct as well OC mediated impact upon intention to stay, the influence exerted by WE is mediated through OC. The result from the study are in line with findings from the earlier studies indicating a positive relationship between WLB and intention to stay (Heikkeri, 2010; Mohd Noor, 2011; Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010), organizational commitment and intention to stay (Chew & Chan, 2008; Meyer et al., 1993; Suliman & Al-Junaibi, 2010; Udo et al., 1997; Uraon, 2018).

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ever since the world has been rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the world of work has changed dramatically. Work-from-home has become a norm rather than exception and many of the organizations have realized that recovery might be slow and long. The organizations, as such are primed to embrace innovative work practices so as to find a sustainable solution to retain and enhance productivity, improve workplace flexibility and employee welfare.

The adoption of work from home systems solves many of the problems faced by the organizations and may be beneficial to society as well as the employees. The organizations can benefit as they will have the flexibility of remote working and the opportunity to operate 24X7 leading to enhanced productivity and customer servicing and satisfaction. This may however, entail increasing the staff strength from present levels. In case the companies decide to cap the staff strength, they can reap the benefits of lower overhead costs and considerable cut in the travel time of the employees. Further, the finding from the present study indicates that with the adoption of work from home, the organizations can expect greater employee commitment and intention to stay, as the employees perceive that new work methods will lead to better work-life-balance and

more engagement with work. Earlier studies have linked these two parameters with increased productivity and efficiency (Schaufeli et al., 2008), reduced burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006)and greater role fit (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the majority of them, in fact 71% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 20-34 years and 65% were unmarried. The findings from the study assume more significance as this generation represents the future work force, the importance and significance they have attributed to work-life balance should make the future employers take note of this factor while designing the work. This generation does not believe in the fixation of a workplace in their life but is looking for a harmonious relationship between work and family/personal life through flexibility of working hours and space. The employers therefore need to seriously think about adopting work-from-home (WFH) as an alternate work arrangement post COVID – 19. As this will not only lead to employee commitment, engagement and increased intention to stay, but will also ensure employee welfare, safety and security. The benefits to the organization are evident - increased intention to stay and increased organizational commitment.

The benefits that are associated with organizational commitment and the intention to stay are well documented. The novelty of this study lies in the fact that it investigates the perception of employees towards organizational commitment and intention to stay in case of work from home. The fact that employees' perception regarding work-life-balance and higher work engagement that they expect to experience is able to predict approximately 70% variance in intention to stay. These findings are probably compelling enough for the employers to seriously think about implementing work from home program.

The findings from this study together with findings from earlier studies that implementing work-from-homeis not only beneficial to organizations as it leads to increase in productivity (Bird, 2010; Stahl, 2019; Voytko, 2019)accompanied with enormous reduction in overhead costs(Voytko, 2019)– like reduction in consumption of electricity and printing, reducing carbon footprints and ensuring environment sustainability, it is also beneficial to society as availability of greater leisure time with family may fuel expenditure on entertainment, travel and tourism, thereby, leading to the revival of these sectors which have been badly hit by COVID-19. Work from home may be a stitch in time that may save nine stitches in future. It is not that the organizations have not dabbled with remote working before. Earlier in 2016, Yahoo! company reinstituted the work from home strategy after it was reportedthat there was an increase in productivity during the working time and greater employee satisfaction.

9. CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of sudden and disruptive introduction of world of work brought about by COVID-19. The concept of work-from-home has become a norm rather than exception. The companies do understand that road to recovery may be long and arduous, they are therefore looking at adopting innovative work arrangements that ensure flexibility, productivity and employee welfare.

This study investigates the relationship between employees' perception of improved work life balance, increased work engagement on account of work-from-home and intention to stay, with organizational commitment as a mediating variable. The study used PLS-SEM for analysis of data. The results indicate that endogenous constructs are able to predict 70% variance in intention to stay (mediated by organizational commitment). The bias corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping procedure was used with 1000 subsamples and "no sign change" option (Hair et al., 2016). As it is evident none of the 95% confidence intervals includes zero for any of the parameters – path coefficients, total effects and R^2 values – therefore all the hypotheses were accepted. In order to assess the predictive relevance of the model, blindfolding procedure was used to obtain Q^2 values ($Q^2_{ITS} = 0.558$; $Q^2_{OC} = 0.449$). Positive Q^2 values indicate that the model is able to predict the relationship between endogenous and exogenous variables.

The findings from the earlier studies involving work-from-home have pointed towards increase in productivity, increase in efficiencyand reduction in overhead costs (Purwanto et al., 2020; Pennington &Stanford, 2020;Reshma et al., 2020; Nakrosiene et al., 2019;Bloom, 2015; Eldridge &Pabilonia, 2010). These earlier findings along with the findings from this study that work-life-balance, work engagement experienced by employees due to work-from-home leading to increased intention to stay, mediated by organizational commitment may offer solution to companies for the web of problems spun by COVID-19.

10. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study is probably one of the first to investigate the perception of employees towards introduction of work-from-home as a norm. The results from the study point towards the fact that organizations can benefit from this new work engagement through increased organizational commitment and increased intention to stay. There, however, remain some limitations. Firstly, the study is limited to employees form ICT sector; results of the study need to be further substantiated by focusing on other sectors like, manufacturing, SMEs, etc. Secondly, and corollary to the first point, although a sample size

of 295 may be adequate to study a single sector, a larger sample size involving multiple sectors may provide deeper insights into the perceptions of employees towards work-from-home. Thirdly, this study only investigates the impact of improved work-life-balance and increased work engagement on intention to stay, the inclusion of other antecedents like impact of job satisfaction, employee involvement and so forth should make future studies more interesting and enriching. Fourthly, this study, while investigating perception of employees, has not accounted for cultural differences on the construct; a cross-cultural comparison may lead to differing findings and conclusions.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender: Male/Female
2. Marital Status: Married/Unmarried
3. Age: 20-34/35-50/50 and above
4. Do you work from home or not?
(The Questions below pertain to the Likert 5 Point-Scale)

S.No.	Constructs/Items	References
Work Engagement		
1	I perceive working in work-from-homemode will make me more enthusiastic about my job.	(Seppälä et al., 2009)
2	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will make me work more intensely.	
3	I perceive working in work-from-homemode will enable me to work continuously for long periods of time.	
4	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will make me more perseverant even when things will not go well.	
Work Life Balance		
1	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will enable me to spend more quality time with my family and friends.	(Kacmar et al., 2014)
2	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will enable me to stop worrying about work, even when I am not working.	
3	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will enable me to delegate work more efficiently.	
4	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will enable me to prioritize my to-do list each day and especially focus on my highest priority items more effectively.	
Organizational Commitment		
1	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will make me strongly committed towards my organization.	(Mowday et al., 1979)

2	I would recommend a close friend to join our staff.	
Intention to Stay		
1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career at my current organization.	(Ghosh et al., 2013)
2	Even if it were to my advantage, I will not feel it would be right to leave my organization.	
3	The offer of a bit more money with another employer would not seriously make me think of changing my job.	
4	I perceive working in work-from-home mode will enable my personal goals to be more aligned with my organizational goals.	