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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Work from home—Work engagement amid COVID-19 lockdown and employee happiness

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Prolonged lockdown as a part of the community mitigation steps to control the spread of the corona virus has led to massive work reorganization throughout the world. Companies as well as individuals are attempting to adjust to this new world of work. Organizations have shifted substantial parts of their work for certain sets of jobs to a "work from home (WFH)" format. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between WFH) work engagement and perceived employee happiness. WFH work engagement was hypothesized to be influenced by WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety. All of the constructs were adapted from established scales. Convenience sampling was used for data collection as, under the circumstances, this was the only viable method. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was used for data analysis. Results from this study indicate that WFH work engagement was able to predict a 23.9% variance in perceived happiness, while exogenous constructs, such as WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety, were able to predict a 25.2% variance in WFH work engagement. Further f^2 effect size (0.313) between WFH work engagement and happiness indicates high effect size. In order to assess the predictive relevance of the model, a blindfolding procedure was used to obtain Q^2 values. Q^2 values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance.

KEYWORDS
COVID-19, employee happiness, psychosocial safety, work engagement, work from home

1 | INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 (coronavirus disease-19) has caused severe disruptions in workplaces throughout the world. As per International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, in the first half of 2020, nearly 93% of workers were living in countries with some kind of workplace closure measures in place. Further, the outlook toward recovery in the second half, as predicted by ILO, is also uncertain (ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fifth Edition, 2020). Many organizations have adopted a "Work from Home (WFH)" approach to dealing with these circumstances. While for some workers, such as IT professionals, this sudden shift might not be a new experience; for others, it has been an entry into unchartered territory. Studies have shown that the category of work that can be shifted to home depends not only upon the nature of the work but also on cross-country heterogeneity (Jean-Victor et al., 2020). Occupations related to hospitality and tourism have a more difficult time shifting into a WFH mode, while software development, banking, and financial services are the occupations that appear to be the easiest to adapt to a WFH situation (Jean-Victor et al., 2020).

Some studies suggest that a WFH arrangement provides freedom and flexibility to the employees to plan when, where, and how they work (Putnam & Mumby, 2016), leading to reduced commuting time and an increase in family time. Other studies suggest the downside of WFH include the loss of a sense of workplace belongingness leading to a reduction in productivity (Bertschek & Niebel, 2016), blurred lines between work and home (Giruge & Vanessa, 2020), increased care giving duties due to the closure of schools, and less than optimal time

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to set up communication infrastructures at home (Hoffman et al., 2020). Earlier studies describe WFH as an interrole conflict between work and private life, in which pressures from both work and private life are incompatible (Chawla et al., 2020; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Whatever the case, the COVID-19 pandemic has surely changed the workplace forever. It also has brought into sharp focus the role of technology, particularly communication technology. It is safe to assume that in the future, communication technology will play an even more important role, with the reports and studies indicating that WFH is here to stay. TATA consultancy services, one of the leading Indian software companies, has already indicated that by 2025, only one-fourth of their employees will be coming to into the office (FEOnline, 2020). Also, some of the recent studies indicate that WFH is all set to be a part of work life. "If there is hysteresis as people learn new ways to work remotely and businesses reorganize, the pandemic-driven changes may portend more lasting effects on the organization of work" (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020, p. 24).

The sudden, massive, and disruptive changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic in the world of work presents an environment that is new to researchers and, therefore, requires careful investigation of its impact on various facets of work as well as on employees. In this regard, the aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between WFH-related autonomy, convenience, safety, and work engagement. Besides, investigating the relationship between autonomy, convenience, safety, and work engagement, this study aims to explore the relationship between work engagement, arising from the WFH arrangement and employee happiness.

The choice of these three exogenous constructs was based partially on a review of the existing literature and partially based on the prevailing circumstances. Earlier studies have linked WFH autonomy with work engagement and innovative work behavior (De Spiegelaere et al., 2016; Golden, 2012; Kossek et al., 2006; Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Versey, 2015), and other studies have established a significant relationship between the convenience of working from home and engagement (Bloom et al., 2015; Lamotte, 2015). On the other hand, construct safety was conceptualized based on the prevailing pandemic conditions as well as literature review. Earlier studies have also linked psychosocial safety with work engagement (Idris et al., 2015; Yulita & Idris, 2017).

2 | REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 | Autonomy and work engagement

Autonomy in the job or the degree of discretion that an employee has to decide about how and when to do a job, as well as what methods to adopt (Langfred, 2000), can be thought of as leading to work engagement—positive, affective-motivational, and work-related well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). A review of the literature showed a substantial number of studies that established a relationship between autonomy and work engagement. (Albrecht et al., 2013; Christian et al., 2014; Halbesleben, 2010). However, the strength of the relationship between autonomy and work engagement is found to vary across studies. While some studies suggest a weak relationship between the two constructs (DeLange et al., 2008; Weigl et al., 2010), others point toward no relationship (Mauno et al., 2007). This variation in relationship between the two might be the result of differences in perception of autonomy or differences in the values that an individual attaches to autonomy (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Shin, 2004; Stiglbauer & Kovacs, 2018). One of the many reasons that entrepreneurs thrive is the value they place on autonomy (Prottas, 2008; van Gelderen, 2016).

The first question the researchers sought to answer was whether there is a significant positive or negative relationship between WFH autonomy and an employee's work engagement. Thus, the first hypothesis was:

Hypothesis H1. There is a significant positive relationship between WFH autonomy and employee work engagement.

2.1.1 | Work from home autonomy and employee work engagement

Earlier studies have indicated that organizations are increasingly promoting working from home to enable employees to integrate work and home roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). It has also been reported in some of the studies that employees are willing to accept a lower salary in exchange for the convenience of working remotely (Mas & Pallais, 2017). The flexibility that a WFH format provides toward how and when to schedule the work around their home demands may lower employees' work-to-home conflicts (Golden, 2012; Kossek et al., 2006; Versey, 2015), reduce commute time, lower the frequency of work breaks, result in fewer reported sick days, and offer the convenience of a quieter work environment (Bloom et al., 2015). Contrary to these, other studies indicate that a WFH format, instead of leading to convenience, can be a source of conflict between work and home responsibilities (Schieman & Young, 2010; Voydanoff, 2005).

The time spent on commuting to and from the workplace represents not only a physical but also a psychological transition from home to work and vice-versa. Also time spent commuting does not belong to any of the domains in particular (Burch & Barnes-Farrell, 2020). Studies have indicated that employees' likelihood of being more irritable and susceptible to poor concentration and self-control at work or home are higher if they experience a strenuous ride to work or to home, respectively (Wiese et al., 2020). Studies also indicate a spill over between employees' work experiences on safety behavior during their commute. Employees are more likely to exhibit unsafe commuting behaviors as a result of work stress, as well as commuting stress (Burch & Barnes-Farrell, 2020).

The convenience of the WFH format is further facilitated by information and communications technology (ICT), due to its ability to

allow temporal and spatial mobility of certain types of work (Schlachter et al., 2018). Research also indicates that employees are more likely to adopt ICT if they perceive that they will be practically and technically supported (Bentley et al., 2016).

As mentioned, the convenience of the WFH format has some distinct advantages, such as reduced commute time, lower frequency of work breaks, fewer reported sick days, and a quieter work environment. All of these contribute toward enhanced employee productivity (Bloom et al., 2015). Besides employee's productivity, studies focusing on employee's engagement also stress the importance of taking into account the events in an employee's life outside of work (Lamotte, 2015).

Another question the researchers sought to answer was if a significant positive or negative relationship existed between WFH psychosocial safety and an employee's work engagement. Thus, the second hypothesis was:

Hypothesis H2. There is a significant positive relationship between WFH psychosocial safety and employee work engagement.

2.1.2 | WFH psychosocial safety and work engagement

Psychosocial safety refers to "freedom from psychological and social risk or harm" (Dollard & Bakker, 2010, p. 580). Psychosocial safety is predominantly viewed from the perspective of organizational climate and is referred to as "psychosocial safety climate (PSC)." PSC relates to "policies, practices, and procedures for the protection of workers' psychological health and safety" (Dollard & Bakker, 2010, p. 580). Studies have indicated a direct correlation between PSC levels, workers' psychological health, and work-related outcomes. Higher levels of PSC were found to be related to higher levels of work engagement (Idris et al., 2015; Yulita & Idris, 2017), as well as to lower emotional exhaustion (Idris et al., 2014; Yulita & Idris, 2017). Studies have also confirmed the moderating effect of PSC between job demands and fatigue, as well as job demands and engagement, suggesting that higher levels of perceived PSC may enhance recovery from daily fatigue (Garrick et al., 2014).

One of the community mitigating steps that most of the governments across the globe took was to encourage those who can work from home to do so (ILObrief, 2020). The measures have been put into place to ensure the safety and well-being of their citizens. While studies carried out earlier correlated workplace psychosocial safety with work engagement. An online search investigating the relationship between the two constructs, that is, psychosocial safety and work engagement during pandemics or during COVID-19, yielded no results.

A third question the researchers sought to answer was whether there was a significant positive or negative relationship between a WFH employee's work engagement, convenience, and sense of happiness. Thus, the third hypothesis was:

Hypothesis H3. There is a significant positive relationship between WFH employee work engagement, convenience, and happiness.

2.1.3 | WFH employee work engagement and employee happiness

Work engagement is usually referred to as a state that includes vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The term "vigor" relates to high-energy levels and mental suppleness while working. Dedication is characterized by strong involvement and the experience of a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, and challenges in one's work. Absorption refers to involvement in work with full concentration, whereby time passes quickly (Zyl et al., 2010). Engagement manifests itself when an employee feels an emotional and cognitive attachment to a work role (May et al., 2004). This feeling of attachment provides an opportunity for an employee to apply his/her signature strength to work (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), leading to a greater role fit and work engagement (May et al., 2004; Rothmann & Olivier, 2007).

Happiness relates to a state of mind in which an individual experiences a sense of joy, satisfaction, positive thinking, and a feeling that one's life is good, has meaning, and is worthwhile (Jalali & Heidari, 2016; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Studies have suggested three routes to happiness, a pleasant life, a meaningful life, and the engaged or the good life. The study further states that these routes can be pursued simultaneously, but meaningfulness and engagement appear to be more under the control of an individual (Peterson et al., 2005).

2.2 | Research gap

The sudden and massive disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reorientation of work, and the WFH format has become the norm rather than the exception. Although a number of studies have been carried out investigating the relationship between work engagement and happiness, this study is an attempt to investigate the relationship of the WFH mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the recent studies suggest that as people adapt to and learn new ways of working remotely, the pandemic-driven changes may have more lasting effects on the organization of work (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020). While the worldwide pandemic has prompted numerous recent studies, there is a gap in the present literature because this crisis situation is unprecedented and has not yet abated, so much is still unknown and unknowable.

2.3 | Scope of the study

As more and more businesses reorganize and analyze the costs and benefits of working from home, there appears to be the distinct

possibility that in the near future, the world may see many jobs being switched to WFH mode. If such a situation arises, it will be of interest for organizations and academicians to investigate and understand the impact of such a job switch on employee's engagement with work and their overall happiness.

2.4 | Research objectives

The following research objectives for this study were:

1. To identify and highlight the relevant factors that influence WFH work engagement.
2. To investigate the relationship between WFH work engagement and happiness.

Proposed model for the study is represented in Figure 1.

2.5 | Research methodology

2.5.1 | Research design

The purpose of the research design was to operationalize the conceptual plan (Kumar, 2014) in order to make the research fruitful (Thamilasaran, 2015), and lead toward the attainment of research objectives (Aaker et al., 2000).

2.5.2 | Research approach

Since the study was carried out with specific objectives intended to arrive at a definite conclusion, a descriptive approach using cross-sectional survey was adopted (Bajpai, 2013; Pannerselvam, 2016).

2.5.3 | Data collection method

The study was based on primary data collected from employees belonging to the capability maturity model integration (CMMI) Level 4 or 5, IT sector companies from across the country (India). These companies have established processes and standards. Also, as reopening and return of employees to their respective places of work will be governed by government guidelines and regulations, as well as company policies, this study is limited to those employees who were working from home during the data collection period. The collection of data was carried out between April 2020 and July 2020.

2.5.4 | Variable identification and design of survey instrument

The survey instrument was comprised of 16 items corresponding to five constructs, namely WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, WFH psychosocial safety, WFH work engagement, and happiness. The constructs forming the survey instruments were derived from established measurement scales; the construct of autonomy was adapted from physician job satisfaction scale (Konrad et al., 1999; Lichtenstein, 1984). WFH convenience was adapted from "facilitating conditions" construct of the modified unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Two new items were added to the construct on the basis of the feedback obtained from the respondents, namely, "work from home is convenient as it saves on commuting time" and "working from home avoids cross reporting to superiors other than reporting superior."

UTAUT2 elaborates on the factors that assist in adoption of technology, and the construct facilitating conditions deal specifically with availability of infrastructural and other facilities that promote adoption of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). WFH psychosocial safety was adapted from the second version of the Copenhagen Psychosocial

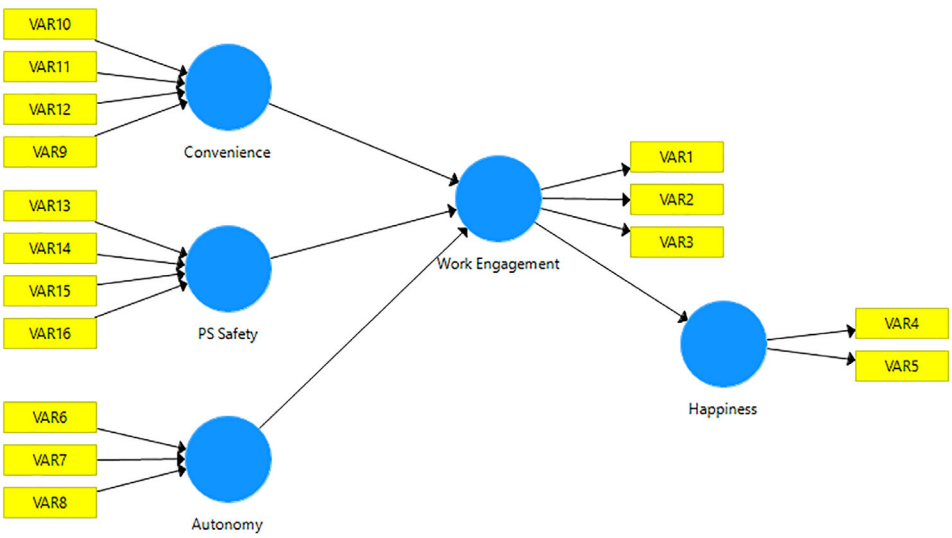

FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model

Questionnaire II (Pejtersen et al., 2010). The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire II (COPSOQ II) is an extension of COPSOQ I, which was a theory-based questionnaire intended to measure the psychosocial aspects of the work environment. COPSOQ has been translated into numerous languages, including Spanish, English, German, Chinese, etc. (Pejtersen et al., 2010). COPSOQ I has in fact been adopted as a standard for measuring the psychosocial work environment in Spain and Germany (Moncada et al., 2014; Nübling et al., 2006).

WFH work engagement was adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Seppälä et al., 2009) and happiness from the Oxford Happiness Scale (Hills & Argyle, 2002). The Oxford Happiness Scale is an extension of the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI), which was developed by the University of Oxford, Department of Experimental Psychology. The OHI has been reported to behave consistently across different cultures and countries, such as the United Kingdom (Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Joseph & Lewis, 1998), the United States (Valiant, 1993), etc. oxford happiness questionnaire, which is an extension of the OHI, consists of single item scale. These items can be incorporated into large questionnaires in random order (Hills & Argyle, 2002).

2.5.5 | Sample design

The researchers assured the respondents in the study that strict confidentiality would be maintained. Sample size for the study was determined on the basis of the "10 times rule" (Hair et al., 2017), which prescribes the minimum sample size in case a data analysis is carried out using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). As per the "10 times rule," the minimum sample size is equal to 10 times the maximum number of arrows converging on any construct in the study. In the present study, the maximum number of arrows converging on a construct was four, so the minimum sample size required was 40. However, for the present study, data were collected from 440 respondents employed in the IT sector, who currently work from home.

2.5.6 | Sample technique

The data for the study were collected from across the country (India) using the snowball method of convenience sampling. The prevailing conditions made this mode of data collection the most advantageous and viable. This method ensures the safety of the respondents as well as the researchers, since venturing out of one's home is presently avoided. Besides safety, this method was convenient, time-saving, and cost-effective. Also, convenience sampling was acceptable in an area involving no prior research (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2005). Further, the precondition that a sample should be a true representative of the population is rarely met, as the researchers are never sure of the respondents who have not been included in the sample. So, even if random sampling is used for collection of data, nonrespondents invalidate the logic of randomness.

Convenience sampling, which is considered one of the lesser methods of data collection, might be the only viable method under certain conditions, such as the conditions prevailing presently. As stated, earlier convenience sampling ensures the safety of the respondents as well as the researchers, is convenient, and is cost-effective. Also, analysis of the data using PLS-SEM does not require random sampling or the condition of normality to be met (Hair et al., 2017). However, in the past, studies have also combined convenience sampling with parametric testing using Amos (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2019).

2.6 | Data analysis and interpretation

2.6.1 | Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 440 responses were obtained out of which 57.3% were males and 42.7% were females. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

2.6.2 | A review of the construct measures

PLS-SEM was used to understand the relationship between WFH work engagement and happiness. WFH work engagement was hypothesized to be influenced by WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety. All of the constructs were adapted from established measurement scales. The construct of autonomy was adapted from the physician job satisfaction scale (Konrad et al., 1999; Lichtenstein, 1984). WFH convenience was adapted from the "facilitating conditions" construct of UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012), and two new items were added to the construct on the basis of feedback obtained from the respondents, namely, "work from home is convenient as it saves on commuting time" and "Working from home avoids cross reporting to superiors other than reporting superior."

WFH psychosocial safety was adapted from the second version of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Pejtersen et al., 2010), WFH work engagement from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Seppälä et al., 2009), and happiness from the Oxford Happiness Scale (Hills & Argyle, 2002). The exogenous constructs, WFH

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	252	57.3
Female	188	42.7
Experience (in years)		
10 and above	63	14.3
5–10	158	35.9
0–5	219	49.8

autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety, were measured formatively, while the endogenous constructs, WFH work engagement and happiness, were measured reflectively using a 5-point Likert scale.

2.7 | Estimation procedure and measurement model

2.7.1 | Formatively measured constructs

WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety were measured formatively. Convergent validity, collinearity, and significance of outer weights/loadings were evaluated beforehand.

2.7.2 | Validity and item loadings

While evaluating the convergent validity of the formative measurement model, the researchers examined whether the formatively measured construct was highly correlated with the reflectively measured construct of the same construct (Hair et al., 2017). WFH autonomy was reflectively operationalized through, "WFH gives me the flexibility to plan my work," global measure for WFH convenience was operationalized through, "work from home is convenient as I have the necessary resources available," and WFH psychosocial safety was operationalized through, "WFH saves me from the obnoxious office banter," respectively.

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., 2017). Path coefficients for all of the formatively measured constructs were found to be higher than the acceptable value of 0.7. Similarly, items corresponding to all of the constructs had variance inflation factor (VIF) values of less than five, except one of the items corresponding to WFH convenience, "working from home avoids cross reporting to superiors other than the reporting superior," which was removed from the scale. All of the items had outer loadings greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). In PLS-SEM, the VIF values were less than five indicating the absence of collinearity and common method bias (Hair et al., 2017). Refer to Table 2 for validity statistics. All of the items with outer loadings of more than 0.5 were retained, even if outer weights for these were less than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017).

2.7.3 | Reflectively measured constructs

Two constructs namely, WFH work engagement and happiness were measured reflectively. All the indicators in the reflective measurement model had loadings above the threshold level of 0.7. The average variance extracted for both the constructs was above the threshold value of 0.5 establishing convergent validity. Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio representing discriminant validity between the two constructs was below the threshold value of 0.9 as well. Composite reliability although on the higher side was below the unacceptable level of 0.95 (Hair et al., 2017). 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 3.

2.8 | Estimation procedure—structural model

The structural model comprises of three exogenous constructs that were measured formatively and two reflectively measured endogenous constructs.

The proposed model confirms the hypotheses that WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety have significant effect on WFH work engagement. The path coefficients, total

TABLE 2 Validity statistics—Formatively measured constructs

			Convergent validity	
Constructs and items	**VIF values**	**Outer loadings**	**Path coefficients**	**R^2**
WFH autonomy			0.783	0.612
AUT1	3.823	0.883		
AUT2	3.626	0.885		
AUT3	3.401	0.839		
AUT4	3.423	0.879		
WFH psychosocial safety			0.846	0.715
PSS1	3.315	0.918		
PSS2	3.179	0.892		
PSS3	2.404	0.844		
PSS4	2.642	0.873		
WFH convenience			0.871	0.864
CON1	2.114	0.973		
CON2	2.114	0.864		

TABLE 3 Reliability and validity: Reflectively measured constructs

Constructs	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	HTMT ratio	Outer loadings
WFH work engagement (WE)	0.797	0.922	0.872		
Happiness (H)	0.813	0.912	0.813		
WE→H				0.556	
WE1 → WE					0.924
WE2 → WE					0.918
WE3 → WE					0.944
H1 → H					0.887
H2 → H					0.965

TABLE 4 Structural model statistics

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (*SD*)	T statistics (|O/*SD*|)	*p* values	Significant/ nonsignificant ($p < 0.05$)
Path coefficients						
AUT - > WE	0.251	0.254	0.051	4.906	0.00	Significant
CON - > WE	0.18	0.18	0.036	5.056	0.00	Significant
PSS - > WE	0.239	0.246	0.045	5.304	0.00	Significant
WE - > H	0.488	0.492	0.037	13.254	0.00	Significant
Total indirect effects						
AUT - > H	0.123	0.124	0.025	4.994	0.00	Significant
CON - > H	0.088	0.089	0.02	4.429	0.00	Significant
PSS - > H	0.117	0.121	0.025	4.756	0.00	Significant
Specific indirect effects						
AUT - > WE - > H	0.123	0.124	0.025	4.994	0.00	Significant
CON - > WE - > H	0.088	0.089	0.02	4.429	0.00	Significant
PSS - > WE - > H	0.117	0.121	0.025	4.756	0.00	Significant
Total effects						
AUT - > H	0.123	0.124	0.025	4.994	0.00	Significant
AUT - > WE	0.251	0.254	0.051	4.906	0.00	Significant
CON - > H	0.088	0.089	0.02	4.429	0.00	Significant
CON - > WE	0.18	0.18	0.036	5.056	0.00	Significant
PSS - > H	0.117	0.121	0.025	4.756	0.00	Significant
PSS - > WE	0.239	0.246	0.045	5.304	0.00	Significant
WE - > H	0.488	0.492	0.037	13.254	0.00	Significant
***f*-square effect**					**Effect size**	
WE - > H					0.313	Large effect
***R* square**					***R* square-value**	
WE					0.252	
H					0.239	
***Q* square**					**Effect size**	
WE					0.194	Moderate effect
H					0.192	Moderate effect

effects, total indirect effects, and specific indirect effects of all of the exogenous constructs were significant at 95% level of significance. Table 4 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., 2017). 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, WFH work engagement predicts 23.9% variance in the

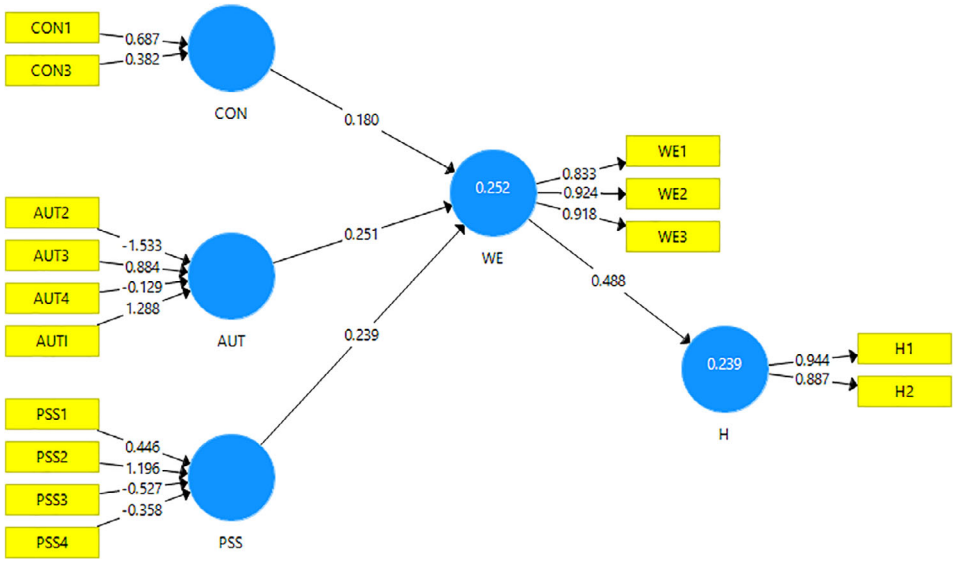

FIGURE 2 Final model

perception of happiness due to WFH work engagement. Further, WFH autonomy, WFH convenience, and WFH psychosocial safety as exogenous constructs predict 25.2% variance in WFH work engagement. In addition, f^2 effect size indicates that WFH work engagement has significant impact upon happiness. The final model depicted in Figure 2.

In order to assess the predictive relevance of the model, a blindfolding procedure was used to obtain Q^2 values ($Q^2_{WE} = 0.194$; $Q^2_{H} = 0.192$). Q^2 values of zero and above indicate that the model has predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017).

2.9 | Research findings

The findings of the study that autonomy has significant impact upon work engagement are in consonance with earlier studies (Albrecht et al., 2013; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Christian et al., 2014; DeLange et al., 2008; Halbesleben, 2010; Weigl et al., 2010). While these studies examined the relationship between the two constructs at physical workplace, the present study is an attempt to examine this relationship in the WFH mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from the study indicate that people experience autonomy in their work while working remotely, in this case, working from home, and this perception in autonomy has a significant impact upon work engagement, thus Hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Psychosocial safety relates to "freedom from psychological and social risk or harm" (Dollard & Bakker, 2010 p 580). Most of the earlier studies examined psychosocial safety in terms of organizational climate and have established a significant relationship between psychosocial safety at work place with higher work engagement, as well as psychosocial well-being (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Idris et al., 2014, 2015; Yulita & Idris, 2017). The novelty of this study lies in investigating psychosocial safety from a different point of view. The study examines perception toward psychosocial safety from the perspective of sense of safety arising when an employee feels safe about himself/herself, his/her family, and the employee's family feels safe about the employee while he/she is working from home during COVID-19. The path coefficient between WFH psychosocial safety and WFH work engagement suggests a significant relationship between the two, thus Hypothesis H2 is accepted.

The study examines the convenience of working from home during COVID-19 in terms of saving in commuting time and availability of technical support. The study is in line with other studies that suggest that an employee is likely to exhibit an irritability or engage in negative behavior at work depending upon the commuting experience (Wiese et al., 2020). Also, some of the studies have pointed toward employees' willingness to accept lower salaries in lieu of working from home (Mas & Pallais Harvard University, 2019). Happiness has been defined as "a state of mind in which an individual experiences a sense of joy, satisfaction, and positive thinking and a feeling that one's life is good and carries meaning and is worthwhile" (Jalali & Heidari, 2016; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Studies have suggested three routes to happiness, pleasant life, meaningful life, and the engaged or the good life. The study establishes that WFH work engagement during COVID-19 has a significant impact upon the employee's happiness. Some of the earlier studies too have suggested a significant relationship between employee engagement and happiness (Lalić et al., 2020). The findings from the present study suggest a significant relationship between WFH employee work engagement, convenience, and happiness, thus Hypothesis H3 is accepted. Overall, based on the findings of the study, all of the proposed hypotheses are accepted (Table 5).

2.10 | Practical implications

It is likely that employees and businesses who have adapted well to the WFH format will continue to employ this format in the future.. As such there is a distinct possibility that world of work as we had known pre-COVID 19 may no longer exist. Also, if we examine the exponential employment growth in "gig economy," we will be able to conclude

TABLE 5 Structural model statistics and proposed hypotheses

Hypothesis	Status
H1—There will be significant relationship between WFH autonomy and work engagement.	Accepted
H2—There will be significant relationship between WFH convenience and work engagement.	Accepted
H3—There will be significant relationship between WFH perceived psychosocial safety and work engagement.	Accepted
H4—There will be significant relationship between WFH work engagement and happiness	Accepted

that remote work will be the future workplace (Wilkinson & Barry, 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2020). Under such circumstances, our understanding of the concepts, as we know them and, in the context, we know them, may no longer remain valid.

The present study is an attempt to gain some insight into the changing context of the world of work as it exists today. The findings of this study hold practical implications for both academicians and organizations. The results of this study indicate that employees feel more engaged with their work because working from home affords them autonomy, safety, and convenience during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this work engagement leads to happiness. These findings may have practical implications for organizations as they can think of better ways to ensure that WFH employees' sense of autonomy is enhanced. Also, one of the items corresponding to the construct WFH convenience measured employees' perception of access to technical support, while they were working from home. Organizations in the future, if they do decide to shift some component of their work to the WFH format, may want to take a careful look at their technical support department.

Organizations and individuals having reorganized their work and experienced the virtues and pitfalls of the WFH format may find the outcomes of this study useful in deciding the context of future workplaces.

2.11 | Theoretical implications

The study makes four distinct contributions to the existing literature. First, it extends the concept of psychosocial safety to include the sense of safety an employee has about himself/herself, his/her family, and the sense of safety that the employee's family has about the employee. Earlier studies have defined psychosocial safety in terms of organizational climate (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Second, the study partially contradicts the findings from an earlier study that indicated engaged life to be under the control of the individual (Peterson et al., 2005). The results from the study indicate that work engagement is influenced by psychosocial safety, but, in this study, psychosocial safety is conceptualized as a sense of safety that an individual's family has about that individual. Third, the study supports the earlier findings that work engagement should be studied by taking into account the events in an employee's life outside of work (Lamotte, 2015). The findings from this study indicate that work engagement is not only influenced by factors related to work (autonomy) but also by factors outside of work (convenience and psychosocial safety). Finally, the study reaffirms the relationship between work engagement and happiness, but the same is investigated in the context of different environment, that is, work from home, rather than a physical workplace.

3 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is a preliminary attempt to investigate the positive outcomes associated with working from home. There are many other variables such as absence of workplace conflict, no work intrusions, etc., which may also impact working from home and need further investigation. Also, while this study investigates the positives associated with working from home, academicians, as well as organizations, may be interested to know and understand the negative impact of working alone, devoid of social contact, and connections with co-workers. Further, this study used a snow-ball method of convenience sampling for data collection. Another probability-based method might have improved the quality of data and provided deeper insight. Finally, as the sample frame of the study was limited to employees from the ICT sector, generalization of the results to other professions and regions may not be possible. Future research focusing on other sectors and wider geographical areas should attempt to eliminate these limitations.

4 | CONCLUSION

The lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the need for many companies to reorganize their work and, consequently, shift some components to a WFH format. While working from home is not an entirely new concept, the suddenness and the magnitude of the shift were probably new for the majority of businesses and employees. The findings from the present study led to two main outcomes. First, the results from the study point toward the role of autonomy, convenience, and safety in influencing WFH work engagement. Previous studies, as well as media reports, have pointed out that even when the pandemic subsides and the world of work returns to normal (pre-COVID 19), the work from home mode is here to stay (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020; FEOnline, 2020).

The results from this study can be very useful for organizations in the post-COVID world of work when they begin focusing on designing initiatives or developing programs to foster employee engagement. These findings are also in consonance with some of the previous studies that have linked autonomy, convenience, and psychosocial safety to work engagement (Albrecht et al., 2013; Bloom et al., 2015; Christian et al., 2014; Halbesleben, 2010; Idris et al., 2015; Yulita & Idris, 2017) Second outcome relates WFH work engagement with happiness. While the first outcome is important from an organization's perspective, the second outcome has more

relevance for employees, as it deals with their psychosocial well-being. Both outcomes, if viewed in totality, indicate that the post-COVID WFH mode, if handled and designed properly, may benefit organizations as well as employees.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX 1

S.No	Item	References
1	Working from home enables me to provide full range of services for which I am trained.	(Konrad et al., 1999; Lichtenstein, 1984)
2	Working from home allows me to set the pace of my work	
3	WFH allows me to schedule my work	
4	Working from home gives me the flexibility to make changes in the ways work is carried out.	
5	Work from home is convenient as technical support is always available	(Venkatesh et al., 2012)
6	Work from home is convenient as it saves on commuting time[a]	
7	Working from home makes me feel safe about myself	(Pejtersen et al., 2010)
8	Working from home makes my family feel safe about me	
9	Working from home reduces the risk of unnecessary exposure to strangers[a]	
10	Work from home assures safety of loved ones (family)	
11	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	(Seppälä et al., 2009)
12	I am enthusiastic about my job	
13	Time flies when I am working	
14	I feel particularly pleased with the way I am these days	(Hills & Argyle, 2002)
15	I feel that the life is very rewarding	

[a]Items inserted after feedback from respondents.