THE EFFECTS OF INVOLUNTARY WORKING FROM HOME ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE, WORK-LIFE CONFLICT, AND EMPLOYEES' BURNOUT

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ABSTRACT
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home (WFH) was supposed to be an HR practice to help employees attain a higher work-life balance. WFH has also been shown in previous research to reduce work-life conflicts. We suggest that these benefits of WFH are specific to voluntary WFH, and cannot be generalized to involuntary WFH, when it is not a choice, but a requirement. Unfortunately, research on involuntary WFH is extremely scarce. Using a time-lagged design, we collected data in three waves during the COVID-19 pandemic to test the effects of WFH on work life balance (WLB), work life conflict (WLC) and burnout. Results show that working from home directly and indirectly affects work-life balance, work-life conflict and burnout. The results also show that emotional exhaustion is the burnout dimension, which is most strongly influenced. Finally, results show that effects of WFH on burnout are mediated through WLB and WLC. These results significantly contribute to the research on working from home and burnout and present important directions for future research. In addition, the results help policy makers and managers in designing better WFH schemes and to develop conditions in which harmful effects of WFH are minimized.

Keywords: Working from home, work-life balance, work-life conflict, burnout.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work from home (WFH) involves managing one's time and other resources more efficiently while operating from home. It is one of the most flexible work arrangements that positively impact employees and organizations through outcomes, such as wellbeing, work-life balance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance (Bosua, Kurnia, Gloet, & Moza, 2017; Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2015; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). Inspired by the positive results, several organizations have made it a permanent feature of their policies.

Most research focused on the positive effects of WFH is based on the premise that it is a voluntary decision and a choice that organizations offer to their employees. However, little is known about what effects involuntary WFH would have on employees' personal and organizational outcomes. Whether involuntary WFH brings the same positive outcomes associated with voluntary WFH or are the effects of involuntary WFH harmful is a question that has yet to be answered. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in many more people working from home, a trend which is ongoing even after the pandemic. Thus, it is essential and urgent to investigate the effects of involuntary WFH on employees so that managers and organizations may plan accordingly. We, therefore, propose and examine the possible outcomes of involuntary WFH in this study.

In this study, we attempt to explore the proposed adverse outcomes of WFH in conditions where employees do not have a choice. More specifically, we suggest that WFH will disturb the WLB and enhance WLC, leading to burnout. Conceived as a set of negative psychological experiences (Leiter, Bakker & Maslach, 2014), burnout includes emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. Emotional exhaustion refers to the draining of emotional resources and is gauged by the presence of fatigue and stress reactions. Cynicism indicates an indifferent attitude towards work in general and is related to frustration, disillusion, and mistrust towards the organization and people (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Reduced professional efficacy is a behavior that decreases employee's feeling of competence and sense of achievement in their work. It is associated with a lack of personal accomplishment, subsequently reducing motivation (Maslach, 2003).

Using the Job Demand Control (JDC) framework (Karasek, 1979), we explain the positive effects of voluntary WFH on personal and organizational outcomes by highlighting that WFH offers flexibility to employees, which helps them manage their job demands efficiently. In contrast, involuntary WFH may be deficient in the flexibility or control element, lacking the advantages otherwise associated with WFH. Applying the JDC framework, we hypothesize that involuntary WFH may exert high job demands but offer low control, ultimately resulting in employee burnout. The job demands associated with involuntary WFH may include longer working hours and blurred work-home boundaries.

2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

The JDC framework (Karasek, 1979) is a theoretical model that attempts to provide insight into the effects of psychosocial work characteristics on employee motivation and well-being. This model can be utilized to investigate work-related stress and psychological fatigue in employees. JDC is based on the idea that employees experience job demands but have limited job resources. The job demands include workload, time pressure, and environmental conditions of the job, which elicit physical or mental depletion in employees. Resources or job control refers to the extent to which employees can manage the pace of work, deciding when and how to perform different tasks, along with a say in policy decisions.

Relationship between Working from Home and Burnout

The involuntary WFH is fundamentally distinct from the flexible telecommuting arrangement. Under this work plan, employees have little, or no volition related to WFH. Their access to physical infrastructure, tools, and resources in the workplace is also restricted (Chong, Huang, & Chang, 2020). Thus, involuntary WFH can be demanding and taxing as it might lack adequate control over resources, otherwise required for efficient performance (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, &

Golden, 2012). Additionally, employees may experience more strain while working from home (Giberson & Miklos, 2013) as they must spend extra time and energy in coordinating tasks, contacting colleagues for information, and fulfilling responsibilities without access to office technology or equipment (Rousseau, Tomprou, & Simosi, 2016). They may miss out on resources that otherwise facilitate spontaneous employee interactions, such as socio-emotional support, information, or the visibility that comes from simply being in the office.

For employees engaged in working from home involuntarily, the job becomes more demanding as it might require increased use of technological resources. Lacking adequate control over their resources to manage the increased demands, employees experience burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The anxiety associated with psychological stressors causes mental strain and exhaustion (Huang, Du, Chen, Yang, & Huang, 2011). The related excessive demands make them feel frustrated and indifferent towards work activities. Resultantly, employees show indifference to avoid job stressors (Ter Hoeven, van Zoonen, & Fonner, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesize that involuntary WFH triggers the three dimensions of burnout.

Hypothesis 1: Involuntary WFH has positive effects on emotional exhaustion and cynicism but negative effects on professional efficacy.

Relationship between Working from Home and Work Life Balance

Working from home gives rise to increased job demands. Individuals must divert additional resources towards their work domain to cope with these demands. As work and family life are two key domains, the supplemental resources needed to cope with job demands in the corporate arena come at the cost of reduced resources in the family sphere. Moreover, lack of control or coping mechanisms negatively affects the balance between work and life (Grönlund, 2007). In other words, when individuals have excessive job demands with limited resources, it reduces WLB or "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work and family role" (Greenhaus, et al., 2003; p. 513). With the invasive effect of technology, the boundaries between work and home get blurred with employees working odd hours at the cost of their privacy. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Involuntary WFH has negative effects on WLB.

Relationship between Working from Home and Work-Life Conflict

Work-life conflict occurs when involvement in one domain, for example, work or personal life, interferes with participation in the other domain (Grönlund, 2007). Involuntary WFH limits employees' flexibility to plan and organize the competing demands effectively. Therefore, employees must be simultaneously present in their work domain (though virtually) and non-work area (physically), which might give rise to concurrent demands. They must either choose between the demands arising from work or non-work domains. Given the fuzzy work-life boundaries and compromised resources, involuntary WFH blurs the line between work and family lives, giving rise to unmet demands and conflicts in work as well as non-work life arenas. We therefore suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Involuntary WFH has positive effects on WLC.

Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Burnout

WLB is defined as an individual's engagement and satisfaction in his/her work and family roles. When the balance between the work and family domain is not achieved, it could be a potential source of stress for employees (Grönlund, 2007). The role conflicts and physical and emotional demands associated with deteriorated WLB, cause further resource depletion and eventually

influence burnout (Lizano & Barak, 2012). When employees cannot perform work and family roles effectively, they suffer from emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of a sense of professional efficacy at work. Hence, we may hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: WLB has negative effects on emotional exhaustion, cynicism but positive effects on professional efficacy.

Relationship between Work-Life Conflict and Burnout

When employees experience increased demands but lack adequate coping resources, they perceive conflict between their work and life domains. It results in energy depletion as the employees cannot fully recover or conserve energies (Reichl, Leiter, & Spinath, 2014). Therefore, the inter-role conflict between work life and personal life spheres might elicit stress in employees. They might feel overwhelmed, experiencing an increased level of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished professional efficacy. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: WLC has positive effects on emotional exhaustion and cynicism, but negative effects on professional efficacy.

The Complete Chain: Working from Home, Work-Life Balance & Conflict, and Burnout

Involuntary WFH is associated with non-traditional work hours, blurred responsibilities and boundaries, simultaneous and conflicting demands from different life domains, and job intensification (Golden, 2012; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Because of the invasiveness of technology, employees are expected to be constantly connected and responsive. Hence, there is an ongoing challenge of balancing work and family roles. In situations where the appropriate resources are unavailable, involuntary work from home results in loss of WLB and increased WLC, subsequently leading to burnout in employees (Perry, Rubino, & Hunter, 2018). These arguments suggest that the effects of involuntary WFH on burnout are transmitted through WLB and WLC. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 6: WLB mediates the effects of involuntary WFH on emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy.

Hypothesis 7: WLC mediates the effects of involuntary WFH on emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy.

The figure below shows the conceptual model.

Figure 1. The Model
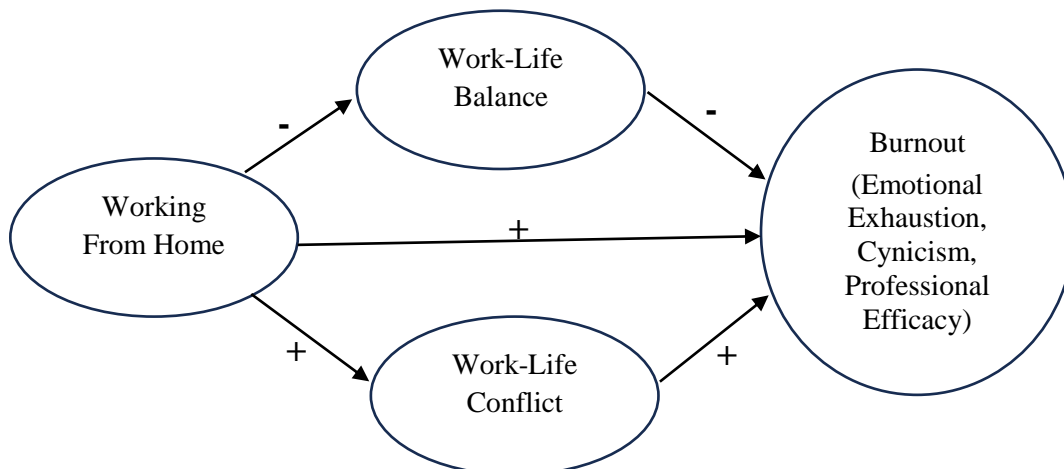
3. METHOD
Sample and data collection procedure
We collected data during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jan 2021 till March 2021) in Pakistan, when involuntary WFH became a norm. We sourced employees for participation in our study via email. Employees were contacted through professional contacts at organizations. Due to pandemic restrictions and lockdowns in Pakistan, only online collection of data was possible. Therefore, we used Google forms via email as the identifier to collect data.

To avoid common method bias concerns and mitigate causality issues we deployed a time-lagged multi-wave design. Data were collected in three waves, where each wave of data collection was temporally separated by three weeks. WFH was measured at time 1, WLB and WLC at Time 2, and the dependent variable, burnout at Time 3. The demographic information was also collected at Time 1. A total of 800 emails were sent at Time 1, out which 690 responses were received. At Time 2, 690 emails were sent to the respondents of the first wave, and 475 responses were received back. Then at Time 3, the third part of the questionnaire was sent to the 475 respondents of the second wave, and 285 responses were collected. Thus, the overall response rate was 35.6%. After removing questionnaires with missing data or unmatched identity (mentioning a different email address when filling in T3 data), 254 usable responses with data across all three waves were left. The final sample included 254 responses, which comprised 76.0% males, 74.4% married participants, and 35.4% employees working entirely from home.

To test the hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical multiple regression, using the software SPSS. To test the direct effects hypotheses, the controlled variables were entered first followed by the independent variables. Regression coefficients, p values, and R square values indicated the significance of direct effects. To test the mediation hypotheses, two separate regressions were performed. First, we conducted hierarchical linear regression to analyze the effects of the control variables (step 1), independent variables (step 2a), and mediators variables (step 3a) on the dependent variable. Second, we tested the effects of control variables (step 1), and mediator variables (step 2b) on dependent variable. Difference between regression coefficient of independent variable between step 2a and step 3a, along with the significance of regression coefficient of mediator variable in step 2b showed the presence of mediation effects.

Measures
The responses for WLB and WLC were gathered through items with five options likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Burnout was measured through rating options and WFH was gauged through number of hours. For all the measures, pre-established scales were adopted except for 'working from home'.

WFH was measured as the difference in hours of WFH before and during COVID. This was to adjust for the jobs for which WFH was a significant portion even before COVID-19. Thus, the IV was a continuous variable, measured in the additional number of WFH hours.

WLB was measured through 8-item scale developed by Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy (2013). WLC was measured through 5-item scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996).

Burnout was measured using the three dimensions of burnout in Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000).

Gender and marital status were used as control variables, as both may have implications for WLB, WLC, and burnout. Moreover, we also controlled for the preference of an employee to work from home, as this might also alter the effects of WFH.

4. RESULTS

To establish the discriminant validity of WLB, WLC, and burnout, we conducted three confirmatory factor analyses (independent variable, WFH was operationalized as a continuous variable). First, we loaded all items on a single factor, however data did not fit this model well (χ^2/d.f. = 6.102, CFI = .527, GFI = .498, AGFI = .421, TLI = .490, RMSEA = .142). Second, we created three factors, one each for WLB, WLC, and burnout. Fit indices for this model were better than the first model but not at satisfactory level (χ^2/d.f. = 3.610, CFI = .760, GFI = .674, AGFI = .621, TLI = .739, RMSEA = .102). Finally, we tested a five-factor model, with one factor each for WLB, WLC, and three dimensions of burnout. CFA results showed this to be the best model among the three models, with reasonable fit indices (χ^2/d.f. = 1.505, CFI = .955, GFI = .875, AGFI = .851, TLI = .950, RMSEA = .045). These analyses suggested that respondents were able to differentiate between study constructs, and common method bias did not impose any significant threat to the results of this study.

The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and bivariate correlations of the variables are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard Deviations and Bivariate Correlations of variables

	Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gender	.76	.43	-							
2	Marital Status	1.91	1.65	-.19**	-						
3	Work from home preference	3.37	1.28	-.33**	.07	-					
4	Work from Home	21.47	19.64	-.09	.07	.44**	-				
5	Work-life Balance	3.56	.67	.08	-.14*	.14*	-.09	-			
6	Work-life Conflict	3.00	.86	-.10	.08	-.04	.10	-.57**	-		
7	Emotional Exhaustion	2.29	1.53	-.12	.26**	-.003	.11	-.56**	.48**	-	
8	Cynicism	1.92	1.25	-.04	.23**	.01	-.03	-.38**	.30**	.66**	-
9	Professional Eff.	4.84	1.01	-.04	-.05	.05	.16*	.22**	-.04	-.19**	-.17**

Note. N=254; *p< .05 (2-tailed), **p< .01 (2-tailed); WHP= Work Home Preference, WFH= Work from Home, WLB= Work Life Balance, WLC= Work Life Conflict.
(Source: Authors calculations)

To test the hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical multiple regression. First, we conducted hierarchical linear regression to analyze the effects of the independent variable (WFH) on the two mediators (WLB and WLC). The control variables were added in the first step, and then in the second step WFH was added to assess its influence on WLB and WLC. Table 2 depicts that WFH has significant negative effects on WLB (β = -.19, p = .000) and significant positive effects on WLC (β = .14, p = .044). Hence, data supported hypotheses 2 and 3.

Table 2: Regression analysis for WLB and WLC

Step	Predictors	WLB		WLC	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
1	Gender	.12^x	.13^x	-.09	-.10
	Mar_Status	-.13*	-.12^x	.07	.07
	WHP	.18**	.27***	-.08	-.14
2	WFH		-.19**		.14*
	F	4.366**	5.20***	1.35	2.05^x
	R^2	.051	.079	.016	.016
	ΔR^2	.051	.028	.032	.016

N=254; Regression coefficients are standardized ones. $^x p < .1$; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$.
WHP=Work Home Preference, WFH = Work from Home, WLB = Work Life Balance.
(Source: Authors calculations)

Table 3 shows the results of hierarchical linear regression to assess the effects of WFH, WLB and WLC on the three dimensions of burnout. Table 3 shows that WFH has significant positive effects on emotional exhaustion (β = .14, p = .046). However, the effects of WFH on cynicism were insignificant (β = -.05, p=.461). Counter to hypothesis 1, the effects of WFH on professional efficacy were positive (β = .17, p=.02). Hence, data partially supported the first hypothesis. Results show that WLB has significant negative effects on emotional exhaustion (β = -.43, p=.000) and cynicism (β = -.31, p = .000) but significant positive effects on professional efficacy (β = .31, p = .000). Hence, hypotheses 3 was supported. WLC has significant positive effects on emotional exhaustion (β = .21, p=.001). However, the effects of WLC on cynicism (β = .13, p =.079) and professional efficacy (β = .09, p=.222) were non-significant. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was only supported for emotional exhaustion.

Table 3: Regression analysis for emotional exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy

Step	Predictor	Emotional Exhaustion			Cynicism			Professional efficacy		
		M 1	M 2	M 3	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 1	M 2	M 3
1	Gender	-.05	-.06	.02	.014	.02	.07	-.02	-.03	-.06
	Mar_Stat	.25***	.24***	.18***	.24***	.24***	.19***	-.05	-.06	-.03
	WHP	-.05	-.11^x	.04	.001	.02	.13^x	.05	-.04	-.10
2	WFH		-14*	.03		-.05	-.13*		.17**	.22**
3	WLB			-.42***			-.31***			.31***
	WLC			.21***			.13^x			.09
	F	6.08***	5.61***	25.51***	4.74***	3.69***	10.32***	.42	1.83^x	4.16***
	R^2	.069	.084	.387	.055	.057	.204	.005	.029	.094
	ΔR^2	.069***	.015*	.303***	.055**	.002	.184***	.005	.024^x	.064***

N=254; Regression coefficients are standardized ones; $^x p<.1$, $*p<.05$, $**p<.01$, $***p<.001$

(Source: Authors calculations)

To test the proposed mediation hypothesis, model 4 of PROCESS v3.5 by Hayes (Hayes, 2017) was used. It was observed that there was a significant positive indirect effect of WFH on emotional exhaustion through WLB (b = .008; BCaCI =.002 - .014]. Similarly, there was a significant positive indirect effect of WFH on cynicism (b =.005; BCaCI =.001 - .009] and a significant negative indirect effect on professional efficacy (b= -.002; BCaCI = -.005 - -.001]. These results supported Hypothesis 6. Table 4 shows these results.

Moreover, with respect to mediation through WLC, it was observed that there was a significant positive indirect effect of WFH on emotional exhaustion through WLC (b = .005; BCaCI =.0001 - .010]. However, the indirect effect of WFH on cynicism through WLC (b =.003; BCaCI =.000 - .006) and on professional efficacy (b= -.001; BCaCI =-.0022 - .0004) came out to be insignificant. Thus, hypothesis 7 was partly supported. Table 5 shows these results.

Table 4: Total, Direct, and Indirect effects of WFH on Three Dimensions of Burnout.
Role of WLB as a mediator.

Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Emotional Exhaustion				
	Effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Total Effect	.011	.005	.0002	.021
Direct Effect	.003	.005	-.006	.012
Indirect Effect	.008	.003	.002	.014
Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Cynicism				
	Effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Total Effect	-.003	.005	-.012	.005
Direct Effect	-.008	.004	-.016	.000
Indirect Effect	.005	.002	.001	.009
Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Professional Efficacy				
	Effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Total Effect	.009	.004	.002	.016
Direct Effect	.011	.004	.004	.018
Indirect Effect	-.002	.001	-.005	-.001

(Source: Authors calculations)

Table 5: Total, Direct, and Indirect effects of WFH on Three Dimensions of Burnout.
Role of WLC as a mediator.

Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Emotional Exhaustion				
	Effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Total Effect	.011	.005	.0002	.021
Direct Effect	.006	.005	-.004	.015
Indirect Effect	.005	.003	.0001	.010
Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Cynicism				
	Effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*

	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	-.003	.005	-.012	.005
Direct Effect	-.006	.004	-.015	.004
Indirect Effect	.003	.002	.000	.006

Bootstrap results for Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect on Professional Efficacy

	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	.009	.004	.002	.016
Direct Effect	.010	.003	.002	.017
Indirect Effect	-.001	.001	-.002	.000

N = 254; $^x p<.1$, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
Control variables = gender, marital status; WHP=Work Home Preference; WFH = Work from Home; WLC = Work Life Conflict. Bootstrap Sample size = 5000. LL = Lower Limit, CI = Confidence Interval (95%), UL = Upper Limit

(Source: Authors calculations)

5. DISCUSSION

In the current study, we suggested that unlike the positive effects of voluntary WFH, the effects of involuntary WFH on employees would be negative. Using the Job Demand Control (JDC) framework (Karasek, 1979), we hypothesized that involuntary WFH would decrease work-life balance but increase work-life conflict. We further hypothesized that reduced WLB and increased WLC would trigger burnout in employees. Data collected in three time-lagged waves from 254 employees working full-time or part-time from homes during the COVID-19 crisis largely supported these hypotheses.

Results show that employees working from home for more hours experienced significantly lower WLB and higher WLC. Results also show that WLB has significant effects on all three dimensions of burnout. In contrast, the effects of WLC were significant only for emotional exhaustion but not for cynicism and professional efficacy. Results also confirmed that WLB and WLC mediate the effects of WFH on burnout. Indirect effects of WFH through WLB were significant for all three dimensions of burnout. However, the indirect effects of WFH through WLC were significant, only for emotional exhaustion but not for cynicism and professional efficacy. These findings have several important implications, both for practice and research.

Practical Implication

The results of this study inform managers and policymakers to design more effective and beneficial policies during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. First, managers should be cognizant of the additional demands that WFH imposes on employees. Mastering the online platforms, managing work, and home chores simultaneously, and reduced organizational resources could be the potential reasons for these demands. Second, not everyone is likely to suffer equally from WFH. Results show that married employees experienced a significantly higher level of WFH on emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Similarly, the employees who prefer to work from home (high WHP) reported a significantly higher level of WLB. One of the most critical steps that organizations should take is to identify the employees and jobs at greater risk of being negatively affected by WFH. Third, the results show that the effects of WFH on burnout are mediated through WLB and WLC. Previous research has highlighted policies and initiatives such as flexible timings, family-friendly policies, etc., to help employees maintain a

healthy WLB and avoid WLC. Thus, one way to mitigate the adverse effects of WFH on burnout could be to use these initiatives and ensure that employees are maintaining a good WLB.

Theoretical implications, future research directions, and study limitations
The present study offers at least three significant theoretical contributions. First, the results show that the effects of human resource management policies and practices are contextual and depend on how employees perceive them. Thus, WFH can have adverse effects on employees' wellbeing if this practice triggers the perceptions of increased demands and reduced control. Second, the results contribute significantly to the burnout literature by identifying involuntary WFH as a precursor of burnout. The results also uncover the distinct direct effects of WFH on the three dimensions of burnout. These highlight that WFH has adverse and significant effects on emotional exhaustion. Effects of WFH on cynicism were insignificant, whereas effects of WFH on professional efficacy were positive and significant. It is possible that continued WFH may gradually affect the other dimensions of burnout. However, it is also possible that WFH has adverse effects exclusively on emotional exhaustion and not on cynicism and professional efficacy. Future research may shed light on these relationships by studying the effects of continued WFH over a long time. Counter to our expectations, the direct effects of WFH on professional efficacy were significant and positive. In contrast, the indirect effects of WFH on professional efficacy through WLB and WLC were significant and negative. It is possible that mastering online working platforms triggers positive perceptions about professional effectiveness. Whether the effects of continued WFH on professional efficacy will remain positive is another question that future research can investigate.

Finally, the current study contributes to the literature on WLB and WLC significantly. In addition to the identification of WFH as the driver of WLB and WLC, the results highlight WLB and WLC as the underlying mechanisms, which translate the harmful effects of WFH on burnout. These results trigger several interesting questions for future research. What are other mechanisms through which WFH affects employees' wellbeing? Whether the effects of WLB on the three dimensions of burnout are more sudden than the effects of WLC on burnout dimensions? Is there a temporal sequence in which WLB and WLC affect burnout? Would the effects of continued WLC will be significant on emotional exhaustion only, or if WLC will also affect cynicism and professional efficacy in the long run?

Like any other research, this one is not without some limitations. First, all the data for this study is from one source, collected through self-reported questionnaires. To reduce the common method issues, we employed a three-wave time-lagged method to collect data, using varied scales for different constructs. These measures and the CFA results suggested that common method bias did not affect the current results significantly. Second, although the literature suggests the causal direction to be from the stimulus affecting the demand-control balance (WFH in this case) towards employee wellbeing, we cannot establish causality through this research. Third, the respondents were from various jobs, organizations, and industries. Although such selection increased the generalizability of our results, there is a possibility that the effects of WFH vary depending upon the nature of jobs, organizations, and industries. Finally, there could be mediating mechanisms other than WLB and WLC, and it remains an area for future researchers to identify such mechanisms.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study significantly add to the literature on WFH, WLB, WLC, and burnout. This is one of the earliest studies to explore the harmful effects of involuntary WFH and identify the channels through which these effects are transmitted. The

practical implications can help managers deal with the adverse effects of WFH during and after the COVID crisis. The findings also help policy makers to design WFH schemes after carefully weighing the potential advantages with the unavoidable disadvantages. Further, the theoretical implications add to the existing literature and open several new avenues of future research.

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