

A Comparative Study of Remote Work and Hybrid Work Models: Adapting to the New Normal

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Before the Covid-19 pandemic, traditional office-based work models were prevalent in the corporate sector. Employees were generally expected to work on-site, with remote work being infrequent and mostly restricted to certain roles or situations. In the wake of the global health crisis caused by Covid-19, novel concepts such as remote work and hybrid work have emerged in the corporate sector. This shift has given rise to a new normal, where online and virtual modes have become integral to the functioning of almost all organizations. While the positive aspects of this evolving work culture are evident, existing research also highlights certain drawbacks. Among these trends, the hybrid work style appears to be the favored choice. This paper delves beyond mere statistical and comparative analysis of an existing dataset and data encompassing individuals ranging from the employed, unemployed, to newcomers in the job market, collected by conducting a survey. The study explores the merits and demerits of this new working environment from a future-oriented perspective. The findings unveil a strong inclination toward hybrid work culture among the majority of respondents. Interestingly, employers still exhibit a preference for on-site or office-based work.

Keywords: Work from Home, Hybrid Working, Information Technology, Work from Office, Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic had a big impact on the working environment in the entire globe. Remote work has become more common than ever before, as many countries implemented lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the virus [18][26]. As a result, as companies were compelled to adjust to this new reality, more employees were working from home. The popularity of remote work soared during the pandemic, surpassing its previous levels, despite its existence for a considerable period of time. Employees who work from home (WFH) can avoid long commutes, which can be exhausting and time-consuming [32]. A better work-life balance and higher productivity could emerge from this reduction in commute time.

Furthermore, remote work enables employees to work from anywhere in the world. Individuals residing in remote areas can have the most significant advantages, as it provides them with access to work opportunities that were previously inaccessible [14]. Businesses might gain from it since it enables them to access a global talent pool and hire the top applicants from any location. The extensive shift has compelled companies to swiftly enhance their digital presence, employing cloud storage, cyber security measures, and device tools to accommodate their newly established remote workforce [1].

Despite these advantages of work from home like: global reach of job applicants, low operational costs for companies, friendly and relaxed environment and many more, remote work is not without its drawbacks. One of the most difficult challenges is the lack of face-to-face interaction with coworkers. This can make it difficult to form strong working relationships and lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection. It can also be more difficult to collaborate on projects and communicate effectively, especially if you work from multiple locations. Another disadvantage of remote work is the possibility of feeling isolated and lonely [5]. Remote workers may feel isolated from their colleagues and the broader company culture because they lack the social interactions that come with working in an office setting. This can have an effect on morale and motivation, and may even lead to higher turnover rates.

A survey carried out on 1,421 knowledge workers, encompassing individuals engaged in computer-based work that can be remotely conducted to some extent, took place during the week of March 21-25, 2022 [9]. In this study, it has been found that, to tackle some obstacles like maintaining employee productivity and engagement, fostering social interactions and teamwork, organizations might need to allocate resources towards adopting new technologies and implementing strategies to effectively manage remote teams. This may involve the utilization of productivity and engagement tracking tools, along with the implementation of programs that foster social interactions and teamwork. Employees themselves need to take initiative in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and actively seeking opportunities for social interaction and professional growth [9] [24].

To summarize, the growth of remote work is expected to continue in the coming years. While there are some drawbacks of remote work, there are also many advantages, such as increased flexibility, productivity, and access to global talent [22]. Companies and employees can make the most of this new way of working by being aware of the potential drawbacks and investing in the right tools and strategies.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 1 provides an introduction to the current topic remote working in the corporate world, Section 2 presents a literature review on the topic, Section 3 includes SWOT analysis on work from home, and Section 4 conducts a SWOT analysis on hybrid working. Section 5 represents the analysis on the existing dataset observed results, Section 6 is the analysis of the current survey. Section 7 is the Comparative Analysis of the existing and current survey, Section 8 is all about observations and finally Section 9 is the conclusion

2. Literature Review

Research indicates that remote work arrangements offer numerous benefits, such as heightened productivity, job satisfaction, employee retention, engagement, and performance outcomes. After reviewing on the benefits and drawbacks of remote working practices in the IT industry, it is possible to provide recommendations on implementing best practices in virtual teams while effectively addressing any potential negative consequences that may arise from engaging in such setups. According to one of the research, working from home resulted in 13% improvement in performance, with 9% attributed to increased work time per shift (including fewer breaks and sick days [6].

Numerous research studies have investigated the advantages of work from home and hybrid working. Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) study revealed that remote work can enhance job satisfaction, diminish the conflict between work and family life, and boost productivity[13] [10]. Likewise, Bloom et al.'s (2015) research found that remote workers tend to be more productive compared to those who work in the office. Furthermore, Bailey and Kurland (2002) showed that remote work can reduce expenses associated with office space, commuting, and other related costs.

The IT industry has increasingly embraced hybrid working, which involves combining remote and office-based work. According to a study by CIPD (2020) [6], a majority of employers, i.e., 61%, plan to adopt hybrid working models in the future. This approach provides the advantages of remote work, such as enhanced flexibility and cost savings, while also facilitating in-person communication and collaboration. Nevertheless, there are some challenges linked to implementing hybrid working, such as ensuring equal treatment of remote and office-based employees and providing the necessary resources to support remote work (Bosua et al., 2021).

In overall, the literature supports the notion that work from home and hybrid working are the future in IT. The benefits of remote work, such as increased productivity and reduced costs, make it an attractive option for both employees and employers. However, there are also challenges associated with remote work, such as social isolation and difficulty managing remote teams [4]. Hybrid working offers a compromise between remote and office-based work, providing the benefits of both models while mitigating some of the associated challenges. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape the way we work, it is likely that we will see an increased adoption of work from home and hybrid working models in the IT industry.

With reference to data from 2021, breakdown of the global working population are shown in [Figure 1]:

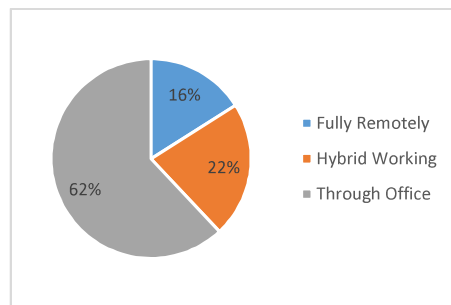


Figure 1: Worldwide working Breakdown [25]

Age is important too. 42% of generation Z wanted to work remotely 1-2 days a week, while 37.8% of Millennials want to work remotely 3-4 days a week. [25]. In the second quarter of 2022, Microsoft accounted for nearly 40 percent of the global unified communications and collaboration market. In 2021, companies' main IT investment priorities to support WFH were cloud-enabled technologies and digital collaboration tools [11].

3. Work from Home

Working from home, often known as telecommuting, is a common practice in which employees carry out their job responsibilities away from the typical office settings [15]. There are different perspectives to look at it and everyone has their different preferences for it, but flexibility and higher productivity are benefits of this arrangement, but there may also be drawbacks, such as difficulty in achieving a healthy work-life balance and feelings of loneliness [7]. The effectiveness of remote work arrangements depends on careful planning and attention always

3.1 Strengths

Working from home has several advantages, including greater flexibility in scheduling and managing day-to-day life [32], saving money on transportation, parking, and professional wardrobe [33], and fewer interruptions from meetings and chitchats [27]. Working from home also allows for better control over managing energy and matching breaks to natural peaks and dips in focus [32]. Additionally, remote work can help keep employees safe from communicable diseases [28]. However, there are also some drawbacks to working from home, such as the potential for isolation and longer working hours [32]. Overall, remote work may be a good fit for those who value flexibility and independence in their work.

3.2 Weaknesses

There are always two sides of a coin. Therefore as there are benefits of work from home, there are also some limitations of it. First of all, the absence of social connection is one of the main disadvantages of WFH. People who work remotely sometimes feel alone and cut off from their coworkers and the corporate culture. This isolation and lack of social engagement can have a harmful impact on their mental health.

Secondly, WFH may interfere with productivity. Employees who are not held accountable or monitored may find it difficult to remain motivated and concentrated at work. Productivity can also be hampered by distractions from home, such as household duties or family issues. And neglecting self-care can also be an issue.

3.3 Opportunities and Threats

Working from home presents both opportunities and threats. Some of the opportunities include increased flexibility, reduced commuting time and costs, and the ability to work from their comfort zone [30]. However, there are also challenges associated with working from home, such as increased isolation, blurred work-life boundaries, inadequate equipment, and hovering supervisors [30][31]. Additionally, working from home can pose cyber security risks, such as email phishing, weaker security controls, and cyber-attacks on remote-working infrastructure [32][33]. To mitigate these threats, it is important to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, invest in adequate equipment, and implement strong cyber security measures [32][31][33]. Overall, working from home is likely to remain a popular option for many employees, and it is important to address the challenges and opportunities associated with this model of work

4. Hybrid Working

Hybrid working is an approach that mixes traditional workplace structure with opportunities to work remotely or on-site if necessary. The capacity to conduct information-based work from home has increased substantially, due to advances in videoconferencing, file sharing and cloud-based systems, which have become more accessible and higher quality [8]. It allows employees some flexibility when arranging their working hours, so they are free to choose whether they want to come into the office on certain days of the week or continue their work entirely outside the office walls. A potential solution could be to create flexible schedules that ensures both offices have enough staff while allowing teams to have some freedom in deciding when and where they work. For example, instead of requiring individuals to attend all meetings in person every day, they could be assigned specific roles or time periods during the week or month when their physical presence is necessary. This approach strikes a balance between meeting the needs of both offices and giving employees some flexibility in managing their work schedules [16]. Besides this, according to one of the reports, only 36 percent of employees would choose to come on Friday compared with 82 percent on Wednesday [2].

4.1 Strengths

Hybrid working allows employees to have autonomy over their own productivity levels, while creating an environment where collaboration between team members still takes place on a regular basis [21]. Employees no longer have to stress about long commutes or struggle to find a balance between their personal lives and time spent at the office – making it easier than ever before to focus on quality output and results [12][23]. This approach not only boosts employee satisfaction by allowing them to decide how they tackle their work without excessive control from managers. It promotes a more understanding and supportive environment within the company and also creates an ideal situation for learning fresh skills and information uptake from managers and peers alike due to increased interaction opportunities with colleagues remotely too through video meetings etc. [19]

Work from anywhere should be viewed as a non-pecuniary benefit that should be preferred by workers, whose utility would increase by moving from their current location to a more highly preferred location [3]. Remote offices also costs less, given there isn't daily operational expenses such as rent/utilities amongst other things - saving money not just for employees but employers who don't invest large amounts into traditional leased workplaces either. Following the implementation of the lockdown orders of Covid-19 pandemic, there was a notable reduction in traffic volume, estimated to be around 45%, during the initial six-week period. This decreased in traffic coincided with a decrease in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, as indicated by BEACON data, which recorded a decline of approximately 25% compared to the preceding six weeks [20].

4.2 Weaknesses

However, hybrid working also has some limitations. One of the challenges of hybrid working is the need for effective communication and collaboration between remote and in-office workers [27]. This can be addressed by using technology such as video conferencing and collaboration tools [29]. Another limitation is the potential for an in-group and an out-group to form, where remote workers may feel excluded from office culture and decision-making [30]. This can be mitigated by creating a culture that supports both remote and in-office workers [28].

Managing a hybrid team can present several challenges, including maintaining productivity, collaboration, and communication, ensuring equity and inclusion, and maintaining organizational agility [31] [27] [28] [29]. In a hybrid setup, it can be difficult to monitor productivity and ensure that all team members are contributing equally [28]. Collaboration and communication can also be challenging, as team members may be working from different locations and time zones [31]. Managers

need to ensure that all team members feel included and have equal opportunities for growth and development [27]. To overcome these challenges, managers can offer support, set clear expectations, prioritize flexibility, emphasize inclusion, and strive for equity [27]. It is also important to use technology effectively to facilitate communication and collaboration among team members [31]. There are always exceptions as there are many occupations which comes under non-technical backgrounds in which hybrid or work from home is not possible.

4.3 Opportunities and Threats

Hybrid working, which combines in-person and remote work, presents both opportunities and threats. Benefits can include saving money on office expenses, providing employees with more flexibility in their work arrangements [27], access to global workforce and redefined collaboration etc. However, there are also challenges associated with hybrid work, such as feeling less connected to the organization and colleagues, and coordination challenges [28][29]. Other challenges include maintaining organizational culture and social cohesion, declining productivity, and stress management [28] [29]. To overcome these challenges, leaders need to focus on human connection, communication, and productivity [28]. Overall, hybrid work is likely to be the norm for many organizations in the near future, and it is important to address the challenges and opportunities associated with this model of work.

5. Analysis on Existing Dataset

The current survey is based on questionnaire specific to the objective of study, along with the statistical analysis of an existing data set with attributes based on professional growth, laziness, productivity, improvement of skillset etc. The existing data is the survey on professionals with different occupations, in the age group of 24-53 [17]. The existing study is all about the preferences on WFH vs. WFO. Most of the responses collected in the existing one were in the form of yes or no and in the scale range of 1-5 referring to disagree to strongly agree.

The existing dataset that has been used for a comparative study purpose includes information on individuals' age, occupation, gender, location (whether they work from home or in the office), presence of kids, and various factors affecting their work performance [17]. These factors include saving money, spending quality time, getting better sleep, feeling calmer or more stressed, experiencing professional growth, being lazy or productive, having sufficient digital connectivity, achieving a better work-life balance, improving their skillset, and having more job opportunities. The dataset is designed to explore the relationship between these variables.

Following is the descriptive analysis of the said survey.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statics is presented on attribute wise in this section.

1) Professional growth:

The response is on a scale of 1-5, with 5-yes: it's affecting me badly, and 1-No: it doesn't affect me. The mean and standard deviation found here is 3.086956522 (Approx. 3.087) and 1.089300975 (Approx. 1.09)

2) Laziness:

The response is on a scale of 1-5, do you feel WFH has made you lazy? With 5-extremely lazy, and 1-No, not lazy at all [17]. The mean and standard deviation found here is 2 and 0.82

3) Productiveness:

The response is on a scale of 1-5, for the question: are you more productive with working remotely, with 1-not productive at all, 5-extremely [17]. The mean and standard deviation found here is 4.33 and 1.53

4) Improved Skillset:

The response is on a scale of 1-5, for the question: how much has your skillset improved in the last two years? (Skillset with respect to your work domain) with 1: Not improved, 5: Improved drastically [17]. The mean and standard deviation found here is 3 and 1.41.

From the above statistics, it's very clear that the participants' responses regarding the effect of remote work on their professional growth, laziness, productivity, and skillset vary considerably. For professional growth, the average score of 3.087 suggests a neutral response. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 1.09 indicates that the responses are somewhat dispersed, reflecting diverse experiences. Similarly, participants reported a low average laziness score of 2, indicating that they do not feel significantly lazy in a work-from-home (WFH) environment. On the other hand, the average score for productivity is 4.33, indicating that participants perceive themselves as more productive when working remotely. Additionally, when asked about skillset improvement, participants provided an average score of 3, suggesting a neutral response. These results highlight the variability in individual experiences and opinions regarding the impact of remote work on different aspects of work life.

Besides this, it is also noteworthy that most of the participants responded with "No" to the question about feeling more stressed since remote work began. Additionally, majority of the participants indicated that they have better work-life balance with remote work having average score of 3.043478261, indicating better work life balance.

6. Analysis on The Current Survey

In this research paper, data was collected through a survey to understand people's preferences and experiences with different modes of working. The survey was conducted based on multiple factors like one's productivity, job satisfaction, communication gap and many more that were considered during its development and implementation. These factors helped to ensure that the survey covered a comprehensive range of topics and provided valuable insights.

6.1 Analysis on Survey

The survey questionnaire consisted of four sections of questions. The first section dealt with questions on personal information like age, gender, employment status, and area of expertise, current mode of working and preferred mode of working. The second, third and fourth sections included questions about the effect on work-life balance, productivity, communication gap, effect on mental health, job satisfaction, difference between work life and personal life, job performance, feeling of disconnection from the team, better work environment and flexibility of work schedule.

The figures [Figure 2 and Figure 3] display data regarding people's current employment status and their preferred mode of work. Most employed individuals responded as this is directly related to their personal and professional lives, reflecting their current feelings and statuses. The colored bars have been included in the figures for clarity purposes.

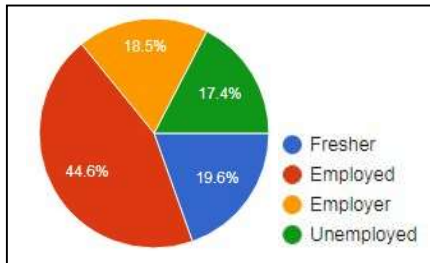


Figure 2: Current employment status of the respondents

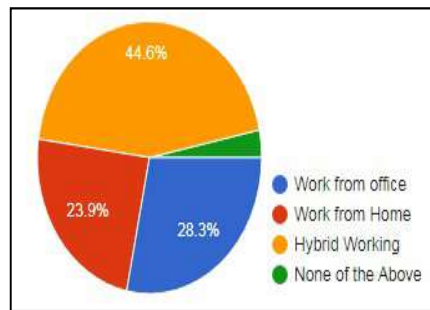


Figure 3: Preferred mode of working of the respondents

[Figure 4] displays the gender-wise breakdown of preference for Hybrid working. Most of the respondents found to be males. It may be most of the cases in India male employees are more than females. Around 70% of the males and 30% of the females agreed for hybrid working, which definitely an indication that, people somewhere want to dedicate for their works and want to have comfortable life and to spare some of their valuable time for their families too.

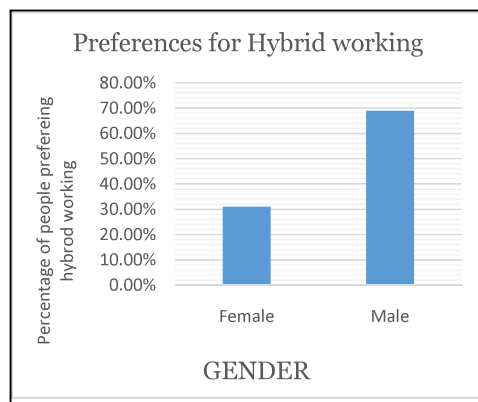


Figure 4: Gender-wise Preferences for Hybrid mode of working

Also people agreed (scale 4 i.e. Agree) that it's easier for them to improve work life balance and collaborating with colleagues, in the case of WFH and Hybrid work [Figure 5]. The scales used were from 1-5 (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree).

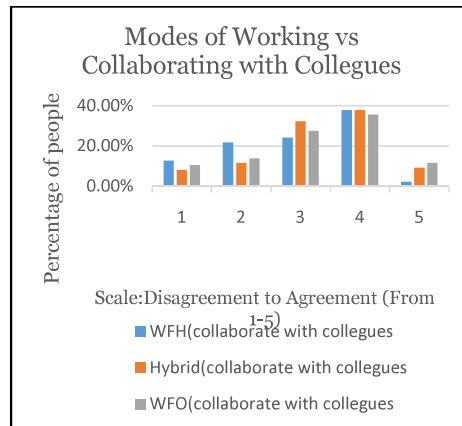


Figure 5: Modes of working affecting collaborating with colleagues

[Figure 6] reveals significant variations in how women of different age groups perceive the negative impact of hybrid working on their mental health. Among women aged 18-24, a majority (40.74%) believed that hybrid working can have negative effects. This percentage decreases to 18.52% for women aged 25-32, indicating lower concern in this group. Women aged 32-44 show increased concerns with response of 29.63%. Only a small proportion (3.70%) of women over 45 feel that they are negatively affected. Additionally, 7.41% of women under 18 report mental health concerns. These findings emphasize the importance of considering age when evaluating the mental health implications of hybrid working for women, as younger age groups express greater concerns.

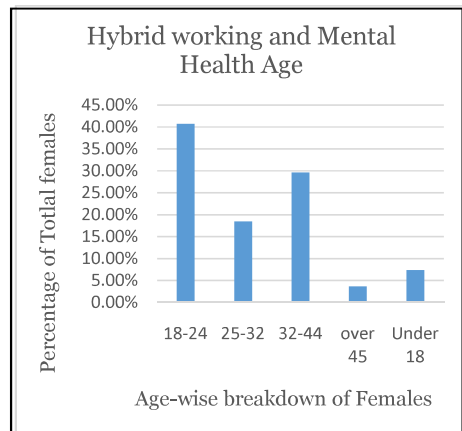


Figure 6: Impact of Hybrid working on the mental health

It has been found that 30.92% of women and 69.08% of men believed that hybrid working can lead to a sense of disconnection from their teams [Figure 7]. This suggests that a greater percentage of men than women hold this viewpoint. However, additional analysis and context are needed to fully comprehend the reasons behind these divergent perspectives.

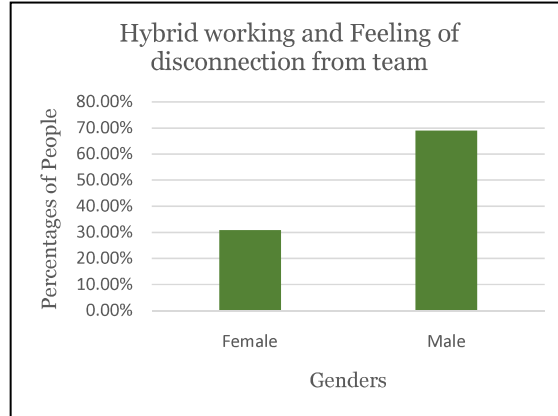


Figure 7: Hybrid Working and Feeling of disconnection from team

According to another response it is suggested that hybrid working is seen as a way to gain more flexibility in work schedules across different age groups. The highest agreement comes from those aged 32-44 (32.35%), followed by 18-24 (28.92%) and 25-32 (25.00%). However, individuals over 45, shown the lowest agreement (10.29%), while those under 18 have the lowest percentage (3.43%) [Figure 8]. Overall, the majority of respondents believed that hybrid working provides increased flexibility in their work schedules. These results may be because people are normally married after the age of 30. So there is huge response from the age group of 32-44 in terms of flexibility as they believe that they can work more peacefully and focused by staying away from home sometimes.

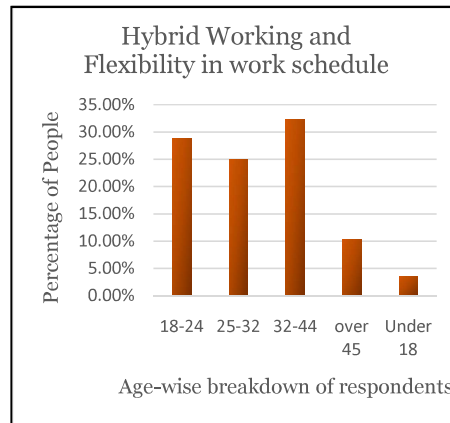


Figure 8: Hybrid Working and Flexibility in work schedule

[Figure 9] displays the age-wise breakdown of how Work from Home can improve productivity. As usual, age group of 32-44, contributing around 35% of the respondents agreed that WFH improves their productivity.

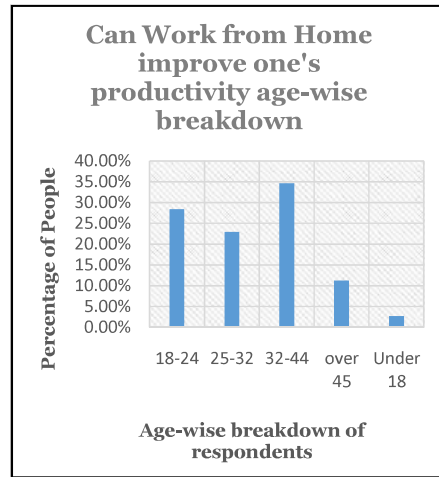


Figure 9: Effect of Work from Home on improving productivity

The response of how Hybrid working can effect on job satisfaction according to different respondents age groups, respondents of age groups 18-24 and 32-44 agreed that Hybrid working gives job satisfaction too [Figure 10].

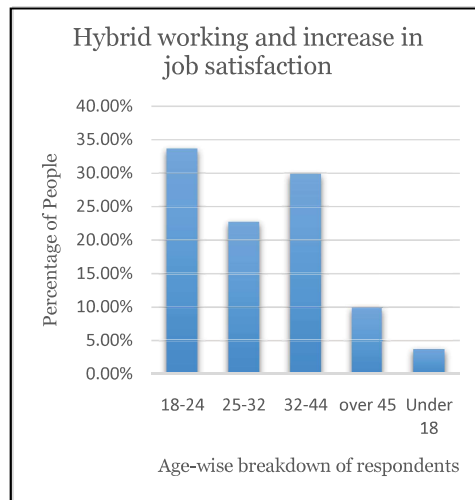


Figure 10: Effect of Hybrid Working in increasing job satisfaction

6.2 Descriptive Statistics

According to the statistics done on the data collected through the survey has been shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Percentage of Employment status

Employment Status	Percentage
Fresher's	20.2%
Employed	43.8%
Employers	19.1%
Unemployed	16.3%

Table 2: Percentage of Current mode of working

Current Mode of Working	Percentage
Office-based work	43.4%
Hybrid arrangement	28.9%
Work from home	24.4%

Table 3: Percentage of Preference in working model

Mode of Working	Percentage (%)
Work from office	34.48%
Work from Home	27.59%
Hybrid Working	37.93%
None of the Above	1.72%

The survey collected data from individuals aged between 17 and 45, focusing on their current employment status and preferred modes of working. Among the respondents, the majority were working in non-technical fields, with 36.7% working from the office, 23.3% in a hybrid arrangement, and 14.6% working from home. The survey also examined the potential impact of working from home (WFH) on work-life balance, productivity, job satisfaction, mental health, and work-personal life separation. Respondents were positive about the flexibility of work schedules but negative about the impact of WFH on mental health and work-personal life separation. The analysis showed that hybrid work can improve collaboration, job satisfaction, and job performance while giving employees more flexibility. The survey's findings can guide organizations in developing effective policies and practices for remote work in the post-COVID-19 era.

7. Comparative Analysis: Existing vs. Current Survey

For an enhanced survey and analysis, a small review on the existing dataset has been done. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the working culture from various perspectives, additional factors were included, consistent with those used in the existing dataset. As a result, a clearer understanding of the desires and expectations of both technical and non-technical employees was obtained. The findings revealed widespread agreement among individuals regarding the benefits of hybrid working and

remote work, such as increased flexibility, enhanced performance, improved collaboration, and higher job satisfaction. Therefore, a more holistic view of this emerging working style has been achieved, taking into account diverse viewpoints.

8. Observations

The primary objective of this study was to determine if hybrid working is a preferable choice for the modern era and whether individuals would choose to work from home or opt for a hybrid working model if given the opportunity. Surprisingly, the willingness of managers and work-related factors emerged as the most influential predictors of employees' decision to telework. It is worth noting that the association between organizational identity and work enthusiasm or commitment was not significantly affected by remote, hybrid, or on-site work arrangements. It is important to highlight that these findings cannot be directly compared to similar studies due to the absence of prior research in this specific sector, considering the factors examined.

9. Conclusion

To our knowledge, this study represents an empirical investigation into the effects of work-from-anywhere or hybrid working, which has gained significant attention from CEOs and senior management in the current work landscape. Through the use of a unique dataset, and a survey, we have presented robust econometric findings on the productivity outcomes of transitioning employees from work-from-home to work-from-anywhere arrangements. Our research contributes to the existing literature on remote work, non-monetary incentives, company-specific motivations, and migration. The results brought dramatic shifting in terms of the policies and culture to be followed in the working mode in organizations.

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