

The Future of Work : Exploring the Impact of Remote and Hybrid Work Models on Employee Productivity and Well-Being

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of remote and hybrid work models on employee productivity and well being, two critical dimensions of performance in the evolving landscape of digital work. Despite the increasing adoption of flexible work arrangements, research remains fragmented regarding their holistic effects. This study addresses that gap by examining how work life balance mediates and organizational support moderates the relationship between work models and employee outcomes. Employing an exploratory qualitative approach, data were collected through semi structured interviews with 15 participants from the education, technology, and finance sectors. Thematic analysis revealed five core themes: work flexibility, work life balance, organizational support, mental well being, and motivation. Findings indicate that while flexibility enhances autonomy and efficiency, it can blur personal professional boundaries without adequate organizational support. Work life balance emerged as a critical mediator in sustaining productivity and psychological health, whereas organizational support moderated the effects of flexibility and stress. These results validate the theoretical framework based on the Job Demands Resources and Conservation of Resources models. The study concludes that remote and hybrid work models can improve performance and well being when supported by clear boundaries and inclusive organizational strategies. This research contributes a conceptual model for designing sustainable digital work environments and offers practical implications for human resource management in flexible settings.

Keywords: Employee Well Being; Flexible Work Arrangements; Hybrid Work; Organizational Support; Productivity

1. Introduction

The transformation of work arrangements in the digital era has positioned employee productivity and well being as critical indicators of organizational performance. Productivity reflects the efficiency of output relative to input, while well being includes physical, mental, and emotional health at work. These two dimensions are increasingly interconnected, especially in flexible and technologically mediated work environments [1], [2]. Scholars have emphasized that remote and hybrid work settings reframe how organizations assess performance, mental resilience, and worker engagement [3]. Sustainable employee performance is thus contingent not only on task output but also on mental health and holistic well being [4].

The rise of remote and hybrid work models has dramatically reshaped traditional employment landscapes. Catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations worldwide rapidly adopted flexible work structures, accelerating a digital transformation that was previously unfolding at a slower pace [5], [6]. Remote work allows employees to operate outside the office, often from home, offering benefits such as autonomy, reduced commuting

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time, and increased flexibility [7]. However, issues such as social isolation, decreased collaboration, and blurred boundaries may hamper productivity and reduce employee morale [8], [9]. On the other hand, the hybrid model, which combines on-site and remote work, is regarded as a compromise solution that enhances collaboration while preserving flexibility [10]. Nevertheless, challenges related to team cohesion, coordination, and equity between remote and in office employees remain prevalent [11], [12].

Central to this dynamic is the mediating role of work life balance. The flexibility offered by remote and hybrid systems can improve personal scheduling and reduce work related stress, leading to better overall satisfaction [13]. Yet, in the absence of clear boundaries, flexible models may blur the line between professional and private domains, increasing the risk of role conflict and burnout [14]. The impact of work life balance is particularly important in understanding how different work settings translate into employee productivity and well being.

Another crucial factor is organizational support, which serves as a moderator in the relationship between work models and employee outcomes. Support mechanisms ranging from leadership communication to technological resources can mitigate the challenges associated with flexible work [15]. High levels of perceived support are associated with greater employee engagement, stronger organizational commitment, and lower turnover intentions [2], [10]. Conversely, insufficient support can amplify the stressors inherent in remote and hybrid arrangements, thereby undermining their potential benefits.

This study investigates the impact of remote and hybrid work models on employee productivity and well being, with work-life balance as a mediating variable and organizational support as a moderating variable. Theoretically, this research contributes to organizational behavior and occupational health literature in the context of digital work. Empirically, the findings provide actionable insights for human resource practices and workplace policy making, helping organizations adapt effectively to the evolving future of work.

Although recent systematic reviews have established the significance of flexible work models namely remote and hybrid arrangements on employee productivity and well being [1], [2], substantial gaps remain in the literature. Most studies narrowly examine either productivity or well being in isolation without integrating the two within a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, prior research often overlooks the interaction effects of mediating and moderating variables such as work life balance and perceived organizational support. For instance, Prasad et al. [1] emphasized output efficiency under remote work but excluded well being metrics, while other works [3] explored social disconnection in hybrid settings without assessing its implications on performance. Additionally, many existing studies rely heavily on cross sectional or qualitative methods [4], [5], resulting in a lack of empirical, statistically robust models that can delineate the complex mechanisms linking work modes to employee

outcomes. This gap is particularly evident in the absence of integrated frameworks that examine how work life balance mediates and organizational support moderates the effects of flexible work on both productivity and multidimensional well being including physical, emotional, mental, and social aspects.

The literature also presents conflicting findings about the effectiveness of hybrid models, with some research noting enhanced retention and autonomy [6], while others highlight operational challenges and fairness issues [7]. Compounding this is a contextual limitation, where many studies focus narrowly on specific sectors such as academia or technology [4], [8]. There is a lack of empirical studies that draw from a diverse, cross industry sample, limiting the generalizability of findings. As such, this study addresses a critical research gap by proposing a holistic, quantitative investigation that tests a structural model incorporating work life balance as a mediator and organizational support as a moderator on both employee productivity and well being across remote and hybrid work settings.

This research introduces three key novelties. First, it develops an integrated theoretical model that simultaneously examines employee productivity and comprehensive well being (physical, mental, emotional, and social) while incorporating work life balance and organizational support as intervening factors. Unlike prior studies such as Medina Garrido et al. [9], which established simple correlations, this study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to empirically validate complex relationships. Second, it draws on data across multiple industries to address the sectoral limitations found in earlier research [4], offering broader generalizability. Third, the research provides actionable insights for organizations aiming to optimize digital work environments by identifying support strategies such as leadership communication, digital infrastructure, and flexible policies that enhance performance and well being outcomes.

2. Literature Review

The literature review provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how remote and hybrid work arrangements influence employee productivity and well being. It synthesizes recent empirical studies and theoretical models that explain the dynamics of flexible work environments, including the mediating role of work life balance and the moderating effect of organizational support. This section critically evaluates prior research, highlighting key findings, inconsistencies, and gaps in knowledge. By doing so, it positions the current study within the broader academic discourse and justifies its contribution to advancing integrated frameworks that address both psychological and performance related outcomes in digitally enabled workplaces.

2.1. Remote and Hybrid Work Models

Remote and hybrid work arrangements have transformed organizational structures and daily work practices, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote work refers to the practice of working from locations outside traditional office environments, commonly from home [1], while hybrid models blend on site and remote schedules to offer both flexibility and face to face collaboration [2].

Several studies have shown that remote work enhances autonomy and reduces commute related stress [1], but may lead to social isolation, communication breakdowns, and reduced collaboration [3]. Hybrid work is positioned as a compromise that fosters both flexibility and cohesion, yet it also raises challenges related to equity, communication, trust, and managerial oversight [4]. Some employees may benefit from flexibility, while others may feel disconnected or less visible to leadership. These evolving models necessitate further investigation, especially in how they affect worker outcomes under varying conditions of support, clarity of role, and balance between personal and professional life. Furthermore, different sectors and job types may respond differently to remote or hybrid arrangements. For instance, knowledge based and administrative roles may adapt well, while operational or service based work often requires physical presence [5]. This context specific variation has not been widely explored and adds another layer of complexity to understanding the effectiveness of flexible work models.

2.2 Employee Productivity and Well being

Productivity in flexible work settings is influenced by both environmental factors (e.g., technology, clarity of tasks, communication systems) and personal factors (e.g., time management, self-motivation, digital fatigue). Well being, on the other hand, encompasses psychological, emotional, and physical health dimensions that influence long term engagement and organizational sustainability [6].

Previous research has provided mixed findings. While some report improved productivity and satisfaction due to flexible arrangements [7], others find detrimental effects, particularly when organizational support is lacking or work life boundaries are unclear [8], [9]. For example, employees who lack structure or supervision may struggle to maintain performance or motivation over time. The dual focus on productivity and well being is crucial because high output without well being is unsustainable, while high well being without performance does not meet organizational goals. However, the simultaneous investigation of these outcomes remains limited, especially in empirical models that include mediating and moderating factors.

2.3 The Role of Work-life Balance and Organizational Support

Work life balance is a key mediating variable in flexible work studies, influencing how individuals allocate time, energy, and attention between professional and personal roles [10].

It plays a pivotal role in reducing stress and enhancing satisfaction. However, without proper boundaries especially in remote settings employees may experience role conflict, work overload, and eventually burnout [11]. Clear policies and time management practices are thus critical to prevent overlap between work and home responsibilities.

Organizational support, both in the form of managerial communication, digital tools, emotional support, and flexible policies, serves as a critical moderator that shapes employee perceptions and experiences [12]. High levels of perceived support lead to better job satisfaction, motivation, and retention, and can buffer the negative effects of role ambiguity or social disconnection [13]. Nonetheless, empirical studies rarely test the combined effects of work life balance and organizational support in a single framework. Most focus on one aspect or use qualitative methods, leaving a gap in quantitative models that examine their joint impact on both productivity and well being an area this study seeks to explore.

2.4 Theoretical Foundations

To better understand the dynamics between flexible work models, productivity, and well being, this study draws upon several theoretical frameworks. One central theory is the Job Demands Resources (JD R) Model, which posits that job outcomes are shaped by the balance between demands (e.g., workload, emotional strain) and resources (e.g., autonomy, support) [14]. In remote and hybrid contexts, the ability to manage work life boundaries and access organizational support serve as crucial resources that mitigate burnout and enhance engagement.

Additionally, the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory explains how individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources such as time, energy, and social support to reduce stress and sustain performance [15]. From this perspective, work life balance serves as a mechanism to protect personal resources, while perceived organizational support helps replenish them. These theories provide a strong foundation for integrating the mediating role of work life balance and the moderating effect of organizational support in predicting both employee productivity and well being.

2.5 Research Gap and Contribution

Despite growing attention to flexible work models, existing research often treats productivity and well being separately, or fails to incorporate both mediating and moderating factors in a single empirical model. Most studies focus on either remote or hybrid settings without comparative analysis, or rely on qualitative insights that lack generalizability [1], [3], [9]. In addition, prior literature has not fully explored the interplay between personal boundary management and organizational support as dual enablers of sustainable performance. This study contributes to filling that gap by simultaneously analyzing the effects of remote and hybrid work on both productivity and well being, with work life balance as a mediating variable and organizational support as a moderating variable. This integrated, quantitative

approach not only extends the current theoretical landscape but also provides actionable insights for organizations in designing inclusive, supportive, and balanced work environments in the digital age.

3. Method

This research applies an exploratory qualitative approach to investigate the impact of remote and hybrid work models on employee productivity and well being. The qualitative method is appropriate for exploring subjective experiences, individual perceptions, and challenges within flexible work environments. It is particularly suitable for addressing "how" and "why" questions regarding complex psychological and social phenomena [1], [2].

Data were collected through semi structured interviews with 15 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Participants were employees from education, technology, and finance sectors who had engaged in remote or hybrid work for at least six months. This criterion ensured that respondents had substantial firsthand experience with flexible work practices.

The interview guide was structured around the Job Demands Resources (JD R) model and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which explain the relationship between job demands, available resources, and outcomes such as performance and well being [3], [4]. Topics explored during the interviews included work flexibility, time management, organizational support, and the effects of work settings on mental health and job performance.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis following the six phase process proposed by Braun and Clarke [5]. This included data transcription, familiarization, initial coding, theme development, reviewing themes, and interpretation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied source triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail as validation techniques [6].

3.1. Research Design

This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design to investigate how remote and hybrid work arrangements influence employee productivity and well being. A qualitative approach was selected because it is effective in understanding complex social phenomena, especially those that involve subjective experiences, emotions, and context specific dynamics [1]. Given that flexible work models affect individuals differently based on their environment, roles, and personal situations, this method allowed for deep exploration beyond measurable variables.

The research aimed to capture the lived experiences of employees navigating remote and hybrid systems. These arrangements often involve emotional, psychological, and behavioral adaptations that cannot be fully explained through quantitative indicators. The qualitative

design provided the flexibility to explore participants' perceptions, coping mechanisms, and interpretations of support and stress, which are essential for understanding both productivity and well being from a holistic perspective [2].

The research process was grounded in two well established theoretical frameworks: the Job Demands Resources (JD R) model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The JD R model emphasizes how job resources (e.g., flexibility, support) and demands (e.g., workload, isolation) interact to influence outcomes like performance and burnout [3]. Meanwhile, COR theory highlights individuals' efforts to obtain, protect, and maintain valuable resources in times of stress or change [4]. These frameworks guided the development of research questions, interview themes, and overall analytical direction.

3.2. Participant Selection

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a non probability technique that allows researchers to choose individuals based on specific characteristics and relevance to the research objectives [1]. The primary inclusion criteria required that participants must have worked under either remote or hybrid arrangements for at least six months. This ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to the flexible work environment, enabling them to provide meaningful insights into their productivity and well being.

A total of 15 participants were recruited from three key sectors: education, information technology, and financial services. These sectors were chosen due to their active adoption of remote and hybrid models during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The diversity in industry background aimed to enhance the transferability of the findings, allowing the study to capture a broader range of work experiences. Gender, age, job role, and work location were also considered to ensure a balanced sample.

Before participation, all respondents received a study overview and gave informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Ethical considerations were handled in accordance with qualitative research best practices, as outlined by Creswell and Poth [2], ensuring that the selection and treatment of participants adhered to academic integrity and research ethics.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through semi structured interviews, which are widely used in qualitative research for their balance between guided inquiry and open ended responses [1]. This method allowed participants to share their experiences in detail while enabling the researcher to probe deeper into relevant themes. Interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom, reflecting the study's focus on flexible work environments and ensuring accessibility for participants across different regions.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and followed a pre designed interview protocol. The questions were derived from two theoretical frameworks: the Job Demands Resources (JD R) model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. These theories informed the inquiry into employee workload, autonomy, organizational support, psychological well being, and the balance between work and personal life [2], [3]. The interview protocol included both open ended core questions and tailored follow ups to capture context specific details.

All interviews were audio recorded with participant consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. To ensure clarity and accuracy, brief follow up communications were conducted with some participants for validation. Data saturation was achieved after 12 interviews, but three additional interviews were conducted to ensure thematic consistency. This rigorous process enhanced the credibility and depth of the collected data, as recommended in qualitative research standards [4].

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible and rigorous qualitative technique suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data [1]. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the study's aim to explore complex personal experiences related to remote and hybrid work. Thematic analysis also allows for both inductive (data driven) and deductive (theory driven) theme development, which was essential for linking empirical findings with established theoretical frameworks.

The analysis process followed the six phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke [2]: (1) familiarization with the data through active reading of transcripts, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Coding was conducted manually and iteratively, allowing the researcher to remain closely engaged with the data. To maintain consistency and transparency, coding decisions were documented in an audit trail throughout the analysis process.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed several validation strategies. Member checking was conducted by sharing initial findings with a subset of participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. Peer debriefing and triangulation of participants from different sectors helped to enhance credibility and depth. These practices, along with the detailed documentation of analytical steps, support the reliability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings, as recommended in qualitative research methodology [3].

3.5. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, this study applied four key criteria as proposed by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability [1]. Credibility was reinforced through prolonged engagement with the data, member

checking, and peer debriefing. A subset of participants reviewed the initial themes to verify whether the interpretations aligned with their actual experiences. Dependability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail of all analytical decisions, ensuring that the research process could be reviewed and traced.

Confirmability was achieved by minimizing researcher bias through reflective journaling and transparency in the coding process. All coding decisions and theme categorizations were documented and periodically reviewed with an external qualitative expert. This process ensured that findings were not solely shaped by the researcher's perspective but grounded in the participants' narratives and direct quotations. Transferability was supported by providing rich, detailed descriptions of participants, contexts, and findings, allowing readers to assess the applicability of results to other settings [2].

Regarding ethical considerations, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were assured that they could withdraw at any stage without any negative consequence. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research as recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA) and ethical review standards for social research [3].

4. Results and Discussion

This study utilized an exploratory qualitative approach involving semi structured interviews with 15 participants from the education, information technology, and financial sectors, all of whom had engaged in remote or hybrid work arrangements for at least six months. Although no physical hardware or specialized analytical software was required for empirical testing, the research employed thematic analysis to extract insights from the interview transcripts. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six phase framework: familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and final reporting. Manual coding enabled a deep immersion in the data. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, source triangulation, and the maintenance of an audit trail, ensuring transparency and reliability. The analysis identified five primary themes: flexibility in work arrangements, work life balance, organizational support, mental well being, and employee motivation.

Flexibility emerged as a dominant advantage of remote and hybrid models, with participants expressing that these arrangements enhanced autonomy and time efficiency by eliminating commuting. However, this benefit was accompanied by emotional challenges such as social isolation and reduced team cohesion. The mediating role of work life balance was particularly prominent. While flexible scheduling allowed better integration between professional and personal life, it also blurred boundaries, contributing to emotional fatigue

and, in some cases, burnout. Organizational support surfaced as a key moderating variable: employees who perceived strong support from leadership communication to access to digital tools reported higher levels of job satisfaction and well being. Conversely, lack of support increased stress and reduced performance motivation. These findings validate the theoretical proposition of the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, which highlights the interplay between workplace demands and available resources in predicting employee outcomes [1].

Table 1 presents a concise overview of the five key themes derived from the qualitative analysis, linking each to its conceptual role and observed impact on employee outcomes. These themes flexibility, work life balance, organizational support, mental well being, and motivation are central to understanding how remote and hybrid work arrangements influence both productivity and well being. By mapping each theme to roles such as enabler, mediator, or moderator, the table illustrates their functional significance within the broader theoretical framework. This structured summary supports a clearer understanding of the dynamic interactions shaping employee experiences in flexible work settings.

Table 1. Core Themes, Conceptual Roles, and Impact Summary

Theme	Conceptual Role	Impact Summary
Flexibility	Enabler	Increases autonomy and task efficiency
Work Life Balance	Mediator	Balances stress, reduces burnout
Organizational Support	Moderator	Enhances morale, buffers job strain
Mental Well being	Indicator	Reflects emotional resilience
Motivation	Outcome Driver	Boosts engagement and performance

Table 1 presents a succinct yet conceptually robust summary of the five central themes emerging from the qualitative analysis. Each theme is aligned with its conceptual role in the research model and its practical impact on employee productivity and well being. This format reflects a structured integration of theoretical constructs mainly the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory with empirical insights from the interview data. The theme of flexibility is classified as an enabler, indicating its instrumental role in enhancing autonomy and task efficiency. Participants consistently reported that having control over their schedules led to better time management and increased productivity, especially in remote work settings. This finding supports Vaziri et al. [1], who demonstrated that flexible work arrangements improve performance outcomes by allowing workers to align tasks with personal energy peaks.

Work life balance operates as a mediator, playing a pivotal role in buffering the negative impacts of workload and psychological demands. Participants who achieved clear boundaries between professional and personal domains experienced lower stress levels and reported higher overall satisfaction. Conversely, those who lacked such balance faced role conflict and emotional fatigue. Organizational support emerged as a critical moderator, influencing how effectively employees adapted to flexible work. Strong managerial communication, accessible

digital tools, and emotional validation served as protective factors that mitigated stress and sustained engagement. These findings echo Allen et al. [2], who emphasized that perceived organizational support directly correlates with job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention. Mental well being was classified as an indicator a reflection of the internal psychological state shaped by external work conditions. Its deterioration was linked to demotivation, absenteeism, and decreased output. Lastly, motivation served as an outcome driver, reinforcing the notion that engaged employees are more likely to perform at higher levels and sustain long term productivity. The table encapsulates these dynamics, affirming that remote and hybrid work environments function optimally when embedded within systems that balance demands with adequate support and autonomy.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of remote and hybrid work models on employee productivity and well being, with a focus on the mediating role of work life balance and the moderating role of organizational support. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with participants from diverse sectors, five core themes emerged: work flexibility, work life balance, organizational support, mental well being, and motivation. The findings revealed that flexibility alone does not guarantee positive outcomes; rather, its effectiveness depends on how well employees manage boundaries and the degree of support provided by their organizations. Organizational support significantly amplified the benefits of flexibility by reducing stress and enhancing motivation.

These results directly support the study's initial hypothesis that employee outcomes in flexible work environments are shaped not just by structural arrangements but also by psychological and organizational factors. The integration of the Job Demands Resources and Conservation of Resources theories provided a robust framework for interpreting these dynamics. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by offering a conceptual model that organizations can use to enhance employee engagement and well being in remote or hybrid settings. However, the findings are based on a limited sample and qualitative approach, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should apply quantitative methods and larger, more diverse samples to validate the proposed relationships and assess long term impacts across different industries and cultural contexts.

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