

A STUDY ON SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK STRUCTURES

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the influence of work-life balance and sustainable employee engagement in remote and hybrid work arrangements among Information Technology (IT) workers in Chennai, India. The movement toward flexible work arrangements has changed conventional organizational paradigms, leading to a critical evaluation of how such models influence employee well-being, motivation and long-term organizational allegiance. Based on a quantitative research design, the research surveyed 180 IT workers through a structured questionnaire to study the influence of remote and hybrid work on work-life integration and the contribution of organizational support mechanisms such as flexible work schedules, access to technology, trust in managers and communication towards increasing employee engagement. The results show that most employees view remote and hybrid setups as positive for work-life balance, with flexible working hours and access to technology as key support drivers. Statistical analysis suggests that there are significant differences in perception by gender and work experience, especially concerning flexible working hours and technological facilities. The research concludes that although flexible work arrangements provide significant advantages, their effectiveness is contingent on focused organizational support and demographic inclusiveness.

KEYWORDS: *Work Life Balance, Employee Well-being, Organizational Support, Workplace Flexibility, Employee Retention*

INTRODUCTION

The development of remote and hybrid work models have turned conventional workplaces upside down as they now require a reevaluation of the impact work-life balance has on employee engagement. As organizations adopt more flexible arrangements, their impact on engagement rests on the ability to leverage active constructive feedback for long-term organizational success. Consistent balance among an employee's work and home life fosters their overall physical and mental health and job satisfaction, thus productivity, which is vital for balanced engagement. This study seeks to explore the effect of telecommuting and hybrid work models on employees' work-life integration and the subsequent impact on their engagement and retention. Furthermore, it looks at the long-term implications of such flexible working schemes on employees motivation and commitment to their work. By examining the confluence of work-life integration and employees engagement, the research seeks to deliver practical findings for HRM practices in the new work context. Organizations need to understand if they want to maximize performance and develop a healthy work culture in the post-pandemic era.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study highlights how remote and hybrid work setups impact work-life balance and long-term employee engagement with two key factors that play a crucial role in an organization's success in today's work environment. As flexible work arrangements continue to gain traction, understanding their lasting effects on employees' overall well-being and engagement is essential for keeping a motivated workforce and boosting productivity. This study will assist organizational leaders and HR professionals to follow the best practices for achieving work-life integration. Hence, prevent burnout and enable an engaged workforce. In addition, through the exploration of sustainable engagement, this study adds to the general knowledge about how flexible workspaces can be designed for maximum employee satisfaction and performance. As work dynamics change, the implications of this research can be used as a guide by organizations seeking to remain competitive and enable their workforce in an ever-changing environment.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

With remote and hybrid work arrangements continuing to transform contemporary workplaces, their effects on the work-life balance and long-term employee engagement are of fundamental importance. This study was required to examine how flexible working arrangements influence long-term engagement and the well-being of employees. With companies looking to hold onto the best and brightest talent and maximize productivity, a fuller understanding of how work-life integration affects engagement will assist HR practitioners in crafting more efficient policies. Moreover, since digital tools continue to facilitate remote work, there is a need to determine the influence of such tools on employees satisfaction and performance.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study targets employees in the information technology (IT) industry working in remote and hybrid work environments in Chennai city, India. The research seeks to examine how flexible work arrangements affect work-life integration and long-term employee engagement in the IT industry setting in Chennai. It will examine how IT professionals manage their work and personal lives while working remotely or in hybrid environments. The organizational support system, such as flexible working, technology, and management style, will be scrutinised to examine the influence it plays on employee involvement. Employee data from IT organizations in Chennai will be gathered from the structured questionnaire.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kelliher and Anderson (2010), focus on having the capacity for work-life balance is an important predictor of employee engagement, particularly in remote and hybrid working environments. Based on their study, employees with the ability to balance work with personal obligations experience greater levels of engagement and well-being. In the tech sector, where high-pressure projects and long hours are standard, having the option to set flexible work hours and work at home can alleviate burnout and boost motivation. The study points out that work-life balance programs, if properly implemented, result in higher retention rates and long-term engagement.

Ajendran and Harrison (2007), study analysing the influence of flexible work arrangements on employee outcomes. They found through their research that hybrid work arrangements, where employees divide time between working in the office and working from home, enhance employee well-being, minimize stress, and enhance overall job satisfaction. The authors contended that hybrid work arrangements, with the support of robust organizational frameworks and communication channels, enhance a sense of belonging and job commitment. For the IT workers of Chennai, where

usually the professionals are usually exposed to close deadlines in their projects, hybrid work provides an important buffer needed to counteract work stress and private life.

Golden and Veiga (2005), study examines the effect of telecommuting on employee job satisfaction and engagement in IT firms. The researchers identified that telecommuting can enhance job satisfaction through increased control over schedules, leading to improved engagement. Nevertheless, the study also indicated some of the potential problems, including limited face-to-face interaction, which could have negative implications for team dynamics and organizational commitment. For IT sectors, where teamwork is the most important factor for the success of a project, achieving the appropriate balance of autonomy and collaboration within remote environments is still an essential determinant of staff motivation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The widespread use of remote and hybrid work arrangements has critically changed the work culture, especially in the Information Technology (IT) industry in Chennai city, India. Although flexible work arrangements are perceived to have numerous advantages, including enhanced work-life integration and greater autonomy, their long-term effects on employee engagement are not yet fully understood. Research shows that remote and hybrid work may have both positive and negative implications for workers' work-life balance (Kossek et al., 2020), but the issue is how these models affect sustained engagement, productivity, and retention in the IT industry setting. Additionally, although organizational support systems such as flexible work arrangements, technological infrastructure, and management practices have been found to influence employee satisfaction (Choi et al., 2016), it is not well understood how these factors particularly influence participation in hybrid and remote contexts. In Chennai, where the IT industry is a major contributor to the economy, organizations are increasingly leveraging hybrid models, but empirical studies on how these practices influence employee long-term engagement are lacking. This research seeks to fill this gap by exploring how remote and hybrid work arrangements influence work-life integration and long-term employee engagement in the IT sector in Chennai. It will also investigate the influence of organizational support on enhancing employee engagement and work outcomes, thus yielding practical recommendations for HR practices in the changing work landscape.

Research Questions

The research questions are framed to investigate the intricate relationship between remote and hybrid work arrangements, work-life integration and enduring employee engagement among IT professionals in Chennai.

- How do hybrid and remote work arrangements affect work-life integration between IT employees in Chennai city?
- To what level do organizational support infrastructures and their effects on employee participation under flexible working models in the IT industry?

Objectives

- To explore how remote and hybrid work arrangements affect work-life integration among IT employees in Chennai city.
- To assess the extent to which organisational infrastructures support employees motivation under flexible working models in the IT sector.

Testing of Hypothesis

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference between the gender of employees and their perception of organizational support factors.
- **H₀₂**: There is no significant difference in employees' perceptions of workplace factors and their levels of work experience.

Research Design

The study employs a quantitative research design to examine the influence of remote and hybrid work arrangements on work-life integration and long-term employee engagement among IT professionals in Chennai city. This design allows for collecting structured, numeric data at a point in time, hence being appropriate for studying employee perceptions and organizational support factors within flexible work environments.

Sample Size

The research was conducted with a sample population of 180 IT professionals employed in remote or hybrid work conditions in Chennai.

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling method is employed to provide balanced representation for different job positions such as developers, analysts, project managers, experience levels as entry, mid and senior levels and work models as remote and hybrid.

Data Collection

Data were gathered using a guided web-based survey questionnaire sent to selected IT professionals through email and Google Forms. Closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire that elicited quantifiable responses on remote and hybrid working practices, work-life integration, and employee engagement. The tool was intended to elicit both qualitative perceptions and quantitative assessments of the effectiveness of organizational support systems and flexible work arrangements in the IT industry.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Gender Distribution of IT Employees

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	108	60
Female	72	40
Total	180	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 displays the gender breakup of IT employees in Chennai, and 60 per cent of the respondents (108 respondents) are male, whereas 40 per cent of the respondents (72 respondents) are female.

Table 2: Work Experience of IT Employees

Years of Experience	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
0–5 years	62	34
6–10 years	57	32
11–15 years	36	20
Above 16 years	25	14
Total	180	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows the distribution of IT employees in Chennai based on their years of experience. The largest group with 34 per cent consists of those with 0-5 years of experience, followed closely by those with 6-10 years of experience with 32 per cent.

Table 3: Influence of Remote and Hybrid Work Structures on Work-Life Integration

Work-Life Integration	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Positive	62	35
Positive	67	37
Neutral	31	17
Negative	15	8
Very Negative	5	3
Total	180	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows the influence of remote and hybrid work structures on employees' work-life integration. A majority of 72 per cent of respondents report a positive and very positive influence on their work-life balance.

Table 4: Organizational Support and Its Effect on Employee Engagement in Remote and Hybrid Work Models

Support Factors	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Effective	Very Effective	Total
Flexible Work Hours	5	10	20	70	75	180
Percent (%)	3	6	11	39	41	100
Access to Technology and Tools	8	15	30	50	77	180
Percent (%)	4	8	17	28	43	100
Managerial Support and Trust	12	18	38	58	54	180
Percent (%)	7	10	21	32	30	100
Clear Communication Channels	20	25	40	52	43	180
Percent (%)	11	14	22	29	24	100
Training and Development Programs	25	30	45	50	30	180
Percent (%)	14	17	25	28	16	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 illustrates that Flexible Work Hours proved to be the highest rated support factor, as 145 of 180 respondents with 80 per cent identified it as Effective and Very Effective. Access to Technology and Tools was next, with 127 respondents with 71 per cent recognizing its effective impact on engagement. Managerial Support and Trust also had a high rating, with 112 respondents of 62 per cent by listing it in the top two levels. Comparatively, Clear Communication Channels were found to be Effective or higher by just 95 respondents with 53 per cent, which reflects a moderate level of effectiveness. Training and Development Programs were rated lowest, with only 80 respondents with 44 per cent viewing them as Moderately Effective or higher, reflecting a potential area of improvement for the organization.

Table 5: T-Test for Gender and Perception of Organizational Support Factors

Support Factors	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Sig.
Flexible Work Hours	Male	108	4.18	0.59	2.134	0.035*
	Female	72	3.90	0.66		
Access to Technology & Tools	Male	108	4.05	0.65	1.962	0.052
	Female	72	3.82	0.72		
Managerial Support & Trust	Male	108	3.93	0.63	1.287	0.200
	Female	72	3.78	0.71		
Clear Communication Channels	Male	108	3.85	0.61	0.874	0.384
	Female	72	3.75	0.65		
Training & Development Prog.	Male	108	3.62	0.68	1.004	0.317
	Female	72	3.50	0.71		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

T-test indicates a gender difference is significant only for Flexible Work Hours ($p = 0.035$), with male perception being higher. For Access to Technology & Tools, Managerial Support, Clear Communication, and Training Programs, there is no gender difference ($p > 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected only for Flexible Work Hours. For the other support factors, the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there are similar perceptions by gender. Gender generally affects attitudes toward flexible hours but not toward other organizational supports.

Table 6: ANOVA Test for Work Experience and Perception of Organizational Support Factors in Remote and Hybrid Work Models

Variables	Work Experience	N	Mean	S.D.	F-Value	Sig.
Flexible Work Hours	0-5 years	62	4.25	0.58	3.210	0.026*
	6-10 years	57	4.10	0.62		
	11-15 years	36	3.92	0.70		
	Above 16 years	25	3.80	0.65		
	Total	180	4.05	0.64		
Access to Technology & Tools	0-5 years	62	4.12	0.70	2.794	0.044*
	6-10 years	57	3.98	0.68		
	11-15 years	36	3.85	0.73		
	Above 16 years	25	3.72	0.75		
	Total	180	3.96	0.71		
Managerial Support & Trust	0-5 years	62	4.05	0.65	1.956	0.123
	6-10 years	57	3.89	0.66		
	11-15 years	36	3.78	0.70		
	Above 16 years	25	3.65	0.72		
	Total	180	3.87	0.68		
Clear Communication Channels	0-5 years	62	3.98	0.62	1.243	0.297
	6-10 years	57	3.85	0.60		
	11-15 years	36	3.75	0.66		
	Above 16 years	25	3.60	0.69		
	Total	180	3.82	0.63		
Training & Development Prog.	0-5 years	62	3.72	0.69	1.334	0.265
	6-10 years	57	3.58	0.71		
	11-15 years	36	3.45	0.75		
	Above 16 years	25	3.40	0.73		
	Total	180	3.57	0.70		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

The null hypothesis specifies no difference in perceptions between work experience groups in terms of workplace factors. ANOVA findings, though, show that work experience impacts perceptions of Flexible Work Hours ($p = 0.026$) and Access to Technology & Tools ($p = 0.044$). The null hypothesis is thus rejected for these two variables. Contrarily, no differences were noted for Managerial Support & Trust, Clear Communication Channels, and Training & Development Programs ($p > 0.05$), thus the null hypothesis is accepted for these.

FINDINGS

- The IT employees in Chennai under remote and hybrid models have a greater percentage of males, with 60 per cent, than females with 40 per cent, indicating a gender disparity in these work environments.
- Most respondents, with 66 per cent possess 0-10 years of experience, implying that comparatively younger professionals are more active in flexible work patterns in the IT industry.
- Most employees of 72 per cent, believe that remote and hybrid options will benefit their work-life balance, verifying the advantage of flexible work arrangements.
- The research revealed that flexible hours of work with 80 per cent and technology access, with 71 per cent are the most significant support factors that improve employee engagement.
- T-test outcomes indicate a statistically significant gender gap only in attitudes towards Flexible Work Hours ($p = 0.035$), where males perceive them more positively. Other support factors do not indicate gender-based differences in perception.
- ANOVA findings indicate that there are significant variations in Flexible Work Hours and Technology Access perceptions among experience groups, with less experienced employees appreciating them more. The other support structures are perceived equally across all levels of experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Since flexible hours have a major influence on work-life integration and are appreciated more by less experienced and younger staff, IT firms should make flexible scheduling more institutionally ingrained to enhance employees satisfaction and retention.
- Since easy access to tools and technology is one of the major facilitators of telecommuting, companies must continuously invest in current infrastructure as well as offer hassle-free tech support to workers at every level of experience.
- The observed gender disparity in interpreting flexible work hours, HR policies must be shaped to make work schedules, caregiving duties, and job functions inclusive and accommodating for women workers.
- Managerial assistance and training have little variation by experience, firms can create standardized employee development and engagement programs that are suitable for everyone, irrespective of experience.
- Organizations need to make regular checks on remote/hybrid models to evolve in response to changing employee preferences, particularly on support mechanisms that ensure long-term engagement and productivity.

CONCLUSION

The research finds that flexible and remote work arrangements contribute to work–work-life integration of IT employees in Chennai in a positive way. Flexibility is most beneficial to younger and less experienced workers. The gender effect was notable only for flexible working hours, which were associated with males. Help and support from the organization, particularly flexibility and access to technology, are instrumental in promoting employee engagement. In general, flexible workplace arrangements are critical in fostering well-being and productivity in the IT industry.

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