A Hybrid Workplace: Is a New Normal

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Abstract

After the pandemic, so many scenarios have changed at the workplace, such as work, workforce, working style, technology, and even the workplace. One thing that has caught the attention of business houses, leaders, and HR is the workplace hybrid, which is new conventional, more human-focused, tech-enabled, and sustainable. We are on the verge of being disrupted by the epidemic, and there has been a dramatic shift to remote work. Due to the pandemic, we are on the edge of disruption, and there is a sudden shift to remote work. Workforces in countries such as India face numerous challenges when transitioning from an office to a remote workplace. In the service industries, such as IT, education, banking, consulting, e-commerce, and so on, workers were able to handle work from remote locations more easily. Because of stringent measures, government actions, and the availability of immunizations, the number of cases has decreased since April 2021, and lives are returning to normal. It has been demonstrated that employees with suitable employment can work effectively from home without any detrimental effects on their performance or output. This change coincides with a new employment paradigm known as the "hybrid workplace," in which some employees return to work while others want to work from home. Businesses and workers' lives are gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, and we can now say that homes are the new workplace. This study also discusses a hybrid workplace system with employees working on different profiles from different sectors. The main purpose of this study is to learn about the hybrid workplace system and employees' attitude towards it.

Keywords: Pandemic Employees Hybrid Workplace New-Normal

1.0 Introduction

After pandemic so many scenario has changed at workplace such as work, workforce, working style, technology and even workplace. Among all one thing which catches' the eye of Business houses, Leaders and HR is workplace hybrid which is new conventional, more human centric, tech enabled and sustainable (Laker). Due to pandemic we are on the edge of disruption and there is a sudden shift to remote work. In May 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic caused a sudden change in the workforce throughout the world. Employees in all sectors were told to work from home amid lockdowns and stay-at-home instructions. While most of the world's workforce cannot migrate to remote work, it is more prevalent in advanced economies including the US, UK, and Australia (McKinsey, 2020). In countries like India workforces faced a lot of challenge to shift from office to remote workplace. In industry if we talk about service industry such as IT, education, finance, consultancies, e-commerce, etc., was able to manage work from remote places more conveniently "Additionally, some areas, like technology, finance, and management, are better suited for remote employment" (McKinsey, 2020). From April 2021, number of cases decreases, because of strict precautions, steps taken by government and availability of vaccinations lives are getting normal again. Institutes, offices, industries, schools etc are moving toward new normal with utmost precautions. The impact of pandemic is almost on everyone and everywhere.

Hybrid workplace is comparatively a new concept in India as it mostly came into being after the pandemic hot in the year 2020. Even though hybrid workplace existed before the pandemic in India, many organisations did not found it to be a viable option. Work-from-home was considered to be less

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productive as compared to work-from-office by a number of organisations. One of the most significant modifications that people adopted as part of their "new normal" following Covid-19 was the alteration in workplace interactions. People went from rushing to offices at 9 AM in the morning to attending meetings from their dining room. As the lockdown forced people to attend offices from their house for more than a year, people got adjusted to this new normal.

The occurrence of pandemic has changed the scenario of the workplace all over the world. The Indian population found it difficult to adjust to this abrupt change from Work-from-Office to Work-from-Home. Many aspects of work, like workforce, working style, technology, and even the environment, have changed as a result of the epidemic. The workplace hybrid, which is new conventional, more human focused, tech enabled, and sustainable, is one thing that captures the notice of business houses, leaders, and HR. We are on the verge of being disrupted by the epidemic, and there has been a dramatic shift to remote work. In May 2020, the worldwide workforce was transformed overnight due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

In the midst of lockdowns and stay-at-home instructions, workers from all sectors were instructed to work from home. Although most workers worldwide cannot work remotely, it is becoming more common in industrialised economies like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (McKinsey, 2020). Workforces in nations like India experienced numerous challenges when transitioning from the office to a remote location. Service sectors, such as IT, education, finance, consulting, e-commerce, and so on, were able to manage work from remote locations more easily. Additionally, some professions – such as those in technology, finance, and management – are better suited to remote work (McKinsey, 2020). The number of cases has reduced since April 2021 as a result of careful safeguards, government initiatives, and the accessibility of vaccines, and life is getting back to normal. Institutions, organisations, businesses, schools, and other establishments are moving to a new normal with great caution. The effects of a pandemic are felt by practically everyone and everywhere. The crisis hit everyone hard, but it also presented a chance. It has been shown that employees with suitable jobs can operate from home productively and efficiently without suffering. This change coincides with a new employment model known as the hybrid workplace, in which some employees resume while others want to work from home. Businesses and workers' lives are gradually reverting to pre-pandemic levels, and it is possible to claim that houses have become new workplaces.

2.0 Literature Review

King A. et al.[8], in their study focused on examining the available literature in order to identify factors that influence

mental health professional disclosure of lived experience to co-workers and supervisors, in order to inform future interventions, policy, and research. Studies were identified that focused on the benefits and efficacy of an on-site and hybrid working approach. The question of whether any of these differ entially and represent different theoretical mechanisms was raised in relation to the difference between negative and positive approaches to various working environments when taking into account aspects of respect and dignity, support, caring, rewards, forgiveness, and inspiration[1]. The researcher in this study compared the difference between the perception on positive practices among "hybrid workers" and "cubicle workers". The following hypotheses were further formulated where the significant relationship between demographic variables – gender and age with various reasons of work from home.

H_{01}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason better performance from home"

H_{02}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason flexibility to work-from-home"

H_{03}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason more convenient to work-from-home"

H_{04}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason less interaction with seniors to work-from-home"

H_{05}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more money when working-from-home"

H_{06}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more time when working-from-home"

H_{07}: "There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason less exposure to competition"

H_{08}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason better performance from home"

H_{09}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason flexibility to work-from-home"

H_{10}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason more convenient to work-from-home"

H_{11}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason less interaction with seniors to work-from-home"

H_{12}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more money when working-from-home"

H_{13}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the

hybrid workers and the reason saves more time when working-from-home"

H_{14}: "There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason less exposure to competition"

Vyas L. & Butakhieo N.[13], focused on the ongoing challenges that employers and employees in Hong Kong confront. "A vital insight and pertinent recommendations have been established for future policy decisions. Additionally, it will consider whether this employment arrangement will be a short-term remedy to the extraordinary circumstances or whether it might turn out to be permanent". It is commonly acknowledged that the institutional starting point and the foundation of today's concept of working life belong to the industrialization or beyond, despite the fact that the concept of labour being so old that it demonstrates parallelism with the history of humanity[12]. The Industrial Revolution's most recognisable emblem, the "Steam Engine," altered manufacturing processes and brought about a flurry of scientific advancements, rapid urbanisation, and institutionalisation and restructuring of the economy, politics, and culture[9]. "In the pre-Covid-19 period, the Home-Office-School environment proved to be a benefit"[2]. Beno M.[21] defined hybrid working as "a blend of home and cubicle operation, working in a hybrid model merging remote and in-person work," and described it as "a modern way being researched."

3.0 Objectives of the Study

1. To learn about the hybrid workplace system in India.
2. To find out how employees feel about a hybrid workplace and the elements that influence it.

4.0 Research Methodology

The research has applied a quantitative approach to the problem, with the primary goal of performing an empirical investigation. The information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. While a set of standard guidelines were followed for gathering primary data, a number of prominent national and international journals, books, and reports available in print and online were evaluated for secondary sources.

4.1 Research Design

A structured questionnaire was formulated to collect the data on the perception of the employees on the hybrid workplace dynamics that has been considered as the new

Table 1: Research Design

Nature of Study	This study is descriptive in nature because it describes the demographic characters with relations to hybrid workplace.
Type of Research	Quantitative and Qualitative
Target Population	BPO Employees working at U-Middle, Middle and Lower Level. (7000-7500)
Sample Size	158 received filled questionnaire from target population.
Sampling Technique	Convenient Sampling technique
Data Collection Tools	Primary Information gathered through a questionnaire. The research also made use of secondary data from books, websites, publications, journals, conference papers, periodicals, and other published data from government and non-government organisations.
Techniques for Analysis	Descriptive Statistics and Chi-Square Test used for analysis

Table 2: Parameters for analysis

Statements	Scales				
How effective do meetings that take place by video call (Zoom, Teams, etc.) compare to those that take place in person?	Hugely better	Substantially better	Better	About the same	Worse
Culture change seen in an organization after following hybrid workplace system.	Improved a lot	Gotten little Improved	It is same as before	Not at all Improved	Worst
It's become easy after covid to seek permission to work from home	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
"It is more flexible to work from home rather than work from office"	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

normal. Questionnaire is inspired by the well developed questionnaire used by Radoni, M.[11], and HR consultancies (HR Forecast, SAP etc). The questionnaire is based on five point likert scale. The sample parameters on which answers of respondent analysed are as follows:

The sample selected for study is employees working in service sector (IT, BPO, Education, Consultancies etc) at different profiles (Executives, Supervisors, Team Leader, Managers etc). Convenient sampling is used for the study because population of the study is unknown. The questionnaire were float among target population employees working in the service sector at lower level, middle level and upper middle level and get the filled questionnaire from 158 employees. The study attempted to find the significant relationship between the demographic factors of hybrid workers and the various reasons to work-from-home and work-from-office.

5.0 Results and Discussions

In order to understand how employees felt about the hybrid workplace and what they preferred, and asked various questions. A few questions are intended to elicit information about the employee's opinions. These questions are analysed using descriptive statistics and shown in the following graph:
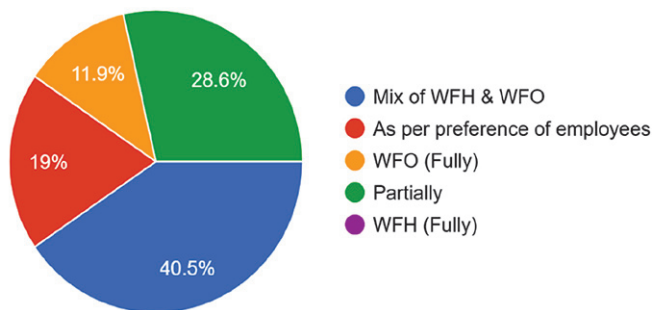

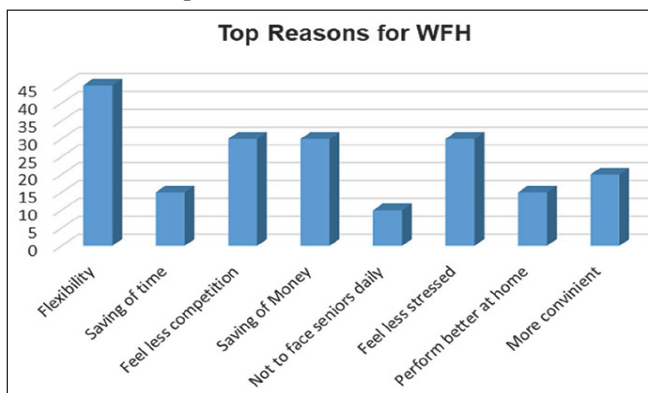Figure 1: Future Workplace Model

"Future Workplace Model"

Figure 2: Reasons of WFH

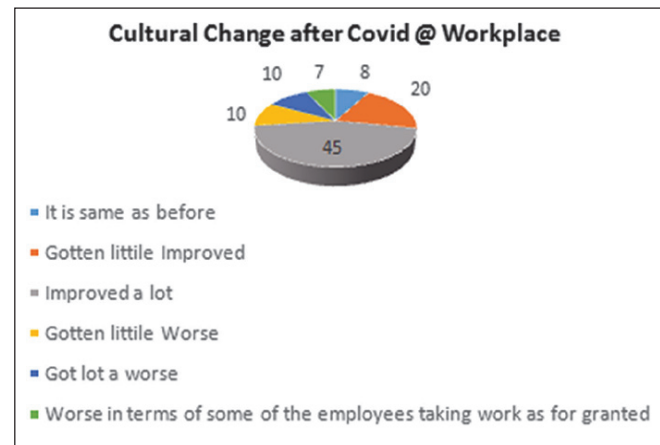*"Tick reasons for would you like to work from home"*

Figure 3: Cultural change

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show the employees' perceptions of the hybrid workplace, which is new to them. According to Fig.1, the majority of employees prefer to work both from home and from the office. Fig.2 describes the reasons why employees like to choose to work from home, and from statistics, it is found that most employees like to work from home because of flexibility, to feel less competition, and to save money. Fig.3 depicts changes in the organization's culture following Covid, so most employees believe there has been a significant improvement in how the workplace functions.

For testing the hypotheses from to Chi-square test was conducted. The hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. Chi-square test was conducted in SPSS to test the significance of the relationship between gender and the various reasons identified for work-from-home. Table 3 shows the chi-square results of the significance of gender for the various reasons for preference of work-from-home for the hybrid workers.

The results from the chi-square test suggested that there exists a significant relationship between gender and three items – more convenient to work-from-home, less interaction with seniors and less exposure to competition.

For testing the hypotheses from to Chi-square test was conducted. The hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. Chi-square test was conducted in SPSS to test the significance of the relationship between age and the various reasons identified for work-from-home.

Table 4 shows the chi-square results of the significance of age for the various reasons for preference of work-from-home for the hybrid workers.

The results from the chi-square test suggested that there exists a significant relationship between age and five items – performs better working from home, more convenient, less

Table 3: Chi-square test results between gender and top reasons for work-from-home

Hypothesis	p-value	Status of Hypothesis
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason better performance from home"	0.488	Not rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason flexibility to work-from-home"	0.391	Not rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason more convenient to work-from-home"	0.047	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason less interaction with seniors to work-from-home"	0.027	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more money when working-from-home"	0.294	Not rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more time when working-from-home"	0.509	Not rejected
"There is a significant relationship between gender of the hybrid workers and the reason less exposure to competition"	0.026	Rejected

Table 4: Chi-square test results between age and top reasons for work-from-home

Hypothesis	p-value	Status of Hypothesis
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason better performance from home"	0.022	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason flexibility to work-from-home"	0.128	Not Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason more convenient to work-from-home"	0.001	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason less interaction with seniors to work-from-home"	0.001	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more money when working-from-home"	0.007	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason saves more time when working-from-home"	0.048	Rejected
"There is a significant relationship between age of the hybrid workers and the reason less exposure to competition"	0.651	Not Rejected

Table 5: Comparison of chi-square test results between age and gender for the various reasons for work-from-home

Top reasons for work-from-home	Age	Gender
Better performance from home	Significant Relationship	Not a significant relationship
Flexibility to work-from-home	Not a significant relationship	Not a significant relationship
More convenient to work-from-home	Significant relationship	Significant relationship
Less interaction with seniors to work-from-home	Significant relationship	Significant relationship
Saves more money when working-from-home	Significant relationship	Not a significant relationship
Saves more time when working-from-home	Significant relationship	Not a significant relationship
Less exposure to competition	Not a significant relationship	Significant relationship

interaction with seniors, saves money when working from home and saves time when working from home. The chi-square test results for the existence of a significant relationship between the various reasons for work-from-home and demographic variables – age and gender are shown in Table 3.

6.0 Conclusions

The outbreak of a pandemic has altered the workplace landscape all around the world. The sudden switch from working from an office to working from home was difficult
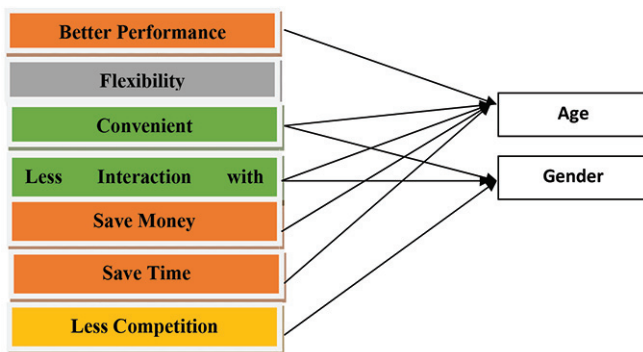
Figure 4: Comparison chart factors and age and gender

for the Indian population to adapt to. The epidemic has changed many aspects of work, including the workforce, working habits, technology, and even the physical environment. One item that has caught the attention of company houses, leaders, and HR is the workplace hybrid, which is new conventional, more human focused, tech enabled, and sustainable.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the significance of the association between the various justifications for working from home and the demographic variables of age and gender. The results suggested that only three factors were found to have a significant relationship with gender. These items were more convenient to work-from-home, less interaction with seniors to work-from-home, and less exposure to competition. Out of the seven factors tested only three factors are observed to have a significant relationship with gender. However, when the same items are tested to determine the existence of a significant relationship with age out of seven, five items are found to have a significant relationship. The benefits of working from home include higher performance, greater convenience, fewer engagement with elderly, increased financial savings, and increased time savings. These benefits are all found to be significantly correlated with age. The study also conclude that now time to adopt new normal where need to take care of where and how people work. New approach and technology to be followed to manage workplace, health and wellness should be top priorities one. This is time to reconstruct office togetherness of employees and employer.

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