

IMPACT OF HYBRID WORK MODELS AND AUTONOMY ON EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS AND PRODUCTIVITY IN MULTINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Dharshitha K¹, Dr. Yashaswini S²

¹*Student, Department of Post Graduate Studies, School of Commerce, Mount Carmel College, Autonomous, Bengaluru. Email: kdharshitha1829@gmail.com*

²*Assistant Professor, Department of Post Graduate Studies, School of Commerce, Mount Carmel College, Autonomous, Bengaluru. Email: yashaswini.s@mccblr.edu.in*

Abstract—This study looks at how hybrid work models and employee independence affect happiness—specifically job satisfaction, well-being, and engagement—and productivity in multinational organizations (MNCs). It focuses on mid-level employees in hierarchical systems like India. After COVID, hybrid work arrangements offer flexibility but can lead to mixed results because of issues like infrastructure gaps, GST compliance, time zones, and multi-generational dynamics. These factors can increase turnover by 20-30%. By combining theories on hybrid organizations, insights on work-life balance, and performance frameworks, the research finds gaps in empirical, cross-cultural studies. It suggests a multi-layered conceptual model: hybrid models improve happiness, with independence playing a key role and being influenced by organizational support and cultural diversity. A planned quantitative study will involve 300-500 non-IT MNC employees to test the hypotheses. It aims to provide HR strategies, such as culturally sensitive policies and technology tools, to improve outcomes and global competitiveness.

Keywords: Hybrid Work Models, Employee Autonomy, Happiness, Productivity, Multinational Organizations, Work-Life Balance, Emerging Economies.

Introduction

The nature of the workplace has undergone a tremendous change since the COVID-19 pandemic, with the concept of hybrid working, which combines office and remote working, gaining momentum across the globe due to its flexibility. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are at the forefront of the adoption of hybrid working, driven by technology and the need to be resilient in an uncertain world. The benefits of reduced travel time and improved job satisfaction are obvious, but success depends on several variables, including the need for employee autonomy, which allows workers the freedom to plan, make decisions, and control their tasks, thus creating a high sense of trust, motivation, productivity, and happiness.

In the Indian context, MNCs employ millions of people in an environment driven by the boom in the IT and services industry, creating unique challenges in the adoption of the hybrid model, including the lack of proper infrastructure, such as the unavailability of the internet in rural areas, the need to match the time zones of global teams, and the traditional hierarchical approach to managing the workforce, which may conflict with the need for autonomy, creating an environment of debate about the ability of the hybrid model to create happiness and productivity of employees in multinational organizations can be understood.

Need for the Study

The sudden transition to a hybrid work model after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionized the way organizations function globally. Multinational organizations are embracing hybrid work models to ensure organizational productivity while offering flexibility to their workforce. However, the effectiveness of hybrid work models depends on various aspects, namely, employee autonomy, organizational support, and cultural diversity. Although hybrid work models are gaining popularity, little attention has been paid to the impact of these aspects on employee happiness and productivity, especially in emerging economies such as India.

Impact of Hybrid Work Models and Autonomy on Employee Happiness and Productivity in Multinational Organizations

Hence, this study becomes essential to understand the role of hybrid work models and employee autonomy in boosting employee happiness and productivity.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it adds to the existing literature on hybrid work arrangements by incorporating autonomy, happiness, and productivity in one conceptual framework. Second, it enlightens multinational organizations on how hybrid work arrangements contribute to employee well-being and productivity. Third, it guides HR managers and organizational leaders on how to effectively formulate hybrid work arrangements for their organizations. Lastly, it adds to the literature on workplace transformation in emerging economies such as India.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between hybrid work models, autonomy, happiness, and productivity in multinational corporations. The study attempts to conceptualize a framework for understanding how hybrid work arrangements affect employee outcomes in terms of autonomy while considering organizational support and diversity as moderators.

Review of Literature

Philip Marcel Karré (2022): Karré's model looks at hybrid organizations that mix public and private features across six areas: ownership, activities, funding, value or strategic orientation, and autonomy. Each hybrid creates a unique "thumbprint" represented on a radar chart for comparison and performance insights. This approach turns the concept of hybridity from a vague description into a clear, multi-faceted evaluation.

Giuseppe Grossi, Christoph Reichard, Anna Thomasson and Jarmo Vakkuri (2017): Hybrid organizations combine features of public, private, and third-sector entities. This shift stems from New Public Management reforms that mixed the roles of the state and the market. They balance various goals, stakeholders, and methods related to ownership, funding, and independence. Research views them as innovative but also faces challenges with conflicting goals, gaps in accountability, and difficulties in measurement.

Multidimensional frameworks are essential for examining their governance and performance.

Christian Wiradendi Wolor, Destria Kurnianti, Siti Fatimah Zahra, S Martono (2020): Work-life balance (WLB) improves millennial employee performance, satisfaction, and productivity in Indonesia by reducing stress and boosting motivation. Flexible hours, telecommuting, leave policies, and support from supervisors and family are key factors. Good WLB strategies increase commitment, retention, and company results in flexible, tech-driven workplaces.

Melvin S. Rañeses Noor un Nisa, Edgar Suliva Bacason, Salvacion Martir (2022): Remote work affects work-life balance and productivity in Dubai's consultancy sector. A poor balance leads to stress, burnout, and absenteeism. Flexible hours, telecommuting, and support from managers and families improve satisfaction, motivation, and retention for millennials. Good work-life balance strategies lead to better performance and productivity in organizations.

Mei-I. Cheng and Andrew R.J. Dain, David R. Moore (2023): Traditional performance systems fall short in dynamic settings. Job-based, person-based, or role-based approaches alone overlook managerial complexity. A hybrid framework brings together tasks, behavioral skills such as leadership, self-control, teamwork, analytical thinking, and flexibility, along with social roles. Comprehensive models improve effectiveness, HR decisions, and adaptability in team-oriented, uncertain environments.

Pallavi Datta, Sathiyaseelan Balasundaram, Elangovan N and Sridevi Nair (2023): Effective management practices improve employee performance, satisfaction, and organizational success through supportive policies, flexible work, and skill-based approaches. Challenges such as stress, role conflict, and measurement issues continue to exist, but balanced, comprehensive strategies increase productivity, commitment, and results.

Ingela Eng, Michaela Tjernberg & Marie-France Champoux-Larsson (2024): Modern organizations prefer management methods that combine skills, abilities, and context instead of one-dimensional approaches. Comprehensive frameworks improve decision-making, employee performance, and results. Well-rounded, multidimensional strategies address the complex issues faced by today's organizations

Research Gap

While there are several research studies on the concept of hybrid work models and work-life balance, there is limited research done on the concept of integrating the elements of ‘hybrid work models,’ ‘employee autonomy,’ ‘employee happiness,’ and ‘productivity’ within a conceptual framework. Moreover, there are limited research studies done on the concept in the context of developed economies and specific industries such as the IT industry. There are no research studies done in the context of multinational organizations in emerging economies such as India.

Thus, this research study attempts to bridge the research gap by proposing a conceptual model on the relationship between ‘hybrid work models,’ ‘employee autonomy,’ ‘employee happiness,’ and ‘productivity’ in the context of multinational organizations.

Objective 1: “To examine the impact of hybrid work models on employee happiness in multinational organizations.”

Variables for the Objective:

Independent Variables

Hybrid Work Models

Refers to a flexible work arrangement where employees divide their work time between remote work and office work .

Dependent Variables

Employee Happiness

Refers to employees job satisfaction, well being, and positive emotional experience at work.

Variable Relationship

Hybrid work models provide flexibility increase employee autonomy which improves employee happiness.

Objective 2: To develop a conceptual framework linking hybrid work models, employee autonomy, employee happiness, and productivity in multinational organizations.

Independent Variables

Hybrid work models

Hybrid work models refer to flexible work arrangements where employees work partly from home and partly from the office.

Dependent Variables

Employee Happiness

Employee happiness refers to the level of job satisfaction , well being and positive emotional experience employees feel in the workplace.

Employee Productivity

Employee productivity refers to efficiency and effectiveness with which employees complete their tasks and achieve organizational goals.

Discussion

The literature shows that hybrid work models can change work practices by providing more flexibility, lowering commute stress, and increasing job satisfaction and engagement. However, these benefits do not come automatically, especially in hierarchical and culturally diverse settings like Indian multinational organizations. In these cases, the relationship between hybrid work, autonomy, happiness, and productivity becomes more complex and depends on the context.

How multidimensional “hybrid” frameworks support Objective 1

Karré (2022) and Grossi et al. (2017) point out that hybrid organizations are not simply “part-office, part-remote.” They are multi-dimensional systems that combine ownership, funding, governance, and autonomy into a unique organizational identity. In this perspective, the level of autonomy becomes a key aspect of the hybrid model, rather than just a personal

Impact of Hybrid Work Models and Autonomy on Employee Happiness and Productivity in Multinational Organizations

benefit. When employees in Indian MNCs have control over when and how they work, they feel greater trust, manage their work rhythm better, and develop a sense of ownership. These factors contribute directly to higher job satisfaction and well-being.

This matches Objective 1 of study, which looks at how hybrid work models affect employee happiness. In India, where strict hierarchies and long-lasting office cultures still exist, allowing autonomy in a hybrid setup can help turn simple flexibility into real happiness. For instance, letting employees pick their work hours within Indian time limits or plan office days around family duties can lessen stress and boost emotional well-being, especially in the context of commuting between urban and rural areas.

How work-life balance and autonomy mediate happiness and productivity

Studies on work-life balance, such as Wolor et al. (2020) and Rañeses et al. (2022), show that flexible hours, telecommuting options, and supportive supervisors significantly reduce stress and burnout, especially in emerging markets. In India, hybrid work patterns observed in IT and service-sector MNCs similarly indicate that when employees can integrate personal commitments with work, they report higher job satisfaction, engagement, and perceived productivity.

In the framework, autonomy acts as the mediating mechanism: hybrid work provides the structural flexibility (independent variable), but it is only when employees exercise autonomy over scheduling, communication style, and task management that this flexibility translates into happiness and performance. For instance, allowing mid-level employees in Indian MNCs to negotiate their own weekly office-vs-remote split, or to design their task sequences, strengthens their sense of agency and reduces role conflict—two key drivers of job satisfaction.

Linking performance frameworks and Objective 2

The hybrid performance frameworks proposed by Cheng et al. (2023) and extended by Datta et al. (2023) and Eng et al. (2024) stress that effective performance in modern organizations depends not only on tasks, but also on behavioral skills like self-control, teamwork, and flexibility. These frameworks fit well with your second objective: to develop a conceptual model linking hybrid work, autonomy, happiness, and productivity in MNCs.

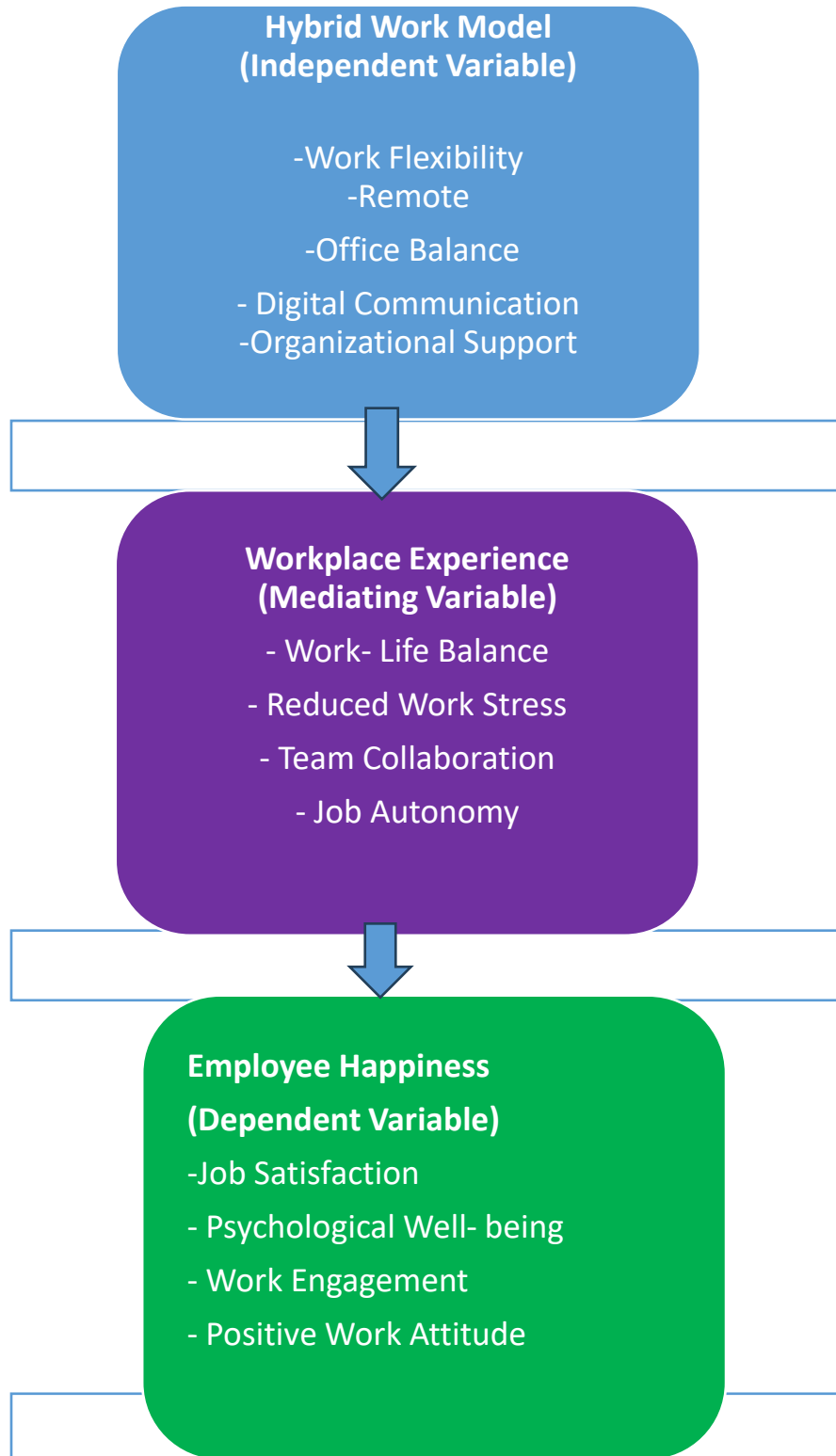
In practical terms, this means that hybrid work arrangements in Indian MNCs are most effective when they are supported by:

Organizational support systems such as clear communication protocols, digital collaboration tools, and manager training on trusting remote work.

Cultural moderators such as shifting from purely top-down hierarchies toward flatter, more inclusive decision-making, especially in multi-generational teams where younger employees may expect higher autonomy while older employees may prefer structure.

When these supports are present, autonomy becomes a performance lever: employees manage their energy better, align work with personal rhythms, and feel more engaged, which in turn increases both happiness and productivity. Without such supports—i.e., in highly hierarchical or infrastructurally weak settings—hybrid work can instead create confusion, blurred boundaries, and perceived workload overload, undermining both well-being and output.

Conceptual Framework model



Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between **hybrid work models and employee happiness** within multinational organizations. In this framework, the **hybrid work model is considered the independent variable**, while **employee happiness is treated as the dependent variable**.

Hybrid work models refer to organizational work arrangements that combine **remote work and in-office work**, allowing employees greater flexibility in choosing where and when they perform their tasks. Elements such as **work flexibility, remote-office balance, digital communication systems, and organizational support** are important components of hybrid work environments.

These workplace practices influence employees' overall **workplace experience**, which acts as a mediating factor in shaping employee attitudes and well-being. Factors such as **work-life balance, reduced work stress, effective team collaboration, and job autonomy** contribute to how employees perceive their work environment.

When employees experience positive workplace conditions under hybrid work arrangements, they are more likely to report higher levels of **employee happiness**, which can be reflected through **job satisfaction, psychological well-being, work engagement, and positive work attitudes**.

Therefore, the conceptual framework suggests that the adoption of hybrid work models can enhance employee happiness by improving employees' workplace experiences and overall quality of work life within multinational organizations.

Findings and Suggestions

The study has shown the significant impact of the hybrid work model on employee happiness. It has been found that the hybrid work model has a positive effect on employee happiness. If the employee has the option to divide the work between home and office, he/she will be less stressed and satisfied with the work. Another factor found in the study is the role of employee autonomy in the hybrid work model. It has been found that the more autonomous the employee is in the work model, the more productive he/she will be. It has also been found that the success of the hybrid work model depends on the organizational support provided and the effective digital communication system in the organization.

Social Contribution

This study makes a social contribution by highlighting the significance of flexible work arrangements in enhancing the well-being of employees and work-life balance. Hybrid work arrangements can help employees save time on commuting, reduce levels of stress, and increase the quality of life. Moreover, the reduction of commuting can lead to environmental sustainability through the reduction of traffic jams and pollution. This study is also important in the creation of a modern workplace that is inclusive to employees who have personal responsibilities.

Future Research Direction

The proposed conceptual framework can be empirically tested through quantitative and qualitative research methods in the future. Industry-wise research can be conducted to understand the implications of hybrid work models in the information technology industry, the finance industry, and the manufacturing industry, among others. Comparative research can be carried out to understand the implications of hybrid work across different cultures and countries. In the future, the implications of hybrid work models can be tested on the happiness and productivity of employees in the long term.

Conclusion

Based on the above arguments, it is safe to conclude that hybrid work models have become an essential part of contemporary workplace practices, particularly in the context of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed conceptual framework has clearly indicated the link between hybrid work models, employee autonomy, employee happiness, and productivity in the context of multinational organizations. Therefore, organizations can create a favourable work environment through the implementation of hybrid work policies and management practices, which can positively influence the happiness and productivity of employees.

REFERENCES

- [1] Claartje L. ter Hoeven, & Zoonen, W. van. (2015). Flexible work designs and employee well-being: examining the effects of resources and demands. *New Technology Work and Employment*, 30(3), 237–255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12052>
- [2] Slemp, G. R., Kern, M. L., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2015). Workplace Well-Being: The Role of Job Crafting and Autonomy Support. *Psychology of Well-Being Theory Research and Practice*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-015-0034-y>
- [3] L, L., & Muhammad, R. (2023). The Association Between Work-life Balance and Employee Mental Health: A Systematic Review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*. <https://doi.org/10.24083/apjhm.v18i3.2565>
- [4] Ratih Devi Aryanti, Sari, & Herlina Siwi Widiانا. (2020). A Literature Review of Workplace Well-Being. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Community Development (ICCD 2020)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201017.134>
- [5] Li, Z., Yang, Y., Zhang, X., & Lyu, Z. (2021). Impact of Future Work Self on Employee Workplace Wellbeing: A Self-Determination Perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.656874>
- [6] Slemp, G. R., Kern, M. L., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2015). Workplace Well-Being: The Role of Job Crafting and Autonomy Support. *Psychology of Well-Being Theory Research and Practice*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-015-0034-y>
- [7] Rajesh, S. (2025). “Fostering Workplace Happiness: The Impact of Organizational Learning Capability on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment.” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 15(4), 38–48. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7315.2025.00011.6>
- [8] Cheng, M. I., Dainty, A. R. J., & Moore, D. R. (2004). Human resource management in construction project organizations. *Construction Management and Economics*, 22(6), 585–594. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144619042000202720>
- [9] Datta, P., Balasundaram, S., Elangovan, N., & Nair, S. Employee social experiences in hybrid work environments.
- [10] Eng, I., Tjernberg, M., & Champoux-Larsson, M. F. (n.d.). Hybrid work in a 3:2 model. Mid Sweden University. <https://epi-prod.miun.se/en/Research/research-projects/ongoing-researchprojects/hybrid-work-in-a-32-model/>
- [11] Grossi, G., Reichard, C., Thomasson, A., & Vakkuri, J. (2017). Hybrid organizations in the public sector: A systematic literature review. *Public Money & Management*, 37(6), 379–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2017.1328798>
- [12] IJSREM. (2025). Future of hybrid work in multinational corporations. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management*.
- [13] Rañeses, M. S., Nisa, N. U., Bacason, E. S., & Martir, S. (2022). Hybrid work and employee well-being. *International Journal of Business and Applied Sciences*, 8(7).
