



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

A STUDY ON HYBRID WORK PARADOX AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS IN INDIA

Manas Sushma Dattaprasad Dicholkar

Independent Scholar,
Mumbai (Maharashtra, India)

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2026-17894938/IRJHIS2608007>

Abstract:

The "Hybrid Work Paradox" represents a critical challenge in contemporary organizational behavior, employees' simultaneous desire for the flexibility of remote work and the social connection of in-person collaboration. This study compares established Multinational Corporations (MNCs) with early-stage startup organizations to examine how this paradox affects employee performance across Indian firms. Using a quantitative research design, empirical data was collected via a structured questionnaire from 43 professionals working across various sectors in urban Indian centers, including Mumbai and Bengaluru. The findings indicate that while hybrid work arrangements significantly improve work-life balance and individual focus-driven productivity, they can lead to collaboration fatigue and cultural friction. Notably, while 69.7% of respondents equate workplace flexibility with monthly salary in employer selection, 76.7% affirm that physical interactions with mentors are essential for career growth and professional guidance. This paper provides actionable frameworks for Human Resource leaders in India's post-pandemic economy to balance operational coherence with employee autonomy.

Keywords: Hybrid Work Paradox, Employee Performance, India-based Organizations, Multinational Corporations (MNCs), Startups, Work-Life Balance, Collaboration Fatigue, Organizational Culture, Remote Work

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Background:

The global pandemic accelerated the adoption of hybrid work models in India, transforming them from temporary business continuity measures into permanent operational strategies across major commercial hubs such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR. In the Indian urban context, this transition is particularly complex due to structural challenges like lengthy daily commutes and a traditional corporate culture that places high value on in-person interpersonal dynamics. Contemporary organizations are increasingly moving beyond survival metrics to establish sustainable frameworks that optimize both employee well-being and productivity.

1.2 The Employee Perspective:

For the Indian workforce, hybrid work creates a dual-edged reality. On one hand, eliminating strenuous commutes allows employees to reclaim significant personal time, which frequently enhances "deep work" efficiency and task execution. Conversely, remote isolation often results in a connectivity deficit. Younger professionals and Gen Z entrants report missing informal mentorship, spontaneous organizational networking, and cohesive workplace rituals that build social capital.

1.3 The Employer Perspective:

Employers across Indian MNCs and startup ecosystems evaluate the hybrid paradox through the lenses of operational sustainability and organizational alignment. While startups frequently leverage hybrid arrangements to optimize real estate costs in Tier-1 cities, established MNCs express concern over "productivity paranoia" and the potential erosion of long-term collaborative innovation.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

As India consolidates its position as a global leader in Information Technology and Global Capability Centers (GCCs), understanding the drivers of performance in hybrid settings is crucial. This study offers strategic guidance for talent retention by differentiating the operational demands of resource-lean startups from process-intensive multinational enterprises.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

2.1 Evolution of Hybrid Work and Organizational Flexibility:

The transition toward hybrid work arrangements has evolved from an emergency response into a core structural dimension of modern Human Resource Management. Recent literature confirms that workplace flexibility is no longer viewed merely as a perk but as a strategic requirement for organizational resilience and talent attraction. Sari and Wening (2025) observed that implementing hybrid work systems in the digital era directly enhances employee job performance by granting autonomy over work hours and locations, thereby optimizing individual workflow efficiency and personal well-being. Similarly, A. S. E. (2025) demonstrated that hybrid arrangements significantly increase employee satisfaction and output compared to rigid, traditional in-office settings by allowing workers to balance personal responsibilities with professional deadlines. In the Indian retail and service sectors, Renugadevi (2025) found that adaptive work models reduce turnover intentions and boost employee engagement, although structural disparities persist between backend office staff and customer-facing frontline employees.

2.2 Productivity Drivers and the "Always-On" Digital Culture:

While quantitative metrics often show gains in individual productivity under remote and hybrid models, scholarly investigations reveal significant underlying operational frictions. G. H. (2025), in an empirical assessment of the Indian IT industry, noted that while commute reduction and spatial independence boost task efficiency, the lack of spontaneous face-to-face interaction introduces

communication lag and hinders cross-functional teamwork. Furthermore, empirical studies from ShodhKosh (2024) across Pune IT firms and Themeinwp (2025) across Hyderabad IT companies highlighted that prolonged reliance on virtual collaboration tools leads to "digital exhaustion" and screen fatigue. Rosari et al. (2025), through a systematic literature review, corroborated that while hybrid work enhances work-life balance, it simultaneously risks inducing collaboration fatigue, perceived leadership bias, and erosion of shared workplace identity if digital communication boundaries are left unregulated.

2.3 Employee Engagement, Retention, and Hybrid Identity in India:

Understanding how Indian professionals navigate hybrid environments requires examining cultural and relational dynamics. Vanitha et al. (2024), studying IT professionals in Karnataka, found that sustained job engagement in hybrid frameworks depends heavily on transparent communication and organizational support systems. Inthiyaz (2025) emphasized that customized hybrid policies promote organizational development by building trust and interpersonal cohesion. Crucially, Awasthy and Adya (2025) explored how non-managerial employees in Indian hybrid organizations navigate institutional contradictions, identifying adaptive behaviors such as "pragmatic role-switching" and "symbolic compliance" to survive conflicting workplace expectations. Finally, Tawalbeh (2025) demonstrated that in distributed work models, outcome-focused performance evaluations serve as much stronger predictors of productivity and engagement than traditional time-based surveillance.

2.4 Research Gap:

Despite extensive international research on remote working, there remains a noticeable scarcity of comparative empirical studies in India that evaluate employee performance across established Multinational Corporations (MNCs) versus early-stage startup ecosystems. Existing literature often treats "hybrid work" as a monolithic construct, overlooking how digital intensity, sector-specific demands, and Indian cultural expectations of hierarchy and mentorship influence the employee experience. This study addresses this gap by comparing distinct organizational models within India's urban commercial centers.

3. OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the core elements of the Hybrid Work Paradox within the Indian corporate context.
2. To evaluate the impact of hybrid work arrangements on employee performance and engagement.
3. To recommend evidence-based strategies for Indian HR managers to mitigate the negative effects of the paradox.

4. METHODOLOGY:

4.1 Research Gap & Design:

Existing literature frequently treats hybrid work as a uniform concept without accounting for

digital intensity or the cultural expectations of physical presence unique to Indian workplaces. This study employs a Descriptive and Analytical Research Design to examine causal relationships between work models and performance indicators across different organizational scales.

4.2 Data Collection & Sample Size:

Primary data was gathered using a structured 12-item questionnaire administered digitally across professional networks. The sample comprises \$N = 43\$ actively employed professionals and potential job seekers in India, primarily representing the Gen Z and Millennial demographics (aged 18–40).

4.3 Data Collection & Sample Size:

Primary data was gathered using a structured 12-item questionnaire administered digitally across professional networks. The sample comprises \$N = 43\$ actively employed professionals and potential job seekers in India, primarily representing the Gen Z and Millennial demographics (aged 18–40). Secondary data was compiled from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and academic literature regarding hybrid work performance.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

5.1 Demographic & Organizational Profile:

The survey sample reflects a digitally native workforce, with 62.8% of respondents aged 18–25 and 27.9% aged 25–34. Respondents are distributed across well-established MNCs (65.1%) and startup organizations (34.9%). Industry representation is led by Banking, Financial Services & Insurance (BFSI) at 30.2% and IT & Software Services at 27.9%, followed by Media & Advertising (11.6%) and Manufacturing (7.0%).

Demographic / Organizational Variable	Primary Category	Percentage (%)	Secondary Category	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	18–25 Years	62.8%	25–34 Years	27.9%
Organization Type	Established MNC	65.1%	Startup Organization	34.9%
Industry Sector	BFSI	30.2%	IT & Software Services	27.9%
Current Work Arrangement	Mandatory Office (5–6 Days)	46.5%	Defined Hybrid Model	30.2%

5.2 Sectorial Comparison: BFSI & IT/ITeS vs. Manufacturing & Media:

A critical insight from the empirical distribution is the high concentration of respondents in

knowledge-intensive sectors—specifically BFSI (30.2%) and IT/Software Services (27.9%). These sectors were early adopters of remote working during the pandemic and continue to experience the highest degree of tension regarding work model implementation. In contrast to manufacturing (7.0%), where operational feasibility mandates physical site presence, employees in BFSI and IT/ITeS execute tasks that are predominantly cloud-based and asynchronous. Consequently, when these organizations impose rigid physical attendance rules, employees perceive a conflict between operational necessity and management surveillance. Furthermore, startups in our sample (34.9%) demonstrate higher agility in maintaining flexible arrangements to conserve capital and attract digital talent, whereas established MNCs (65.1%) grapple with institutional inertia and complex cross-border coordination, often resorting to mandated office days.

5.3 Work Model Impact on Employee Engagement and Self-Rated Output:

Despite global shifts toward flexibility, 46.5% of respondents remain subject to mandatory return-to-office (RTO) policies requiring 5 to 6 in-office days weekly, while 30.2% work under defined hybrid schedules and 23.3% operate fully remotely.

- **Employee Engagement:** When assessing engagement, 48.8% of participants reported feeling neutral, while 30.2% expressed satisfaction. This high percentage of neutrality (nearly half the sample) indicates an emotional decoupling between the physical workplace and organizational commitment. For many Indian professionals, compliance with attendance policies occurs without genuine psychological engagement, signaling a risk of "quiet quitting" if flexibility is removed.
- **Self-Rated Output Performance:** Respondents rated their overall work output performance at a mean score of **3.51 out of 5.00**. Scores clustered predominantly at 4 (39.5%) and 3 (37.2%), indicating solid perceived productivity but highlighting room for optimization through better digital workflows. The absence of ratings at the absolute maximum suggests that collaboration friction and context-switching between home and office environments impede peak performance.

5.4 Retention Risk under Mandatory Return-to-Office:

The empirical data reveals a substantial retention risk associated with rigid office mandates. When asked if they would seek new employment if their organization mandated a 100% Return-to-Office policy:

- **51.2%** indicated they "Maybe" would look for a job switch.
- **18.6%** stated "Yes, definitely," confirming immediate flight risk.
- **30.2%** reported being comfortable with mandatory 5–6 day in-office attendance.

Combining the "Maybe" and "Yes, definitely" cohorts demonstrates that **69.8% of the workforce** poses a potential attrition risk under an inflexible return-to-office policy. In India's

competitive job market, where replacement costs for skilled IT and banking professionals are exceptionally high, ignoring employee preference for spatial flexibility represents a severe strategic liability for employers.

5.5 Deconstructing the Hybrid Work Paradox: Flexibility vs. Physical Mentorship:

The core thesis of this study—the Hybrid Work Paradox—is empirically demonstrated by contrasting employee priorities regarding workplace autonomy against their developmental needs:

- **Value of Flexibility:** 69.7% of respondents agreed (rating 4 or 5 out of 5) that workplace flexibility is as important as monthly salary when evaluating an employer.
- **Need for Physical Presence:** Conversely, 76.7% agreed that the physical presence of seniors and mentors is essential for career growth, professional guidance, and overall productivity.
- **Innovation & Collaboration:** Respondents rated the statement *"In-person brainstorming sessions lead to better innovation than virtual meetings"* at an average of **3.88 out of 5.00** (with 44.2% rating it 4, and 25.6% rating it 5).

This juxtaposition explains why employees resist both 100% remote and 100% in-office mandates. While workers demand autonomy over where routine, focused tasks are completed, they actively seek physical proximity to leadership for implicit learning, career sponsorship, and complex brainstorming. In Indian corporate culture, where hierarchical guidance and personal rapport play critical roles in career progression, remote isolation threatens professional development.

5.6 Urban Infrastructure and Work-Life Balance Dynamics:

The urban infrastructure of Indian metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Bengaluru significantly influences employee perception of remote work. Among respondents, 55.8% reported that hybrid/remote arrangements significantly improved their work-life balance. In cities where daily commutes can consume 2 to 4 hours, remote work directly reduces physical fatigue and stress. However, 30.2% reported no improvement in work-life balance. This stagnation is attributed to the "always-on" digital culture prevalent in Indian firms, where blurred personal boundaries, after-hours communications, and uncoordinated virtual meetings replace commute stress with digital burnout.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

5.1 Conclusion:

This research confirms that the Hybrid Work Paradox is an acute organizational challenge in India. Employees refuse to view flexibility as a peripheral benefit, with nearly 70% equating it with monetary compensation. However, they simultaneously rely on in-person environments for mentorship (76.7%) and collaborative innovation (3.88/5.00). Organizations that enforce rigid return-to-office mandates face severe talent attrition risks, as nearly 70% of employees would consider leaving under 100% physical attendance policies.

5.2 Strategic Recommendations for HR Leaders:

1. **Implement "Mentorship Office Days":** Rather than mandating arbitrary attendance quotas, organizations should establish scheduled anchor days dedicated explicitly to senior-junior collaboration and career coaching.
2. **Convert Offices into "Innovation Hubs":** Given the strong consensus that in-person interaction fosters creativity, physical office facilities should be redesigned away from individual cubicles toward collaborative brainstorming spaces.
3. **Enforce "Digital Right-to-Disconnect" Policies:** To prevent collaboration fatigue and protect work-life balance, HR policies must define clear boundaries for electronic communication outside contracted working hours.
4. **Customized Organizational Strategies:** Multinational corporations should prioritize reducing bureaucratic digital friction, whereas startups should focus on structuring formal mentorship channels within flexible working environments.

5.3 Limitations and Scope for Future Research:

The primary limitation of this study is its sample size (N=43), which, while providing deep analytical insights into Gen Z and Millennial professionals in Tier-1 cities, may not generalize across rural or unorganized sectors. Furthermore, data was collected through convenience sampling via professional networks. Future research should utilize larger, longitudinal samples across diverse geographical tiers in India and incorporate objective organizational KPI metrics alongside self-rated employee performance scores.

REFERENCES:

1. Awasthy, R., & Adya, M. (2025). Which Way Do I Go? How Non-Managerial Employees Navigate Conflicting Logics In An Indian Hybrid Organization. *FIIB Business Review*, 14(5), 566–585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23197145251370854>
2. G, H. (2025). Evaluating The Impact Of Hybrid Work Models On Employee Productivity In IT Industry. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 6(4), 5521–5527. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0425.1499>
3. Inthiyaz, K. (2025). Influence Of Hybrid Work Model On Employee Performance And Organizational Development. *International Journal On Science And Technology*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.71097/ijstat.v16.i3.7879>
4. Renugadevi, B. (2025). A Study on Evaluating Workplace Flexibility and its Impact on Employee Well Being and Organisational Success in Indian Retail Sector. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering & Management*, 10(31s), 730–738. <https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i31s.5128>
5. Rosari, M. A., Dewati, A. R., Calvin, M., Febrianti, R., & Febrianty, N. (2025). The Impact Of Hybrid Working On Employee Performance And Well-Being In The Digital Era. *JISOSEPOL*

Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Ekonomi Dan Politik, 3(2), 525–536. <https://doi.org/10.61787/9vq8j115>

6. Sari, A. P., & Wening, N. (2025). The Impact Of Hybrid Work System Implementation On Employee Performance In The Digital Era. *Journal of Social Work and Science Education*, 6(2), 773–788. <https://doi.org/10.52690/jswse.v6i2.1217>
7. Tawalbeh, J. (2025). Remote and Hybrid Work Models: Enhancing Employee Engagement And Redefining Performance Management In A New Era. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i3.715>

