

The Role of Hybrid Work Models in Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture

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Abstract

Hybrid work has become increasingly popular as employers look to offer their workforce more options regarding where and how they perform their job. Hybrid work provides workers with a greater degree of flexibility and autonomy. Hybrid work is beneficial not only to individuals but also to organizations, and as such, may create a variety of changes for organizations and employees. While hybrid work has spread rapidly across industries, there remains an absence of scholarly research about the way(s) hybrid work systems impact employee engagement and the overall culture of a given organization. This study explored the degree to which and the reasons why hybrid work systems are positively related to employee engagement and the overall culture of an organization. A quantitative research methodology was employed. Data were collected from employees who had the capability to operate in hybrid work environments. In this analysis, hybrid work arrangements are treated as independent variables, while employee engagement and organizational culture serve as dependent variables. The Pearson correlation method was employed to ascertain the relationship between the variables, and multiple regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the interaction between hybrid work, employee engagement, and organizational culture. The correlation results indicate a positive relationship between hybrid work and employee engagement as well as between hybrid work and organizational culture. The outcomes of the regression analysis reveal that hybrid work models exert a significant positive effect on both employee engagement and organizational culture. Specifically, the hybrid work model accounts for 47% of the variance in employee engagement and 34% of the impact on organizational culture. These findings validate the alternative hypotheses, demonstrating that the effective implementation of hybrid work models enhances employee engagement levels and fosters a robust organizational culture. In summary, hybrid work is crucial for enhancing employee experiences and cultivating a strong organizational culture. Organizations must prioritize flexibility, communication, technological support, and collaboration with employees to maximize the benefits of the hybrid work model.

Keywords: Hybrid work model, employee engagement, organisational culture, leadership support, remote work

The work environment has experienced a tremendous upheaval in last years, driven by rapid technological improvements, globalization, and evolving employee expectations. Flexible work arrangements which place emphasis on independence, digital interaction, and outcome orientation rather than physical presence have been steadily replacing traditional office workings with set working hours based in an office environment. The hybrid model of working i.e. the practice of employees spending some time at the office and working remotely in several cases has now become a common work arrangement in many organizations because of the changing work environment. Different industries have continued to adopt hybrid forms of work as a way of balancing efficiency in the operations of a company and the welfare of the employees through hybridization of work.

The pandemic of COVID-19 played a significant role in forcing organizations to carry out experiments with teleworking on an

unprecedented basis which resulted in the rapid acceptance of a hybrid work model. The move from full remote work to hybrid work made it clearer that hybrid work is a long-term strategy. Now hybrid work is seen as a means of cutting down on costs, boosting satisfaction with work, and attracting and keeping talent. Even though hybrid work has advantages and disadvantages, the impact it has in terms of developing the culture of an organization and thereby ensuring employee engagement is ambiguous and therefore requires empirical research. Since the lifting of the social distancing requirements due to COVID-19, hybrid working is one of the most used forms of employment for white-collar employees (Hopkins & Bardowell, 2023; Teng-Calleja et al., 2024). Employee engagement is the focus of the study in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management since it correlates positively with productivity, innovation, retention of employees, and performance.

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Highly engaged employees manifest elevated levels of enthusiasm, commitment, and focus on their work, translating to positive organizational outcomes. Hybrid working models can contribute to employee engagement through the provision of flexible and autonomous work arrangements, which allow individuals to balance their multiple personal and professional obligations more effectively. However, when not managed well, reduced face-to-face communication, poor social connections, and the blurring of boundaries between work and home may create difficulties which, in turn, lead to sustained engagement of employees. Therefore, organizations that are seeking to take advantage of the flexible working environment must also understand the impact of hybrid work on employee engagement.

Among many factors influencing the success of hybrid work models is the effect they have on an organization's culture. The culture of an organization is the values, beliefs and behaviors of the employees that give them a sense of connectedness and belonging to the organization. For over one hundred years, being present to physically connect with a colleague, share experiences, and have ongoing and consistent interactions with coworkers and teams has contributed to developing and sustaining the culture of an organization. The reduction of face-to-face interaction and the increase of technology-related means of communication such as video conferencing will prohibit continuing progress toward establishing the systems that contribute to creating a unified and inclusive organizational culture of employees who span across the globe and primarily communicate with each other using virtual tools. The transition into a hybrid workplace has generated discussions globally among employers and their employees; several employers continue to be doubtful while individual employees report that they desire flexibility in their work. Employee-based preferences outweigh those of the employer-based preference, which favors in-person work, but employee desire to work from home (WFH) a few days a week.

Organizational culture and employee engagement are intrinsically linked. An effective corporate culture provides employees with a sense of purpose, psychological safety, and connection to their company's values which enhances their level of engagement. Conversely, employees who are engaged contribute positively to the evolution and sustainability of the corporate culture by virtue of their behaviors and

attitudes. As hybrid working arrangements have emerged, the nature of the reciprocal relationship between employee engagement and corporate culture has likely shifted due to employees' perceived levels of connection to their employer being affected by where they work; frequency of visits to the office; and access to leadership / communication support. To effectively understand how today's organizations work, not only is it essential to understand and have experience with how hybrid working models co-exist but also to evaluate the inter-relationship of the two concepts of employee engagement and corporate culture as they relate to each other. On the other hand, employee engagement is understood to mean the level of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement employees have with their employer and what the employer is trying to achieve. Higher levels of employee engagement result in an organization's increased productivity, creativity, satisfaction with the job they perform, and loyalty to that organization. Consequently, it has become a strategic workplace priority for organizations to maintain employee engagement, which presents a challenge for organizations operating in a hybrid work culture. In a hybrid work environment, communication and leadership serve as an important factor in how employees experience the organization. Through creating trust, providing inclusivity among employees, and providing clarity of what is expected of employees, effective leaders can help close the gaps created by hybrid working employees (i.e., physically and psychologically) and thereby build company culture and increase employee engagement, even in situations where there is not a consistent level of employee/leaders direct interaction. By providing consistent empathy-based support and open, transparent communication to the team's constituents, leaders can continue to build and maintain company culture and continue building and developing employee engagement.

In the same way, in hybrid contexts, the effectiveness of communication thanks to technology and arranged communication practices plays an important role in ensuring alignment, cooperation, and cultural continuity. There is a great need for further research around how support given by leadership and specific communication practices influences cultural aspects and engagement in hybrid work setups. Even though there is an increasing amount of literature on flexible work schedules and remote

work, most of it has concentrated on individual-level outcomes including performance, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. The combined effects of hybrid work models on corporate culture and employee engagement within an integrated framework have been the subject of few research. Furthermore, a large portion of current research is based on experimental or short-term studies carried out during the early stages of remote work adoption, which restricts the generalizability of findings to stable hybrid work situations. In order to assess the overall impact of hybrid work on both organizational culture and engagement via effective communication and support from leadership, there needs to be an extensive body of empirical research that investigates hybrid working arrangements from the perspective of an extended organizational element as well as a broader organizational and employee impact holistically. The hybrid working models utilized by organizations and employees will differ between some industries, cultures and types of organizations. Furthermore, employee perceptions of such hybrid working arrangements will be influenced by numerous variables, including the nature of the organization (size, leadership style, technological readiness, existing cultural norms), as well as the context surrounding the country or region; particularly for emerging economies that may have enormous differences in terms of organizational structure and managerial practices compared to more developed nations. Therefore, developing comprehensive and meaningful insights regarding hybrid working models will require an understanding of these contextual factors across a number of organizational contexts. Accordingly, this study investigated the influence of hybrid working models on both organizational culture and employee engagement through the moderating roles of communication effectiveness and leadership support. This study uses quantitative correlation research design to acquire people's (managers' and employees') experience working in a hybrid work environment and collect quantitative data connecting key variables. A combination of both data types makes it possible to get a more detailed understanding of the impact that hybrid work has on employee engagement and organizational culture at the same time.

The relevance of this research is due to its contributions to theory and practice. This research theoretically develops existing

organizational culture and employee engagement in the context of hybrid work. The results of this research will show managers and policymakers the way to develop hybrid working strategies to ensure not only ongoing employee engagement but also organizational culture alignment. As organizations deal with the changes of the workplace, understanding the impacts of hybrid work on employee engagement and corporate culture is critical for long-term organizational success.

Models of Hybrid Work

A hybrid working environment provides employees with greater flexibility by blending parts of remote and part of on-site work while still being able to oversee the company. Numerous studies have shown that hybrid work improves both work/life balance and job satisfaction but presents some challenges in the form of coordination, communication and supervision of employees. Employee engagement is the degree to which an employee feels positively towards and is engaged in fulfilling work experience; this is measured by energy, commitment and absorption. Research suggests that two key elements of hybrid work—autonomy and flexibility—positively influence engagement. On the other hand, if not properly addressed, feelings of isolation and reduced social interaction can adversely affect engagement.

Culture of the Organization

An organization's common beliefs, customs, and behaviors are all included in its organizational culture. Because there is less face-to-face connection in hybrid work situations, cultural cohesion may be weakened. Research emphasizes how crucial communication techniques, digital collaboration tools, and leadership conduct are to maintaining culture in flexible work environments.

Research gap

Few empirical studies examine the combined effects of hybrid work on employee engagement and organizational culture, particularly utilizing integrated quantitative and qualitative methodologies, even though earlier research has looked at distant work and employee outcomes. Organizations that use hybrid policies without also redesigning their cultures have been shown to have gaps in leadership effectiveness, increased turnover, and less innovation (Schwartz et al., 2023). But, as of, there has been no systematic approach to identify the hybrid maturity level of an entity and assist

organizations with methods of improving their hybrid maturity through various means. The impact of an organization's work strategy on employee well-being, retention of skilled employees, and overall performance in relation to an organization's objectives indicates why this area is critical for research. This project supports closing this gap.

Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between hybrid work styles, employee engagement, and the culture of the organization.
2. To examine the role of hybrid work model on employee engagement and organizational culture

Hypotheses

H1: The relationship between hybrid work environments, employee engagement, and organization culture is significant and positive.

H2: Hybrid work model significantly impacts employee engagement and organizational culture.

Method

Design

A quantitative correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between hybrid work models, employee engagement, and organizational culture.

Sample

Non- random purposive sampling was used for sample selection. Those employees who are involved with hybrid working for at least six months will be able to take part in the research. The sample comprised of 300 employees. It is enough to conduct correlation and regression.

Inclusion Criteria

Employees must be 21 years of age or older. They should be engaged in a hybrid work arrangement. They must have at least six months of experience within the organization.

Exclusion Criteria

Employees who work entirely remotely or entirely on-site. Interns and temporary personnel.

Measures

Adapted Hybrid Work Scale encompasses aspects such as working flexibility, support for remote work, communication practices, utilization of available technologies, and work-life balance. It consists of 10- 15 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used to gauge employee engagement. It was developed by Schaufeli et al. in 2006.

Organizational Culture was measured through the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) created by Cameron and

Quinn. The number of items is adapted and varies from 12 to 24.

Procedure

After participants have given their informed consent, the data collection process will commence. The respondents will be informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their confidentiality will be protected. The questionnaire will be presented to each participant in a clear and uncomplicated manner, with assistance provided as necessary.

Results and Discussion

The obtained data were analyzed using Pearson coefficients of correlation and regression and the results are described and discussed below:

Correlation analysis

To examine the relationship between the Hybrid Work Model, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Culture, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results reveal a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.82$, $p < .001$) between the Hybrid Work Model and Employee Engagement. This suggests that a more effective implementation of hybrid work practices enhances employee engagement. Furthermore, a moderate correlation, ($r = 0.56$, $p < .001$) is observed between the Hybrid Work Model and Organizational Culture.

Table 1: Linear Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	R ²	p-value	f-value	Beta (β)
Employee Engagement	0.47	< .001	87.36	0.68
Organizational Culture	0.34	< .001	62.38	0.59

R²: This indicates the degree of change in the dependent variable because of the Model. R² = 0.47 suggests that 47% of the variation in Employee Engagement is attributable to the Hybrid Work Model. R² = 0.34 indicates that 34% of the variation in Organizational Culture is due to the Hybrid Work Model.

Beta (β): This metric reveals the strength of the effect. A positive Beta signifies that enhancements in the Hybrid Work Model also led to improvements in Employee Engagement or Organizational Culture. The larger the Beta value, the more pronounced the effect. The regression analysis reveals the influence of the Hybrid Work Model on Employee Engagement. The results suggest that organizations implementing effective hybrid strategies are more prone to having an engaged workforce.

This study highlights the significance of developing flexible hybrid work policies that prioritize communication, technological support, and employee inclusion.

The correlation and regression results have demonstrated the efficacy of the Hybrid Work Model in enhancing employee engagement. The findings imply that organizations could leverage hybrid work arrangements as a strategic approach to boost employee satisfaction and enrich the quality of workplace interactions.

The study's purpose was to investigate the degree to which hybrid working models influence corporate culture and employee engagement when employees are transformed by both hybrid and other hybrid structures available to them. As hybrid work continues to expand across many organizations globally, examining the implications of hybrid work on employee perceptions of their organizations has become a critical need. This study provides empirical evidence of the significant effects of hybrid working models on corporate culture and employee engagement, demonstrating that organizations that employ intentional design and management practices are best positioned to create a culture of engagement in hybrid environments. The favorable connection between hybrid work arrangements and employee engagement supports the notion that flexible working conditions can strengthen employees' psychological ties to their organizations. Employees who have greater control over their work settings may experience heightened motivation, job satisfaction, and a stronger inclination to contribute to the overall performance of the company. The findings indicate that hybrid work arrangements are not merely a facet of workplace flexibility; rather, they can be regarded as a significant organizational strategy designed to enhance employee behaviors and attitudes. This indicates that enhancements in the execution of hybrid work practices contribute to improvements in Organizational Culture.

The findings confirm that increasing employee engagement in hybrid modes of work can be achieved through improving flexibility, autonomy, and perceived work-life balance. Employees working in hybrid environments experienced an increase in vitality, a better degree of commitment, and a higher level of immersion (as in being “fully present”). These results confirm and extend the existing theories of engagement which suggest that both

psychological empowerment and autonomy are key contributors to employee engagement in hybrid working environments. Notably, this research has shown that managing employee engagement within a hybrid work setting is not automatic but requires management attention and proven procedures to develop environments that can mitigate problems like isolation and uncertainty. The study shows that hybrid work affects the entire organizational culture and employee engagement levels. Hybrid working has the potential to enhance trust and inclusion culture, but poor management can lead to decreased social cohesion and shared values. Firms that prioritize clear communication, collaboration, and enforcement of culture can establish strong corporate identity even with little physical interaction. Motivated employees are most likely to take actions to enhance their organization's culture. This relationship is particularly important, especially if employees depend on leadership signals and other organizational processes to motivate them. Leadership support has been identified as an important moderating variable, stating that leaders must respond to the unique requirements of the hybrid work model. In this regard, the findings are useful for managers and policymakers. When companies want to adopt or improve hybrid work models, they should consider behavioral and cultural factors in addition to structural issues. Companies can maximize the benefits of hybrid work by implementing technological communication tools and inclusive organizational behaviors. It will be necessary to create more opportunities for social connections, performance criteria, and shared norms to ensure continuous engagement of employees. Even though the research is informative, it has some limitations, including the reliance on self-reported data and the focus on specific kinds of companies. Further research will eliminate these limitations by using longitudinal approach, making cross-cultural comparisons, or doing industry-specific studies.

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