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Implementing a hybrid workplace model

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Abstract

The study discusses the advantages of adopting hybrid workplace model by organizations. The study is based upon the survey conducted on IT organizations in India. From the survey, it was found that employees perceive more work-life balance, more creativity, better well-being from working remotely. The remote working model also contributes to physical and mental health of employees. Also, it was observed that most of the employees were in favor of hybrid working model as compared to traditional working model. Thus, it can be concluded from the study that hybrid work model is a win-win solution for both employers and employees. The study has important managerial implications in terms of exploration and implementation of hybrid working model in organizations.

Keywords: Hybrid work model, work-life balance, remote working, productivity

Introduction

The Covid-19 epidemic suddenly changed the usual office work we had become habitual during the previous decade, and previously busy office buildings were reduced to rows of empty workstations. Following that first upheaval, many people began to wonder if office life as we know it is the best arrangement, or if companies should explore establishing a new style of working that allows workers to work both in the office and remotely. Prior to the epidemic, it was widely accepted that offices were critical to winning the struggle for talent, culture, and productivity. Organizations battled fiercely for superior real estate in major cities throughout the world, with many focusing on open-office designs, co working, densification, and hoteling as methods to encourage collaboration. Furthermore, there were indications that supervisors were hesitant to enable workers to work from home. Managers expressed concerns about staff productivity and performance, as well as technology and compliance with labor laws. Organizations will instead be forced to find creative strategies to recruit, retain, and manage people from a distance in the post-pandemic era, with flexibility, culture, and cooperation at the forefront. Companies might save money on rent while boosting productivity and employee happiness if they use the proper methods to accomplish the transformation.

We're already witnessing how remote team structures are being challenged and forcing firms to become nimbler, thanks to the world's largest remote work experiment.

The days of physically going to work every day of the week are unlikely to return until the epidemic has passed. Working from home has become commonplace for knowledge professionals and dividing time between home and office is expected to become the new normal.

Employees who wish and can split their time between working remotely and in the office save three of their most important commodities: Money, time, and health.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to see if a hybrid workplace model has the capacity to disrupt a typical office-centric workplace, focusing on economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Two sub-questions must be answered to do so:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of distant employment in terms of social and economic factors?
2. Is it more socially and economically advantageous for a business to allow workers to work remotely as well as in the office, as opposed to the previous typical office-centric form of employment?

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Literature review

It is estimated that around 81 percent of the worldwide workforce was affected by workplace changes during the epidemic. There is a lot of buzz about how the pandemic is radically changing how we live and work, with predictions that working from home will become "the new normal." According to researchers, organizations must plan for change, promote employee participation, and create a trusting environment to overcome resistance to change. Because of the rapidity of the epidemic, a few of these elements to counter resistance were in place, exacerbating the problem for both employees and management.

After the immediate crisis has passed, characteristics that contribute to resistance may reappear, based on past behavior and conventions.

Remote Work

Working from home (also known as telework, teleworking, or telecommuting) is defined as "A flexible work arrangement in which workers work in locations remote from their central offices or production facilities, with no personal contact with co-workers but the ability to communicate with co-workers using IT.

The establishment of WFH rules in the 1970s may have sparked a widespread shift from traditional, office-centric labor to remote work, since rising gasoline prices caused by the 1973 OPEC oil embargo resulted in higher commute costs. Those rules allowed workers to work from home, coworking spaces, or other public sites like libraries and coffee shops for a few days on a regular part-time or full-time basis, with the expectation that they would return to the office sometimes.

Employees were routinely granted authority over their own schedules, allowing them to run errands, exercise during lunch, or pick up their children from school without being accused of shirking.

In recent years, several companies have allowed more workers to work from home.

Several companies, like IBM and Yahoo, have reversed direction in the run-up to the epidemic, demanding that their staff return to the office to foster more effective teamwork. Other firms, however, have evolved toward more geographic flexibility, allowing some, if not all, workers to work remotely. Nonetheless, the pandemic's forced experiment with entirely remote work has prompted most firms to move toward majority-remote, with less than 50% of staff working in an office. Even before the epidemic, a small number of companies had gone even further, eliminating offices and spreading everyone from entry-level newbies to the CEO.

GitLab, a tech business, has adopted this strategy at scale, with workers working remotely in over 60 countries in fields such as engineering, sales, personal management, senior responsibilities, and management.

Remote Work Challenges

While the advantages of remote work, such as increased productivity, better concentration, increased employee motivation, and reduced psychological stress, may entice many organizations to consider its implementation, inadequacies such as mental demands and fatigue, communication difficulties, cost of working from home, strains regarding performance monitoring, unsuitability for all jobs, social isolation, and no clear separation between

work and home must be considered.

1. Productivity and Work Satisfaction
2. Inequality
3. Mental Health
4. Physical Health
5. Managerial Attitudes

Hybrid Workplace Model

Employees who worked in a hybrid remote work paradigm rated the experience positively, with over 75 percent saying it improved their job satisfaction. Communication, trust, connection, cooperation, and the recognition that we are all people with different habits and needs are all required in a hybrid workplace. A company may let go of a few chosen realities and focus instead on what is best for its employees, business, and environment. In addition, while implementing a hybrid workplace model, insurance preparedness, tax, and labor legislation must all be considered. Another problem to address before establishing a remote workplace model is determining how much time workers should spend working remotely vs in the office.

Benefits of Hybrid workplace model

Various big firms have changed to more permanent remote-work practices after the epidemic upended the traditional office-centric work ethic. Employee retention, productivity gains, enhanced job satisfaction, and other types of competitive advantage are just a few of the potential benefits of remote work for businesses.

Bentley polled approximately 1800 workers across 50 firms, as well as almost 100 team and HR managers, with the goal of examining employee and management opinions on remote work productivity and wellbeing.

Employees were polled on their remote work experiences, and managers were interviewed about results, attitudes, remote work policies, and processes, with a focus on remote work support, productivity, and wellness outcomes.

Hybrid Workplace Challenges

According to Sid Sijbrandij, CEO of web development company GitLab and a critic of the hybrid workplace paradigm, it may have an inclusiveness problem. "The worst of both worlds," says Sijbrandij of mixed remote work. GitLab offers a completely remote workforce, and it pays for employees to rent coworking or office space if they desire it, as well as for them to visit one another for work. According to Sijbrandij, under a hybrid arrangement, the head office would always have disproportionate authority, and office regulars would have an advantage over home employees. If poorly constructed, this type of setup would lack the equality that totally remote workforces may provide, as well as the contact that face-to-face employment provides.

Development opportunities regarding digital meetings

Ensure that when one is invited to an external meeting (for example, Teams, Zoom), the tool functions properly and that connecting as a participant is simple. - ensure that staff have access to the appropriate resources.

- Initiatives involving large gatherings. Specifically, resources that may help with technical assistance and jobs like moderator and producer.
- Ensure greater audio and video quality during digital meetings.

- A traffic network solution for handling sensitive and password-protected data.
- There's also a backup option for meeting services that may be employed in the event of extended outages.
- There is a need for a single point of contact for digital meetings, as well as better coordination and administration with the user in mind.
- Implement assistance tools that instruct users on where to save sensitive information in real time and how to digitally classify it.
- Continue to keep an eye on the cloud services sector, with an emphasis on digital meetings services

Methodology

First and foremost, a literature review of existing research was undertaken, which included, among other things, the benefits and challenges of Remote working vs Hybrid workplace model, as well as a compilation of earlier information on employees' satisfaction attitudes and perceptions of remote employment. Second, a questionnaire was used to find out more. Workers' perspectives on remote work, which served as the foundation for the most recent cost-benefit study examining the advantages and disadvantages of a hybrid mode.

Data Collection

Questionnaires are the most common means of gathering data from a group of people. A questionnaire is a series of questions, each with a set of responses, and a framework for collecting standardized, reasonably organized data about many instances. Questionnaires are now widely used in social research at all levels, from students and community initiatives to large multinational surveys. The design of a series of questions to aid the researcher in answering research questions or testing a hypothesis is a typical feature of these surveys.

Questions asked in the survey

1. How often did you work from home before the pandemic?
2. How have you perceived your work life balance during the pandemic?
3. During the pandemic your perception of the work home environment?
4. If work allows, would I appreciate working remotely more often?
5. Have you experienced decreased creativity due to fewer physical meetings?
6. Have you experienced your opportunity to take responsibility for solving your tasks in an adequate way during the pandemic?
7. How have you experienced your mental and physical health during the pandemic?
8. Have you experienced the opportunity to be physically active during the pandemic?
9. Did you enjoy working from Home?
10. How have you perceived your productivity during the pandemic?

Data Analysis

Gender and age distribution

As can be seen in the Figure 1 and Figure 2, the participants of the survey were distributed by 55.8% women and 44.2% men. Furthermore, most respondents were of the ages

between 21-25 years (86.5%) followed by ages 25-30 years (13.5%).

Remote work Employee perspective

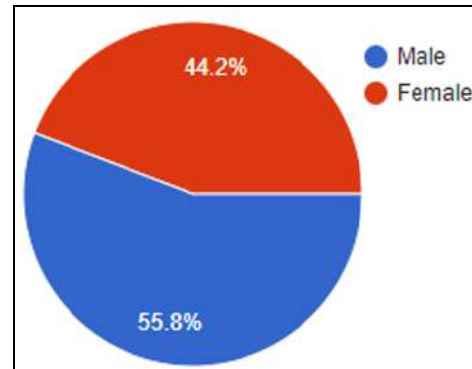


Fig 1: Gender

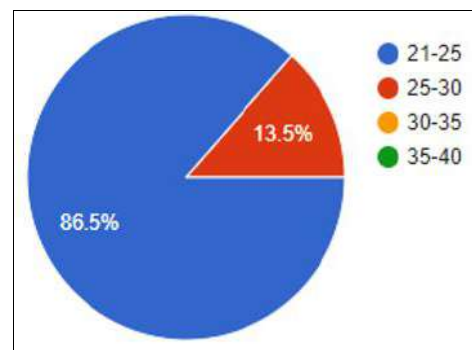


Fig 2: Age

How often did you work from home before the pandemic?

Most people, as shown in Figure 3, have never worked from home (67.3%), next largest portion of participants worked a few times a month (15.4%) and some 1-2 times per a week (7.7%) and lastly (9.6%) never worked from home before the pandemic.

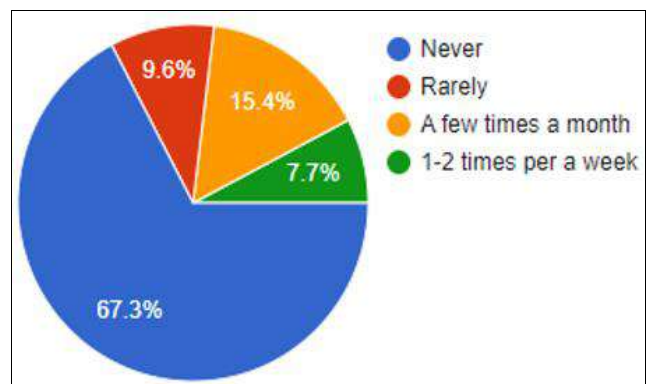


Fig 3: Remote work Employee perspective

How have you perceived your work life balance during the pandemic?

As Figure 4 represents 34.6% of employee's had no differences during the pandemic and for some felt they had a same difference with high and low having 26.9%. Moreover some felt it was too good to maintain work life balance having 9.6% and for the other 2% it was hard in adjusting.

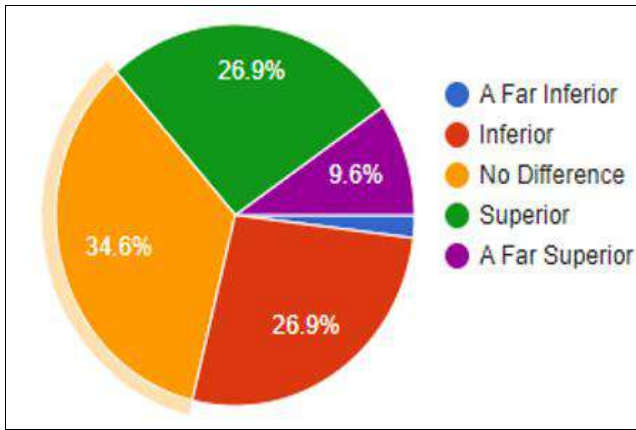


Fig 4: During the pandemic how is your perception of the work home environment?

Regarding the home environment, as can be seen in Figure 5, most respondents have had an overall positive experience. A vast majority (48.1%) state they have a good workspace. 38.5% state they been able to work alone with what they had and 38.5% indicate they have had a good IT equipment.

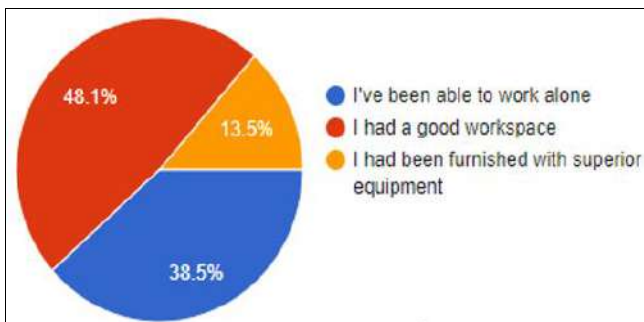


Fig 5: If work allows, would I appreciate working remotely often?

Remote work post pandemic

As indicated by Figure 6 below, 38.5% of participants would wish to work remotely more often if work allowed. 4.75% of respondents do not wish to work more remotely, while 30.8% state they have no opinion of the matter.

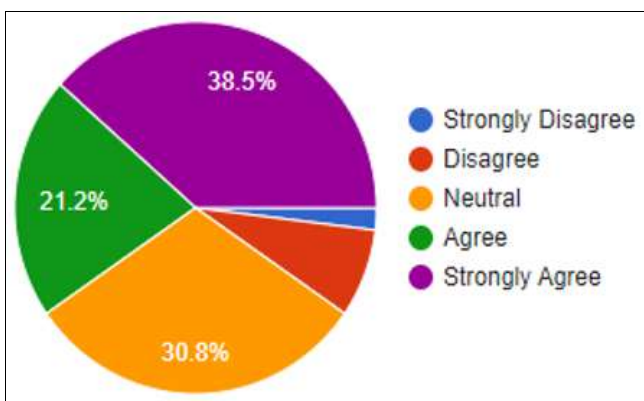


Fig 6: Have you experienced decreased creativity due to fewer physical meetings?

As illustrated in Figure 7, most respondents had kept their creativity (51.9%) even though they had fewer physical meetings. Nevertheless, almost 11.5% have experienced decreased creativity due to fewer physical interactions while 36.5% remained indifferent.

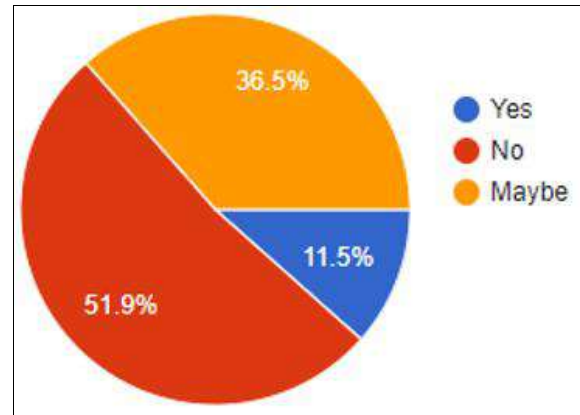


Fig 7: How have you experienced your opportunity to take responsibility for solving your tasks in an adequate way during the pandemic?

Figure 8 below demonstrates that a vast majority of respondents (69.2%) have experienced their opportunity to solve their tasks in an adequate way during the pandemic. 28.8% of participants state it has remained unaltered and a minority (2%) of employees indicate their opportunity to solve tasks has been negatively impacted.

Mental and Physical Health

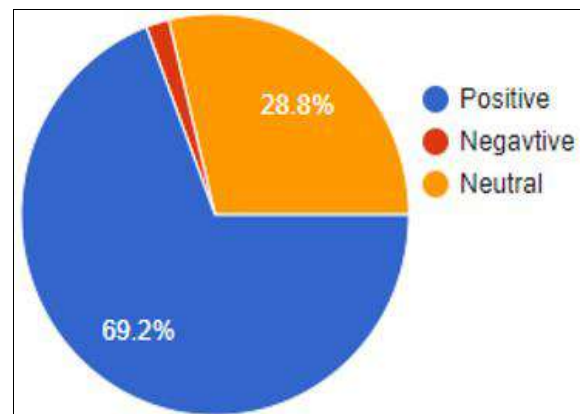


Fig 8: How have you experienced your mental health during the pandemic?

According to the findings as shown in Figure 9, 9.6% of respondents believe that the ergonomic work environment has deteriorated because of the epidemic. Furthermore, 59.6% say the pandemic had no effect on their mental health, while 30.8 percent say it has improved.

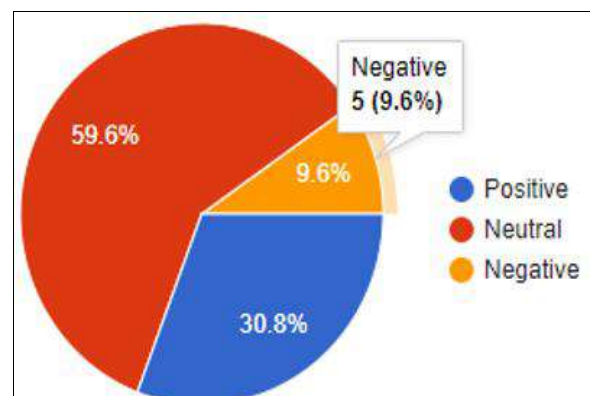


Fig 9: How have you experienced your physical well-being during the pandemic?

As shown in Figure 10 below, physical well-being has improved by 42.3 percent while 28.8% of the respondents

have said it has decreased. 28.8% of the respondents have said it has remained neutral.

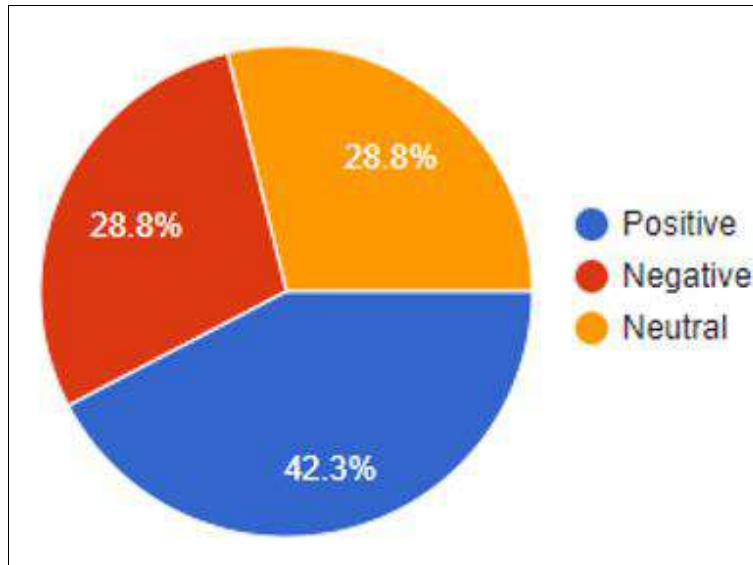


Fig 10: How have you experienced the opportunity to be physically active during the pandemic?

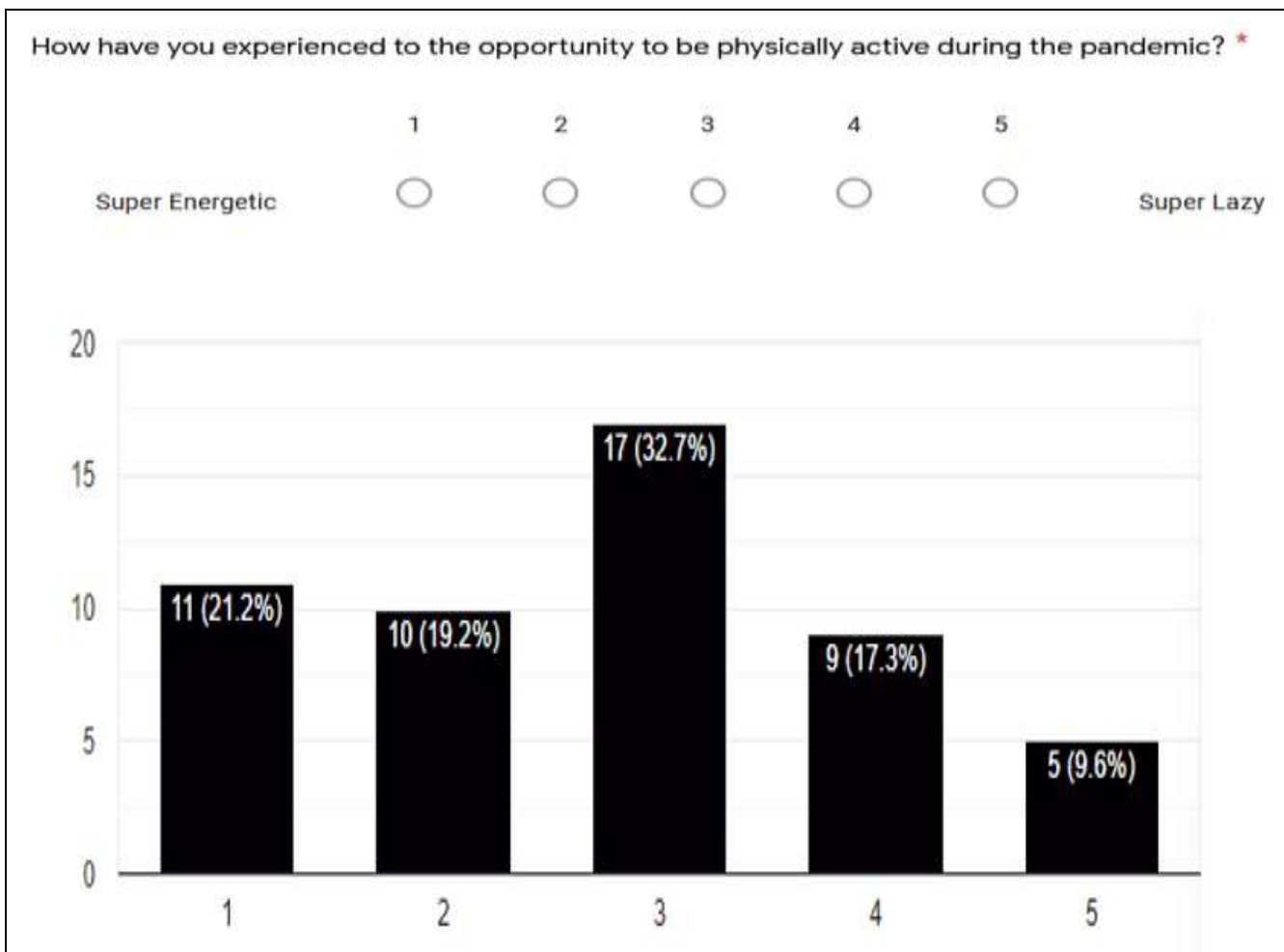


Fig 11: How did you enjoy working from Home?

As can be seen in the figure 11, 73.1% of the respondents have the opportunity to be physically active during the pandemic, while 26.9% do not have the opportunity to be physically active during the pandemic

How did you enjoy working from Home?

The results of the survey indicate that 48.1% of IT company members enjoy working from home, 51.9% remain moderate because they feel the same working from home and none of them feels working from home is bad.

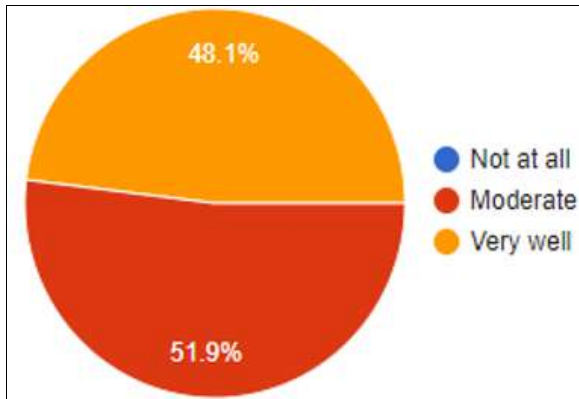


Fig 12: How have you perceived your productivity during the pandemic?

Furthermore, 9.6% of employees believe their productivity has improved when working remotely, 42.3 percent believe it has stayed unchanged, and 2% believe it has deteriorated.

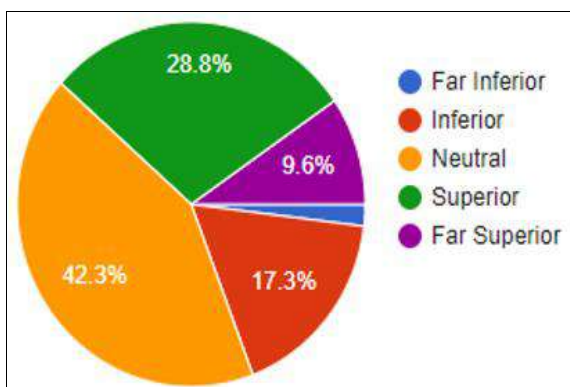


Fig 13: What are the social and economic benefits and challenges of remote work?

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to see if a hybrid workplace model might disrupt a typical office-centric workplace while also considering economic and social sustainability. The conclusion is separated into two research questions to address the purpose.

1. What are the social and economic benefits and challenges of remote work?

With the epidemic prompting the largest remote work experiment in modern history, most people have now experienced the benefits and problems of distant work. Increased productivity, better mental and physical health, creativity, and better work life balance are just a few of the advantages as found from the survey. Additional advantages include lower real estate, commute, and staff expenditures. Absenteeism and voluntary turnover are two of the most common causes of employee turnover. Remote work can be a competitive advantage for firms to tackle that problem. Remote work problems like increasing inequality and deteriorated inequity can be difficult to overcome if handled incorrectly.

2. Is it possible for a business to benefit socially, ecologically, and economically by allowing people to work remotely as well as in the office, as opposed to the previous typical office-centric form of employment?

Many more businesses, functions, and teams might become

entirely or largely remote with the correct approach, technologies, organizational procedures, and, most importantly, leadership. The question isn't whether a hybrid model is possible, but rather what it will take to make it so. Management is the quick solution to this question. If the bulk of top managers work at the office, employees will flock there to receive some face time. Hybrid organizations could emerge as the future of work if managers support synchronous and asynchronous communication, problem-solving, and brainstorming, as well as encourage virtual socialization, mentoring, and teambuilding, ensure regulatory compliance, invest in, and enforce data security, and set an example by engaging in remote work.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Recommendations

To optimize the benefits of a hybrid workplace model, management should:

1. Evaluate the benefits of remote work arrangements in a small area of their organization or within a single team before considering a large-scale implementation.
2. Ensure that remote working rules, arrangements, and contracts are evaluated consistently to provide the greatest outcomes from both management and remote workers' viewpoints.
3. Provide appropriate training for remote employees and their managers.
4. Assist with the setup of a home office.
5. Provide enough technology/IT assistance to distant workers.
6. Line managers should provide outstanding assistance for remote personnel.
7. Calculate the economic, environmental, and social benefits of remote labor, both the organization and the society
8. Communicate early on how your company regards remote work in the aftermath of the epidemic.
9. Employees prefer to work remotely when they need to focus and in a traditional office when they want to be creative and sociable, according to research and polls. Make the workplace a place where people can be creative and sociable.
10. Gather input from employees on how things are going today and what help they require from home. Employees should be involved in how the company envisions its future workplace.
11. During the start-up period, new workers profit from working in their normal workplace. From a typical workplace standpoint, on-boarding is the most beneficial.
12. If an organization needs new capabilities, it may now recruit from a broader geographic area.
13. Concentrate on quality and outcomes; the location of the job is unimportant.
14. In an ideal world, all employees in the same field would report to work on the same days.
15. Consider how meetings are scheduled throughout the day, as well as natural breaks, especially if you work remotely.
16. An employee's ability to work remotely increases as she works more independently.
17. If a hybrid model is used in a company, management must adhere to the rules for it to be effective.

Suggestions for the Future work

A suggestion for future research on this topic is to do a case study on a formerly office-centric business that has established a hybrid workplace post pandemic to investigate the benefits and problems that have arisen because of the change.

Furthermore, future research might examine the adoption of a hybrid regime on a minor organization vs a larger one. In comparison to a large and established organization, a start-up knowledge work business in the IT industry may be ideally positioned to implement such a model.

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