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Hybrid Workplace: “Employees’ Perception Towards the Future Workplace”

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every phase of life and every sector of the world economy. While the pandemic has created catastrophe on one side, on the other, it has also furnished the world with a whole lot of opportunities and new doors to open. One such opportunity is the “**Hybrid Work Model.**” As companies and businesses worldwide are slowly returning to work, some corporates are planning to discover the suitability of a hybrid or blended workplace. Although the education sector has previously adopted the blended learning mode, it is worth experimenting with the same model in Indian workplaces. This paper is such a new door to look into the model of hybrid working suitability in Indian Companies and the perspective of Indian employees in adopting this model. The main objective of this research is to analyse how the employees have experienced Work from Home (WFH), which was introduced recently due to the pandemic, and how they look forward to a more secure workplace atmosphere that provides them flexibility in the future. This survey-based study will be conducted on Indian employees from all sectors to identify if the employees support blended working and how significant the impact of the employees’ perception towards this work model is.

The study also aims to analyze statistically how the employees' demographics and past experience of virtual working influence their attitude towards the hybrid workplace model. The findings of the study show that the Hybrid Workplace Model has its own pros and cons from the employees’ viewpoint. Many respondents were pessimistic about this new model, while the majority felt that the Hybrid Workplace model should be adopted by their companies.

One of the highly beneficial reasons for employees to work in a Hybrid work environment is that this model would ensure a balance between creativity and collaboration. However, following a daily work routine would pose a problem for the majority of the respondents if their companies adopted the new model. Through this study, not only employees but also employers will gain an understanding of the Hybrid Workplace and how to see the future of their organisation through the eyes of this blended model of working.

Keywords: COVID-19, Hybrid Workplace, Blended Working Model, Work From Home (WFH), Virtual Working

Introduction:

Since last year, the world has been observing swift changes than ever before due to the pandemic. Everyone had to be accustomed to the new normal. We all know that not even a single economic sector was unaffected by the pandemic. Now, the question arises: what next? How should it be done? After the pandemic ends, many companies plan to consider a new work setup. Giant corporations are also considering working from home as an option. There is also talk doing rounds regarding blended workplace/ Hybrid workplace. The pandemic has changed the talent base. Companies like WIPRO, Infosys, TCS, and Microsoft, to mention a few, are adopting this new model where some aspects of work could be performed from home, and some parts could be performed in the office.

All these depend not only on the size of the companies and the nature of the business but also on the employees' preferences. It is crucial at this stage to understand how the employees feel about working in a blended mode and how the company needs to tailor the specific needs of employees, keeping in mind the goals and culture of the company. This is vital because the attrition rate in MNCs has rapidly increased since last year, and employees have been facing difficulty working from home. Apart from adopting this new technique, companies must also work on acquiring new employees and retaining talented ones.

This research attempts to understand employees' perceptions of working in a Hybrid environment, which has its own merits and demerits.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

(Pavithra et al., 2021) conducted an exploratory study on employees' perceptions of and satisfaction with traditional office and WFH culture. The research revealed some significant results, with only 31% of the respondents preferring to work from home. It was found that the

majority of the respondents had never worked from home before the pandemic. Only 27.9% of the respondents felt that their work-life balance was well managed during work from home, which indicates that most of the respondents managed their professional and personal lives better while working from the office. The study also depicted that the respondents' age and satisfaction level are positively correlated.

(Deloitte, 2021) conducted a survey on employers' adoption of the hybrid model. The survey found that 43% of the companies never or rarely allowed work from home. At the same time, most respondents felt that it was difficult to perform work at home at the same level as they did at the office. Few companies observed an increase in the productivity of their employees during work from home during the pandemic. The research found that nearly 74% of the companies did not address the employees' contracts to be amended during the pandemic. Only 21% of the companies provided all the necessary equipment for employees to work from home.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the respondents' perception towards Work from Home.
2. To understand the pros and cons of working in a Hybrid Workplace from employees' viewpoint.
3. To scrutinise the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and their perception towards working in Hybrid mode.

RESEARCH GAP: There is a lack of literature available on analysing how the Hybrid Model would work in India and how the employees would perceive it emotionally and professionally. Hence, this study can bridge the research gap in this area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Type & Design: This exploratory and descriptive research study collected data through an online structured questionnaire circulated among working people in Chennai.

Source of Data: The primary data used in this research is primary data.

Sampling Technique: Using a random sampling method, the study received responses from 100 employees working in different sectors, such as IT, the Financial Sector, Retail services, Education, and Consulting Firms.

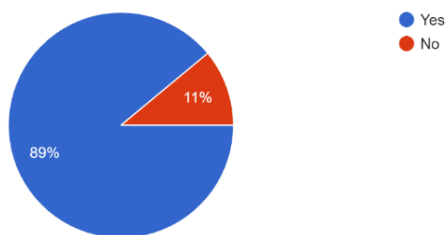
Out of the 100 responses received, it was found that only 64 preferred the hybrid working model to be adopted in their organisation; hence, to achieve the research objectives, the responses received from 64 respondents were taken for further statistical analysis. The Google form automatically stopped collecting responses from those respondents who have opted that

they would never suggest their companies should adopt a Hybrid work model or their jobs cannot be performed online. Hence, the last chart shows responses only from 64 respondents who suggested the Hybrid Work model will better suit their organisation.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION:

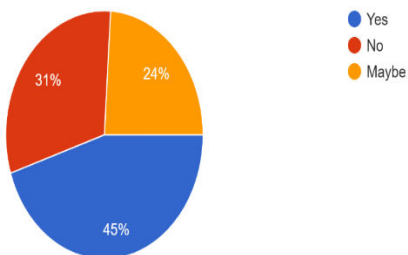
ADOPTION OF WFH BY THE RESPONDENTS' COMPANIES

6. Had your company adopted Work From Home (WFH) during pandemic last year?
100 responses



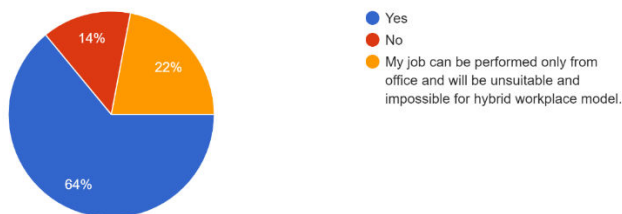
PREFERENCE TOWARDS WFH IN FUTURE

8. Would you prefer working from home even in future.
100 responses



SUGGESTION TO ADOPT HYBRID WORK MODEL

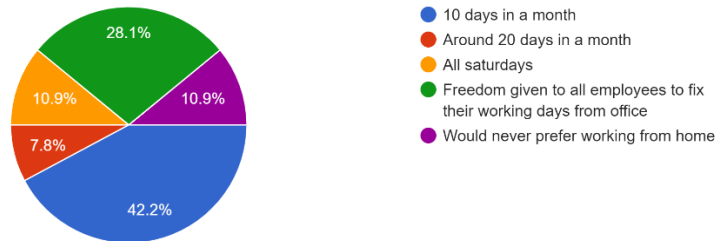
9. Do you suggest your company should adopt Hybrid Work model?
100 responses



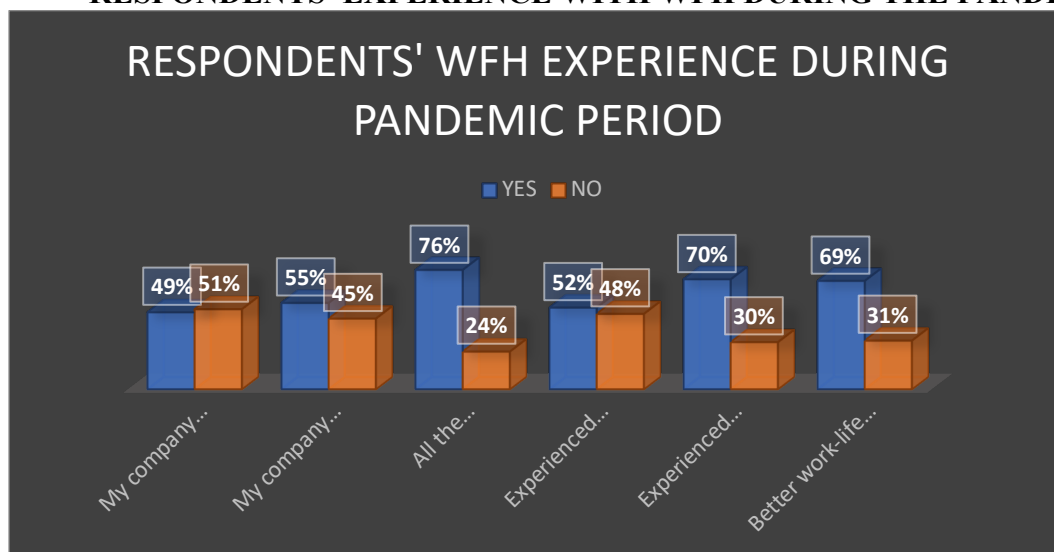
FREQUENCY OF WFH IN A HYBRID WORK MODEL

12. Under hybrid workplace model how many times would you prefer working from home.

64 responses



RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH WFH DURING THE PANDEMIC



- The study found that most respondents worked online during the pandemic. Only 49% of the respondents received technical equipment, such as computers, internet services, etc., from their companies while working from home. Most respondents (55%) had the flexibility to choose their working hours. It was found that 76% of respondents agreed that while working online, their tasks and projects would be completed even before the deadline, and 69% felt that they spent adequate time with their friends and family, which helped them manage their work-life balance better.
- It was also found that 52% of respondents experienced stress and burnout due to working online, and 70% experienced a lack of interaction with their colleagues.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON THE BENEFITS OF THE HYBRID WORKPLACE MODEL IN THEIR ORGANIZATION

BENEFITS OF HYBRID WORK MODEL IN YOUR ORGANIZATION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N	Mean
It will ensure better space management in the company	30	28	5	1	0	64	1.6406
Increase the productivity of employees due to proper work-life balance	26	30	7	1	0	64	1.7344

Improve mental and physical health	26	29	6	3	0	64	1.7813
It will ensure a balance of creativity and collaboration	13	35	14	2	0	64	2.0781
Saving extra travel costs and time	39	22	2	1	0	64	1.4531
Ensuring adequate time is spent with family and friends	34	22	8	0	0	64	1.5938
More autonomy and flexibility to prioritise task	17	29	18	0	0	64	2.0156

TABLE 2: RESPONDENTS' VIEW ON HURDLES FACED WHILE WORKING ON HYBRID MODE

HURDLES FACED IN HYBRID WORK MODEL	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutra l	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N	Mean
The workplace may feel dull when many employees are working from home	17	30	14	3	0	64	2.0469
I struggle to know who is on-site and when	13	38	8	5	0	64	2.0781
Problems in interacting with colleagues and teammates	12	30	13	7	2	64	2.3281
A lot of distractions when working from home	8	23	22	6	5	64	2.6406
Poor broadband connectivity and technical equipment at home	9	28	14	9	4	64	2.5469
High cybersecurity risk	5	23	21	13	2	64	2.7500
Increased employee isolation and social disconnectivity	12	30	16	5	1	64	2.2656
Over-politicized workplace as more power will come to those employees who more often visit the workplace	11	14	30	7	2	64	2.6094
Difficulty in following work routine	6	19	25	10	4	64	2.7969

INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

The Independent sample T-test compares the mean of two independent groups to determine whether there is statistical evidence associated between the two mean groups is statistical.

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant association between the sample means of Gender of the respondents and better work-life balance experienced while working from home during the Pandemic.

H1: There is a significant association between the sample means of the respondents' gender and better work-life balance experienced while working from home during the Pandemic.

Crosstab

			Better Work-life balance		Total
			Yes	No	
Gender	Female	Count	42	12	54
		Expected Count	37.3	16.7	54.0
		% Within Gender	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	Male	Count	27	19	46
		Expected Count	31.7	14.3	46.0
		% Within Gender	58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	69	31	100	
	Expected Count	69.0	31.0	100.0	
	% Within Gender	69.0%	31.0%	100.0%	

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.229	1	.040
N of Valid Cases	100		

Cross-tabulation data shows that most respondents experienced better balance in their professional and personal lives while working online during the pandemic. The Pearson Chi-square value is also statistically evident, as the p-value (0.04) is less than 0.05.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Better Work-Life Balance	Equal variances assumed	14.658	.000	-2.080	98	.040	-.19082	.09173	-.37287	-.00878
	Equal variances are not assumed.			-2.052	88.450	.043	-.19082	.09300	-.37562	-.00602

Independent sample t-test results also accept the alternative hypothesis as the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Both these tests were performed on all the 100 respondents. Hence, there is a significant difference between the sample means of both variables.

INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST: ANALYSIS

Group Statistics

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Preference towards WFH if a Hybrid Mode of working is adopted	Male	42	2.7381	1.41524	.21838
	Female	22	2.5455	1.40500	.29955

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Preference towards WFH if a Hybrid Mode of working is adopted	Equal variances assumed	.008	.930	.518	62	.606	.19264	.37155	-.55008	.93536
	Equal variances not assumed.			.520	43.028	.606	.19264	.37070	-.55493	.94021

Since the p-value (0.930) is higher than the significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no difference between the respondents' genders and their desired frequency of working from home if their organisation adopts the Hybrid Work Mode.

FINDINGS:

- The demographic profile of the respondents shows that 54% were female and 45% were male. Twenty-three per cent of the respondents had an Undergraduate degree, 38% had a Postgraduate degree, 20% had a Professional degree, and 19% had a Doctorate Degree. Thirty-six per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 20-29, 26% were in the age group of 30-39, 22% were in the age group of 40-49, and 16% were above 50.

- Fifteen percent of the respondents had work experience ranging from 1-3 years, 16% had 3-5 years of work experience, 19% had 5-10 years of experience, and 50% had more than ten years of experience. It was found that 29% of respondents worked in financial service companies, 23% worked in the IT sector, 32% worked in educational institutions, 9% in the retail sector, 3% worked in the Consulting Service sector, and the remaining respondents were self-employed. (The demographic profile includes all the 100 respondents).
- When the pandemic started, 89% (**Chart 1**) of the respondents had worked online from home. But when asked if they would prefer continuing WFH under the Hybrid Work Model, 64% (**Chart 3**) favoured this new model, where they could work virtually and physically as well. It was also found that 42% (**Chart 4**) of the respondents preferred working from home ten days a month.
- Table 1 shows the respondents' positive view of the Hybrid Workplace model, and Table 2 shows their opposing views. The mean value of 2.0781 in Table 1 shows that one of the highly preferred reasons for working under Hybrid Mode is that this model would ensure a balance between creativity and collaboration. The mean value of 2.7969 in Table 2 shows that under Hybrid Mode, respondents felt that following a routine schedule would be difficult.

CONCLUSION:

With the growing digitisation, reliance on technology has increased in almost all our lives, especially during the pandemic. Although some people couldn't successfully use technology for their benefit, leading to loss of business and jobs, some companies, both large and small, have considered the pandemic an advantage. These companies adopted digital solutions for all their activities, which proved to be a double-edged sword for employers and employees.

This study shows how adopting Work from Home during the pandemic has been beneficial and stressful for the employees. In predicting the destructive impact of COVID, many companies are moving towards a hybrid work model, where companies can work physically and virtually at times.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- This research paper discusses how the respondents perceived Work from Home. It also surveyed whether the respondents prefer the new concept of a Hybrid

Workplace, its pros and cons, and whether they would prefer if their organisations adopted a Hybrid work mode in the future.

- This study would help many organisations understand how employees perceive Hybrid Mode before they adopt this new concept. Companies may understand the comfort and difficulties the employees may face in the future. This study is also an effort to help the employees adjust to the new normal working mode.
- The study may provide an opportunity for other researchers to conduct extensive research in this field. Researchers may also survey particular companies that have adopted the Hybrid Workplace model.

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