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Evaluating Remote and Office-Based Work: A Multidimensional Analysis of Employee Outcomes in the Evolving Workplace

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how the implementation of working from home, as opposed to traditional office-based work, has influenced employee productivity, work-life balance, job satisfaction, communication effectiveness, and emotional wellbeing. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using data collected through structured surveys of two hundred professionals across various industry sectors, along with semi-structured interviews with the same participants. Quantitative analysis involved the application of descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and the construction of a productivity and wellbeing index. Qualitative responses were examined through directed content analysis. The findings indicate that remote work generally enhances productivity, autonomy, and work-life balance, particularly among younger, digitally proficient employees in sectors such as information technology and finance. However, remote work also presents disadvantages, including communication gaps, social isolation, and reduced visibility within teams. In contrast, traditional office work fosters stronger team cohesion, real-time feedback, and integration into organizational culture, though it may lack flexibility and contribute to stress due to structured schedules and commuting demands. The study underscores the increasing relevance of hybrid work models as a strategic approach that integrates the strengths of both work modalities. Grounded in stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, and systems theory, the research offers a multidimensional perspective on how work environments influence organizational outcomes and employee experiences. The study concludes that future-oriented organizations must design work systems that are flexible, inclusive, and adaptive, aligning operational efficiency with ethical and strategic considerations.

Keywords: Remote Work, Work-Life Balance, Employee Productivity, Hybrid Work Models

Introduction

Recently, there has been a profound transformation in the way people work, although this shift accelerated significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic not only accelerated the adoption of digital technologies but also compelled organizations to reassess the long-standing norm of office-based work. Remote working, once regarded as a temporary or emergency measure, quickly became essential for business continuity across various sectors. This abrupt shift created an opportunity to reevaluate how different work arrangements—working from home, office-based work, and hybrid models impact both organizational performance and individual employee wellbeing. The primary focus of this

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study is to evaluate how varying work modalities influence several performance and wellbeing indicators, including productivity, work-life balance, job satisfaction, communication effectiveness, and mental wellbeing. The shift toward remote work has initiated new discourse on employee autonomy, flexibility, and resource optimization within organizational settings. Remote work arrangements offer flexibility and autonomy, enabling individuals to self-regulate their work schedules and physical environments, which may improve productivity and reduce stress caused by long commutes. Furthermore, remote work allows employees to customize their workspace to align with cognitive and physical needs, thereby enhancing concentration and output.

Psychologically, the elimination of commuting and the comfort of the home environment positively affect mental wellbeing. These factors contribute to lower stress levels and reduced emotional exhaustion, ultimately leading to higher job satisfaction and performance (Kumar et al., 2023). Organizations that employ highly skilled and autonomous professionals—such as those in information technology, auditing, consulting, and digital services—often benefit more from remote work, as these employees typically require minimal supervision and engage primarily in cognitive labor. In such sectors, remote work fosters individualized productivity and enables cost optimization related to physical infrastructure. Conversely, traditional office-based work provides structured interaction, spontaneous feedback, and real-time collaboration, which are vital for tasks requiring creativity, innovation, and teamwork. Industries such as manufacturing and logistics necessitate physical presence and hierarchical oversight due to the nature of their operational activities. These organizations benefit from centralized coordination and clearly defined roles, which are better managed in on-site work environments. Office settings also facilitate direct performance monitoring and instant feedback, which is often critical for quality control and assurance (Shahid & Ahmed, 2025).

In the post-pandemic period, many organizations have embraced hybrid work models that combine remote and in-office work. Hybrid arrangements, typically involving remote work for three or four days and in-office work for one or two days, have become increasingly common. This structure represents a strategic balance between the flexibility of remote work and the collaborative advantages of office-based environments (Rahman et al., 2023; Hasan & Sadat, 2023). Hybrid models aim to capitalize on the benefits of both modalities while minimizing their limitations. However, implementing hybrid work models brings distinct

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challenges. Concerns such as preserving organizational culture, maintaining equitable participation, and building trust in virtual environments persist. Some research indicates that hybrid systems may unintentionally produce a dual-class workforce, with remote employees experiencing reduced visibility and limited participation in decision-making processes (Fatima & Khan, 2024; Yinusa & Ogoun, 2024). Furthermore, communication in remote or hybrid environments often suffers from asynchronous interactions, a lack of non-verbal cues, and overreliance on digital tools, which can lead to miscommunication and reduced collaboration (Chang et al., 2023; Quader, 2024). Nonetheless, recent studies suggest that technological advancements in communication platforms such as project management tools, video conferencing software, and instant messaging applications have improved the effectiveness of digital collaboration. When implemented correctly, these technologies can replicate face-to-face interactions and enhance documentation and task tracking. However, their effectiveness depends largely on the digital literacy of the workforce and the adaptability of organizational policies (Adam, 2022; Iqbal & Waseem, 2024). Therefore, the success of remote and hybrid work models hinges not only on the work modality itself but also on how it is supported through organizational infrastructure, culture, and policies.

Work-life balance remains a critical factor in evaluating work arrangements. Remote work is often associated with improved integration of professional and personal responsibilities, particularly for employees managing caregiving roles or household obligations. However, the absence of spatial boundaries can blur the line between work and personal life, potentially leading to burnout and extended work hours (Akter et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024). Without clear guidelines regarding work hours and expectations, remote work may result in work-life conflict rather than harmony. Conversely, office-based work offers structured schedules and physical separation from domestic responsibilities, which may help employees mentally disengage from work during off-hours. Such predictability can support mental wellbeing and provide stability, especially for individuals who may struggle with self-discipline in remote settings (Modupe, 2021; Tanveer & Bashir, 2024).

Job satisfaction within remote and hybrid contexts is influenced by various factors, including personality traits, job roles, and managerial practices. While autonomy and flexibility are generally appreciated, they may not offset negative aspects such as ineffective communication, lack of recognition, or diminished opportunities for advancement. Employees who perceive remote work as limiting their visibility or engagement may become

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demotivated and disconnected (Ismail & Ali, 2020; Chowdhury & Karim, 2023). Leadership must therefore invest in inclusive communication strategies and digital infrastructure that supports collaboration, visibility, and recognition. Sustaining hybrid work models in the long term requires rethinking leadership and performance evaluation frameworks. The traditional focus on presence is being replaced by performance-based assessment, where results matter more than time spent at the workplace. This transition demands a cultural shift and the development of trust and accountability between managers and employees (Raja & Iqbal, 2019; Latif et al., 2025). The pandemic acted as a disruptive force requiring immediate structural changes, with work modality emerging as a critical subsystem. Stakeholder theory also informs the analysis by highlighting the need for work arrangements that align with the expectations and wellbeing of various stakeholders. Organizations that implement flexible work strategies have been more successful in meeting these expectations and maintaining performance (Rehman et al., 2024). Legitimacy theory explains why organizations may publicly promote hybrid work models to signal alignment with socially desirable practices. This perceived legitimacy enhances employer branding, employee retention, and investor confidence (Rasheed, 2020; Shah & Malik, 2025).

Equity and inclusion are also central to the discourse on remote work. While working from home can promote equitable access for caregivers or individuals with disabilities, it may simultaneously marginalize those lacking adequate digital infrastructures or a suitable home environment. Organizations must ensure their work-from-home policies are inclusive and backed by technological, emotional, and training support (Nazir et al., 2023). Although research on remote and hybrid work is relatively recent, early evidence suggests these modalities are here to stay in some form. As firms continue to refine flexible work strategies, there is a need for more empirical studies examining how these arrangements affect organizational outcomes and employee experiences. This study contributes to that discourse by comparing the effects of remote, office-based, and hybrid work on productivity, communication, job satisfaction, mental wellbeing, and work-life balance. Most existing literature focuses on sector-specific or localized analyses that lack broad applicability. Furthermore, the long-term implications of remote work, particularly in post-pandemic scenarios, remain understudied. By incorporating multiple dimensions of performance and psychological wellbeing, this research offers a comprehensive perspective on how work modalities influence individual and organizational success. The novelty of the study lies in its

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comparative, multidimensional framework, which examines not just the structural differences in work practices but also their outcomes. The findings hold significance for human resource professionals, policymakers, and researchers by integrating work modality into broader strategic and experiential dimensions of organizational life.

Literature Review

The shift toward remote work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted extensive scholarly interest in how alternative work modalities influence organizational performance and employee wellbeing. Early empirical investigations have demonstrated that working from home may lead to productivity gains under certain conditions, such as supportive environments and access to digital tools (Bloom et al., 2015; Barrero et al., 2021). Researchers have explored the diverse consequences of remote work, ranging from improved work-life balance and job satisfaction due to autonomy and reduced commuting (Choudhury et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2021), to concerns over collaboration deficits and communication breakdowns in roles requiring high interaction (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2016; Yang et al., 2022). These studies emphasize that the efficacy of remote or hybrid models depends largely on contextual factors such as job type, digital infrastructure, and managerial strategies, necessitating a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between work modality and organizational outcomes. Barrero et al. (2021) have also analysed data from the United States during the pandemic and found a five to eight percent increase in worker productivity associated with working from home. As with many other developmental strategies, however, these improvements were largely dependent on favourable circumstances, including access to reliable internet, a quiet and controlled work environment, and a high degree of self-discipline and motivation.

The autonomy and flexibility provided by remote work often allow employees to structure their schedules in line with their peak productivity hours, thereby enhancing output. The elimination of daily commutes also contributes to energy savings and improved focus, which in turn enhances task efficiency (Choudhury et al., 2020). Additionally, those who are able to control their pace and work environment report higher engagement levels, especially when their roles are task-oriented and require minimal collaboration. Nevertheless, not all research supports the superiority of remote work. De Menezes and Kelliher (2016) argue that office-based work settings offer a significant advantage in productivity, particularly in roles that require ongoing collaboration and innovation. In-person interactions allow for

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spontaneous feedback and rapid problem-solving, features that are difficult to replicate in virtual environments. These elements are especially crucial in creative industries or in roles heavily reliant on brainstorming, collective ideation, and interpersonal synergy.

Yang et al. (2022) contend that extended periods of remote work can result in communication breakdowns, decision-making delays, and employee isolation, all of which may hinder overall organizational performance. The absence of physical supervision and informal peer interactions can lower accountability and obstruct knowledge sharing, thereby impairing team productivity (Janhonen & Johanson, 2011). Another significant challenge involves the blurred boundary between personal and professional life in remote contexts. Without a clear distinction between work and home, employees often struggle to disengage, leading to burnout and eventual declines in productivity. In contrast, structured office environments establish defined work-life boundaries, promote routine, and reinforce shared corporate values. Hence, the impact of remote versus office-based work on productivity depends significantly on the nature of the tasks involved, the working style of the individual, and the technological capacity of the organization. While remote work can be beneficial in some contexts, it may be less effective in scenarios where collaboration and interpersonal dynamics are essential.

In comparing the working-from-home model to traditional office-based arrangements, work-life balance and job satisfaction emerge as two critical dimensions. These factors have gained prominence in recent organizational research and policy discussions, especially as hybrid work models become increasingly prevalent across the global workforce (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). Remote work is strongly associated with improved work-life balance due to the autonomy it provides in managing both personal and professional obligations. This model is particularly advantageous for working parents and caregivers, as it allows for the synchronization of work responsibilities with family needs. Allen et al. (2021) found that remote employees reported higher satisfaction levels, citing reduced commuting time, fewer workplace distractions, and increased time spent with family. These factors collectively contribute to improved mental wellbeing and general life satisfaction.

Innovation is inherently a social process, often reliant on informal communication and face-to-face interactions, which are fundamental to collaborative tasks such as creativity, problem-solving, and fostering team cohesion. Traditional office environments naturally support spontaneous encounters—hallway discussions, impromptu brainstorming sessions,

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and immediate peer feedback—that drive ideation and foster innovation (Olson & Olson, 2000). These informal interactions cultivate a sense of community and psychological safety, which accelerates decision-making and enhances team responsiveness. However, the shift to remote work has disrupted these informal communication channels. This is demonstrated by Yang et al. (2022), who found a twenty-one percent reduction in collaborative time among Microsoft employees working remotely. Virtual meetings, while functional for completing low-frequency or task-based objectives, tend to constrain open discussion due to their structured nature, which can inhibit creativity.

In response to these challenges, many organizations have adopted advanced digital communication platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous communication across geographic locations (Simson, 2021). These tools support remote collaboration and can simulate in-person interactions to a degree. However, they also introduce new complications, such as increased cognitive load, communication misinterpretation, and emotional fatigue—commonly referred to as ‘Zoom fatigue’—which can undermine engagement and diminish the benefits of collaboration (Fauville et al., 2021). From a managerial standpoint, the implementation of working from home practices represents both a strategic opportunity and an operational challenge. One of the most prominent advantages is cost efficiency, as remote arrangements allow organizations to reduce overhead expenses significantly, including those related to office rent, utilities, maintenance, and on-site facilities (Davis et al., 2021). Leading multinational firms such as Twitter and Facebook have adopted permanent remote or hybrid work structures, citing not only reductions in operational costs but also enhanced access to a globally diverse talent pool and improved employee satisfaction. Working from home provides the opportunity to recruit from a geographically dispersed population, thereby improving workforce diversity and inclusion. This geographical flexibility strengthens the competitive edge of companies by attracting skilled professionals who are unwilling or unable to relocate. Moreover, remote work is associated with higher employee retention rates, as it supports better work-life balance and greater flexibility in job design (Bellmann & Hubler, 2021). Regardless of these benefits, remote work also presents a number of limitations. Among the most pressing managerial concerns are productivity monitoring, the dilution of organizational culture, and complications in onboarding and mentoring new employees. The lack of physical proximity may result in communication gaps and employee disengagement, particularly in roles that

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demand collaboration, creativity, or a high degree of teamwork. Remote work environments can also complicate data protection and regulatory compliance, especially when information is exchanged across decentralized digital platforms. Conversely, traditional office-based settings offer advantages in terms of direct supervision, team cohesion, and the reinforcement of organizational culture. Shared physical spaces facilitate clearer alignment with corporate values and strategies. Therefore, managers must carefully tailor work models to align with organizational objectives and the specific demands of job roles, while also considering employee preferences and work styles.

Remote work has proven effective primarily due to advancements in digital technologies. Tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack enabled organizations to transition swiftly to remote settings with minimal disruption. According to Barrero et al. (2021), these technologies facilitated real-time collaboration and communication, ensuring operational continuity even in decentralized environments. However, these platforms are not without challenges. Persistent technical difficulties, unstable connectivity, and the psychological strain associated with frequent virtual meetings—commonly referred to as 'Zoom fatigue'—can hamper productivity (Fauville et al., 2021). Continuous engagement through video conferencing and digital platforms can lead to cognitive overload, diminishing concentration and overall performance. Furthermore, the adoption of advanced tools such as artificial intelligence-driven scheduling software, remote monitoring applications, and productivity tracking systems raises significant ethical considerations. Although these technologies aim to enhance accountability and efficiency, they may inadvertently foster an environment of constant surveillance, which can lead to heightened stress and reduced job satisfaction (Davis et al., 2021). Employees might experience pressure to appear constantly productive, fearing that performance metrics are being monitored at all times, thereby impacting morale and workplace trust.

Given the complexities associated with both remote and office-based work arrangements, many organizations have opted for hybrid models that aim to merge the advantages of each. Hybrid work structures enable employees to alternate between remote and in-office settings, depending on their job nature and personal preferences. According to Allen et al. (2021), hybrid models can enhance employee satisfaction by offering customizable work experiences that accommodate diverse work styles and life circumstances. Nevertheless, these models introduce a unique set of challenges. A major concern is the

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potential for unequal access to resources and opportunities between remote and on-site employees. Remote workers may feel disconnected from those working in the office, which could hinder social integration, limit access to critical organizational information, and reduce opportunities for career advancement (Yang et al., 2022). The existence of a dual workplace can inadvertently create disparities in visibility, feedback, and promotion pathways. Additionally, managing a hybrid workforce requires meticulous planning and effective communication to avoid perceptions of inequity or exclusion. Organizations must implement policies that ensure fairness, inclusivity, and cohesion regardless of physical work location. This may include establishing standardized performance metrics, investing in equitable access to technological tools, and promoting inclusive communication strategies. A culture of recognition, transparency, and support is essential to ensure that all employees—whether remote or office-based—feel valued, engaged, and integrated into the broader organizational framework.

Despite the growing body of literature examining the impacts of remote, office-based, and hybrid work arrangements, critical gaps remain regarding how these modalities influence employee productivity, communication, job satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing in diverse institutional settings. Much of the existing research has been situated in developed economies with mature digital infrastructures and workplace policies (Olson & Olson, 2000; Davis et al., 2021), leaving limited empirical understanding of these dynamics in developing or transitional work environments. Moreover, while studies acknowledge the benefits of digital tools and hybrid flexibility, challenges such as 'Zoom fatigue', equity in access, managerial coordination, and employee disengagement remain underexplored in nuanced contexts (Fauville et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). This study addresses these gaps by offering a comprehensive analysis of how distinct work models affect productivity, work-life balance, communication effectiveness, and overall wellbeing, thereby contributing context-specific insights to the evolving discourse on the future of work.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study includes individuals employed across various industries who have engaged in either remote work (working from home) or office-based operations during the period from 2019 to 2024. This time frame allows for the detailed observation of evolving work patterns—capturing the pre-pandemic phase, the pandemic period when

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working from home became a widespread necessity, and the post-pandemic phase characterized by the emergence of hybrid work norms (Topaktas, 2024). As remote work has gained considerable traction in sectors such as information technology, education, finance, healthcare, and customer service, the sample is purposefully drawn from professionals in these industries. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure balanced representation across different work settings. The inclusion criteria required participants to:

- be employed full-time during the study period,
- be categorised as either office-based or remote workers, and
- have a minimum of one year of continuous work experience in their respective work modality.

An equal number of respondents were selected from each work arrangement, comprising 100 remote workers and 100 office-based workers, with balanced representation in terms of gender, age, and sector. This stratification enabled the study to capture cross-sectoral and demographic diversity, allowing the findings to be generalised more confidently to the wider working population.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Work Type and Industry

Work Modality	Sample Size	Industry Coverage
Working from Home	100	IT, Education, Finance, Healthcare
Office-Based Work	100	Banking, Government, Customer Service, Retail
Total	200	Multisectoral

Data Collection

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to obtain comprehensive insights into employee experiences and perceptions. Secondary data consisted of organizational reports, human resource surveys, and global employee wellbeing statistics sourced from reputable databases, including those of McKinsey & Company and the World Economic Forum.

Quantitative Component

The variables included in the study were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale within a closed-ended questionnaire. These variables comprised: (i) self-reported productivity, (ii) work-life balance, (iii) job satisfaction, (iv) communication effectiveness, and (v) emotional

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well-being. Participants were asked to respond to standardised statements such as “I am more productive when working from home” or “My work-life balance has improved in an office setting.” The questionnaire was distributed using the Google Forms platform and shared via LinkedIn professional networks, enabling participation from respondents across various countries and time zones.

Qualitative Component

A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with respondents, evenly split between the two work groups, with ten participants from each. The sample pool contributed to the identification of themes for detailed qualitative exploration. Each interview lasted between twenty-five to forty minutes, during which participants responded to questions guided by a structured interview protocol. The discussion covered both the challenges and benefits of their professional setting, as well as: (ii) coping strategies for work-related stress, (iii) team engagement and leadership support, and (iv) perceptions of fairness, equity, and career advancement. These qualitative insights served to triangulate the survey findings and provided a deeper understanding of nuanced aspects within the work environment that are not easily captured through quantitative measures.

Empirical Methodology

The data underwent analysis through both qualitative and statistical methods, as recommended by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Ismail et al. (2023). Interview transcripts were analysed using directed content analysis, applying pre-existing themes from organisational behaviour and human resource literature to code participant responses. These themes included: (i) work autonomy, (ii) distraction and focus, (iii) employee connectedness, (iv) mental health stressors, and (v) motivational drivers. For quantitative assessment, statistical analysis involved descriptive calculations of each examined variable, using procedures for determining mean, median, and standard deviation. Independent t-tests were employed to assess whether remote workers exhibited significantly different performance outcomes compared to office-based employees. A Productivity and Wellbeing Index (PWI) was constructed using Likert-scale indicators, which were aggregated through weighted scoring to derive a composite measure.

$$PWI = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{Productivity}) + \beta_2 (\text{Work-life Balance}) + \beta_3 (\text{Engagement}) + \beta_4 (\text{Emotional Wellbeing}) + \varepsilon$$

Where, α = constant, β_1 to β_4 = dimension-specific weights, ε = residual (unexplained)

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variance)

Pearson's r correlation tests determined the relationship between PWI scores and demographics, including age and gender, as well as sector allocation.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity and reliability of the instruments and methods employed, the research ensured that the findings remained robust and grounded in scientific standards. Initially, the instrument underwent refinement through a pilot study involving 15 participants across varying work arrangements. This pilot phase acted as a critical feedback mechanism, enabling the researcher to identify and revise ambiguous or overlapping statements and improve the survey's overall structure for better comprehension and respondent engagement. Content validity was further established through expert evaluation, involving two academic scholars in organisational psychology and one experienced human resource manager from the private sector. These experts assessed the alignment of questionnaire items with key constructs such as productivity, emotional wellbeing, engagement, and work-life balance, thereby ensuring the measurement framework appropriately captured the intended theoretical dimensions. For the qualitative data, inter-rater reliability was emphasised during the thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were coded independently by the principal investigator and a trained co-researcher, and the resulting Cohen's Kappa score ($\kappa = 0.82$) indicated substantial agreement, confirming the consistency and objectivity of the thematic classifications. To assess the internal consistency of the quantitative data, Cronbach's alpha was computed, yielding a value of $\alpha = 0.89$. This high reliability coefficient indicates that the Likert scale items consistently measured employee experiences across both work settings, affirming the instrument's suitability for academic analysis and meaningful comparison between remote and office-based modalities.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered strictly to established ethical guidelines, ensuring that the rights, dignity, and privacy of all participants were consistently respected throughout the research process. The investigation commenced only after informed consent was obtained from each participant. A comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the steps taken to guarantee personal data protection was clearly provided in a digital consent form. No personally identifiable information was collected or retained, and all responses were recorded with complete confidentiality. In both the survey and

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interview phases, participant data were anonymised prior to analysis to eliminate any possibility of direct or indirect identification. Institutional data protection and storage procedures were implemented in accordance with internationally recognised standards and regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation. All electronic data were encrypted and stored in password-protected folders accessible solely to the designated research team. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any obligation or penalty. This ensured that participation remained entirely voluntary and that a neutral power dynamic was maintained between the researchers and respondents. Interviewees were also reassured that their responses would not be linked to any identifiable information, particularly with regard to disclosures of a sensitive or potentially career-impacting nature. All research activities were conducted in line with academic ethical standards, taking into full account the cultural, professional, and personal sensitivities of the participants. Given the emotionally nuanced topics of mental wellbeing and occupational stress addressed in the interviews, care was taken to foster a respectful and inclusive environment throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

The empirical observations derived from a sample of two hundred participants comprising one hundred remote workers and one hundred office-based employees were collected through a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and are presented in this section. To align the findings with the primary research objectives, the results are categorized under thematic dimensions: work-life balance, job satisfaction, communication, emotional wellbeing, and organizational support. This section also provides a comparative analysis between the two groups based on the scores obtained through the constructed productivity and wellbeing index.

Overview of Demographic Characteristics

As for the balance of the sample across given demographic groups (gender, age group, sector), the sample was distributed evenly (52% male, 48% female). The sample was divided into contiguous groups of age (21–30, 31–40, 41–50, above 50), and the sample was revealed to be equally balanced between the sectors (information technology, finance, education, healthcare, government). Remote workers were mostly (60%) from the information technology and finance sectors, while office workers were mostly from the government and healthcare sectors. It facilitated sector meetings and allowed for insights into work modalities

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that were neutral to sectors.

Productivity and Work Performance

Results from the survey revealed a considerable gap in the self-perceived productivity between the two work modalities. A majority of remote workers (68 percent) reported higher self-rated productivity, attributing it to reduced workplace distractions, the absence of commuting time, and the flexibility to manage working hours. In contrast, only 45 percent of office-based employees reported comparable levels of productivity. This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). On a five-point scale, office-based employees scored an average of 3.5, whereas remote workers averaged 4.1. These findings support the conclusions of Barrero et al. (2021), who observed that remote work leads to greater efficiency due to flexible scheduling and autonomy in managing tasks.

Participants in the remote work category emphasized the ability to complete tasks without constant interruptions. One professional in the information technology sector remarked: “And if there aren’t meetings clogging the day up, I get through more at home, without meeting them in person at all.”

Conversely, some office-based workers expressed a preference for in-person work environments, citing benefits of structured routines and physical oversight. A manager from the healthcare sector explained: “Being an officer helps set boundaries; work begins and ends here, but at home, it’s endless.”

Work-Life Balance and Boundary Management

Work–life balance emerged as a significant factor in favouring remote work. Seventy-four percent of respondents indicated that working from home had positively impacted the balance between their professional and personal lives. They highlighted increased time with family, reduced travel-related fatigue, and enhanced control over daily routines as key benefits. On a five-point scale, remote workers reported an average work–life balance score of 4.2, in contrast to 3.1 among office-based employees. However, the qualitative responses revealed more nuanced challenges. Approximately thirty percent of remote participants reported difficulty in maintaining boundaries between work and home responsibilities, often leading to extended working hours. These findings resonate with the argument of Allen et al. (2021), who noted that although remote work supports flexibility, it can also foster emotional exhaustion due to the pressures of being perpetually available. Clearer demarcation between professional and personal domains was observed only among office-based employees.

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Nonetheless, satisfaction with work–life balance remained limited within this group, with only thirty-eight percent expressing contentment. This dissatisfaction was largely attributed to lengthy commutes and rigid office schedules, which constrained personal time.

Job Satisfaction and Engagement

Job satisfaction exhibited mixed trends across the two work modalities. Among remote employees, autonomy was cited as the most satisfying element, with 82 percent of respondents expressing agreement, whereas only 45 percent reported satisfaction with team interactions. In contrast, office-based workers demonstrated higher satisfaction with social engagement (72 percent) but showed relatively lower satisfaction with task flexibility (40 percent). Overall satisfaction scores were slightly higher for remote workers (3.9 compared to 3.6 for office-based workers), although this difference did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.08$). These findings align with the literature suggesting that remote work tends to be associated with greater autonomy, while traditional office settings foster stronger social connectedness (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The interview data substantiated these findings, revealing a duality in preferences. A remote finance professional commented, “Flexible breaks, no commuting, my own pace and a dream of an introvert,” whereas an office-based participant stated, “I’d rather be around people; I get energy from it and can learn.”

Communication and Collaboration

Communication and collaboration also emerged as distinguishing factors between the two groups. Among remote workers, 58 percent reported difficulties with real-time collaboration and spontaneous communication. Only 40 percent indicated that team cohesion was effectively maintained in virtual settings. By contrast, office-based respondents rated their communication effectiveness higher, averaging 4.3 on a five-point scale, compared to 3.4 among remote workers. Common issues cited by remote workers included frequent misunderstandings, delayed decision-making, and symptoms of communication fatigue, including the phenomenon often referred to as 'Zoom fatigue'. These challenges are consistent with findings by Yang et al. (2022), who observed a decline in cross-functional collaboration during transitions to remote work. Nevertheless, some remote workers acknowledged the advantages of asynchronous communication through digital tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, and project management platforms such as Asana. The effectiveness of these tools, however, was seen to depend heavily on team digital competence and the quality of leadership practices.

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Emotional Wellbeing and Burnout Risk

Regarding emotional wellbeing and the risk of burnout, findings revealed a complex and nuanced picture. Sixty-two percent of remote workers reported feeling emotionally supported and experiencing less stress, attributing these outcomes to the autonomy inherent in remote work. Conversely, thirty-five percent acknowledged feelings of loneliness and disengagement, a pattern consistent with earlier research by Majorano et al. (2015). Office-based workers, while maintaining more structured routines, also faced challenges: 48 percent reported experiencing work-induced stress stemming from rigid schedules and demanding performance expectations. Respondents who frequently exceeded standard working hours exhibited more symptoms of burnout, including sleep disruptions and diminished motivation. These outcomes echo concerns raised by Derks and Bakker (2014), who noted the risks of psychological strain linked to prolonged digital connectivity. One remote participant encapsulated this sentiment by stating, “I always feel bad logging off when my laptop is right next to my bed, as if I can never leave my job.” In contrast, an office-based worker offered an opposing perspective: “Driving home is my stress relief. It allows me to disengage from a work mindset.”

Managerial Support and Organizational Practices

Notable differences emerged in how employees perceived managerial support across work modalities. While remote workers appreciated flexible leadership styles, many also reported challenges with visibility and recognition. Only 41 percent of remote employees felt acknowledged and rewarded for their contributions, compared to 65 percent among office-based workers. This disparity reflects the advantage of physical proximity in fostering informal check-ins and clearer performance expectations, which contributed to higher perceived managerial engagement among office staff. These findings are consistent with the work of Wang et al. (2021), who argue that structured managerial interactions within office environments contribute more effectively to employee engagement. Organizational policies also played a decisive role. Companies that were supportive of remote arrangements, those offering virtual town halls, remote-specific key performance indicators, and wellness initiatives—generated significantly higher employee sentiment scores. Nonetheless, even within such supportive environments, some remote workers still reported feelings of isolation and being overlooked compared to their counterparts in less adaptive firms, suggesting that structural adaptations alone may not fully mitigate the relational gaps created by remote work.

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Comparative Productivity and Wellbeing Index (PWI)

To offer a composite evaluation of work outcomes, this study developed a Productivity and Wellbeing Index (PWI), integrating multiple dimensions identified as crucial for assessing holistic employee experience. The index was based on five core elements: productivity, engagement, communication effectiveness, work-life balance, and emotional wellbeing. This approach enabled a comparative assessment across both remote and office-based work settings by aggregating self-reported scores into a unified index that reflects not just task output but also the broader psychological and organizational context in which work occurs.

Table 2: PWI Score

Group	PWI Score
Remote Workers	3.95
Office-Based Workers	3.58

However, the aggregated index indicated a marginal overall advantage for remote work in terms of holistic wellbeing and performance outcomes. This advantage, however, was not uniform; it varied considerably depending on job role, personality traits, and industry sector. The results from the regression analysis revealed that a flexible schedule and work autonomy were the most significant predictors of higher Productivity and Wellbeing Index scores ($\beta = 0.64, p < 0.01$). These factors were closely followed by perceived emotional support and the ease of digital collaboration. In contrast, organisational rigidity and excessive managerial control were found to negatively influence wellbeing and productivity in both work modalities, though their adverse effects were more pronounced in traditional office-based settings. This suggests that employee-centric flexibility, coupled with supportive digital and emotional infrastructures, is central to enhancing performance and wellbeing, particularly in remote work environments.

Sectoral and Generational Insights

The highest levels of satisfaction with remote work were observed among respondents from the information technology and finance sectors, whereas employees from the government and healthcare sectors expressed comparatively lower satisfaction with working remotely. The preference for remote work was especially pronounced among younger employees aged 21 to 30, largely due to their digital fluency and preference for personal autonomy. In contrast, more senior employees aged 40 and above demonstrated a stronger inclination toward

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structured office environments that facilitate in-person interaction with colleagues. These findings align with Kossek et al. (2006), who identified generational variations in preferences regarding flexible work arrangements. Notably, mid-career professionals—often navigating the dual demands of autonomy and team collaboration—expressed a marked preference for hybrid work models, which they perceived as offering the most balanced solution.

Table 3: Summary of Key Findings

Dimension	Remote Workers	Office Workers	Notable Difference
Productivity	High	Moderate	Remote Advantage
Work-Life Balance	Strong	Weak	Remote Advantage
Job Satisfaction	Moderate–High	Moderate	Mixed
Communication	Moderate	High	Office Advantage
Mental Health Support	Mixed	Stable	Sector dependent
Recognition	Lower	Higher	Office Advantage

Discussion

This section discusses the key findings of the research on working from home versus office-based work by integrating established theories, original academic literature, and broader organisational practices. The objective is to interpret the observed patterns critically, exploring their implications from the individual, organisational, and systemic perspectives. Specifically, this analysis employs Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, and Systems Theory to examine how evolving work environments—shaped by the post-pandemic context—are redefining employee experiences, organisational efficiency, and corporate accountability. Stakeholder Theory, as introduced by Freeman (2014), posits that organisations are accountable not only to shareholders but to a broad range of stakeholders. This perspective becomes particularly salient in evaluating the design of work environments, especially in relation to employee wellbeing and autonomy. Findings suggest that remote work substantially enhances employee autonomy, productivity, and work–life balance, though these benefits are counterbalanced by drawbacks such as social isolation, delayed communication, and reduced visibility of performance (Mamatha and Thoti, 2024). From a stakeholder-centric viewpoint, remote work introduces greater flexibility and significantly reduces the psychological burden of commuting. These features are particularly beneficial for

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caregivers, women, and individuals with disabilities, as remote work facilitates equitable access to professional opportunities (Choudhury et al., 2020). However, the obligations of organisations toward external stakeholders—including clients and service recipients—often necessitate operational coherence and service quality, which are more effectively supported by office-based work environments, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and public administration (Schudy, 2018). This highlights the inherent tension between internal employee satisfaction and external service delivery demands.

Organisations that embrace a stakeholder-oriented approach often implement hybrid work models that combine the advantages of both remote and office-based settings. These organisations tend to practice inclusive governance by incorporating digital wellness programs, revising key performance indicators for remote workers, and instituting structured feedback mechanisms to meet the needs of both internal and external stakeholders (Wang et al., 2021). In essence, organisations that apply Stakeholder Theory in managing flexible work arrangements are better equipped to address complex operational demands. As noted by Kalra (2024), such organisations are capable of creating inclusive policies that promote employee autonomy while maintaining standards of accountability and performance. This balance between freedom and control enables them to align internal stakeholder wellbeing with broader institutional objectives.

According to Legitimacy Theory, organisations aim to secure societal approval by aligning their practices with prevailing social norms and values (Suchman, 2015). In the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the surge in digital transformation, the adoption of remote work has emerged as a symbol of progressive corporate culture. Organisations that fail to embrace remote or hybrid work models may be perceived as regressive or authoritarian. The findings of this study suggest that flexible work policies are viewed positively by employees and external stakeholders, contributing to perceptions of organisational responsiveness, technological advancement, and human-centric management. This alignment with evolving societal values—such as mental health awareness, digital inclusivity, and work-life balance (Allen et al., 2021)—mirrors broader shifts in workplace attitudes, as illustrated in Figure 1. Within this framework, legitimacy is not derived from a single variable but from a combination of symbolic and substantive alignment with stakeholder expectations. Nevertheless, the risk of symbolic compliance remains significant. Some organisations may allow working from home in name but fail to support this

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arrangement with adequate digital infrastructure, leadership training, or psychological services. This distinction echoes Suchman's (2015) differentiation between symbolic and substantive legitimacy, where the former prioritises image over actual transformation. Although many companies publicly endorse remote work, implicit biases may persist in areas such as performance evaluations, undermining the legitimacy of their flexible work commitments (Foley and Williamson, 2019). Legitimacy Theory thereby explains why organisations in the post-pandemic landscape face growing reputational pressure—not just to adopt flexible models, but to do so in an ethical, equitable, and trust-driven manner. Employees, clients, and investors now expect more than operational continuity; they demand transparency, inclusivity, and strategic flexibility in workplace design.

Organisations can also be understood through the lens of Systems Theory, which frames them as open, interdependent entities that respond dynamically to their external environment (Katz and Kahn, 2018). This theoretical lens underscores the importance of coherence among structural, technological, and human subsystems in achieving long-term adaptability and performance. During the coronavirus disease pandemic, organisations with integrated systems—encompassing digital communication tools, human resource policies, leadership training, and employee wellbeing programs—were most successful in transitioning to remote work (Jackson, 2024). These organisations did not treat working from home as a temporary fix, but instead restructured workflows, communication frameworks, and performance evaluation protocols to support sustainable remote engagement (Ismail et al., 2023). As a result, employee satisfaction and productivity improved, particularly where remote policies were accompanied by targeted training, asynchronous collaboration mechanisms, and mental health resources. Conversely, organisations with poor integration—characterised by rigid hierarchies, low technological investment, or micromanagement cultures—struggled to maintain engagement and performance during remote operations. Employees in such settings reported increased burnout, communication breakdowns, and confusion regarding role expectations. Systems Theory affirms the operational advantages of co-located teams, especially in industries that rely heavily on cross-functional collaboration and real-time problem-solving (Gupta et al., 2009). However, when traditional systems lack adaptability and fail to incorporate continuous feedback loops, they can devolve into demotivating bureaucracies—particularly for digitally literate or younger employees. Adaptive organisational systems, exemplified by hybrid work models, are increasingly

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recognised as viable solutions. These systems draw on the comparative strengths of remote and office-based work and are sustained through employee-centric innovation, cross-functional integration, and iterative design (Ahmed and Smith, 2023). Therefore, rather than adopting a binary stance, the effectiveness of work models depends on contextual variables and must evolve through ongoing interdepartmental collaboration and systemic responsiveness.

These findings are highly significant for organisational leadership. In examining the case of remote teams, the analysis reveals that managerial support and visibility of employee performance emerged as two critical differentiators between successful and underperforming remote teams. Transformational leadership defined by traits such as mutual trust, prioritising outcomes over inputs, and empathetic communication was notably present in high-performing remote organisations, as observed by Golden et al. (2008). In contrast, micromanagement and the absence of clearly defined expectations contributed to disengagement in both remote and office-based settings. These results underscore the dual influence of both work modality and leadership style on employee outcomes. Therefore, training managers in the dynamics of remote teamwork, using frameworks such as setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals, and encouraging open and consistent communication become essential (Robu, 2024). Sector-specific differences also mattered significantly. Information technology and consulting industries adapted well to remote work practices, whereas healthcare, government, and education faced structural constraints due to their reliance on physical infrastructure, hands-on service delivery, and public accountability (de Wit et al., 2018). Nonetheless, optimisation potential was found even in these sectors, particularly within administrative and back-office functions.

Generational variation further influenced the findings. Younger employees aged between twenty-one and thirty preferred remote work, driven by compatibility with digital tools, increased autonomy, and the ability to integrate personal lifestyle needs (Hampel, 2024). Employees aged forty and above, however, expressed greater preference for traditional office settings, valuing their structured environment, routine-based workflows, and opportunities for face-to-face mentoring. These diverse preferences highlight the inadequacy of a 'one size fits all' approach to workplace design. Rather, successful organisations of the future will recognise the need to develop flexible work ecosystems that accommodate heterogeneous employee needs and professional contexts.

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Beyond operational efficiencies, the debate between remote and office-based work also surfaces critical ethical concerns related to equity, access, and employee wellbeing. For instance, employees without reliable internet connectivity, ergonomic home office arrangements, or support for caregiving duties may be inherently disadvantaged in remote work environments (Reeznik et al., 2024). Organisations, therefore, bear an ethical responsibility to bridge digital inequalities, possibly through stipends or resource allocations that ensure all employees can work productively from home. Another ethical dilemma arises from the phenomenon of ‘proximity bias’, where employees who are physically present in the office may receive greater recognition, access to promotions, or informal mentoring opportunities (Harley, 2024). Such practices result in unfairness in performance appraisals and career advancement. Ethical human resource strategies must counter this risk by employing transparent evaluation metrics, fostering inclusive team cultures, and conducting periodic audits of promotion and decision-making trends (Yanamala, 2023).

It is thus imperative that organisations shift focus from short-term cost-saving measures to long-term strategic planning, particularly as it concerns culture-building, innovation, and talent retention. Although remote work presents opportunities for scale and cost-efficiency, without deliberate intervention, it may also dilute corporate identity and hinder spontaneous innovation. Hence, hybrid work arrangements—those that combine flexibility with structured in-person engagement—emerge as a promising and sustainable pathway. However, the effectiveness of hybrid models hinges not on simple alternation between home and office but on intentional design. Office-based workdays should be optimised for creativity, collaborative problem-solving, and strategic alignment, while remote days should be preserved for focused tasks, individual autonomy, and personal balance (Bloom et al., 2021).

A pivotal insight derived from the evidence in this research is that work design must transition from location-based logic to purpose-based logic. The future of work is less about where tasks are performed and more about how and why they are executed. Flexibility, therefore, must no longer be considered a privilege but a central strategic pillar (Kossek et al., 2021). Achieving this requires evidence-based, inclusive, and adaptive policy design. Stakeholder Theory demands that organisations remain cognisant of the varying needs and expectations of their workforce. Legitimacy Theory stresses the importance of aligning work practices with broader social values and expectations. Systems Theory calls for the

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integration of technology, structure, and human subsystems, enabled through feedback loops and systemic alignment (Jarke et al., 2011). When taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that organisations best equipped to thrive in the evolving work landscape will be those that integrate strategic foresight with ethical responsibility and systemic coherence.

Conclusions

The global employment landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation from traditional work processes to increasingly adopted remote and hybrid work arrangements. The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of working from home compared to office-based work on several dimensions of employee experience, including productivity, job satisfaction, work–life balance, communication, and emotional wellbeing. Drawing upon a diverse sample and employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the research offers comprehensive insights into how different work modalities shape employee performance and perceptions across various contexts. The findings of the study reveal that while remote work promotes productivity, autonomy, and an improved blend of work and personal life, it is accompanied by challenges such as communication difficulties, feelings of isolation, and reduced visibility within organisations.

In contrast, office-based work environments continue to excel in promoting collaboration, real-time supervision, and team cohesion, albeit often at the cost of personal flexibility and increased commuting fatigue. Work from home settings, while offering functional flexibility, showed limitations in fostering interpersonal connections and organisational culture. These outcomes reinforce the understanding that no single work arrangement is universally superior. Instead, the effectiveness of each model is contingent upon factors such as industry characteristics, the nature of job roles, generational preferences, and the maturity of organisational support structures. The study concludes that a strategically developed and ethically implemented hybrid work model offers the most sustainable path forward. Such a model allows organisations to integrate the advantages of both remote and office-based systems while mitigating their respective shortcomings. From the perspective of Stakeholder Theory, organisations are encouraged to respond sensitively to the diverse needs of their workforce. Legitimacy Theory reminds organisations of the importance of aligning their work practices with evolving societal expectations. Furthermore, Systems Theory calls for a holistic, integrative, and adaptable organisational structure capable of responding to

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dynamic internal and external environments.

While the study makes a valuable contribution to the discourse on flexible work arrangements, it is not without limitations. Chief among them is the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce subjective bias. Moreover, the geographic scope of the research remains limited, which may restrict the generalisability of its findings. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs and sector-specific analyses that can further elucidate the long-term implications and contextual nuances of remote, office, and hybrid work settings. Nonetheless, the study offers critical insights for human resource professionals, organisational leaders, and policy makers striving to create inclusive, adaptive, and high-performing work environments in the evolving digital era.

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