

OUT OF OFFICE BUT NOT OUT OF WORK; REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING IMPLICATIONS ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE, JOB SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING: EVIDENCE FROM INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote working, and it's likely to continue in the post-pandemic era. As remote working continues to be an innovative, technology-enabled working model, there is a need for a well-represented study on the preference of employees for remote working in the post pandemic era and how it impacts on their personal, family and mental well-being. This study explores the preference of IT professionals for remote working and its impact on their personal, family, and mental well-being. A survey of 435 professionals from three IT parks in Kerala reveals that remote working professionals prefer to continue working remotely for the rest of their careers. The study finds significant differences in work-life balance, job satisfaction, and well-being across remote, hybrid, and in-office IT professionals. The results suggest that workplaces need to increase flexibility to accommodate the demand for remote working arrangements. The study's findings have implications for employers seeking to support the well-being and job satisfaction of their employees in a post-pandemic world.

Keywords:- IT Industry, Job Satisfaction, Mental Well-being, Remote Working, Work Life Balance.

As a result of the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, increased requirements to adopt social distancing measures resulted in widespread adoption of remote working in work places where such mode of working is possible (Stefaniec et al., 2022).

While the proportion of employees who work from home has been very low in the pre-pandemic period, it is worth considering how trends might change once the world emerges out of pandemic and continues to be perceived as an effective method of work especially in

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Information Technology industry worldwide(Jain et al., 2022). Thus, the prevalence of remote working, as an innovative technology-enabled working model, has thus increased considerably especially for the post Covid-19 era. Emerging research indicates that, there will be a positive and negative impact from remote working with employees' well-being (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2023).

From the perspective of employees, the adoption of remote working is likely to have significant impact on work-life balance, job satisfaction and mental well-being. While there are likely to be a number of benefits, there are also likely to be negative impacts(Kurdy et al., 2023). As remote working continues to be an innovative, technology-enabled working model(Gifford, 2022),there is a need for a well-represented study on the preference of employees for remote working in the post pandemic era and how it impacts on their personal, family and mental well-being. This is the area in which the present paper focuses by adding to the emerging literature in this field.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of the study are;

1. To understand the preference of employees in the Information Technology Industry for remote working in the post pandemic era;
2. To assess the work-life balance, job satisfaction and well-being of employees in the Information Technology Industry significantly differ across remote, in-office and hybrid workers.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows. The research hypotheses are described in the next section, which also evaluates relevant literature. The methodology of the study is described in the third section followed by results. The paper concludes with an outline of key findings and discussion and directions for further study.

2. Literature review

2.1. Remote Working and Work-Life Balance

Mukhopadhyay (2023) reported that managing the increased dual demand of home and office has been stressful to those who are in remote working especially for women. The family situation is found to be an influencing factor on the suitability of working from home (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). The research on work from home improves or impairs the work-life balance conducted and reported by Bellmann & Hubler (2020) also indicate a negative impact of remote work on work-life balance, however, employees working from home are found to be more happier than those who want to work at home. Similarly, survey in Indonesia (Dodi et al., 2021) found working from home has a significant and negative effect on work-life balance. Therefore, we propose the hypothesis;

H01: Work-life balance does not differ significantly across remote, hybrid and in-office IT professionals.

2.2. Remote Working and Job Satisfaction

Aslan et al. (2022) found that employees who work from home have better general task performance

perception compared to those who work only from the workplace, the work location has not been found to affect job satisfaction significantly. There is also evidence that the implementation of the remote working system has a positive impact in helping to achieve the job satisfaction. Similarly, survey in Indonesia found working from home has a significant effect, both directly and indirectly, on job satisfaction (Dodi et al., 2021). However, on the contrary Bellmann & Hubler (2020) observed that the introduction of remote work increases job satisfaction temporarily. Taking all these in to consideration, we propose that;

H02: Job satisfaction does not differ significantly across remote, hybrid and in-office IT professionals.

2.3. Remote Working and Mental Well-Being

Previous studies have found that occupational stress and remote working are closely related to the physical and mental well-being of employees. Prasada et al.(2020) showed that the effect of remote working is statistically significant on the psychological well-being of an employee. For instance, Sutarto et al. (2021) found the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among remote workers. On contrary, Felstead & Henseke (2017) found a positive association of remote working with higher organizational commitment, job satisfaction and overall well-being of the employees. Gillet et al. (2021) observes remote working a double- edged sword by buffering the negative effects of work centrality on family satisfaction but also limiting the positive effects of work centrality on work

engagement. Taking all these into consideration, we propose that;

H03: Well-being does not differ significantly across remote, hybrid and in-office IT professionals.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative survey- based research methodology was adopted in this study.

3.2. Population and Sample

The study has been conducted among Information Technology sector employees in Kerala. The determination of the study sample was conducted by using cross sectional one group proportion. After calculating the sample size using the formula for three groups of respondents, a minimum sample size of 435 was obtained. Stratified random sampling technique was applied to select the respondents. The details of the respondents are remote workers (157), in-office workers (172) and hybrid workers (106) obtained from three government owned IT parks in Kerala; Technopark Thiruvananthapuram, Infopark Kochi and Cyberpark Kozhikode.

3.3. Questionnaire and Scales

A structured questionnaire was developed by tailoring the questionnaires from earlier studies to fit the parameters of the present research objectives. The scale used for measuring work-life balance is a 15 items scale adapted from an instrument developed by Stanton et al. (2003). Their original scale consists of 19 items. Job satisfaction was evaluated by modifying the 13 items from Dolbier et al. (2005) and well-being was assessed

using the 18 items from Ryff & Keyes (1995). Some modifications have been made in the scales to fit the parameters of the present purposes and the scales were finalized after testing reliability and validity (Table I).

To determine whether the sample data was drawn from a normally distributed population, the Kolmogorov Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test were used (Table II).

4. Data Collection and Analysis

An online survey was conducted between April and July 2023 using the structured questionnaire that was distributed through Google forms. The collected data were coded, classified and analyzed using SPSS 20.0. Categorical and quantitative variables were expressed as frequency and mean ± SD respectively. One way ANOVA test and Scheffe Multiple Comparison were used to compare quantitative parameters between

categories. For all statistical interpretations, $p<0.05$ was considered the threshold for statistical significance.

5. Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents (Table III) revealed that the majority (63.4 per cent) of the participants were female. Of the surveyed respondents, majority was aged 30 and above (56.1 per cent) followed by those aged below 30 years. With regard to marital status 69.7 per cent were married, 27.6 per cent were single and 2.7 per cent were divorced. Regarding mode of work, 39.6 per cent were in-office workers, 36 per cent were remote workers and 24.4 per cent were hybrid workers.

After conducting an ANOVA test to find whether the difference in mean scores for work-life balance of three work groups is significant, it is revealed that, there is a significant difference in the

Table I
Validity and Reliability Statistics

	Items	S-CVI	Split-Half Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Work-life balance	15	0.816	0.812	0.853
Job Satisfaction	13	0.813	0.755	0.804
Well-being	18	0.871	0.784	0.915

Table II
Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Quartile	.036	385	.254*	.996	385	.380

Table III
Description of the Sample

Demographics	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	159	36.6
	Female	276	63.4
Age	Less than 30	191	43.9
	30 and above	244	56.1
Marital Status	Single	120	27.6
	Married	304	69.7
	Divorced	11	2.7
Mode of Work	Remote Work	157	36
	In-office Work	172	39.6
	Hybrid Work	106	24.4

Source: Primary Data

mean scores for work-life balance of different work groups with an F value 34.5, at $p<0.001$. The mean score for work-life balance is high in remote and hybrid workers as compared to in-office workers (Table IV).

Based on the Sheffe test of post-hoc comparison, there is a significant difference found in work-life balance between remote workers and in-office workers with an F vale 33.3 at $p<0.001$. Similarly, there is a significant difference found in work life balance between the remaining two pairs.

It can be revealed from the Table V that the mean score of job satisfaction is

high in remote and hybrid workers followed by in-office workers. Since, the obtained F value is 3.22 ($p<0.05$), it is significant at 0.05 level. It means that there is significant difference in job satisfaction across remote, in-office and hybrid workers. Based on Scheffe test of post-hoc comparison, no significant difference in job satisfaction is found between pairs.

Based on the mean score, the employees who work remotely and in hybrid mode are found good in well-being as compared to those work und in-office mode. It is also revealed from the TableVI that there is a significant difference in the mean scores for well-

Table IV
Mode of Work and Work-life Balance

Mode of Work	Mean	SD	N	F	P	Scheffe's Multiple Comparison		
						Pair	F	P
Remote	2.9	0.8	157	34.5**	p<0.001	Remote & In-office	33.3**	p<0.001
In-office	2.3	0.6	172			Remote&Hybrid	14.1**	p<0.001
Hybrid	2.5	0.4	106			In-office&Hybrid	4.1*	0.016

Source: Primary Data

Table V
Mode of Work and Job Satisfaction

Mode of Work	Mean	SD	N	F	P	Scheffe's Multiple Comparison		
						Pair	F	P
Remote	2.6	0.7	157	3.22*	0.041	Remote & In-office	2.7	0.067
In-office	2.4	0.5	172			Remote & Hybrid	3.0	0.051
Hybrid	2.6	0.5	106			In-office & Hybrid	0.0	0.955

Source: Primary Data

being of different work groups with an F value 11.5, at $p<0.001$. Based on Scheffe test of post-hoc comparison, well-being of remote workers is found significantly different from in-office workers ($F=11.5$, $p<0.001$).

Respondents who work remotely and hybrid mode were asked if they desire to work remotely for the rest of their careers. Table VII shows that a large majority (70 per cent) of respondent desires to continue working remotely for the rest of their careers. As more respondents express a desire to continue remote working arrangements workplaces have had to increase flexibility to match those demands.

6. Findings and Discussion

The descriptive results the perception of respondents toward remote working is positive. They show intense desire to work remotely for the rest of their career. Then ANOVA was conducted to test the research hypotheses. It can be concluded that work-life balance differs significantly across remote and in-office professionals and it is found remote and hybrid work professionals experience better work-life balance as compared to in-office professionals ($F=33.3$, $p<0.001$), which supports the findings of Bellmann & Hubler (2020) and contradicts the findings of (Dodi et al., 2021), who found working from home has a significant

Table VI
Mode of Work and Well-being

Mode of Work	Mean	SD	N	F	P	Scheffe's Multiple Comparison		
						Pair	F	P
Remote	2.7	0.6	157	11.5**	p<0.001	Remote & In-office	11.5**	p<0.001
In-office	2.4	0.6	172			Remote & Hybrid	0.8	0.436
Hybrid	2.6	0.7	106			In-office & Hybrid	1.7	0.181

Source: Primary Data

Table VII
Intention to Continue Remote Working

	Mean	SD	Yes		No	
			Count	Percent	Count	Percent
I desire to continue to work remotely for the rest of my career	3.92	0.5	184	70	79	30

Source: Primary Data

negative impact on work-life balance. Consequently, hypothesis H01 is not supported.

Second, it was revealed that job satisfaction balance differs significantly across remote and in-office professionals and it is found remote and hybrid work professionals experience better job satisfaction as compared to in-office professionals (F=3.22, p=0.041). this confirms with (Aslan et al., 2022; Dodi et al., 2021) who claimed that employees are more satisfied with work from home and contradicts with (Bellmann & Hubler, 2020) who observed that introduction of remote work increases job satisfaction temporarily. Consequently, hypothesis H02 is not supported.

Finally, it was observed that well-being differs significantly across remote

and in-office professionals and it is found remote and hybrid work professionals experience better well-being as compared to in-office professionals (F=11.5, p<0.001). The results contradicts the school of thought that remote working puts strain on physical and mental well-being (Prasada et al., 2020; Smite et al., 2023; Sutarto et al., 2021). But, in line with the other view, which found positive association of remote with overall well-being (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Thus, hypothesis H03 is not supported.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present paper aims to understand the desire of remote working professionals in the IT sector to continue to work remotely for the rest of their career and to assess whether there is significant difference in work-life balance,

job satisfaction and well-being across remote and in-office professionals. Through the analysis of existing literature reviews and research survey, themes have been developed to support the framing of work-life balance, job satisfaction and well-being scales. The results showed that work-life balance, job satisfaction and well-being differ significantly across remote, hybrid and in-office IT professionals. Moreover, the results revealed that remote working professionals prefer to work remotely for the rest of their career.

In conclusion, the key results that are raised from the analysis showed that work places have had to increase flexibility to match those demand to continue remote working arrangements. Organizations should offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid work options, to support employees' work-life balance and job satisfaction. They should also regularly collect feedback from

employees to understand their needs and preferences regarding remote work arrangements and provide training and development opportunities to help employees adapt to remote work.

Remote working professionals should establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, regularly communicate with colleagues and managers, and prioritize self-care activities to maintain their mental and physical well-being. Policymakers should develop policies and guidelines that support remote work arrangements, encourage organizations to offer flexible work arrangements, and monitor the impact of remote work on employees' well-being and job satisfaction to identify areas for improvement. By implementing these recommendations, organizations and policy makers can support remote working professionals and promote a healthier and more productive work environment.

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