

The Future of Work: A Comparative Analysis of Productivity and Stress Across Remote, Office, And Hybrid Work Models

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Abstract

The nature of work has undergone significant transformation due to technological advancements and the widespread adoption of flexible work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations increasingly utilize remote, office-based, and hybrid work models to enhance operational efficiency and employee well-being. This study examines the impact of different work modes on productivity and stress levels among individuals from diverse professional backgrounds. The research is based on primary data collected from 65 respondents, including students, teachers, executives, managers, and other professionals. A descriptive and comparative research design was adopted using a structured online questionnaire. The study evaluates working hours, productivity, stress levels, satisfaction, and work mode preferences among respondents. The findings indicate that office-based employees demonstrate the highest mean productivity score (3.80/5.0) and the highest satisfaction level (3.75/5.0), while hybrid workers report the highest mean stress score (6.38/10.0). Although work-from-home respondents exhibit the highest aggregate productivity due to their larger sample size, their per-person productivity remains lower than that of office workers. The study concludes that each work model offers distinct advantages and challenges, and organizations should carefully consider job roles, employee preferences, and work requirements when designing future workplace strategies.

Keywords: *Remote Work, Hybrid Work, Office Work, Productivity, Employee Stress, Job Satisfaction, Work Environment, Flexible Working*

1. Introduction

The concept of work has evolved dramatically over the last decade, particularly following rapid technological advancements and the global COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally, employees performed their duties within physical office environments under direct supervision and structured organizational systems. However, developments in digital communication technologies, cloud computing, and virtual collaboration platforms have enabled organizations to adopt alternative work arrangements, including remote and hybrid work models.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transformation by forcing organizations worldwide to shift from conventional office settings to remote working arrangements. As businesses adapted to these unprecedented circumstances, employees experienced both benefits and challenges associated with working from home. Increased flexibility, reduced commuting time, and improved work-life balance emerged as potential advantages, while social isolation, communication difficulties, and mental fatigue became common concerns.

As organizations transition into a post-pandemic work environment, hybrid work models have gained considerable popularity. Hybrid work combines elements of both remote and office-based work, allowing employees to divide their time between home and workplace settings. Although this model is often viewed as a balanced solution, its impact on productivity, stress levels, and employee satisfaction remains an important area of investigation.

Understanding the effectiveness of different work arrangements is essential for organizations seeking to improve employee performance, well-being, and organizational outcomes. Productivity and stress are two critical factors influencing workforce efficiency and long-term sustainability. While higher productivity contributes to organizational success, excessive stress may negatively affect employee health, motivation, and job satisfaction.

This study seeks to compare remote, office-based, and hybrid work environments using primary survey data collected from individuals across various professional backgrounds in India. By examining productivity levels, stress experiences, working hours, and employee satisfaction, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the future of work and identify the work model that offers the most effective balance between performance and well-being.

2. Literature Review

The growing adoption of flexible work arrangements has attracted considerable academic attention, particularly regarding their influence on employee productivity, satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Several studies have examined the advantages and limitations associated with remote, office-based, and hybrid work environments.

Bloom, Liang, Roberts, and Ying (2015), in their landmark study *Does Working from Home Work? Evidence from a Chinese Experiment*, found that employees working from home demonstrated higher productivity levels and greater job satisfaction compared to office-based workers. The study suggested that reduced distractions and increased flexibility contributed positively to employee performance.

Gajendran and Harrison (2007), in *The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting*, reported that telecommuting can enhance employee productivity and job performance while improving work-life balance. However, the researchers also highlighted potential challenges, including social isolation, reduced interpersonal interaction, and communication barriers.

Eurofound (2020), through its report *Living, Working and COVID-19*, examined the impact of remote work during the pandemic period. The study revealed that many remote employees experienced extended working hours, blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, and increased mental fatigue. These findings highlighted the psychological challenges associated with prolonged work-from-home arrangements.

Wang et al. (2021), in *Achieving Effective Remote Working During COVID-19*, emphasized the importance of organizational support, effective communication systems, technological infrastructure, and time management practices for successful remote work implementation. The study concluded that organizational preparedness plays a crucial role in determining employee outcomes under flexible work arrangements.

Collectively, the existing literature suggests that remote work can improve productivity and flexibility when supported by appropriate organizational practices. However, concerns related to stress, social isolation, communication challenges, and work-life boundary management continue to persist. While previous studies have primarily focused on comparisons between remote and office work, there remains a growing need to examine hybrid work arrangements and their influence on employee productivity and stress.

The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comparative analysis of productivity and stress across remote, office, and hybrid work models using primary survey data collected from 65 respondents. By evaluating both aggregate and mean-based

performance indicators, the study offers a balanced perspective on the future of workplace arrangements.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- I. To analyze the relationship between work mode and employee productivity using both aggregate and mean-based measures.
- II. To examine the impact of working hours and job roles on employee stress levels.
- III. To identify whether work-from-home, office, or hybrid work models provide a better balance between productivity and stress.
- IV. To evaluate the effectiveness of hybrid work arrangements as an alternative workplace model.
- V. To assess employee satisfaction and work mode switching preferences across different work environments.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and comparative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach. This design enabled the systematic comparison of productivity, stress levels, satisfaction, and work-related experiences among individuals working under different work arrangements.

4.2 Source of Data

The research is based on primary data collected directly from respondents through a structured online survey. The primary data approach ensured that current perceptions and experiences related to different work modes were accurately captured.

4.3 Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire included items related to work mode, working hours, productivity levels, stress experiences, satisfaction, job role, and work preferences.

4.4 Sampling Method

The study employed a convenience sampling technique. Respondents were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. This method was considered appropriate due to time limitations and ease of data collection.

4.5 Sample Size

A total of 65 respondents participated in the study. The sample comprised individuals from diverse professional backgrounds, including students, teachers, executives, managers, and other occupational groups.

4.6 Area of Study

The study was conducted among respondents from different regions of India. Participants represented various educational, professional, and occupational backgrounds, enabling a broader understanding of workplace experiences across different work models.

4.7 Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative analytical techniques.

Tools utilized in the study

- i. Frequency distribution analysis
- ii. Percentage analysis
- iii. Mean score analysis
- iv. Sum-based scoring analysis
- v. Comparative analysis across work modes
- vi. Survey interpretation through quantitative and qualitative assessment

These analytical methods facilitated a comprehensive comparison of productivity, stress levels, satisfaction, and working patterns across work-from-home, office-based, and hybrid work environments.

Variables of the Study

- i. **Independent Variables:** Work Mode, Job Role, Working Hours, Advertisement Exposure and Frequency.
- ii. **Dependent Variables:** Productivity Score, Stress Level, Satisfaction Level, Control Variables and Age Group.

Behavioural Characteristics

The selected variables enabled the study to examine how different workplace arrangements influence employee performance, well-being, and overall work experiences.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Distribution of Respondents by Work Mode

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Work Mode

Work Mode	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Work From Home (WFH)	32	49.2
Mostly Office	20	30.8
Hybrid	13	20.0
Total	65	100.0

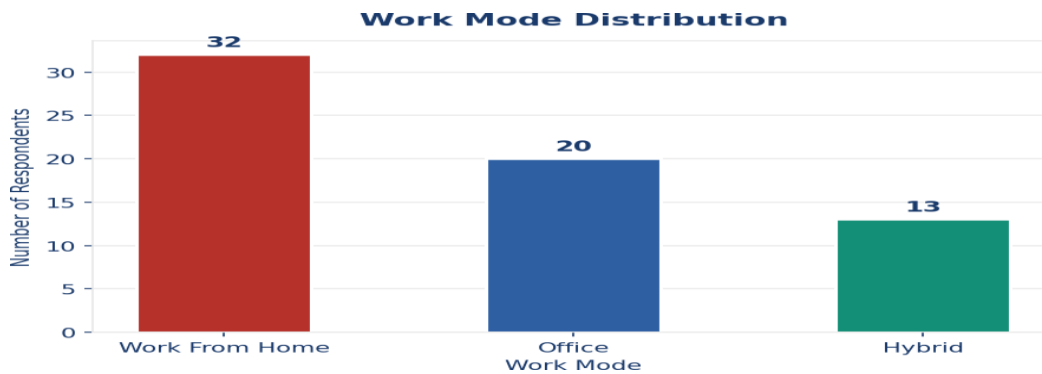


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Work Mode

Analysis

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that nearly half of the respondents (49.2%) work primarily from home. Office-based workers account for 30.8% of the sample, while hybrid workers represent 20.0%. The distribution indicates that remote work remains the most common work arrangement among the respondents. The findings suggest that flexible work arrangements have become widely accepted. The dominance of work-from-home respondents reflects the growing relevance of remote working practices in modern organizations and educational settings.

5.2 Working Hours Distribution Across Respondents

Table 2: Daily Working Hours of Respondents

Working Hours per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 Hours	13	20.0
6–8 Hours	24	36.9
8–10 Hours	24	36.9
More than 10 Hours	4	6.2
Total	65	100.0

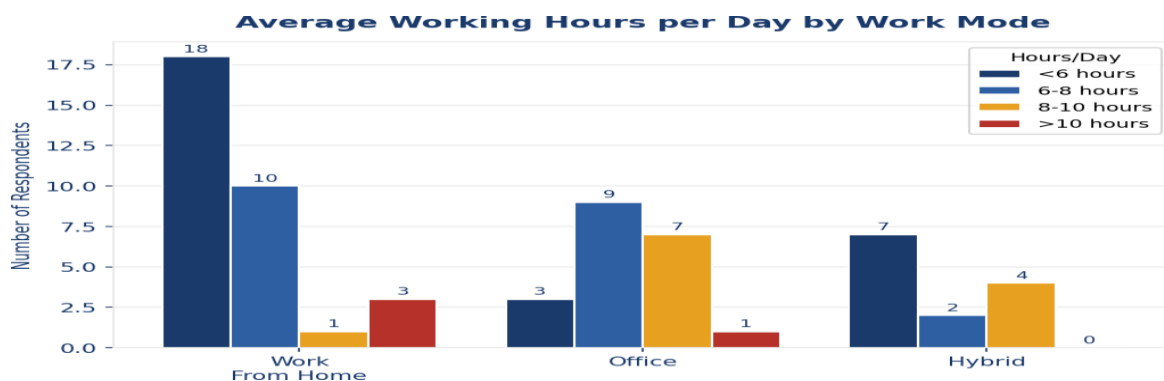


Figure 2: Daily Working Hours Distribution

Analysis

Table 2 and Figure 2 represent that most respondents work between 6–10 hours per day, accounting for approximately 73.8% of the total sample. Only a small proportion of respondents (6.2%) reported working more than 10 hours daily. The results indicate that standard work schedules remain dominant among respondents. Excessively long working hours are relatively uncommon, suggesting that most participants maintain manageable work durations.

5.3 Distribution of Job Roles

Table 3: Respondents by Job Role

Job Role	Number of Respondents
Students	37
Executives	7
Teachers	8
Managers	5
Others	8
Total	65

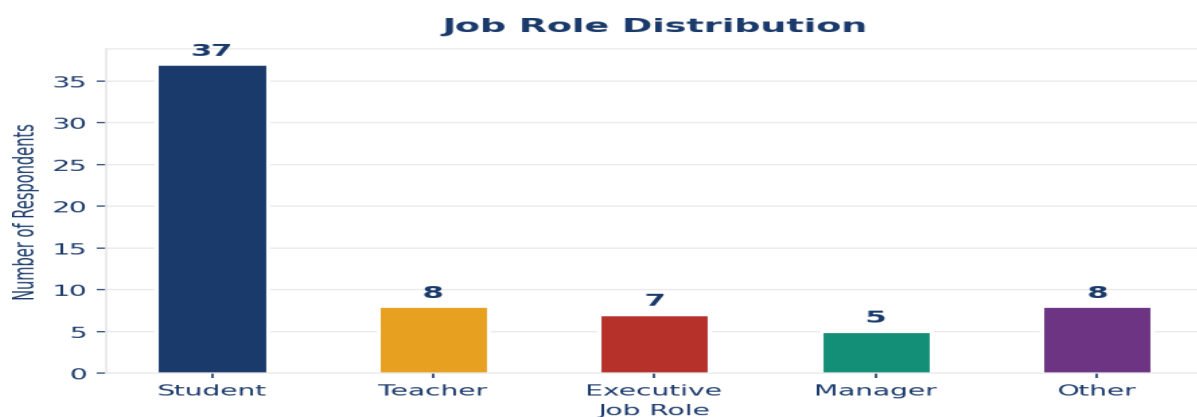


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents by Job Role

Analysis

Table 3 and Figure 3 represents that students constitute the largest group in the study, accounting for more than half of the respondents. Teachers, executives, managers, and other professionals collectively represent the remaining sample. The findings indicate that the study captures perspectives from diverse occupational backgrounds. The strong representation of students reflects the increasing relevance of flexible work and learning environments among younger populations.

5.4 Mental Exhaustion After Work

Table 4: Mental Exhaustion Frequency by Job Role

Exhaustion Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	13	20.0
Often	10	15.4
Sometimes	26	40.0

Rarely	16	24.6
Total	65	100.0

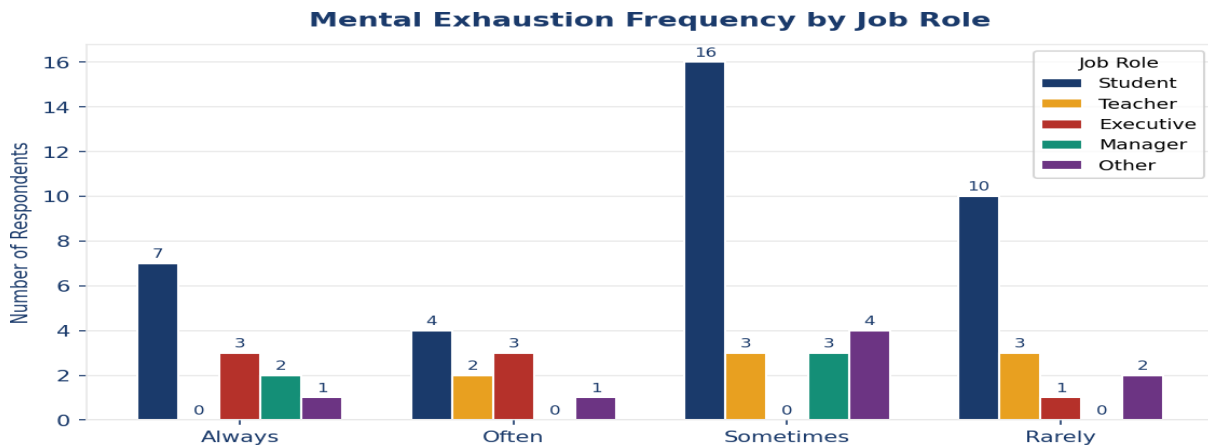


Figure 4: Mental Exhaustion Frequency by Job Role

Analysis

Table 4 and Figure 4 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (40.0%) reported experiencing mental exhaustion sometimes. Twenty percent indicated that they always experience exhaustion after work, while approximately one-fourth reported rarely feeling mentally exhausted. Mental fatigue is a common workplace issue across occupational groups. Although severe exhaustion affects a minority of respondents, a significant proportion experiences periodic mental strain, highlighting the importance of work-life balance and stress management strategies.

5.5 Productivity Score Analysis by Work Mode

Table 5: Productivity Scores by Work Mode

Work Mode	Number of Respondents (N)	Productivity Sum	Mean Productivity Score
Work From Home	32	98	3.06 / 5.0
Mostly Office	20	76	3.80 / 5.0
Hybrid	13	42	3.23 / 5.0

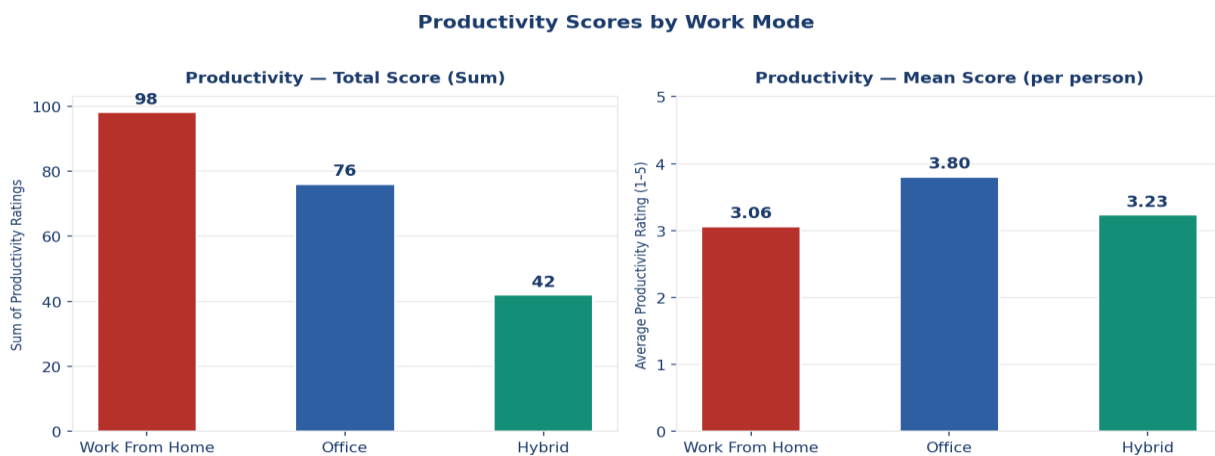


Figure 5: Productivity Scores – Sum vs Mean by Work Mode

Analysis

Table 5 and Figure 5 illustrate that office workers achieved the highest mean productivity score (3.80/5.0), followed by hybrid workers (3.23/5.0). Although work-from-home respondents recorded the highest aggregate productivity score, this result is influenced by their larger sample size. When adjusted for the number of respondents, office-based work demonstrates superior productivity performance. The findings suggest that structured office environments may support concentration, collaboration, and task completion more effectively than remote or hybrid arrangements

5.6 Stress Score Analysis by Work Mode

Table 6: Stress Scores by Work Mode

Work Mode	Number of Respondents (N)	Stress Sum	Mean Stress Score
Work From Home	32	201	6.28 / 10.0
Mostly Office	20	110	5.50 / 10.0
Hybrid	13	83	6.38 / 10.0

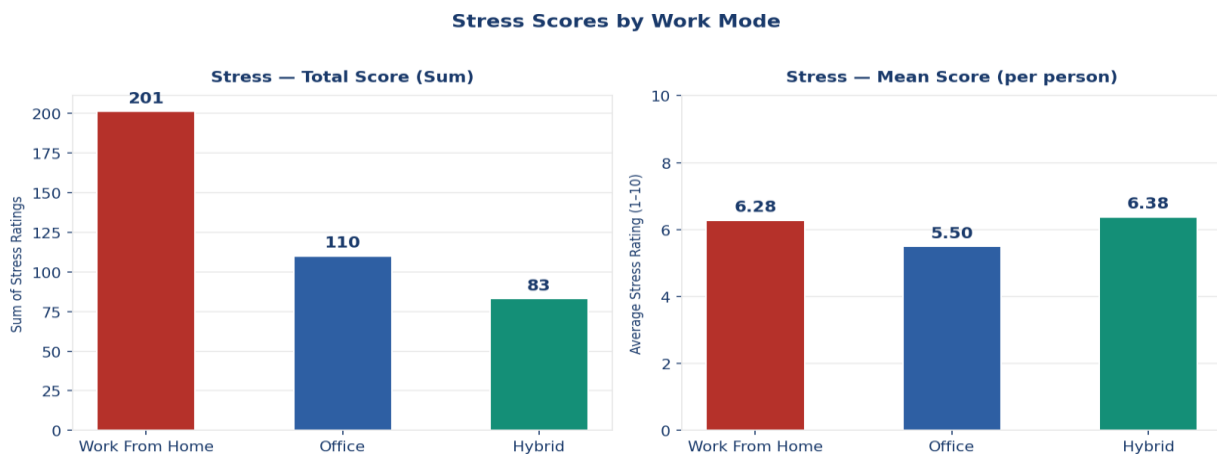


Figure 6: Stress Scores – Sum vs Mean by Work Mode

Analysis

Table 6 and Figure 6 demonstrate that hybrid workers reported the highest mean stress score (6.38/10.0), followed closely by work-from-home employees (6.28/10.0). Office workers exhibited the lowest average stress level (5.50/10.0). The findings challenge the common assumption that hybrid work automatically reduces stress. Managing both home and office responsibilities may create unique pressures that contribute to higher stress levels among hybrid workers.

5.7 Satisfaction and Work Mode Preference

Table 7: Mean Satisfaction Score by Work Mode

Work Mode	Mean Satisfaction Score
Work From Home	3.28 / 5.0
Mostly Office	3.75 / 5.0
Hybrid	3.54 / 5.0

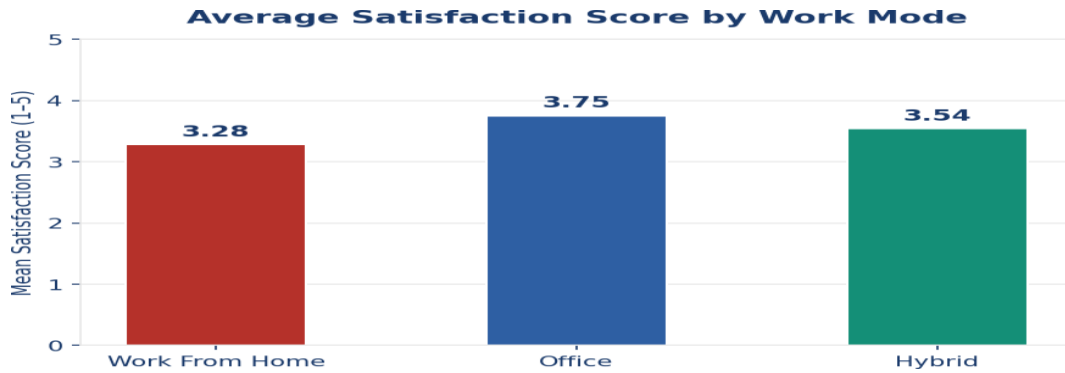


Figure 7: Mean Satisfaction Score by Work Mode

Analysis

Table 7 and Figure 7 show that office workers recorded the highest satisfaction score (3.75/5.0), while work-from-home respondents reported the lowest satisfaction level (3.28/5.0). Hybrid workers demonstrated moderate satisfaction. The results indicate that office-based work may provide stronger organizational support, social interaction, and professional engagement, contributing to higher employee satisfaction.

5.8 Preference for Switching Work Mode

Table 8: Respondents’ Preference for Switching Work Mode

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	36.9
Not Sure	21	32.3
No	20	30.8
Total	65	100.0

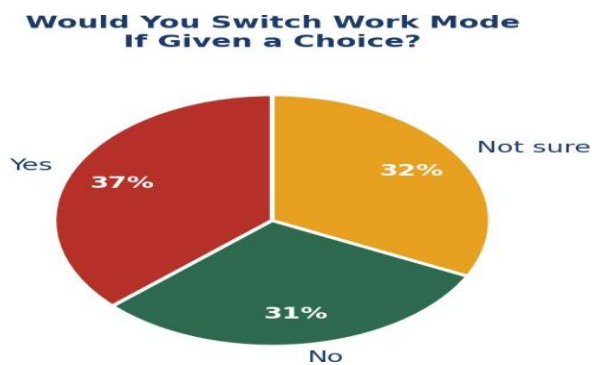


Figure 8: Work Mode Switching Preference

Analysis

Table 8 and Figure 8 project that the largest proportion of respondents (36.9%) expressed willingness to switch their current work mode. Approximately one-third remained uncertain, while 30.8% preferred to retain their existing work arrangement. The findings suggest that many individuals continue to evaluate alternative work arrangements in search of improved productivity, flexibility, and well-being. The substantial proportion of uncertain respondents reflects the evolving nature of workplace preferences.

5.9 Comprehensive Comparison of Work Modes

Table 9: Comparative Analysis of Work Modes

Metric	Work From Home (n=32)	Office (n=20)	Hybrid (n=13)
Productivity Sum	98	76	42
Productivity Mean	3.06/5.0	3.80/5.0	3.23/5.0
Stress Sum	201	110	83
Stress Mean	6.28/10.0	5.50/10.0	6.38/10.0
Satisfaction Mean	3.28/5.0	3.75/5.0	3.54/5.0
Organizational Support Mean	3.09/5.0	3.75/5.0	3.23/5.0
Respondents Working >10 Hours	3	1	0

Analysis

Table 9 show that the comparative analysis reveals significant differences among work arrangements. Office workers demonstrate the highest productivity, satisfaction, and organizational support scores while maintaining the lowest stress levels. Hybrid workers report moderate productivity and satisfaction but experience the highest stress. Work-from-home respondents show high aggregate productivity due to larger participation but lower per-person performance indicators. Among the three work arrangements, office-based work provides the most balanced outcome in terms of productivity, stress management, and employee satisfaction. Hybrid work offers flexibility but introduces additional stress factors, whereas remote work remains attractive due to convenience but may require stronger organizational support systems to improve overall effectiveness.

6. Major Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are summarized below:

- I. Work-from-home (WFH) respondents constitute the largest group in the study, accounting for 49.2% of the total sample, followed by office workers (30.8%) and hybrid workers (20.0%).
- II. Most respondents work between 6–10 hours per day, representing approximately 73.8% of the total sample.
- III. Students form the largest occupational category among respondents, indicating a strong representation of younger participants and individuals involved in flexible work or learning environments.
- IV. Mental exhaustion is a common experience among respondents, with 40.0% reporting that they sometimes feel mentally exhausted after work and 20.0% reporting that they always experience exhaustion.
- V. Office workers achieve the highest mean productivity score (3.80/5.0), outperforming both hybrid workers (3.23/5.0) and work-from-home respondents (3.06/5.0).
- VI. Although work-from-home respondents report the highest aggregate productivity score, this outcome is largely influenced by the larger sample size rather than higher individual productivity.

- VII. Hybrid workers report the highest mean stress level (6.38/10.0), followed closely by work-from-home employees (6.28/10.0).
- VIII. Office workers demonstrate the lowest average stress score (5.50/10.0), indicating a comparatively healthier balance between performance and pressure.
- IX. Employee satisfaction is highest among office workers (3.75/5.0), followed by hybrid workers (3.54/5.0), while work-from-home respondents report the lowest satisfaction score (3.28/5.0).
- X. Organizational support appears strongest in office-based environments, which may contribute to higher satisfaction and productivity levels.
- XI. More than one-third of respondents (36.9%) express willingness to switch their current work mode, indicating ongoing evaluation of alternative workplace arrangements.
- XII. Hybrid work offers flexibility but does not necessarily reduce stress, suggesting that balancing home and office responsibilities can create additional challenges.
- XIII. Overall, office-based work provides the most favorable combination of productivity, satisfaction, and stress management among the three work arrangements studied.

7. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of work and the effectiveness of different workplace arrangements. The results reveal that productivity and employee well-being are influenced not only by the location of work but also by organizational support, work structure, and individual circumstances.

One of the most significant findings is that office-based employees demonstrate the highest average productivity. This result contrasts with the common assumption that remote work automatically leads to greater efficiency. The structured nature of office environments, immediate access to colleagues and supervisors, and clearer separation between personal and professional responsibilities may contribute to improved performance.

The study also highlights the complex relationship between flexibility and stress. While hybrid work is often promoted as an ideal balance between office and remote work, respondents in this category reported the highest average stress levels. Managing responsibilities across multiple work environments may create uncertainty, scheduling difficulties, and additional psychological pressure.

Work-from-home respondents experienced moderate stress levels and the lowest satisfaction scores despite representing the largest group in the study. Although remote work offers flexibility and eliminates commuting time, challenges such as social isolation, communication barriers, and difficulty maintaining work-life boundaries may negatively affect employee experiences.

Another important observation is the prevalence of mental exhaustion among respondents. The majority reported experiencing exhaustion either sometimes or frequently, emphasizing the growing importance of employee well-being in modern workplace management. Organizations must therefore consider mental health initiatives alongside productivity enhancement strategies.

The findings also suggest that organizational support plays a critical role in determining employee outcomes. Office workers reported the highest satisfaction and organizational

support scores, indicating that effective communication, supervision, and workplace engagement contribute positively to employee experiences.

Overall, the results demonstrate that no single work arrangement is universally superior. The effectiveness of remote, office, and hybrid work models depends on job requirements, employee preferences, organizational culture, and support mechanisms. Consequently, organizations should adopt flexible and evidence-based approaches when designing future workplace policies.

8. Conclusion

The present study examined productivity, stress, satisfaction, and work preferences across remote, office-based, and hybrid work models using primary data collected from 65 respondents. The findings provide important insights into the future of work and the effectiveness of flexible workplace arrangements.

The analysis reveals that office-based employees achieve the highest average productivity and satisfaction while reporting the lowest stress levels. Although work-from-home arrangements offer flexibility and convenience, they do not necessarily result in higher individual productivity or satisfaction. Similarly, hybrid work provides a balanced structure but may introduce unique challenges that contribute to increased stress.

The study demonstrates that workplace effectiveness is influenced by multiple factors, including organizational support, work structure, communication systems, and employee well-being. While flexible work arrangements continue to gain popularity, organizations must carefully evaluate their implementation to ensure positive outcomes for both employees and employers.

In conclusion, the future of work is likely to involve a combination of remote, office, and hybrid models. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, organizations should design work arrangements that align with job requirements, employee preferences, and organizational objectives. Such strategies can contribute to improved productivity, reduced stress, and enhanced employee satisfaction in the evolving workplace environment.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- I. Organizations should assess job roles carefully before determining the most appropriate work arrangement.
- II. Employers should strengthen organizational support systems for remote and hybrid workers through regular communication, performance feedback, and technical assistance.
- III. Mental health and stress management programs should be incorporated into workplace policies to address employee exhaustion and psychological well-being.
- IV. Hybrid work schedules should be designed strategically to minimize stress associated with balancing multiple work environments.
- V. Organizations should provide training on time management, digital collaboration, and work-life balance for employees working remotely.

- VI. Managers should establish clear performance expectations and communication channels to enhance productivity across all work arrangements.
- VII. Employee satisfaction surveys should be conducted regularly to monitor workplace experiences and identify areas requiring improvement.
- VIII. Flexible work policies should be tailored to organizational objectives while considering employee preferences and occupational requirements.
- IX. Educational institutions and organizations should collaborate to prepare future professionals for diverse workplace environments.
- X. Future workplace strategies should focus on balancing productivity, flexibility, employee well-being, and organizational effectiveness.

10. Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings:

- I. The sample size is limited to 65 respondents, which may affect the generalizability of the results.
- II. The study relies on convenience sampling, which may introduce sampling bias.
- III. Data were collected from respondents representing specific professional and educational backgrounds and may not fully represent all workforce segments.
- IV. The research is based on self-reported responses, making it susceptible to respondent bias and subjective perceptions.
- V. The study focuses primarily on productivity, stress, and satisfaction and does not examine all factors influencing workplace effectiveness.
- VI. Geographic diversity among respondents was limited, restricting broader national-level generalizations.
- VII. Advanced statistical methods were not employed; therefore, causal relationships between variables cannot be conclusively established.
- VIII. The cross-sectional nature of the study captures perceptions at a single point in time and may not reflect long-term workplace trends.

11. Future Scope of the Study

The findings of the study provide several opportunities for future research.

- I. Future studies may involve larger and more geographically diverse samples representing different regions, industries, and demographic groups.
- II. Comparative studies across specific sectors such as Information Technology, Healthcare, Education, Banking, and Manufacturing can provide industry-specific insights.
- III. Researchers may employ advanced statistical techniques such as regression analysis, factor analysis, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to strengthen analytical accuracy.

- IV. Longitudinal studies tracking respondents over extended periods can help examine changes in productivity, stress, and satisfaction over time.
- V. Future research may investigate the influence of organizational culture, leadership style, and management practices on workplace outcomes.
- VI. Studies may explore additional variables such as employee engagement, work-life balance, career development, technological readiness, and digital competency.
- VII. Comparative international studies can provide a broader understanding of how cultural and economic factors influence workplace preferences.
- VIII. Future investigations may analyze the impact of artificial intelligence, automation, and emerging workplace technologies on remote and hybrid work effectiveness.
- IX. Research can examine differences in workplace outcomes based on age, gender, seniority, and occupational categories.
- X. Future studies may develop predictive models for identifying the most effective work arrangement based on employee and organizational characteristics.

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