Exploring the nexus of social support, work–life balance and life satisfaction in hybrid work scenario in learning organizations

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the nexus of social support (SS), work–life balance (WLB) and satisfaction with life (SWL) in hybrid work (HW) scenario in learning organizations.

Design/methodology/approach – The data were collected via questionnaire method from 531 employees working in learning organizations (IT/ITES sector) in India. The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression.

Findings – The findings of the study showed that HW was positively related to SS dimensions, WLB and SWL. Further, the study established the mediating role of SS between HW and WLB as well as WLB as a mediator between HW-SWL relationships.

Research limitations/implications – This study has certain limitations owing to the cross-sectional nature of the data and the specific sector under study. The findings have significant implications for policy making to determine the conditions under which both employees and organizations can benefit from HW. Further, the study has implications for uncertain and volatile environments as had been created by COVID-19 pandemic, where HW arrangements may not be a choice but become necessity.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the conservation of resources theory. It identifies the importance of true autonomy and flexibility for employees.

Keywords COR theory, Hybrid work, IT/ITES, Learning, Satisfaction with life, Social support, Work–life balance

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The world witnessed a massive disruption owing to COVID-19 pandemic, and organizations across the globe were trying to cope up with the situation at hand (Baert, Lippens, Moens, Weytjens, & Sterkens, 2020). The year 2020 saw a resurge in the remote work practices, which later adapted to hybrid work (HW) culture in most organizations worldwide. The HW model came as the most popular solution to the ongoing global pandemic to meet the grappling needs of organizations [Built in, 2022 (report)]. One sector that has significantly embraced HW during COVID-19 is information technology/information technology-enabled services (IT/ITES) sector where hybrid work arrangements were normalized and jobs become boundless with respect to both space and time (Orth & Schuldis, 2021; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Further, the IT/ITES sector exhibits the characteristics of a learning organization (LO) owing to its knowledge-intensive and technology-driven nature of work.
(Chawla & Joshi, 2011). The adoption of hybrid mode of working in these organizations enabled them to maintain the crucial balance between addressing the overall needs of the business while allowing flexibility and autonomy to the employees at the same time (Haneberg, 2020).

Even after the dilution of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, a significant number of LOs have preferred to move towards HW arrangements that is flexible and incorporates the practicality of options between work from home (WFH) and office spaces (Kane, Nanda, Phillips, & Copulsky, 2021). As per the report titled “Shaping the Future of Work in Indian Tech Industry” by NASSCOM and BCG (2022), more than 80% of the IT organizations and the Gulf corporation companies will be working in the hybrid model that is a combination of onsite and remote work model in the post-pandemic times. Experts also argue that the future workplace model would be based on innovative solutions for workspace that is non-binary, and numerous variations across the continuum are likely to be explored.

While the world is moving toward hybrid model of work, researchers across the world have identified the benefits and challenges associated with this model (Yang, Kim, & Hong, 2021). The challenges of hybrid model of work are many. As per the research report, namely, “Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work” provided in cooperation with Bruegel, Brussels, HWspace models face a lot of challenges, which are in terms of byte, brick and behavior, i.e. owing to remote work culture (Grzegorczyk, Mariniello, Nurski, & Schraepen, 2021). Further, the employees face digital exhaustion, stress and ultimate burnout owing to the spill over of work into their personal life (Gratton, 2021). At the organizational level, challenges include maintaining collaboration communication, and company’s culture in a distributed workforce, while also ensuring that employees maintain a healthy work–life balance (WLB) and digital well-being (Khatri, Raina, Dutta, Pahwa, & Kumari, 2021).

On the other hand, several reports have highlighted how the hybrid model of work has led to higher WLB and satisfaction for certain employees. As per a survey by the NASSCOM (2022) and job portal, 70% of the IT companies are working with hybrid models that resulted in 66% of workforce feeling more satisfied with remote work. Similarly, based on an internal survey done at Bosch, it was discovered that 81% of employees feel connected in a WFH scenario. Further, 83% felt comfortable while working in a hybrid mode, and 86% of the employees felt satisfied with the support they were receiving from their organization (Suresh B R, Senior VP and Country Head – HR, Bosch India; May 2022). Consequently, Bosch, India has implemented a HW model also known as “Smart work,” which acts as a digital transformation lever for Bosch. The hybrid and remote work models support flexibility along with inclusion and diversity at workplace by promoting gender equality and in turn encouraging participation from women and other caregivers, thus bringing in broader talent pool (Orel, 2019).

In lieu of the aforesaid challenges and benefits associated with HW in LOs, there is a need to understand what kind of resources can explain the varying impact of the HW on the satisfaction with life (SWL) of employees working in hybrid mode in LOs. The current study uses the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) to identify two such resources – namely, social support (SS) and WLB. Essentially, the paper argues that SS from family and co-workers helps in mitigating the impact of psychological stress, created due to demands of the HW scenario, on the mental, physical and professional well-being of employees. The availability of SS enables the HW employees to experience WLB (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2012), thus conserving the resources challenged due to the specific demands of the HW model in LOs. Further, the paper argues that enhanced WLB mediates the impact of HW on SWL of employees in HW scenarios.
Thus, hybrid model of work is a double-edged sword, and while the corporate world has started to embrace the new concept of HW, it has become imperative to explore SS and WLB as job resources that can impact employee’s SWL in LOs. The current study addresses this important gap in literature by exploring the mediating variables between HW and SWL in LOs. The research questions that the study explores are as follows.

Q1. Does SS mediate the positive impact of HW on WLB?
Q2. Does WLB mediate the positive impact of HW on SWL?

The current research identifies the importance of true autonomy and flexibility for employees’ WLB and SWL. The current research specifically focuses on the positive side of hybrid work scenario in LOs, operationalized as IT/ITES organizations in the current study.

**Literature review**
This section gives a transpiring overview of the existing knowledge base on the variables under study.

*Learning organizations: an IT/ITES context*
Learning in a continuous mode enables employees to acquire new skills (London and Smither, 1999). In 1990, Senge defined, a “learning organization (LO) is that whose employees focus to continuously enhance their capacity to create knowledge.” Lewis (2002) explained LO as “an organization that regularly creates, disseminates, and integrates knowledge, transforms itself and modifies its action based on new knowledge, perceptions and experience in order to meet its strategic objectives.” An LO is one that has acquired “systems thinking” by mastering the four disciplines of “shared values,” “personal mastery,” “mental models” and “team learning” (Senge, 1990). Further, Serrat (2017) added that “organization,” “people,” “knowledge” and “technology” are the underlying pillars of a LO. In an LO, knowledge is anticipated to exist in both individual minds and the collective memory of the organization that act as promoter of creative ideas and innovation (McElroy, 2000). As highlighted by Oldham & Cummings (1996), the continuous learning of employees is subject to the facilitative environment as they acquire skills, knowledge and abilities throughout their career.

The rapid transition in the IT/ITES has led to new avenues owing to the shift from their conventional way of working to more streamlined operations while maintaining efficiency and effectiveness (Tiwari & Lenka, 2020). IT/ITES is a knowledge-intensive and technology-driven industry that is one of the crucial pillars of any LO (Chawla & Joshi, 2011). The empirical study by Chawla and Joshi (2011) established that IT/ITES industry fared maximum on various dimensions of the LO. Thus, the current study has used IT/ITES organizations as representing LOs.

*Hybrid work*
Hybrid workspaces are not simply relocated or dislocated, but multiply located (Halford, 2005). COVID-19 pandemic has led many organizations to adopt more flexible model of work in terms of both space and time. The flexible work arrangements can be arranged into telecommuting as “work performed remotely for the part-time of the full-time work arrangement,” condensed workweeks where “an individual is flexibly arranging his/her full-time work hours freely” and finally job sharing is where “two or more workers are doing labour for the same full-time position” (Radonić, Vukmirović, & Milosavljević, 2021). Thus,
Hybrid model of work has resulted in disbanding of functional barriers resulting in a transition from hierarchical and controlled organization to a networked organization, while adapting to WFH and remote working arrangements (Hilberath et al., 2020).

HW arrangements have been normalized and knowledge workers in IT/ITES organizations are able to make a choice regarding the time and space of their work as per their specific needs and preferences (Orth & Schuldis, 2021). In the post-pandemic times, new workspaces and flexible work time are gaining recognition due to their significant contribution to job satisfaction and high performance for employees (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020), particularly in IT/ITES organizations that contribute to knowledge economy. HW has essentially led to democratization and flexibility of highly specialized work that has become digitized and virtualized through the use of mobile, internet and cutting-edge technologies. Consequently, careers in IT/ITES organizations are becoming increasingly boundless (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), and occupational success can be achieved by working essentially from anywhere (Feldman & Ng, 2007).

HW arrangements have made it possible for the LOs to find the balance between providing the flexibility that employees demand and satisfactorily address the overall needs of the business at the same time (Haneberg, 2020). Thus, HW arrangements may potentially create a long-term and sustainable approach to work that works for both the employees as well as the organizations.

Hybrid work, social support, work–life balance and satisfaction with life

HW arrangements have been shown to have several benefits, including increased productivity for employees, liberty to manage time flexibly and WLB (Hayman, 2009). Hybrid and flexible work arrangements offer flexibility in terms of space and time for employees to engage in their job-related assignments (Seufert, Guggemos, & Sailer, 2021). This type of arrangement also looks into the changes in the organizational policy and practices (Klerk, Joubert, & Mosca, 2021). Several recent research on WFH arrangements have shown that these work arrangements provide higher control over the work setting, better satisfaction, more privacy and ability to engage in concentrated effort resulting in higher productivity rates (Marzan, Callinan, Livingston, Leggat, & Jiang, 2022). Thus, in post-pandemic period, several employees are likely to prefer HW over traditional work particularly those who had been working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced the substantial benefits (Sailer, Schultz-Pernice, & Fischer, 2021). HW can lead to reduced informal communication among flexible workers (Orel, 2019) and can result in professional isolation. Several adverse outcomes associated with professional isolation have been reported by Golden, Veiga, & Dino (2008) such as reduced organizational belonging and increase dissatisfaction and alienation from co-workers, which affects the productivity and creativity of employees. Moreover, when HW involves employees to WFH, infrastructural inadequacy at home environment (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003) and blurring of boundary between employees personal and professional life (Standen, Daniels, & Lamond, 1999) may undermine some of the benefits associated with HW.

In the context of HW, SS and WLB can serve as job resources that can help to mitigate employee stress and promote their well-being while at work (Giauque & Varone, 2019). Hybrid workers attempt to find a better balance between job assignments and family commitments by seeking better conditions both at work and home that (Skountridaki, Marks, & Mallett, 2021). In a HW scenario, working parents perceive HW models, i.e. “coworking spaces” as the best places to work as they feel that they can build stable social networks in such spaces (Marchegiani & Arcese, 2018). Individual users who flexibly work or work from the home scenario while raising children, use co-working facilities to achieve
WLB, and overcome conflicts between work and home in a flat world where geographical dependency is not a necessity (Orel, 2019).

**H1.** HW is positively associated with SS in LOs.

**Hybrid work and work-life balance**

The organizations opted for sustaining organizational activities and other mechanisms to reduce the occurrence of employees within work environments and thus managing the spread of COVID-19 virus and therefore opting for remote arrangements [International Labour Organization, 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 2020; Verma, Venkatesan, Kumar, & Verma, 2022]. The business is looking toward hybrid models of work to cope up with covid disruptions. Various researchers (Kniffin et al., 2021; Ratten, 2020) reflected about accommodating the numerous exigencies to deal with the COVID-19 scenario by making changes in the labor market. In the post-pandemic scenario and therefore recalling the pre-pandemic times, WFH was deemed as an opportunity for some employees, which became unforeseen catalyst for remote work and forced a reconsideration of work. Feeney and Stritch (2019) established that a friendly/flexible workplace, i.e. offering flexible hours or remote work helps achieving a harmonious balance between personal and work–life (i.e. a good WLB), which would lead to unleashing the employee’s full potential. In addition to this, Palumbo (2020) demonstrated that remote work in the COVID-19 times qualified for work-related fatigue/weariness and individuals felt sandwiched between work as well as non-work life while juggling with day-to-day activities that too from their homes. Budiman, Hidayat & Basbeth (2022) argued that working in a hybrid environment promotes job satisfaction, thus resulting in better WLB. Based on this premise, we hypothesize the following:

**H2.** HW is positively associated with WLB in LOs.

**Hybrid work and satisfaction with life**

Few researchers have identified that HW leads to better lifestyle, more time for friends, family, pets and their personal pursuits, resulting in more flexibility, job satisfaction, productivity, quality of work and ultimately leading to SWL (Singh et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2020; Schawbel, 2021; Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020). Gorjifard and Crawford (2021) highlighted that hybrid style of working is a combination of WFH or remote work and office-based work, which often results in lowered life satisfaction. They suggested that WFH has a lot of personal cost involved owing to constant demand of up/re-skilling due to the technological advancements. The inconsistency in measurement of job-related outcomes and productivity has resulted in work–life imbalances, thus affecting the individual life satisfaction. Whereas, Demirbağ and Demirbağ (2022) and Kondratowicz et al. (2021) established that remote work adds to increased life satisfaction along with family satisfaction and better sleep quality. Therefore, keeping the aforesaid in mind, we hypothesize the following:

**H3.** HW is positively associated with SWL in LOs.

**Mediating role of social support dimensions between hybrid work and work–life balance**

Previous research in the organizational context have highlighted the importance of SS at Work (Ferguson et al., 2012). Studies have explored SS with other variables such as
developmental outcomes (Pepin & Banyard, 2006), stress (Vollmann, Antoniw, Hartung, & Renner, 2011), life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Lu et al., 2018), optimism (Karademas, 2006; Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019a, 2019b), sustainability of organization (Slavković, Sretenović, & Bugarić, 2021) and WLB (Oludayo & Ononjio, 2020) and others. Ruvalcaba-Romero, Fernández-Berrocal, Salazar-Estrada & Gallegos-Guajardo (2017) established that SS tends to improvise the interpersonal relations, positive emotions and leads to better life satisfaction. Ferguson et al. (2012) also reflected that SS is an instrument for employees to achieve a better WLB. Further, the constant need of negotiating between the role-related expectations suggests that SS is one of the crucial contributors in attaining work–family balance.

Hobfoll et al. (2018) elucidated that the COR theory provides a substantial base to support that employees proactively look to “protect, preserve, and rebuild resources” (i.e. the state or energy they value). Further, when individuals accept SS from partners and colleagues at work, they gain resources that assist them in balancing the work and home demands, in turn increasing both work and life satisfaction. As suggested by Hobfoll (2011), the “resources do not exist individually but travel in packs, or caravans, for both individuals and organizations.” Thus, based on the above premise, the authors hypothesize the following:

\[ H4. \] SS mediates the relationship between HW and WLB in LOs.

**Mediating role of work–life balance between hybrid work and satisfaction with life**

Surprisingly, the existing literature base does not contain any clear definition the concept “work-life balance” and provides an array of definitions that populates the existing knowledge base on the concept with respect to multiple roles (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). As per Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003), work–family balance reflects “an individual’s orientation across different life roles, an inter-role phenomenon.” In this research, it is defined as the “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Numerous studies explored the role of WLB in association with WFH (Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, & Walters, 2002), life satisfaction (Cain, Busser, & Kang, 2018), telecommuting and flexibility (Lee & Joseph Sirgy, 2019), well-being (Kashyap, Joseph, & Deshmukh, 2016), satisfaction (Rani & Mariappan, 2011) and others. Keeping the above in mind, the literature points out a dearth in exploring the mediating role of WLB (Santos & Caballero, 2019), and therefore, the authors formulate the following hypothesis:

\[ H5. \] WLB mediates the relationship between HW and SWL in LOs.

Based on the above literature, Figure 1 shows the proposed research model of this study.

**Theoretical background: conservation of resources theory**

The central tenet of the COR theory is stress, which sheds light on the primal nature of human being. It was highlighted that “bodily and psychological stress reactions are based on an inborn survival response that mobilizes the person to take action to regain the lost or reduced resources” (Hobfoll, 1989). Stress is considered as the outcome of loss of resources not in direct harm to the individual (Cole, Bernerth, Walter, & Holt, 2010). The basic assumption of the COR theory is that each individual has some resources that they want to conserve or protect and attain new resources (Hobfoll, 1989). As postulated by Hobfoll (2002), resources are recognized as “something that is valued in itself, or which acts as a means to achieve important goals.”
The COR theory suggests that essentially, there are four resources that explain stress, namely, psychological characteristics (such as optimism, positive attitude, learning orientations, etc.), personal characteristics (such as competency or skills, knowledgebase, self-belief, etc.), SS (i.e. support from friends, family, peers, etc.) and conditions (such as technology enabled or not, married or not, having a job or not, etc.). It also sheds light on certain “energies” (i.e. having money or being well rested or availability time) that boost an individual’s accessibility to resources as an incidental resource that might be reducing in the advent of stressful events. In 2001, Hobfoll (2001) acknowledged a varied degree of SS resources from both the family and work domains that an individual strives to accrue, such as “support from co-workers” and “understanding from my employer/boss” along with family-based resources, including “help with tasks at home” and “intimacy with spouse or partner.”

In addition, HW, which is a combination of remote work and WFH scenario, is determined by the association between the resource-requirement and work performance, affecting the overall employee involvement. The contingencies of HW put additional stress on the employees, and the presence of SS helps in mobilizing the reduced or lost resources to replenish the same. Work resources are the individual, organizational and social attributes of a work setting that help to accomplish the set goals. This research drew on the COR theory, to formulate the various hypotheses. Specifically, we focused on the HW, SS and personal aspects such as SWL and WLB (as an individual finds these variables to be personally important in his or her life), which helps in mitigating the psychological stress being experienced owing to the job demands, leading an individual being caught up in “resource loss spiral.”

**Method and participants**

LO is defined as “a group of people continuously enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create” (Senge, 1990). In the current study, the participants were full-time employees working in the IT/ITES sector in the North Indian region. The IT/ITES sector persistently endures technological advancements with reengineering and advanced IT systems, endures continual operational restructuring process developments and mechanisms to meet the changing requirements of different clients throughout the globe (Alawadhi & Mendonca, 2017). In addition, IT/ITES is a knowledge-intensive, technology-driven industry that is one of the crucial pillars of any LO (Chawla & Joshi, 2011). This research collected data from 15 firms by contacting the human resource professionals. The firms were selected via random method and were listed on “India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) – a trust established by the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India” (IBEF, 2019). These organizations were having a turnover of

![Proposed model](image-url)
INR500 crore and above, with a minimum employee strength of 1,000. More than 30 organizations met the criteria. These organizations cover the entire gamut of operations that exploit IT for improving the efficiency of an organization. They provide services like revenue claims processing, legal databases, content development, payrolls, logistics management, geographical information system (GIS), HR services, web services, call center services, etc. Further, the HRs were contacted as well as informed about the data collection technique, and the cover letter for the same was shared stating the objectives of the study and the confidentiality as well as anonymity of the participants. Also, it was emphasized in the letter that the participation is completely voluntary. The guidelines to fill the survey were enclosed wherein it was highlighted that:

Please take several minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; so, your objectivity and honesty is highly solicited. All responses are strictly anonymous and will be only reported in aggregate. Moreover, the researcher has no means whatsoever to identify any of the respondents. Please also remember that participation in filling up this questionnaire is voluntary, and no money will be paid.

The authors received 531 completely filled questionnaires out of a total of 650. Hence, the response rate capitulated was 68.51%. The different profiles that were considered were from different management levels such as senior-, middle- and junior-level employees such as system manager, team lead, software developer, project manager, domain unit lead and tech support representative, etc. The average age was 37.5 years ranging from 25–55 years, whereas the average work experience was 15 years ranging from 5–28 years. Additionally, the respondent sample was dominated by the males holding 65.2%, while females accounted for 34.8%. Further, the graduate employees added 47%, whereas post-graduate- and diploma-level employees were 37.5% and 15.5%. Also, the participants shared that the average number of hours worked was 8 h. In addition to this, the married participants accounted for 45.3% while the unmarried participants accounted for 54.7%.

**Measurement instruments**

*Hybrid work.* The current study used the operational mechanism of Baert et al. (2020) building upon the work of Radonić et al. (2021) to measure the positive side of HW with two sub-dimensions, namely, “flexible working hours” and “telework.” The scale consists of 11 items, and the sample items are, namely, “I experience better relationship with colleagues with telework/flexible work” and “I experience less disturbances with telework/flexible work.” The specific inquiry for each item was “To what extent do you find the following items being different than in-office/fixed working hours being different...”. The responses from the respondents were taken on a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated “strongly disagree” and 5 indicated “strongly agree.” The reliability coefficient, i.e. Cronbach’s alpha for HW, is 0.85.

*Social support.* SS was measured by considering the two subdimensions, i.e. co-worker support and partner support, as referred by Ferguson et al. (2012) while measuring the support at work and home. For co-worker support, the authors used a four-item scale developed by Haynes, Wall, Bolden, Stride & Rick (1999). The sample item for the same is “I can really count on my colleagues to help me in a crisis situation at work, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so.” Whereas, to measure the partner support, the researchers used a five-item scale as adapted by Allen, Amason & Holmes (1998). The sample item is “My partner/partner is ready to help me with a work problem whenever I need it.” Responses were taken on a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated “strongly disagree” and 5 indicated “strongly agree.” The reliability coefficient, i.e. Cronbach’s alpha, for SS is 0.89.
**Work–life balance.** WLB was measured by using a ix-item scale developed by Gröpel & Kuhl (2006), which focused on measuring the perceived sufficiency of time available for social life and work. The sample items are “In my free time, I still deal with my work duties (R)” and “I have enough time for my friends.” The reverse-coded items were re-scored before the analysis. The responses were recorded using a six-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree (6)” to “strongly disagree (1).” The reliability coefficient, i.e. Cronbach’s alpha, for WLB is 0.90.

**Satisfaction with life.** SWL was measured by using five brief items as given by Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin (1985). A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 1 signaled “strongly disagree” and 7 “strongly agree” to collect responses from the undergraduate university students. The sample item of scale is “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.” The reliability coefficient, i.e. Cronbach’s alpha, for SWL is 0.93.

**Control variables.** In 2003, Naswall & De Witte (2003) indicated that work-related attributes tend to co-vary. Therefore, in this research, few demographic variables that are related with work-related attributes were controlled statistically such as gender (0 coded as male and 1 coded as female), age (years), education (years) and duration of HW.

**Analysis and results**

**Descriptive statistics**
The data were assessed using SPSS version 25.0 to perform the preliminary analysis, and the relationship among the variables was tested using hierarchical regression technique. This study inspected the normality coefficients, i.e. skewness along with kurtosis, and the results were significant within the range of −1.96 to +1.96 in terms of standard error, as suggested by Field, Miles, & Field (2012). Moreover, the Shapiro–Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) was used as the data for any n lies between 3 ≤ n ≤ 5,000 (Razali & Wah, 2011). The tests reflected normality of data with significant p-values. The reliability and validity were tested wherein it was found that the convergent validity was satisfactory with composite reliability (CR; HW = 0.85, SS = 0.89, WLB = 0.90, SWL = 0.93) and the AVE (average variance extracted; HW = 0.75, SS = 0.74, WLB = 0.71, SWL = 0.68), reflecting that acceptability criteria were met, i.e. CR greater than 0.70 and CR greater than AVE, as suggested by given by Campbell & Fiske (1959). Similarly, the criterion for discriminant validity was also met, i.e. “AVE > MSV” and “AVE > ASV,” as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Additionally, the reliability of scales was confirmed with Cronbach’s alpha greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Table 1 depicts the mean, standard deviation and correlation between the variables.

**Measurement model**
The proposed model was tested, and the results depicted that model (T1) is a better fit as compared to the other models. Table 2 depicts the results achieved after evaluating the models with maximum-likelihood procedure by using AMOS 25. The results reflected that Model 1 (T1) has shown better goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2$/df = 1.483 [as suggested by Carmines and McIver (1981)], GFI = 0.931, TLI = 0.942, NFI = 0.915, CFI = 0.928 and RMSEA = 0.032. Additionally, the results reflected 10.45% variance, suggesting that the common-method bias was less than the threshold value, i.e. less than 25%, as specified by Williams et al. (1989).

**Hypotheses testing**
This study used hierarchical regression analysis to test the relationship between HW and SS (H1), HW and WLB (H2) and HW and SWL (H3). In this, HW was the independent variable, and
SS, WLB and SWL acted as the outcome variables. Demographic variable effect was controlled during the analysis and was entered as Block 1 in the first step. In step 2, HW was entered as Block 2. The authors repeated the above steps to assess the effect of HW on SS, WLB and SWL.

The results of analysis are depicted in Table 3. The findings reveal that HW was significantly able to predict SWL ($\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$) and SS ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$) and WLB ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$). The results reveal acceptance of H1, H2 and H3. Based on the above-mentioned results, this can be comprehended that HW contributes 47% percent variance in SWL, 31% percent in SS and 38% percent variance in WLB.

The mediating role of SS (H4) and WLB (H5) was tested. The control variables (age, gender, duration of work, experience, educational level and marital status) were entered Block 1 in Step 1. Additionally, the direct effect of HW on WLB was tested in Block 2. The results of the analysis indicated a significant and positive relationship between the two variables ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$), as shown in Table 4. Also, the indirect effect of HW on WLB via SS was tested using the hierarchical regression method, as illustrated in Table 4. The outcome reflected that HW and SS accounted for 25% variance ($R^2 = 0.25$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.23; p < 0.01$), suggesting a significant and positive influence of SS on WLB ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.01$). The results also revealed that HW still had a positive and significant relationship with WLB ($\beta = 0.36 p < 0.05$), but significantly reduced the influence, i.e. from $\beta = 0.38$ to $\beta = 0.36$ (refer to Figure 2) being consistent with a partial mediation as recommended by Baron & Kenny (1986). Also, Sobel test was conducted that supported the indirect effect

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>DoHW</th>
<th>HW</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>WLB</th>
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<td>1. Gender</td>
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<td>2. Age</td>
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<td>4. DoHW</td>
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<td>5. HW</td>
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<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. WLB</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. SWL</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Mean, SD and intercorrelation between variables

Notes: $N = 531$, DoHW = duration of HW, SS = social support, WLB = work life balance, SWL = satisfaction with life, SD = standard deviation, Edu = education

Source: Authors’ own

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. no</th>
<th>Details criteria</th>
<th>$\chi^2/df$ ($&lt;3.00$)</th>
<th>GFI $\geq 0.80$</th>
<th>NFI $\geq 0.90$</th>
<th>TLI $\geq 0.90$</th>
<th>CFI $\geq 0.90$</th>
<th>RMSEA $\leq 0.08$</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>1.483</td>
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<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.942</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>4.732</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>0.176</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>2.483</td>
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<td>0.904</td>
<td>0.967</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0.850</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.832</td>
<td>0.092</td>
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</table>

Notes: $N = 531$, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CFI = comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker–Lewis index aka NNFI, NFI = normed fit index, GFI = goodness of fit index, $\chi^2$ = chi-square, $df$ = degree of freedom, T1 = proposed model, T2 = one-factor model, T3 = common factor model and T4 = three factor model

Source: Authors’ own
[standardized indirect effect \(a \times b\) = 0.13; Sobel SE\(_a\) = 0.08; Sobel SE\(_b\) = 0.06; \(Z = 2.96; p = 0.023\); \(p < 0.05\)], as suggested by Mackinnon et al. (2002). Hence, the test confirmed that SS significantly acts as a mediating variable explaining the relationship between HW and WLB shown in Table 4 and Figure 2. Therefore, \(H4\) stands supported.

Similar procedure was applied to test the mediating role of WLB in the relationship between HW and SWL (\(H5\)). The results also revealed that HW still had a positive and significant relationship with SWL (\(\beta = 0.39\); \(p < 0.05\)), but significantly reduced the
influence, i.e. from $\beta = 0.47$ to $\beta = 0.39$ being consistent with a partial mediation, as recommended by Baron & Kenny (1986). The Sobel test confirmed that WLB acts as a significant mediator supporting the indirect effect [standardized indirect effect ($a*b$) = 0.10; Sobel $SE_a = 0.08$; Sobel $SE_b = 0.06$; $Z = 3.32$; $p = 0.01$; $p < 0.05$] for the relationship between HW and SWL. Table 5 and Figure 3 reflect the mediation analysis results.

**Discussion**

This study explored the relationship between HW, SS, WLB and SWL in LOs. Also, five hypotheses were tested that reflected there exists a relationship between the variables under study. Additionally, the findings suggested that SS and WLB act as mediators to the relationship between HW-WLB and HW-SWL, respectively, in LOs. As suggested by the existing literature, HW models have been explored previously (Evangelakos, 2020), and the current study adds to the ever-changing landscape of working landscape. The importance of SS was also highlighted in the research conducted by Oludayo & Omonijo (2020) wherein it was significantly proven that the SS is of utmost relevance in achieving WLB as the personal life of employees impacts the workplace outcomes. This research also highlighted that workplace dynamics raise inferable concerns in the environment, thereby resulting in heightened states of fatigue, workplace ambiguity, role vagueness, work overkill, more job dissatisfaction and an absence of autonomy. The current study adds to this research, by suggesting the role of SS for enhancing WLB specifically in the context of HW scenario, in the Indian IT/ITES organizations.

The results are also in line with the study conducted by Scherer (2022) that reflected the importance of HW in SWL. Further, Vyas (2022) also substantiates the results of the current study, suggesting that the HW scenario has provided flexibility to the employees and ultimately improved the productivity. The findings shed light on the need of understanding the WLB to provide meaningfully, enjoy their work as well contribute to the organization (Warhurst, Knox, & Wright, 2020). The findings are in line with the previous research (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Feeney & Stritch, 2019), which substantiates that with flexible settings/policies or flexible work hours or remote work that helps in having a better WLB. This study also highlights the importance of SS and the employees who receive and
are very satisfied with the support from their family as well as the co-workers tend to report higher WLB and SWL (Skountridaki et al., 2021). Erro-Garcés, Urien, Čyrras & Janušauskienė (2022) also reported the effect of HW in terms of telework on the well-being of the individuals via WLB in European nations in COVID-19 pandemic. The findings are in contradiction to the results of Peters and Batenburg (2015), which iterated that the management support in terms of telework/flexible work resulted in increased productivity as well as social cohesion providing an additional explanation for actualization and formalization of flexible work practices in the organizations. This may be because of the reason that though telework, or remote or flexible work was already existing, but it was not
necessitated as in the case when COVID-19 struck the entire globe. The adoption of hybrid culture signaled the adoption of formal HW policy reflecting that the organizations value and trust their employees as well as acknowledge the growing demand for time-spatial flexibility and job autonomy (Babapour Chafi, Hultberg, & Bozic Yams, 2022; Verma et al., 2022; Yap and Tng, 1990).

As formerly stated, during the lockdown, working from home, i.e. remote or telework scenario, helped organizations to maintain their business functions. Thus, HW can play an important role in the processes of continuous improvement and in increasing SWL as well as WLB as SS, digital skills, digitalization, are all relevant in the implementation of HW.

Theoretical implications
This study has several theoretical implications. First, this research contributes to the existing literature on HW, which is often considered as better learning spaces (Goodyear, 2020). As the premise of working in hybrid mode is flexibility and greater autonomy, this acts as an enabler to the productivity. The current study contributes here by elucidating the role of SS for achieving greater SWL and improving WLB for HW employees, therefore enriching the knowledge base on the mediating variables in the relationship between HW and SWL. When HW employees receive support from their peers and supervisors at work and from their family at home, they are likely to benefit from the flexibility and autonomy that is facilitated by HW arrangements. Moreover, the study also has implications for designing course curriculum for professional courses that embraces the changes in workplace dynamics owing to the hybrid workplace. It emphasizes that the specific needs of HW employees, in terms of SS (in both work and home settings), must be kept in mind by the budding managers, i.e. students of professional courses as it contributes to the overall well-being and satisfaction. Finally, the impactions of the current study are significant for IT/ITES organizations because of their unique characteristics of the use of technology and boundlessness. The findings of the study can be extended to other LOs that have similar needs as the IT/ITES organizations. However, future studies should test these results in other contexts and other countries.

Practical implications
The practitioners can draw various inferences with respect to design of HW in IT/ITES sector. Considering the need of the hour is to design HW arrangements while keeping both employee and organizational concerns in mind to make this transition successfully. The findings of this study could be useful for developing intervention programs, specially for training the adult individuals that could increase their satisfaction level in the HW scenario. Also, the study suggests that all types of organizations, whether public or private, should sensitize the employees regarding the HW scenario effectively. Conspicuously, the recent time marred by novel work requirements and relentlessly changing work procedures require employees to execute their core work roles and exhibit proactiveness in building agility owing to the HW models (Grant & Parker, 2009). Certainly, at present, when firms are witnessing difficulties due to the pandemic crisis, the most vital question is what firms can do to assuage the adverse concerns and encourage their employees to adjust and promptly perform beyond their work roles effectively. In the present era, where traditional structures and work processes have become inappropriate, modern organizations obligates effectively focus on fostering LOs to sustain their employees to willingly adapt to the muddled challenges (Malik & Garg, 2017).

From an organizational standpoint, the study also has implications for increasing participation of the organizational workforce from categories of labor such as older/retired
people, employees with young children or elderly parents who could not render their services in traditional work arrangements. The philosophy is to focus on the challenge from four different viewpoints:

1. jobs and tasks;
2. inclusion and fairness;
3. employee preferences; and
4. project and workflows.

Considering that the conventional and classic designed workspaces will continue to prevail but considering the changing needs of environment, firms will design their corporate spaces to be more open, creatively crafted, along with the inclusion of social crescendos, with flexible workspaces to encourage social interaction among the employees. Finally, the findings could help the managers to develop strategies for safeguarding the support from organization, i.e. promoting co-worker support and ultimately leading to WLB, especially in the HW scenario during contingent times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limitations and future research directions
The study has few limitations. First, the study is limited to Los, i.e. IT/ITES, only and can be investigated in other sectors BPO, airline, FMCG, etc., wherein learning and development is a crucial component. Second, the study applied the hierarchical regression technique, whereas different methods/techniques along with a comparative analysis can be used to understand the relationship between variables in a better way. Third, the data was collected from 15 firms, which can be further increased, and a cross-analysis into the findings of this study can be done by future researchers. Additionally, this research suggests further exploration with other variables such stress, job satisfaction, employee engagement, etc. to get a clear picture of the various independent variable that affects the individual’s WLB. Also, the role of sustainability, ergonomics, organization policy, etc. can also be studied in the future line of research. Finally, the researchers can investigate the applicability of other theories, which substantiates the borderless work and flexible concept of working.

Conclusion
Learning in an organization happens when the mind is optimally challenged and when the employees enjoy the cognitive peace. In the initial phase of COVID-19 pandemic, the cognitive space of both employees and employers was occupied with anxiety for the future. After the initial phase of anxiety and fear, employees soon realized that work–life was never going to be the same again. When LOs went remote, there was risk of tacit knowledge being lost. However, with the use of HW force, the organizations had opportunity to facilitate social learning from colleagues through connected communities, such that knowledge documentation and sharing takes place. The swiftness and the ease with which an employee reaches out to their colleagues depend on the SS available at workplace.

This study concludes that considering the nature of work, constant SS is required to attain WLB and life satisfaction, which would lead to sustainable performance. The study indicated that in the contingent times, the role of SS becomes more important in an employee’s life as it impacts the overall functioning as the bread winner and the caretaker of the family. Every individual strives for achieving happiness and, life satisfaction acts as one of the crucial components in gaining that; hence, the role of SS in WLB should be given due consideration, especially in changing times. When employees in hybrid workplace,
particularly LOs, gets access to tacit knowledge, not only learning becomes faster, but employees feel empowered as well.

In current times, the firms are actualizing difficulties due to the pandemic crisis and trying to assuage the adverse concerns to encourage their employees to adjust and promptly perform beyond their work roles effectively. The research contributes to the positive side of HW models that positively affect the life satisfaction and helps in harnessing WLB. Practically, the concepts of hybrid workspace or sharing co-workspace looks like the future of work, which has been tested in the global pandemic and might impact the way organizations perceive work and where work is done along with the workplace outcomes. LOs should invest in technologies that make it possible to deliver proper knowledge from the right people at the right time, irrespective of the location whether remote or physical.

References


Further reading


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