



## Remote and hybrid work models in post-pandemic organizations: A systematic review

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people work, making remote and hybrid work arrangements in organizations around the world rise. This systematic review examines 17 studies (journals/articles) that were published between the years 2018 and 2025 to understand how such work arrangements have influenced the outcomes and what factors justify their continued use in a post-pandemic environment. We conducted these studies through literature reviews based on scholarly databases, following the guidelines provided by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). One of the greatest findings in our research is that since 2020, remote and hybrid work arrangements have become increasingly common. This review seeks to address essential questions regarding the design of these work models, their implications for well-being, the challenges they raise, the modifications organizations should undertake, and the gaps requiring additional research. It provides a guide to developing sustainable hybrid work practices.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement and Productivity, Hybrid Work, Human Resource Management Practices, Post-Pandemic, Remote Work, Organizational Culture

### I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way organizations operate and how people work, leading to a rise in remote and hybrid work arrangements worldwide. What began as an emergency response to lockdowns in early 2020 quickly translated into a transformation of work arrangements. Organizations across different sectors in the world had to abandon traditional office-based models and adopt distributed, technology-enabled systems. This shift has redefined the meaning of work, organizational culture, and employee engagement in the post-pandemic era.

The growth of remote and hybrid work has grown sharply globally. Before the pandemic, less than 5% of jobs in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries offered remote options. By 2023, this figure had risen to over 11% of job postings, with hybrid arrangements emerging as the dominant model. This expansion reflects more than a logistical adjustment; it signals a reconceptualization of work structures, where flexibility, resilience, and digital integration are central. Yet, the adoption of these models has produced uneven outcomes across industries, regions, and demographic groups, raising critical questions about sustainability, equity, and long-term organizational adaptation.

Several key variables shape this discussion. At the employee level, factors such as engagement, productivity, and well-being are some of the outcomes influenced by remote and hybrid arrangements. At the organizational level, leadership approaches, HRM practices, and workplace policies determine how successfully these models are adopted. Technology, in terms of infrastructure and digital inclusion, acts as an enabling factor, shaping both access and fairness. Organizational culture mediates how employees experience distributed work. Together, these variables interact in complex ways, creating both opportunities and challenges.

The existing literature reveals contrasting narratives. On one side, flexible work is praised for boosting productivity, attracting talent, and strengthening organizational resilience. Research points to efficiency gains due to reduced commuting, autonomy, and digital innovation. On the other hand, concerns persist regarding burnout, “Zoom fatigue,” social isolation, and inequities in access to resources. Hybrid models, while promising, risk reinforcing exclusion for minority employees or those in resource-constrained SMEs. Additionally, although technology enables collaboration, it also raises ethical concerns about surveillance, fairness, and privacy, particularly in AI-driven HRM

systems. These debates highlight the need for careful, balanced consideration

Although research on remote and hybrid work continues to grow, several gaps persist. Much of the existing evidence is concentrated in OECD countries, which limits its relevance for Global South contexts where infrastructural and cultural realities differ. Long-term sustainability, particularly the environmental impacts of large-scale remote work, has received limited attention. Questions of equity, including gender, race, and socioeconomic status, are underexplored in hybrid arrangements. Furthermore, the psychological and cultural implications of distributed work, such as risks of exclusion or shifts in work ethic, require deeper investigation. These gaps underscore the need for systematic synthesis to guide organizations toward inclusive and sustainable practices.

This systematic review draws on 17 studies published between 2018 and 2025 to understand how remote and hybrid work models have evolved, what outcomes they produce, and what adaptations organizations have undertaken. By assessing variables such as employee engagement, productivity, well-being, HRM strategies, leadership, and organizational culture, the review seeks to illuminate both the benefits and challenges of these models. Ultimately, the goal is to provide evidence-based insights into how organizations can design sustainable hybrid work practices that balance productivity with equity, resilience, and human-centered values.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

During and after COVID-19, remote and hybrid work models have rapidly increased, yet the available research is still incomplete, not evenly distributed, and focused heavily on the Global North. Although research reports benefits such as improved flexibility, productivity, and organizational resilience, they also reveal chronic challenges, which include technological inequality, leadership gaps, digital fatigue, reduced well-being, and unequal visibility among different employee groups. These issues have not been well synthesized, limiting understanding of their long-term implications.

Current studies focus on the immediate crisis management as opposed to the long-term organizational adjustments post covid-19, resulting in significant knowledge gaps in relation to the development of hybrid work models and the necessary practices to sustain them. Data on the impact of hybrid work on fairness, organizational culture, and employee experience remains limited, especially in regions outside the OECD. As a result, organizations do not have conclusive recommendations for creating sustainable and inclusive hybrid work models. This review therefore compiles research published from 2018 to 2025 to offer a clearer insight into the results of hybrid and remote work and to highlight key priorities for future investigation.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To examine HRM practices and technologies that facilitate efficient implementation.
- ii. To explore new and emerging remote/hybrid models that have developed since the pandemic.
- iii. To explore the change in leadership styles, organizational culture, and workplace policies.
- iv. To evaluate the relevance of technology to facilitate successful hybrid working.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the characteristics of the post-pandemic models of work?
- ii. What effects do these models have on employee well-being, engagement, and performance?
- iii. What are the effective human resource strategies to support them?
- iv. What obstacles and best practices have come up as a result of the implementation of the new models?

## II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study is guided by four interrelated theories that explain the dynamics of hybrid and remote work, employee behavior, technology use, and organizational adaptation in the post-pandemic context.

Work Design Theory (Wang et al., 2021) provides a foundation for understanding how job structure influences employee outcomes in hybrid work environments. The theory emphasizes autonomy, task design, workload, and availability of support systems as key determinants of engagement, performance, and well-being. Within hybrid settings, employees experience different levels of autonomy and task clarity depending on whether they work remotely or on-site. These variations help explain differences in productivity, stress levels, and overall job satisfaction.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) further explains how employees adopt and use digital tools required for hybrid work (Khatatbeh et al., 2023). According to TAM, acceptance depends on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and social influence. This framework aligns with the study's findings that successful hybrid arrangements rely on employees' comfort with digital platforms such as Zoom, Teams, and remote HRM systems. Adequate training, user-friendly tools, and strong technological infrastructure therefore become essential for effective participation and performance.

The study also draws on improvisational theory, particularly the concept of improvisational scaling (Berglund et al., 2024), which describes how organizations respond to crises through rapid and flexible adaptation. During the pandemic, organizations adjusted their structures, processes, and cultures using rule-oriented, goal-oriented, and creative improvisation. This framework helps explain how hybrid models emerged, how HR policies were redesigned quickly, and how digitalization accelerated to support continuity.

Lastly, Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory help explain relational dynamics in hybrid work environments. These theories emphasize that trust, fairness, and perceived organizational support strongly influence engagement, commitment, and well-being (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986). In hybrid contexts where visibility is lower and interaction is more virtual, supportive leadership, inclusive decision-making, equitable policies, and autonomy become central in reducing feelings of isolation and promoting a sense of belonging.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Design

The systematic review was carried out following the guidelines set out in the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020. The PRISMA framework helps in confirming that the review process is transparent and reliable. To further prevent the reproduction of similar work and strengthen our review, the study protocol was officially registered on PROSPERO under registration number PROSPERO 2025 CRD420251229059. Since the range of the included studies was quite broad, as some of them were quantitative surveys and longitudinal designs while others were qualitative interviews, mixed-methods work, and scoping reviews, a narrative synthesis was selected rather than a meta-analysis. It enabled the review to synthesize both qualitative themes and quantitative findings to provide a more comprehensive view of complex problems such as organizational adaptation and the new work models.

The selection was conducted based on clear and strong inclusion criteria: The systematic review involved either the primary or secondary collection of published data between the years 2018 and 2025. The review focused on remote and hybrid work arrangements implemented since March 2020, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak. The review addressed at least one of the objectives or research questions of the review. To minimize chances of bias, all abstracts were screened by two reviewers. Consensus was achieved in resolving any differences in judgment. The systematic review was conducted by two reviewers, where each reviewer was expected to perform a separate literature search independently on relevant studies.

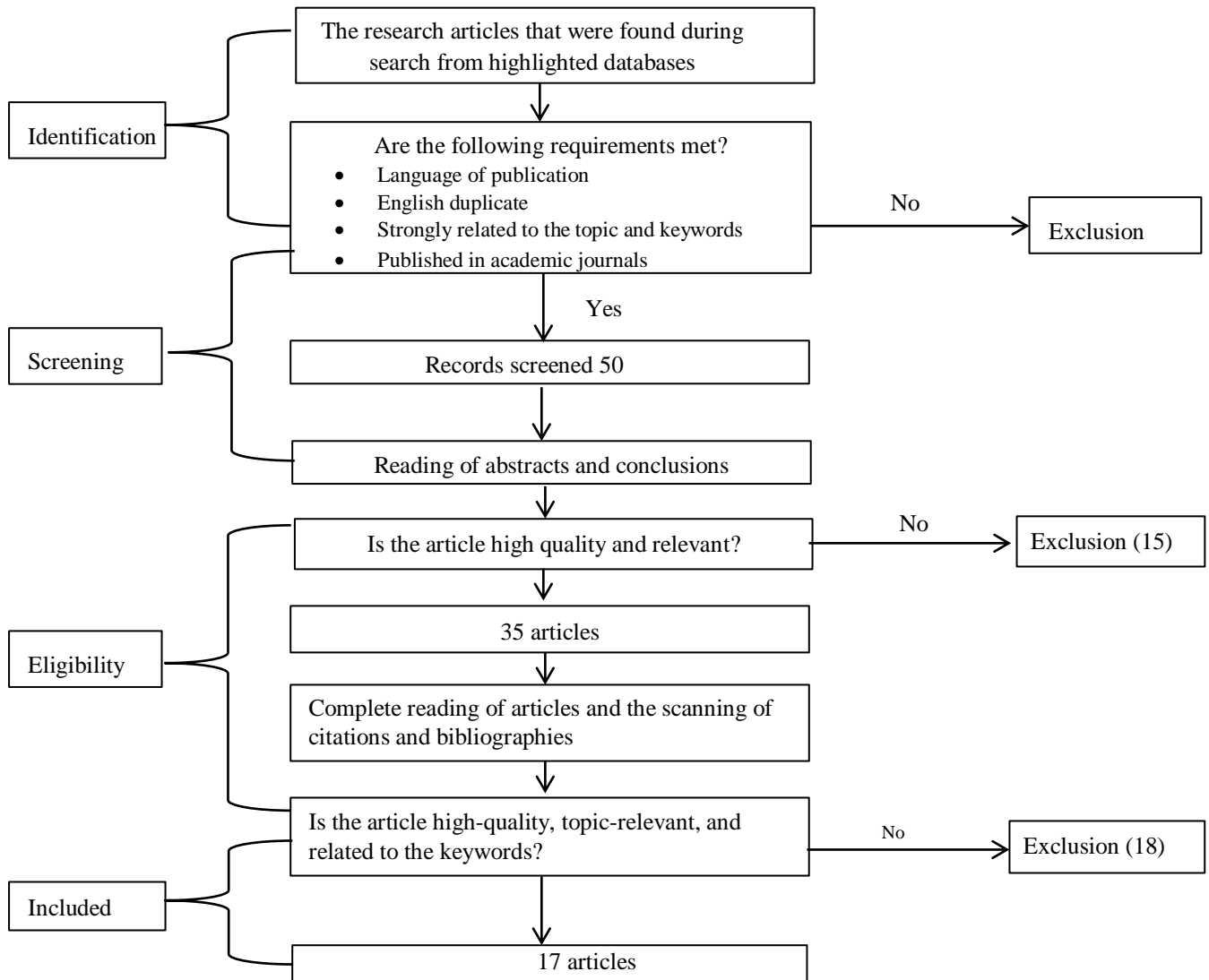
#### 3.2 Data Collection

The process of data collection was conducted in a series of steps to ascertain that the review was conducted to get relevant evidence. The search strings were of a Boolean type with the following combinations: remote work or hybrid work and post-COVID or post-pandemic, employee engagement, productivity, or HRM practices or organizational change, limited to publications in the years 2018 to 2025. Further customized searches involved more narrow themes such as "emergent hybrid models COVID-19" and technology infrastructure remote work.

Various databases and repositories, such as PubMed Central (PMC), Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Journals, SSRN, ResearchGate, and Eurofound, were searched. Open-access filters were preferred since there was no requirement for institutional access, because the irretrievability was as high as possible. Once the duplicates had been weeded out, with the help of EndNote the search yielded 50 distinct records. This was narrowed to 35 by title and abstract screening, ten of which were later eliminated as irrelevant. A thorough assessment of the remaining 25 articles resulted in 17 studies being accepted and 8 studies being excluded. Out of the 17 studies, five were rejected because they were not empirical, and amongst them, three addressed the topics before 2018, making them irrelevant in our study.

The PRISMA chart flow diagram below represents the process used to identify, screen, and select studies for inclusion in this systematic review. The search cut across multiple databases and retrieved 112 records. After removing 62 duplicates, 50 unique records remained.

These records underwent title and abstract screening, resulting in 15 records being excluded since they did not meet the predefined criteria. The remaining 35 articles were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 18 articles were excluded. Ultimately, 17 studies were deemed eligible and were included in the qualitative synthesis.



**Figure 1**  
*Prisma Flow Chart*

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of data was performed using the structured and multi-step thematic synthesis methodology as developed by Thomas and Harden (2008), which enabled the review to combine findings of studies of various designs. This process started with the two reviewers reading each complete text several times and deriving the most important information, including quotations, numerical findings, and reported themes in line with the research objectives and research questions.

The next step involved sorting of the individual codes into a set of broader descriptive themes and higher-level analytical themes. Pattern coding was beneficial in determining where the studies agreed, such as 12 out of the 17 studies reporting productivity gains, and where differences existed, e.g., differences in the well-being outcomes of different demographic groups.

Quality evaluation was performed with the help of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT v.2018). Research was assessed against methodological criteria such as the appropriateness of the research design, with an average score of 4.2 out of 5 (range: 3.5-5.0). In the final synthesis, lower-quality studies had a diminished impact. Due to the high heterogeneity of the research included (estimated I<sup>2</sup> was greater than 75% through narrative evaluation), a meta-analysis was inappropriate. Sensitivity checks were instead done by temporarily excluding low-quality studies to test the stability of the themes.

Lastly, cross-tabulation of themes was conducted with study characteristics, including sector and geographic region, to help determine contextual influences, such as cultural differences that could influence the findings. This was a systematic and transparent process that helped reduce bias and provide a strong synthesis of the evidence.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Findings

#### 4.1.1 Dominant Features and Structures of Post-Pandemic Models

The researchers noted that the main features of remote and hybrid work models after the pandemic are now flexibility, technology integration, and structural adaptation based on the needs of the organization. It is now common for people to work from home two to three days a week and in the office the other days. In a study of over a billion job ads in OECD countries, Adrjan et al. (2024) found that remote and hybrid postings grew from 2.5% to 11% by 2023. It was noted that these patterns show that employees like to be independent and that this hasn't changed much even after the restrictions were lifted.

Organizational structures vary by sector: knowledge-based fields such as IT benefit from remote or asynchronous-first models, while service-oriented industries tend to favor hybrid systems to support collaboration (Maity & Lee, 2025). Berglund et al. (2024) describe emerging post-COVID models as “improvisational scaling up or down,” where organizations rapidly expand or reduce operations in response to uncertainty. For example, Swedish public and private institutions quickly digitalized services such as remote education while suspending non-essential tasks. Different sectors have different types of organizational structures. Technical fields like IT do better with remote or asynchronous-first models, while service-based fields do better with hybrid or remote systems that support collaboration (Maity & Lee, 2025).

Banerjee and Soni (2024) point to tech-based patterns in IT companies, including automated HR systems to support employee well-being, making workplaces joyful with low turnover. In their comparative study of Indian employees, a shift toward hybrid work models has emerged as a way to support both productivity and employee well-being. Alongside this, some organizations are incorporating virtual-reality tools to create more immersive and collaborative working environments. These developments aim to address the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic and promote resilience and fairness in the workplace, although challenges remain in ensuring equal access for all groups.

#### 4.1.2 Effects on Engagement, Well-Being, and Performance

The reviewers pointed out that these models have produced mixed outcomes, which are of benefit to an organization. Dalessandro and Lovell (2024) found no major differences in inclusion across work settings in a survey of 6,497 global workers, which suggests that hybrid and remote work can strengthen engagement. In the U.S, it linked the fatigue that comes with Zoom to depressive symptoms associated with loneliness and frequent video meetings. Nonwhite, married, and food-insecure respondents reported unusually high fatigue, showing mental health implications that could undermine long-term performance. In contrast, Arciniega et al. (2024) found no dramatic shifts in work ethic profiles in a financial sector study (N=692 pre-lockdowns and post-lockdown). However, the post-lockdown period showed fewer “live to work” profiles and more “necessary evil” orientations, suggesting reduced well-being resulting from the abrupt shift to remote work.

Feasible roles are observed to increase productivity, and Wheatley et al. (2024) note 10-30% increases in productive focus groups in the UK because of shortened commutes, but ripple effects such as coordination challenges counterbalance productivity, causing stress. In a survey of 148 in a medical department (Shih et al., 2022), 87% of remote experiences were positive, yet 68% were emotional exhaustion, which demonstrates well-being trade-offs. In general, autonomy increases engagement (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023), but without support, well-being decreases unevenly among demographics.

#### 4.1.3 Key HR Strategies and Technologies.

On this note, it was reiterated that remote/hybrid success relies heavily on human resource strategies and technologies, which are centered on adaptability and support. In the insurance industry of Jordan, Khatatbeh et al. (2023) discovered that acceptance is motivated by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social trust and that the TRA, SCT, and TAM models emphasize the importance of HR in creating norms. The case study of Value Creed by Banerjee and Soni (2024) exemplifies that technology-driven efforts, such as automated welfare programs, can minimize turnover by engaging with the technologically enabled direction.

According to Berglund et al. (2024), there are three types of improvisation: rule-oriented, goal-oriented, and creative-oriented, facilitated by HR policies that support learning. Outcome-based measures and virtual training are suggested by Shockley et al. (2024). Such technologies as VR/AR (Parekh & Gohil, 2025) improve teamwork, whereas infrastructure promotes fairness (Eurofound, 2022). Among the processes are joyful workplaces via digital transformation and strategic HR use of tech in resilience.

#### 4.1.4 Challenges and Best Practices

Remote workplaces are affected by issues that affect the experiences of employees and organizational effectiveness. Such problems as the unequal access to resources, burnout, and challenges related to the coordination of distributed teams are rampantly recorded. As an example, Wheatley et al. (2024) demonstrate the so-called “flexibility ripple effect” in the context of UK multinationals, where providing individual employees with more freedom in their schedules can accidentally interfere in the team processes.

These interruptions will most likely create stress, time wastage, and unnecessary inefficiencies that remind organizations that flexibility should not be handled individually. Likewise, Wang et al. (2021) document that the emergence of video conferencing has led to the prevalence of a phenomenon known as Zoom fatigue, and the long-term effect of digital interaction is the development of symptoms of depression, emotional fatigue, and increased feelings of social isolation.

Issues regarding equity also take center stage in the literature. As Dalessandro and Lovell (2024) demonstrate, minority employees tend to feel less belonging and visible in hybrid environments, where informal communication and proximity-based recognition are decreased. The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are less resourceful and have less developed systems have their own challenges. Maity and Lee (2025) observe that SMEs tend to lose productive momentum regularly due to the lack of a solid digital infrastructure and a sufficient HR team that larger enterprises have.

To mitigate these challenges, researchers have found a number of best practices to reinforce the remote and hybrid work patterns. Some of the underlying measures proposed by Shockley et al. (2024) include inclusive policy development, routine technology reviews, and explicit hybrid-working policies. Cooke et al. (2023) believe that a wider sustainability viewpoint is required, which implies that organizations should strike a balance between people's needs, productivity, and environmental accountability to achieve long-term resilience. Trust is also one of the main factors. Khatatbeh et al. (2023) indicate that the trust between the employees and the managers should be developed to allow the acceptance of the hybrid models, relieve pressure to micromanage, and promote autonomy.

The future of hybrid work is also starting to be shaped by newer innovations within an organization. Banerjee and Soni (2024) emphasized the rising visibility of the concept of digital welfare. These strategies demonstrate that despite the challenges of hybrid work, it can provide organizations with an opportunity to rethink work and make it more sustainable in the long run.

#### 4.1.5 Organizational Changes: Leadership, Culture, and Policies.

Organizations have turned leadership into compassionate forms, a culture encompassing virtual cultures and policies to elastic structures. According to Wheatley et al. (2024), there are ripple impacts that require an adaptive leadership approach to coordination. According to Berglund et al. (2024), scaling involves cultural changes towards innovation. Arciniega et al. (2024) reveal the effects of policies on ethics, with lockdowns changing profiles to disengagement, which leads to retention-based policies.

Indians (as described by Dey & Kumari, 2024) emphasize cultural focus on balance. Banerjee and Soni (2024) are examples of digital policies that make people feel happier by use of tech welfare. According to Eurofound (2022), there are EU regulations that assist in supporting conditions. Change creates trust, belongingness, and resiliency.

The systematic review pointed out some of the critical gaps that should be filled through research in the future. One of the weaknesses evidenced by the systematic review is the scarcity of studies researching the effects of hybrid work on gender, race, and others in the long-term sustainability of an organization (Sailer et al., 2023).

Another interesting knowledge gap relates to the environmental and sustainability impacts of large-scale remote and hybrid work uptake, a domain that has been subjected to only cursory research in recent literature (Science Direct, 2024). Also, the research is highly concentrated in the OECD nations, with the non-OECD and Global South settings being underrepresented, yet both have different infrastructural, cultural, and economic realities (Cooke et al., 2023). This lack of balance restricts the generalizability of the existing evidence across the globe.

In the future, scholars have identified a number of potential developments in the field. Interest in the implementation of randomized controlled trials to determine the effectiveness of asynchronous work models and their influence on collaboration, performance, and stress is increasing (NAIOP. (N.D.)). With the increased integration of AI tools into distributed work systems, researchers also started demanding further investigation of ethical aspects of AI-driven HRM, such as fairness, privacy, and algorithmic transparency (MDPI, 2023; Frontiers, 2024). General theoretical and psychological issues also exist. There is a need to conduct research concerning not only how employees can cope with but also thrive in hybrid work but also how risks of social ostracism or exclusion can be minimized. In the meantime, Wang et al. (2021) recommends focusing on the studies that can perfect and streamline hybrid work configurations, e.g., the best on-site/off-site ratios or the construction of teams that achieve a balance between autonomy and coordination. The analysis of the studies reviewed demonstrates places of convergence and divergence in the evidence base. An example presented here is that 12 out of 17 studies still report quantifiable

productivity changes, indicating the presence of a high level of consensus over the same. On the same issue, 10 out of 17 of the studies put an emphasis on the importance of the technological infrastructure and HR management assistance in order to accomplish a smooth transition towards hybrid or teleworking. However, a number of specific differences may be observed with respect to the accessible results of the well-being of staff. Some studies have reported high work-life integration and stress management, and others have reported neutral and negative impacts, which usually vary depending on the strategic variables such as managerial support, information technologies, and quality relations in virtual communication. Such contradictory results can be viewed as an indicator of a more profound fact behind them: the improvement of productivity and efficiency has been observed to emerge at a significant level, although a well-being outcome is highly dependent on the situation.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Conclusion

This systematic review explains how Covid-19 has changed remote and hybrid work cultures. The pandemic accelerated the immediate shift toward flexible work models. These shifts have been linked to improvements in productivity and employee engagement. When supported with the right tools, policies, and work environment, productivity can rise. These gains from improvement largely depend on whether organizations create a conducive environment that enables employees to perform effectively and enjoy positive work experiences.

However, these benefits are not universal, as a systematic review highlights ongoing challenges to hybrid work. Social isolation and reduced interpersonal interaction remain common problems affecting the overall well-being and teamwork, particularly among those employees with reduced social and work resources. Technological, spatial, and organizational gaps continue to persist, affecting employees with limited access to quality technological infrastructure, home workspaces, and work structure. These findings emphasize that hybrid work is not necessarily egalitarian because, left unplanned; it could perpetuate or widen existing gaps.

Simultaneously, the literature also indicates changes such as the innovative solutions in the framework of a post-pandemic response. Theoretical frameworks, like improvisational scaling, can be used to describe how these organizations were capable of addressing these types of short-notice adaptation requirements, trying out new ways of working as a team, processes, and decision-making. The role and importance of such essential factors as technological infrastructure, HRM innovations, and management studies are left at the center of the manner in which the field of remote/hybrid working settings would stabilize and evolve to become more valuable. These are largely positive steps in organizational resilience, shifting organizations from traditional approaches to more dynamic and person-centered approaches.

Finally, the long-term success of remote and hybrid work depends on how organizations integrate human-centered approaches into their future strategies. The aim must not be merely to keep people productive or maintain operations but to establish work ecosystems in which people and teams can genuinely thrive. Remote and hybrid work will never become as good as they could be unless they are planned considering equity, well-being, and long-term flexibility.

Future research should focus on filling the gaps discovered in this review, especially on long-term equity, cross-cultural differences, and the sustainability of hybrid structures of work. Enhancing this body of evidence is critical towards ensuring that the global workforce forces are not just in a position to meet the challenges that come in the future, but they are also enabled to succeed. With the purpose of turning the lessons of the pandemic into the new stage of development, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have the same job: they need to develop hybrid working models, which are not only more efficient and flexible but also just, human, and strong.

### 5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this systematic review, the following recommendations are proposed for organizations, HR practitioners, policymakers, and future researchers who are seeking to strengthen the sustainability and equity of remote and hybrid work models: Advocating for fair access to reliable internet, user-friendly tools, and secure digital systems to prevent widening socioeconomic divides. Organizations should come up with hybrid work policies and embrace mental health measures like reviewing workloads vis-à-vis the number of employees, no meeting days, and offer wellness initiatives, including psychological support for employees to address issues of burnout. Moreover, leaders should be armed with skills for managing distributed teams, practicing inclusive decision-making, and applying outcome-based performance evaluation to maintain trust and unity across remote and on-site workers.

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