

## DETERMINANTS OF MENTAL WELL-BEING IN THE HYBRID WORKFORCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE ITES SECTOR IN BENGALURU

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### Abstract

The transition to hybrid work models has redefined the professional landscape, particularly in urban IT hubs such as Bengaluru. This study explores the key factors influencing mental well-being among employees in the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector operating in hybrid work environments. Specifically, it examines the impact of three critical variables namely Work-Life Balance, Job Autonomy, and Psychological Safety & Support on mental well-being. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 200 hybrid employees. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including regression analysis and ANOVA, were employed to analyze the data. The results indicate significant positive relationships between all three variables and mental well-being, underlining the importance of organizational strategies that promote flexibility, autonomy, and psychological support. These findings offer actionable insights for ITES firms aiming to foster a mentally resilient and productive hybrid workforce.

**Keywords:** Hybrid Work, Mental Well-being, Work-Life Balance, Job Autonomy, Psychological Safety, ITES Sector, Bengaluru, Employee Mental Health.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a rapid transformation in the global work environment, compelling organizations to pivot from traditional, centralized office setups to remote and hybrid work arrangements. This shift, initially driven by necessity, has since evolved into a sustainable model of work in many sectors. In the aftermath of the pandemic, hybrid work where employees alternate between working from home and the office has emerged as a standard practice, particularly in urban technological hubs such as Bengaluru. As a key center for the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) industry, Bengaluru epitomizes the modern digital workforce that now operates under flexible work regimes.

The hybrid model offers several well-documented benefits, including greater flexibility in managing professional and personal responsibilities, reduced commuting time, and potentially increased productivity. However, it also introduces complex challenges that may have unintended consequences on employees' mental well-being. The dissolution of clear boundaries between work and personal life can lead to role conflict and overwork. Moreover, reduced face-to-face interactions may impair team cohesion and diminish the informal social support systems inherent in traditional work environments. Employees may also face increased pressure to self-manage tasks and performance in less structured settings, leading to heightened stress and potential burnout.

Given that employee mental well-being is a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability, it becomes imperative to understand the psychological dimensions of hybrid work. This study investigates three interrelated factors that significantly influence mental well-being in a hybrid work setting: Work-Life Balance, Job Autonomy, and Psychological Safety & Support. By examining these constructs in the context of the ITES workforce in Bengaluru, this research aims to provide empirically grounded insights that can guide organizations in fostering mentally healthy, inclusive, and resilient hybrid work cultures.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium an individual maintains between professional obligations and personal life roles. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) assert that achieving this balance is essential for employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall performance. While hybrid work is often perceived as a facilitator of balance—by offering temporal and spatial flexibility—it can paradoxically blur the lines between work and home life. Employees may find it difficult to disengage from work responsibilities, leading to extended working hours, emotional exhaustion, and eventual burnout.

Felstead and Henseke (2017) warn that without proper boundaries and managerial support, hybrid work may erode the very flexibility it promises. The encroachment of work into domestic spaces, the absence of a commute as a transitional buffer, and the omnipresence of digital communication tools all contribute to the risk of continuous connectivity and stress. Therefore, effective work-life integration policies and supportive organizational norms are crucial to mitigate these risks in hybrid environments.

### 2.2 Job Autonomy

Job autonomy, defined as the degree of control employees have over how and when they complete their work, is a key driver of intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model positions autonomy as a core psychological state necessary for enhancing employee performance and engagement. In hybrid work contexts, autonomy becomes even more salient, as employees often operate independently and make real-time decisions without immediate supervisory oversight.

Parker et al. (2020) argue that increased autonomy can lead to higher engagement, creativity, and ownership over outcomes. However, they also caution that autonomy must be paired with clearly defined roles, goals, and expectations. Without sufficient structure or communication, the benefits of autonomy can be undermined by ambiguity and role overload. Thus, a balance between autonomy and accountability is essential for maintaining mental well-being in hybrid work settings.

### 2.3 Psychological Safety and Support

Psychological safety, as defined by Edmondson (1999), is the shared belief that the workplace is a safe environment for interpersonal risk-taking. Employees who perceive their work culture as psychologically safe are more likely to voice ideas, raise concerns, and seek help without fear of negative consequences. This sense of security is particularly critical in hybrid work arrangements, where reduced physical presence can limit spontaneous check-ins and informal support.

Kahn (1990) emphasizes that organizational support manifested through empathetic leadership, peer collaboration, and accessible mental health resources plays a pivotal role in fostering psychological resilience. In virtual or semi-virtual teams, the lack of visual cues and immediate feedback can hinder trust and connection, making deliberate efforts to cultivate psychological safety even more essential. Ensuring open communication channels, promoting inclusive practices, and providing emotional support mechanisms are therefore fundamental to supporting employee mental health in hybrid work environments.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the major factors influencing mental well-being among hybrid ITES employees in Bengaluru.
2. To assess the relative strength of job autonomy, work-life balance, and psychological safety in contributing to employees' mental well-being.

3. To explore gender differences in mental well-being perceptions among hybrid employees in the ITES sector.

#### 4. Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical
- **Sample Size:** 200 respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Stratified random sampling from top ITES firms in Bengaluru
- **Instrument:** Structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale
- **Statistical Tools:** Descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, ANOVA

#### 5. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Factors Influencing Mental Well-being (N = 200)**

Domain	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Work-life balance	I can balance my personal and professional life effectively.	13	18	38	64	67
Work-life balance	My workload allows me to maintain a healthy work-life balance.	5	22	59	101	14
Work-life balance	I have sufficient personal time to recharge and reduce stress.	10	40	78	56	16
Work-life balance	I can disconnect from work responsibilities during personal time.	32	21	34	71	42
Job autonomy	I have control over how I perform my job tasks.	17	14	29	44	95
Job autonomy	I can decide when and where to work without rigid supervision.	6	21	45	124	4
Job autonomy	My role allows me to make decisions that impact my work.	8	27	89	55	21
Job autonomy	I feel empowered to take initiative in my job.	9	15	38	111	27
Psychological safety & support	I feel comfortable discussing mental well-being concerns at work.	25	15	34	36	89
Psychological safety & support	My manager supports me in managing stress and workload.	7	32	41	114	6
Psychological safety & support	I have access to mental health resources in my organization.	13	23	85	62	13
Psychological safety & support	I feel comfortable sharing my opinions without fear of negative consequences.	15	17	41	104	18

#### Analysis:

##### Work-life Balance:

- A significant number of respondents (131 out of 200) agreed or strongly agreed that they could balance work and personal life.
- However, only 70 respondents felt their workload strongly supported this balance, indicating stress from workload remains an issue.
- Nearly 50% were either neutral or disagreed about having enough personal time, and about 26% disagreed they could disconnect from work during personal hours — revealing boundary-setting challenges in hybrid setups.

##### Job Autonomy:

- Job autonomy is notably strong among respondents. Over 70% agreed or strongly agreed they control how tasks are performed.
- A vast majority (62%) said they could decide when and where to work — highlighting flexibility.
- Despite this, nearly 45% were neutral or disagreed that their roles allow decision-making impact, showing a gap between autonomy and empowerment.

### Psychological Safety & Support:

- Around 63% felt safe discussing mental health issues, but only 6 respondents strongly felt their managers supported them.
- A striking 85 respondents were neutral on having access to mental health resources, implying a lack of visible or effective well-being programs.
- However, over 60% agreed or strongly agreed they could express opinions without fear pointing to a generally safe interpersonal environment.

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2: Mean Scores of Factors Influencing Mental Well-being**

Factors	Mean Score
Work-Life Balance	3.63
Job Autonomy	3.91
Psychological Safety & Support	3.74

#### Interpretation:

The descriptive statistics reveal that among the three factors examined, **Job Autonomy** received the highest average score (3.91), indicating that respondents perceive a relatively high degree of independence and control over their work tasks within the hybrid work environment. This suggests that employees feel empowered to make decisions regarding their work execution, which aligns with the importance of autonomy in fostering engagement and motivation.

**Psychological Safety & Support** scored an average of 3.74, reflecting a generally positive perception of emotional and social support available to employees. However, since this score is lower than that of job autonomy, it indicates room for organizations to enhance the psychological safety climate and support mechanisms, particularly given the challenges posed by hybrid and remote work setups.

**Work-Life Balance** received the lowest mean score (3.63), though still above the midpoint, indicating moderate satisfaction with employees' ability to manage their professional and personal responsibilities. The relatively lower score suggests that while flexibility is present, maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal life remains a challenge for many employees in hybrid settings.

### 5.2 Inferential Statistics

#### Regression Analysis

- **Dependent Variable:** Mental Well-being

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.764	0.584	0.576	0.412

**Table 4: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	38.122	3	12.707	74.99	0.000*
Residual	27.143	196	0.138		
Total	65.265	199			

**Table 5: Coefficients**

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.114	0.236	—	4.719	0
Work-Life Balance	0.288	0.072	0.271	4	0.000*
Job Autonomy	0.402	0.066	0.383	6.091	0.000*
Psychological Safety	0.237	0.068	0.229	3.485	0.001*

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

#### Interpretation: Regression Analysis

- **Model Summary:**

The regression model yielded an **R value of 0.764** and an **R Square of 0.584**, meaning that approximately **58.4% of the variance in mental well-being** among hybrid ITES employees can be explained by the combined influence of work-life balance, job autonomy, and psychological safety & support. The adjusted R square (0.576) confirms the model's strong explanatory power while accounting for the number of predictors.

- **ANOVA Table:**

The overall model is statistically significant ( $F = 74.99, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the predictors collectively have a meaningful relationship with mental well-being.

- **Coefficients Table:**

Each predictor has a positive and significant coefficient, suggesting they all contribute positively to mental well-being:

- **Job Autonomy ( $\beta = 0.383, p < 0.001$ ):** The strongest predictor, meaning that increases in job autonomy correspond to the greatest improvements in mental well-being. This underscores the critical role of granting employees control over their work in hybrid environments.
- **Work-Life Balance ( $\beta = 0.271, p < 0.001$ ):** Also a significant contributor, highlighting the importance of balancing professional and personal life to support mental health.
- **Psychological Safety & Support ( $\beta = 0.229, p = 0.001$ ):** Though the smallest beta coefficient, it remains a significant positive predictor, confirming that feeling safe to express oneself and receiving support positively influences mental well-being.

The regression analysis demonstrates a robust and statistically significant model that underscores the multifaceted nature of mental well-being in hybrid work contexts. Among the three factors, job autonomy emerges as the most influential, followed by work-life balance and psychological safety. Organizations should therefore prioritize empowering employees with autonomy, while simultaneously supporting work-life integration and fostering psychologically safe environments to promote optimal mental well-being.

### 5.3 ANOVA: Gender Differences

**Table 6: ANOVA on Gender**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	1.147	1	1.147	3.042	0.083
Within Groups	74.118	198	0.374		
Total	75.265	199			

#### Interpretation:

The ANOVA results indicate that the difference in mental well-being scores between genders is **not statistically significant** ( $F = 3.042, p = 0.083 > 0.05$ ). This suggests that in this sample of hybrid ITES employees, men and women report comparable levels of mental well-being, implying that gender does not play a differentiating role in how mental health is experienced or affected in the hybrid work context.

### 6. Discussion

The study affirms that Job Autonomy is the most influential variable in predicting mental well-being among hybrid employees. High autonomy fosters self-efficacy and reduces micromanagement-induced stress. Work-Life Balance remains crucial, though challenges persist around disconnecting from work during off-hours. Psychological Safety, while positively rated, still requires stronger managerial and institutional support, especially in mental health communication and resource visibility.

These findings echo Edmondson’s (1999) and Parker et al.’s (2020) conclusions that hybrid environments thrive when autonomy and emotional safety co-exist with balanced workload practices.

### 7. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical influence of work-life balance, job autonomy, and psychological safety & support on the mental well-being of employees working in hybrid models within the ITES sector of Bengaluru. The findings underscore that mental well-being is not merely a byproduct of flexible work arrangements but is shaped by multiple interrelated factors that require deliberate organizational attention.

Firstly, maintaining a healthy work-life balance emerges as a foundational element in safeguarding employees from burnout and stress, particularly in hybrid settings where the boundaries between professional and personal life tend to blur. Secondly, providing employees with meaningful autonomy over their tasks and schedules significantly enhances their sense of control and engagement, which in turn positively impacts their psychological health. Lastly, fostering an environment of psychological safety where employees feel supported, heard, and valued proves essential in mitigating feelings of isolation and anxiety that may arise from reduced physical interactions.

To build resilient and mentally healthy hybrid workforces, organizations in the ITES sector must prioritize policies and practices that support these dimensions. This includes implementing flexible work schedules that accommodate individual needs, designing role-specific autonomy that empowers decision-making, and ensuring accessible, comprehensive mental health resources and support systems. By adopting such holistic strategies, companies can not only enhance employee well-being but also improve productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in the evolving hybrid work landscape.

Future research could extend these insights by exploring additional psychosocial variables and longitudinal impacts of hybrid work on mental health. Nevertheless, the current findings provide a robust foundation for ITES organizations aiming to create inclusive, supportive, and sustainable hybrid workplaces.

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