# Hybrid Work and Its Impact on Social Relationships within the Workplace

**Prof. Dr. Basma Rahman Ouda[1], Ahmed Adel Abboud[2]**
University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq

| Sections Info | ABSTRACT |
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| | *Objective: The research explores how hybrid work affects interpersonal relationships between employees in organizations, focusing on communication and social cohesion. Method: A descriptive-analytical methodology was used, with a questionnaire as the instrument to collect data from 85 employees in an organization that operates a hybrid work system. The survey included closed and open-ended questions to measure socialization, communication tools' efficiency, and work-life balance satisfaction. Results: Hybrid work has a dual effect: it offers greater flexibility, higher satisfaction, and better time management, but limits informal communication. On-site employees showed higher social interaction and organizational commitment, while remote employees had lower social cohesion. Digital communication tools support connectivity but cannot replace face-to-face meetings for trust and relationship development. Organizational collaboration culture was the most significant predictor of social satisfaction. Novelty: The study reveals the importance of organizational culture and digital tools in hybrid work's impact on social relationships, emphasizing the need for well-implemented communication instruments.* |

## INTRODUCTION

How we work has changed dramatically in recent years – in the way we do our tasks and how we communicate, within and outside organizations. Being at work on a daily basis is no longer the only model; the hybrid work arrangement has become a distinctive solution that is influencing the structure of the workplace in the modern era. This change is a response to fast global and technological changes that have led organizations to adopt a more flexible model that addresses the professional as well as the human needs of the employees [1], [2]. The system has also redefined the notion of job presence, which is now less connected to a physical location and more to an ability to deliver results. The change creates new opportunities for workers to increase their productivity and to more easily balance work and life. Yet, for all its obvious benefits, the model of hybrid work has raised questions about its impact on social relationships in the workplace – which play a key role in creating teams that are cohesive, collaborate effectively, and have an organism that is healthy in the face of difficulties. Work-related social ties are not, of course, constituted solely by substantive professional work or by formal meetings: They are also built though everyday interaction, informal communication, and the belonging formed by co-presence [3]. As some of this interaction shifts to online platforms, it is important to investigate how this affects the nature of

employee interactions, whether hybrid work strengthens these interactions by making them more flexible or weakens them in that direct interaction and communication is a bedrock of a productive work environment [3], [4], [5], [6].

This new reality also poses questions about whether organizations can develop a strong  organizational culture in an environment characterized by geographic dispersion, and whether technology can successfully make up for the absence of daily, face-to-face interaction. As more global and regional organizations are now implementing this type, it becomes important to study its social relational impact to recognize the challenges and opportunities that it creates that are crucial to employee satisfaction, organizational stability and group performance [7].

**Importance of the study**

This study is important in that it will describe the major changes in working conditions due to the adoption of the hybrid work system widely prevalent in contemporary organizations. The social impact of this system on workplace social relationships informs the best practices for improving employee connectedness and communication, which in turn influences organizational productivity, employee satisfaction, job security, and decreased absenteeism and job turnover. The study provides leaders and decision-makers with reliable knowledge to create flexible policies that reconcile actual performance with employees' needs for social interaction, which preserves team functionality and a robust organizational culture. Moreover, this research makes scientific contributions through adding to Arabic literature that connects contemporary organizational transformations in way of work with social  dimensions of work, and enables organizat ions to confront future challenges related to change in the fast evolving landscape of work [8], [9], [10], [11].

**Research aims**

The study is  designed to pursue the following general aim:

1. To gain an understanding of the formation and application of hybrid work in different  companies.
2. Examine the effects of hybrid work  on internal employee social relations in the organization.
3. Determine what  fuels and what inhibits social communication and collaboration in this system.
4. To offer actionable guidance on managing social relationships in  the hybrid work environment in a way that ensures continued positive employee interaction.
5. Identify potential  problems for workers and managers that result from limited physical separation, and diminished face-to-face interaction.

**Research  problem**

The central research issue is formulated as follows: "What are the implications of hybrid work for the interpersonal relations of employees within  the workplace?" The sub-issues are:

1. To what extent does decreasing days spent working in the office affect social cohesion amongst employees?

2. The role of virtual versus face-to-face communication in the formation of trust and team work.

3. The struggle to maintain a strong corporate culture in a hybrid working environment.

**Research hypotheses**

In accordance with the research problem, the hypotheses are:

1. The hybrid work model is positively associated with workplace flexibility and negatively associated with the quality of face-to-face social interaction among employees.

2. Face-to-face communication in the office on work days builds more trust and teamwork than online communication alone.

3. The negative consequences of hybrid work on social relations can be sufficiently avoided by good use of digital communication tools.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Notion and reasons for Hybrid work**

In terms of the way tasks are carried out and time is organized, the work environment has evolved significantly in recent years, which has accepted the hybrid work model as an effectual model for managing the workforce. The Conventional Work Model vs. the Hybrid Work Model Hybrid work is a system that mixes office and remote work, allowing you to splinter your work hours or days between a standard workplace and other spaces made possible by digital equipment. This pattern reflects task flexibility and is more focused on results than physical presence, and thereby transforms the relationship between employee and organization, as well as influencing management style, communication, team structure, and organizational culture [12]. The diffusion of hybrid work is influenced by sociological, technological, and financial characteristics. Advances in technology such as high-speed internet, cloud applications, and digital communication tools such as email and video conferencing allow employees to work effectively remotely from any location. The COVID-19 pandemic sped up the adoption of remote work, proving that a significant number of duties do not need to be done in a traditional office setting. Post-pandemic hybrid work being adopted by organizations speak of greater flexibility, increase in productivity and decrease in stress related to work [13]. The other is strong employee demand for flexibility, with flexible schedules tied to greater satisfaction, less burnout, and more motivation to work. This flexibility enhances the balance between work and life, and contributes positively to the well-being and performance of the employee, leading to less absenteeism and turnover of the employees [13].

The competitive and ever-evolving demands of today's work make flexible models necessary, with the ability to quickly adjust as market conditions dictate. The hybrid mode of working leads to the optimal use of human resources, team organization, the continuity of activities, and the cost of office spaces, that is, to the loosening up of financial resources to be used for training, technological advances, and innovation [14]. Hybrid work poses both challenges and opportunities in terms of organization. This

involves new thinking about rules of management, evaluation of work, time management, and internal communication, to reach objectives without undermining social relations. Therefore, an integrated model towards enhancing productivity and psychological well-being was proposed to improve team work and institutional performance.

Social Relationships in the Workplace Without social relationships in the workplace, institutional performance and team effectiveness would be compromised. It includes formal task-based interactions and informal daily moments, such as emotional and psychological support, building trust, and developing a work environments. There are a number of positive influences including enhanced teamwork, problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and innovation, and if these are lacking in an organization it can lead to isolation, low levels of motivation, and sometimes internal conflict. Social ties shape organizational culture, as they cultivate collaboration, respect, and shared understandings of doing-points. Regular interaction decreases anxiety and enhances resilience and commitment. Due to diminished face-to-face interactions and greater use of electronic communication, the relations are put to the test in this new mode of hybrid work. While technology provides options, face-to-face meetings are still essential for building trust and unity as a team.

**The Impact of Hybrid Work on Social Relationships**

Humanized output Hybrid work has reshaped social life through a mix of remote and in-person office work that provides flexibility while impacting on social ties. Although it fosters concentration and productivity on office days, remote work may limit informal interactions, producing isolation and disintegration of sense of organizational belonging. Good digital communication can address some of the negative impact with the Nichols and Borland papers but there are still issues such as how to weigh up the wishes of employees who want one side of the equation end of the office presence versus telework. The design of the system, the organizational culture and technology are playing a role in the success. Well-defined policies, along with a culture of openness, enable organizations to convert hybrid work challenges into opportunities for enhancing social engagement and strengthening digital communication capabilities. Sustaining an appropriate ratio of working remotely to meeting face to face is what helps to develop social cohesion and team resiliency [15], [16].

Influences on ones social relations in hybrid work Several interrelated things influence social relations in hybrid work:

1. Organizational Policies: Explicit expectations for work hours, attendance, and communication promote equity, decrease isolation, and encourage engagement and ambiguous policies may diminish social cohesion.

2. Digital Communication Tools: Adequate platforms for the execution of tasks and for informal interactions, the ineffectiveness of tools results in isolation and reduces social participation.

3. Organizational Culture: The quality of care of the members of the organization and the transparency and accessibility of the leadership team matter.

4. Communication Skills: Ability to express yourself effectively in person or remotely is very important; You must lead your remote teams with fairness and equity.

5. Time management to Organizational level: Employees who effectively manage their time and tasks have better social interactions; otherwise people isolate themselves forming voids.

6. Social Activities: Team-building, workshops or online meetups help enhance connection and trust that is crucial in a hybrid model. Effective hybrid work involves these considerations, and underpins group, cooperation, creativity, and job occupant happiness. The two make for a competitive and efficient type of work, however they do hinder social interactions, and this is why solutions must be found to resolve the challenges they pose, which can also represent new opportunities. This will enable the realization of organisational objectives with human interactions ensuring continuation.

## RESEARCH METHOD
### Questionnaire preparation

A 20-item questionnaire was developed on both the independent variable—hybrid work—and the dependent variable—social relationships in the work place. It further contained questions on mediating factors such as digital communication tools, organizational culture, and employee work-environment satisfaction. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) and open-ended questions were included in order to collect employees' views on the challenges and opportunities of hybrid working. B. Sample Selection A sample of 100 employees of the Martyrs Organization in Babil Governorate was chosen, which embraces hybrid work approach. The sample was drawn from all departments and levels of the organization. An overall of 85 questionnaires were submitted successfully for analysis, which is 85% of the total questionnaires and thus ensuring the reliability of the results. Questionnaires were administered according to a protocol that would allow the sample to experience all work days of the employees, either in-person or remotely.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### Data Analysis and Variable Correlation

Table 1. Distribution of Office Attendance Days and Level of Social Interaction

| Number of Employees | Average Social Interaction Rating | Employee Category |
|---|---|---|
| 25 | 4.5 | Mostly office-based |
| 40 | 4.7 | Balanced between office and remote work |
| 20 | 3.6 | Mostly remote-based |

Examination of Table 1 reveals that hybrid workers (office and remote) have the highest mean social interaction score, suggesting that the combination of on-site and remote work promotes colleague bonding and social ties. Employees with a mainly remote mode of working hold a somewhat lower mean rating, indicating the challenge associated with strong social interaction in the absence of physical co-presence.

**Table 2.** Evaluation of Digital Communication Tools' Effectiveness

| Ease of Use | Interaction Quality | Response Speed | Teamwork Support | Potential Challenges | Digital Tool |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | High | Fast | Excellent | Excess notifications, need for training | Microsoft Teams |
| Very High | Good | Fast | Medium | Limited collaboration features outside meetings | Zoom |
| Medium | Good | Very Fast | Good | Distraction due to message overload | Slack |
| High | Good | Fast | Medium | Fewer features compared to other tools | Google Meet |
| Very High | Good | Very Fast | Weak | Mixing personal and professional | WhatsApp Business |
| Medium | Low | Slow | Good | Delayed responses, low instant interaction | Email |

The assessment illustrates that the success of each instrument varies depending on work context and team needs. All-in-one platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, offer a seamless communication and collaboration interface that works best for teams that must share things daily. Zoom is great for live meetings but doesn't offer much else beyond the virtual sessions. Slack facilitates swift communication with a more active working rhythm, although it can be distracting with the incoming messages flow. Google Meet is easy to use but it features much fewer features than the competition. WhatsApp Business promotes quick and straightforward communication, but its professional organization is lacking as it combines personal and work communications. Although email is a slower and less interactive means of communication, it still holds value in the sending of official emails and the sharing of documents. Overall, an informed decision about which tools to use should be based on the team's needs and the level of interaction necessary, as well as which tasks are more appropriate for tightly coupled work, and which for looser communication.

**Table 3.** Impact of Organizational Culture on Employee Satisfaction with Social Relationships

| Level of Collaborative Culture Support | Number of Employees | Average Employee Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|
| High | 35 | 4.6 |
| Medium | 30 | 4.0 |
| Low | 20 | 3.4 |

Table 3 shows that the employees of organizations with collaborative, open participation culture are more satisfied with their social connections while strict, individualistic, and performance-focused culture had the lowest satisfaction. This is an indication that the organizatinal culture plays an important role in positive social relations in  hybrid work settings.
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**Table 4.** Employee Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance and Its Impact on Social Relationships

| Level of Balance | Number of Employees | Average Social Relationship Rating |
|---|---|---|
| High | 38 | 4.7 |
| Medium | 30 | 4.1 |
| Low | 17 | 3.5 |

The  results of Table 4 reveal that employees satisfied with their work-life balance were also more satisfied with their social relationships. Flexibility associated to working hours and place (e.g. working at home) has a positive effect on social relations since it alleviates psychological stress and particularly brings positive effects towards increasing involvement in social life of the organization. The analysis of the data reveals that hybrid work has a "double-edged impact" on social relationships in the workplace  :it is flexible, makes employees more productive and satisfied, but it also diminishes cooperation among workers if organizations do not adopt flexible policies and appropriate digital tools. The quality of social relationships can be influenced by interrelated  elements such as days observed for on-site attendance, impact of modes communication effectiveness, organizational culture, and employees' perception towards work-life balance. Therefore, enabling productive, socially-connecting hybrid work environments demands an alignment of flexible policies, intelligent technology use, and  an organizational culture that supports both performance and social connection.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** Hybrid work has become a decisive factor for social relations in the workplace. The flexibility of work-life balance improves employee satisfaction and socialization, especially for those who work both in the office and remotely. Face-to-face encounters are vital for creating trust and a sense of belonging, while digital tools cannot replace informal interactions crucial for human connection. The organizational culture also plays a significant role in fostering social cohesion, with

collaborative and inclusive cultures enhancing employee satisfaction. **Implication :** Organizations should establish flexible attendance policies to balance office and remote work, facilitating in-person interactions without compromising productivity. They must invest in powerful, user-friendly digital communication tools that support both formal and informal communication. Building an organizational culture that encourages teamwork, open dialogue, and active involvement from managers in social interactions is crucial. Additionally, providing training on hybrid communication and managing hybrid teams can reduce isolation. **Limitation :** The study highlights the importance of balancing remote and office work but does not explore the potential long-term effects of hybrid work on employees' mental health or work performance. It also lacks detailed insight into how different industries or organizational structures may uniquely impact the success of hybrid work models. **Future Research :** Future studies should examine the long-term effects of hybrid work on employee well-being and organizational performance. Further research can explore the role of industry-specific challenges in hybrid work adoption and the development of personalized strategies for improving social relationships in diverse work environments. Additionally, assessing the impact of hybrid work on work-related stress, team dynamics, and trust-building over time would provide valuable insights.

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**\* Prof. Dr. Basma Rahman Ouda (Corresponding Author)**
University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq

**Ahmed Adel Abboud**
University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq