LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN A HYBRID WORK ENVIRONMENT

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Dedication

To my husband Binod Menon and daughter Avika Menon, whose unconditional love and support have been my guiding light throughout this journey. Their encouragement and belief in my abilities have been the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence. This thesis is dedicated to them, as a token of my gratitude for always being there by my side.

There are 2 other very important people I want to dedicate my work to - Dileepan Moorkanat for his unwavering support and encouragement to do my best throughout the research journey. The other person is Dr. Ramani Ganesh who is the reason I undertook my doctoral journey, she is the inspiration behind it.

Last but not the least, to my parents, who have always been my rock and have been there for me through all my ups and downs.

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ABSTRACT

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This research explores a key element of our work environment in the post COVID-19 pandemic, that is hybrid working, its challenges and the impact it has had on the management side specifically on senior people leaders, Firstline people leaders and HR professionals in the Indian IT industry. The objective of this study was to research and understand the management sides' key challenges and then go on to identify the key skills that each of these roles would need to build or hone further, to effectively tackle these challenges. The hypotheses delved into the challenges that people managers and HR professionals experienced about hybrid work environments and how to go about handling the areas that need change. The findings of this research provide a ready reckoner to

organizations that are finding it difficult to manage a hybrid work environment, in the form

of top organizational policies that need to undergo change, digital tools required, professional

and leadership skill requirements and training and development needs.

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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In India and across the world, in many industries like Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabling Services (ITES), remote work has been in practice for many years. Remote work was typically offered to those employees who were critical to the organization but had to work from a remote location due to various situations like, managing the family, education etc. The Covid-19 pandemic,forced the adoption of the same in many other industries which were not ready to adopt it viz. Banking, Healthcare, Manufacturing etc.

With the opening up of the industries post pandemic, employees were asked to return back to their offices and many companies started to execute the work in a hybrid environment. As both employees and organizations became comfortable in working in a hybrid work environment which allowed them to execute their work either from home or from an office environment, many organizations realized this new work environment has its own benefits and challenges. It offered flexibility to the employees, and has a concept of both physical and digital workspaces. There is going to be a huge increase in the percentage of the workforce that would be operating in a hybrid environment in the coming years and a large number of challenges thrown by that.

The main focus of this study would be to understand and arrive at the skills required by leaders at various levels and human resource professionals to effectively manage challenges and implement these solutions within their respective organizations.

1.2 Research Problem

Many organizations have been providing remote working as an option for employees on a limited scale or on a need basis even before pandemic. Most of the research prior to 2020 had been focusing on the challenges of managing remote workers. The report by World Economic Forum (2018) anticipated that the trends towards online workers and platform workforces will increase in coming years and also outlines the skills needed by employees and leaders to operate in such an environment.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute report (Feb 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted labor markets globally during 2020. The consequences were sudden and severe, millions of people lost jobs, and others rapidly adjusted to working from home as offices closed.

This led to rapid digitalization and also the need to enable workers to handle their job completely remotely. Much research in the last three years has focused on the impact of COVID-19 on work culture and how leaders and human resources need to handle the challenges emerging out of the remote work environment.

According to Haas (HBR 2022) the most important concerns of hybrid working can be stated as the 5C Challenges - communication, coordination, connection, creativity, and

culture. Some companies, managers, and employees have been familiar with the five Cs for a long time because they've worked with geographically distributed, virtual teams for many years.

1.3 Purpose of Research

Many research has shown the challenges in handling a remote workforce and solutions as well as skills needed by HR as well as people leaders and senior management in handling this. According to (Singer-Velush, Sherman, & Anderson, 2020) some of the key areas that need attention include business continuity, employee wellbeing, and customer orientation. With the advent of digital technologies HR needs to create and modify applicable policies and performance systems to ensure that business standards are met without impacting employee wellbeing which mostly arises due to the negative effects of digital working in particular with regard to social interactions (Parry & Battista, 2019).

There has been an interesting finding that on one hand workplace stressors can lead to personal life disturbing mental health, on the other hand remote workplaces reduce boundaries between work and personal life causing personal stress to spread to work, and ultimately resulting in burnout (Peasley, Hochstein, Britton, Srivastava, & Stewart, 2020). The research by Peasley and colleagues (2020) indicate that despite the many advantages offered by remote work including flexibility, ease of handling domestic issues, it brings on its own challenges when employees experience a "mix of business and home life", which causes troubles for both managers and workers in terms of long-term wellbeing . As a result

of all these the overall employee wellbeing has an impact on motivation and performance outcomes of employees.

During and after pandemic there has been an increased focus on the physiological and mental health of people in the organization (Spence, 2020). Many employees will be happier to return to their offices at the same time others prefer to continue working remotely due to the benefits offered by remote working, companies reframing the workplaces should take into consideration these differences.

For workers who are predominantly remote, social isolation has a negative impact on them. Therefore, HR practitioners need to come up with mechanisms to maintain social interaction among employees who are working remotely and those that are in office space. Some of the techniques would involve Small-group meetings, networking, virtual connections to bridge isolation as work relationships are a source of motivation (Singer-Velush, Sherman, & Anderson, 2020).

With the advent of video meetings and virtual events, many HR leaders are trying to maintain the flexibility and collaboration by redesigning jobs, duties, and work processes (Narayandas, Hebbar, & Liangliang, 2020).

HRM should help companies to transform their business processes into the digital space by upgrading employee skills, create organization culture for adaptability to digitalization, and keeping work-life balance to maintain employee health, motivation, and efficiency. This paper looks at all the above literature and synthesizes the skills and

competencies needed by human resource as well as people leaders along with senior leadership to handle the above challenges.

The introduction of a hybrid work environment brings its own challenges for team members and leaders alike (Agrawal, Kumar, Shah & Budhwar, 2021). This also calls for building a new set of skills and management frameworks for leaders and human resource professionals so as to be better prepared to combat the challenges of hybrid working. There has been many a research conducted on the challenges faced in a hybrid work environment and also many solutions have been proposed for solving these challenges. (Gigauri, 2020), (Kolluru, Krishnan & Kolluru, 2021)

1.4 Significance of the Study

According to an article published in The New Indian Express newspaper (Nov 2021), around 70% of organizations are looking at hybrid work models beyond the pandemic, according to the Return to Workplace survey conducted by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM). "Organizations with a workforce of 1,000 or more are likely to adopt the hybrid work model at 83% as compared to the tech industry average of 70%," it said, adding IT services are likely to be the early adopters of a long-term hybrid work model.

I have been a Human Resource professional for the past 18 years and the impact of workplace related changes and its effects on business performance and employee experience has been an area of interest and intrigue for me. Post-Covid era has seen the emergence of a hybrid

work environment and has brought along with it a unique set of opportunities and challenges for businesses to establish a new workplace ethos.

While there is an understandable difference between employee demands and employer attitudes towards hybrid work. But to move ahead, you need to reach a common ground. And every organization needs happy and committed employees to succeed. At the present time, all signs point towards hybrid work as a decisive factor for both employee retention and recruiting top talent.

Most of the current research has focused on challenges in hybrid working from an employee perspective and solutions for solving them. Leadership development has always held a special place for me in the Human Resource domain. I realized that this research will help me understand and better deploy my research findings to enable leadership and human resource professionals to enhance their skills and succeed in the hybrid working environment.

The main focus of this study would be to help organizations and human resource professionals to understand and arrive at the skills required by leaders at various levels and human resource professionals to effectively manage challenges and implement these solutions within their respective organizations which will enable productivity enhancements, higher employee engagement levels, talent retention and better customer success stories.

1.5 Research Purpose and Questions

Some of the challenges of the Information Technology industry include the lack of connectedness for employees who are remote, balancing work and life for both in-office and remote workers, communication and cohesion within a team in a hybrid workplace, real time collaboration within the team, infrastructure and work environment at home and office.

According to different research already carried out in this area most organizations have adopted the hybrid work model especially in the IT Products and IT services domain. Lot of research has been done on the challenges faced by human resources, team members and leaders with the introduction of a hybrid work environment and also many solutions have been proposed for solving these challenges.

The main focus of this research would be on the skills and competencies needed for human resource personnel to formulate policies, implement systems and provide guidelines that need to be implemented to manage the hybrid workforce. The study intends to gather the key list of professional and leadership skills needed through a survey, employing quantitative and qualitative methods and then applying various analytical tools to analyze this data. It will also recommend the kind of new skills human resource personnel, people leaders and senior management need to build to effectively manage challenges and implement these solutions within their respective organizations in the hybrid work environment. The study will also help senior managers to identify areas that they will need to take action on to manage these workplace transitions and remain engaged and productive.

Q1. What kind of skills human resource professionals need to build to manage the new age hybrid work environment?

Q2. What kind of skills people leaders need to develop to manage the hybrid workforce?

Q3. How do senior leaders support teams to manage these workplace transitions and remain engaged and productive?

The researcher is looking at opportunities to identify specific leadership and professional skills needed, from the responses to the aforesaid questions and based on various literature reviews that have come up during this research. The study expects to offer significant and practical insights to human resource personnel, senior management leaders and people leaders to get better results and employee experiences in the hybrid work environment.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction: Leadership, Human resources management and Hybrid work

The objective of this section is to help us understand the definitions on Leadership and Human resource management which will be applied in the rest of the research. This section also helps us get insights into the literature review of the different hybrid working model environments, challenges that are encountered in the hybrid working environments and also solutions provided by various previous researchers to solve the above challenges with a focus on the Indian Information Technology environment.

2.1.1 Leadership and Human Resource Management definitions

2.1.1.a Leadership definitions

As per Cambridge dictionary leader is "a person who manages or controls other people, esp. because of his or her ability or position". Napoleon Bonaparte as cited in Definitions of Leadership by Scholars (2019) said, "A leader is a dealer in hope, from which an important characteristic of a leader "inspiring and motivating the people, giving them hope" seems to have been involved. Hicks and Gullet (1975) said that a leader was a person who instructed and controlled people in order to secure predefined goals or targets.

As per Muhamad and Sameen in (Leader and leadership: Historical Development of the terms and critical review of literature, Annals of the University of Craiova for Journalism,

Communication and Management) Leader and Leadership have a long history. In their research they mention as per Stogdill (1950) the word "leader" originated back in the 1300s and the word "leadership" emerged in the 1800s (P. 7). The definition has evolved through the years and the same qualities of leaders have swung between good and bad over the years. There are also regional variations to these.

In the 2000s the leadership qualities evolved to be the ability to go through thick and thin, despite challenges and hardships. As per Show, Erickson and Harvey (2011) "Leaders are not always interested in effecting change for the purpose of benefiting the organization and its members as a whole: rather, the leader may be more interested in personal outcomes", bringing in a subtle shift from organization focus to people focus. The focus of a leader is on human resource development and long term goals than the short term ones. Javaid and Mirza (2012) emphasized on cognitive and mental ability for a successful leader while Locke and Kirkpatrick (1991) highlighted the importance of high moral and ethical values for a successful leader.Bass (2019) said, "The primary purpose and value of a leader and leadership practice is to inspire others, deemed followers, to willingly engage together to achieve a goal" (p. 1).

2.1.1.b Human Resource Management definitions

Human Resource Management has been defined by many renowned authors over a period of time. One of the earliest ones was by Glueck (1979), who was a USA Professor in Personnel/HRM, he defines in his textbook titled Foundations of Personnel that Personnel is

that function of all enterprises which provides for effective utilization of human resources to achieve both objectives of the enterprise and the satisfaction and development of the employees.

In 1989 four authors namely Heneman, Schwab, Fossum, and Dyer in their book titled Personnel/Human Resource Management have defined HRM as a set of functions or activities that are designed to influence the effectiveness of an organization's employees. As per this definition, a set of functions exist in an organization and they are aimed at influencing the effectiveness of employees of the organization. Attraction, performance, retention, attendance, satisfaction, and other are considered as personnel/human resource outcomes and they are achieved by personnel/human resource activities.

Aswathappa (2017), is an Indian academician who defined HRM as the application of management principles to management of people in an organization. Further in his book titled Human Resource Management, he says HRM is a management function that helps managers plan, recruit, select, train, develop, remunerate and maintain members for an organization.

In recent years, Dessler (2017) in his fifteenth edition of the textbook titled Human Resource Management has defined HRM as the process of acquiring, training, appraising, and compensating employees, and of attending to their labor relations, health and safety, and fairness concern.

2.1.2 Remote working and its evolution

The origin of Remote working in software industries and its evolution into a hybrid work environment has been well researched. (Reddy and Kannamani, 2018).

The concept of Remote working has its roots in the term Telework. The term "Telework" is synonymous with 'work shifting, telecommuting, work from home, e-work, virtual work, remote work, distance working, distributed work and flexible working'. In the early 1970s, with the cost of employees traveling to offices skyrocketing due to increased oil prices as a result of the oil embargo, the concept of telework was started. Telework refers to a wide range of work preparations including mobile work, work in any location outside the usually accepted work premises of the employer such as work at a shared office location, and home-based work (Reddy and Kannamani, 2018).

Remote workers are usually employees, that means they work for one company on the basis of official employment or working contract, have schedule and obligations, regularly get salary and have social protection.The International Labour Organization (2020) considers working from home as home-based telework. The only and main difference between these concepts is that teleworking may include various locations out-of-office while working from home is limited within employee's premises.

Work from Home (WFH) refers to the approach where an employee can perform his assigned responsibilities from the comfort of the home. Working from home is defined as people working from their home or from another location of their choice other than the working area by payment which is provided by the employer.Working from home is having

lots of use in recent years. Since the growth of the networking from home indicates the employee can finish their work within their own premises (Baruch Y, 2001). It provides the employee flexibility and ease to accomplish the goals set by his employer in the comfort of his/her home. It helps the professional to preserve a very good work-life balance and also allows the company to get the job done. Most of the organizations today are offering this option to their employees.

Remote work didn't begin in light of the current pandemic and has been present since before the industrial revolution. Jack Nilles coined the term "telecommuting" in 1972 (Nilles, 2016). Research for telecommuting began shortly after 1970 (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015). Telecommuting and remote work are different, but they do build on one another. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "telecommuting is the activity of working at home while communicating with your office" (Cambridge, 2021). According to Olson (Olson, 1983, p.182), "Remote work generally refers to organizational work performed outside of the normal organization confines of space and time".

Telecommuting was a term used to refer to those who both worked entirely from home offices and those who shortened their commutes by traveling to nearby regional offices. These nearby regional offices were known as "Satellite Work Centers." According to Olson's article (1983), "Remote Office Work: Changing Work Patterns in Space and Time," the aim of this approach was to provide a critical mass of employees, the necessary social interaction and a sufficiently deep hierarchical structure to provide adequate

management on site" (Olson, 1983). Limiting the commute for employees and lessening traffic jams in highly-populated cities was the secondary objective.

As per The New Way of Working: Hybrid Work Model (Cifci, 2022) , Though the teleworking was started with the aim of cost cutting , teleworking techniques permitted employees to stay physically away from the office on certain days, frequently part-time, at their homes, co-working spaces, or other public areas such as libraries and cafes, (Baker, 2021).

In the book Work from home : multi-level perspectives on the new normal (Kumar, Agrawal, Budhwarl, 1968) refers to   International Labour Organization (ILO), report published in 2020, due to COVID-19 pandemic around 68% of the world's total workforce, 81% of employers had to comply with "recommended or required workplace closures" (p. 5). Many organizations had to adapt to this sudden unforeseen change and develop alternative plans to respond to this situation. They adopted Work from home (WFH) as an optimal option.

Employment is an act of engaging in value-creating activity for an exchange of capital or value. Work-from-home or work-from-office, each would need a certain degree of production of value that satisfies contractual obligations between the employer and the employee. Work-from-home is defined as a "working arrangement in which a worker fulfills essential responsibilities of his/her job while remaining at home using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (ILO, 2020).

Recently there has been a blur of home and office boundaries due to work-related technology spilling over into non-work hours. The various technologies people use to share, distribute, gather information and to communicate through computers and computer networks are referred to as ICT (Sharaievska, 2017, p.401). When ICT pertaining to work is used outside of work hours it transforms to, 'work-extending technology (WET)', 'computer-aided supplemental work at home' and 'technology-assisted supplemental work' (Derks & Bakker 2014, Towers et al, 2005). Inferentially, WET means "work-related activities that take place beyond the spatial and temporal bounds of the workday" (Navarro & Helms, 2020, p. 3). The form and application of institutional logics are bound to change as the boundary between work and home spaces blurr and may have a far-reaching impact on individuals and organizations (Kramer & Kramer, 2020).

2.2 Brief Overview of Hybrid work environment and its evolution

2.2.1. Definition of Hybrid work environment

Hybrid work is defined as a blended strategy that combines a layout based on being physically present at the office with a remote working system in its most basic form (Cook, Mor, and Santos, 2020). As per i4CP report, many organizations have started transitioning into hybrid work as a norm, post pandemic. This method can be implemented in a variety of ways, including having certain employees work remotely while others work in the office, or having the same people work in the office on particular days and hours while working remotely the rest of the time (Iqbal et al, 2021).

Though hybrid working has become popular with the Covid-19 pandemic phase across the globe, it is a model that was adopted by many organizations prior to the pandemic and is expected to become increasingly popular in the coming years regardless of crises (Williamson et al., 2021). Due to this, it is even more critical to investigate the concept in-depth. According to a study, the future of working life will be shaped by hybrid systems (Williamson et al., 2021).

As per HBR article - Our Work-from-Anywhere Future (Choudhury, 2020), in a hybrid work environment people transitioned from traditional, co-located work to remote work where people moved away from physical offices to their homes, coworking spaces, or other community locations, such as coffee shops and public libraries, for occasional days, on a regular part-time basis, or full-time, with the expectation that they would come into the office periodically. Workers are also gaining control over their schedules, allowing them to make time for school pickups, errands, or midday exercise without impacting the work deliverables. Team members saved time by commuting less and have tended to take fewer sick days.

With the advent of the internet, email, broadband connectivity, laptops, cell phones, cloud computing, and video telephony, the adoption of WFH has increased in the 2000's (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). As they note in their article, this trend was accelerated by the need to comply with, for example, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and mandates of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Millennials were excited by the idea of traveling the world while still employed.

One of the study (Bloom et al, 2015) found that when employees opted in to WFH policies, their productivity increased by 13%. When, nine months later, the same workers were given an option between continuing from home and returning to the office, those who chose the former saw even further improvements: They were 22% more productive than they had been before the experiment. This suggests that it can be different for different people and one should probably determine for themselves the situation (home or office) that suits them best.

In "The New Way of Working Hybrid Work Model" (Çiftci, 2022) we can see definitions for Hybrid Working Options. Businesses can implement hybrid work in different ways. These practices are differentiated based on the need for employees to understand how much of their time they spend at work and how much they spend at home. The most common hybrid operation options highlighted are -

2.2.1.a Office Centered Hybrid Model:

Employees are mainly required to work from the office, and are allowed to work from home or a different place one or two days a week in this arrangement. Businesses that need more coordination to work effectively are the ones that choose office-centric hybrid models (Hinds, 2021)

2.2.1.b Fully Flexible Hybrid Model:

This model gives the flexibility to employees as to when they want to work from the office or from home/another location. Employee cooperation and management can be tricky in this method and hence needs special focus (Hinds, 2021).

2.2.1.c Split Weekly Model :

This model is partly flexible with the option of working in the office for a few days in a week and working remotely for a few days. This method helps the managers to stay connected with their teams on a regular basis (Hinds, 2021).

2.2.1.d Week sharing model:

In this model, months are divided into weeks as per the various departments' requirements and the respective department will be in the office in those specific weeks. This method allows teams to be together for 1 week and enables team togetherness and faster results (Çiftci, 2022).

According to an article published in The New Indian Express newspaper (Nov 2021), around 70% of organizations are looking at hybrid work models beyond the pandemic, according to the Return to Workplace survey conducted by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM). "Organizations with a workforce of 1,000 or more are likely to adopt the hybrid work model at 83% as compared to the tech industry average of 70%," it said, adding IT services are likely to be the early adopters of a long-term hybrid work model.

The introduction of a hybrid work environment brings its own challenges for team members and leaders alike (Agrawal et al., 2021). This also calls for building a new set of skills and management frameworks for leaders and human resource professionals so as to be better prepared to combat the challenges of hybrid working. There has been much research conducted on the challenges faced in a hybrid work environment and also many solutions have been proposed for solving these challenges. (Gigauri, 2020; Kolluru, et al. 2021)

2.2.2 Benefits of the hybrid work environment

As per a research (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021). Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work (Research Report No. 14/2021) hybrid work environment, is one of the most important innovations brought to the workplace by the changing face of the new century. In the above study they highlight the benefits and shortcomings of the hybrid work environment. One needs to assess hybrid work from the perspective of businesses and individuals.

One of the most important benefits of the hybrid work system is that it helps to strike a balance between the need for employees to be in the office to engage with the organization and their coworkers and at same time have the independence and comfort of working from home (Baker, 2021). In other words, the hybrid model allows employees to adapt their work lives to their everyday lives rather than scheduling work around fixed hours spent in an office. This will enable them to work with less stress and, as a result, produce more output.

Spending more time with their families and working comfortably at home, helps lower stress in addition to lowering employee costs such as the time they spend commuting to and from traffic. (Iqbal et al., 2021).

For businesses, the biggest benefit is that the infrastructure, maintenance, and service costs associated with the office environment considerably decrease because employees aren't spending all of their time there (Grzegorczyk et al., 2021) and the infrastructure can be used for better time sharing. Remote working also gives the organizations to choose from a far bigger pool of smart, creative individuals with the skills they require (Beno, 2021). Combining the working from home with working from the office is beneficial, as opposed to solely working from home, was found by Halford (2005).

In a study conducted in a finance firm that uses the hybrid working method. In the same paper he claimed that spatial hybridity has altered the nature of work, organization, and management in the local, organizational, and digital domains. Remote working and flexible working hours have a big positive impact on creativity and performance was found by Moll and De Leede (2016). In their research based on a series of in-depth interviews. Hybrid work increases employees' feelings of autonomy, resulting in increased trust between employers and employees, is a finding in the paper produced by The Work Foundation and Newcastle University Business School in (July 2021).Further analysis reveals that the hybrid model, which enables at least the occasional journey to a shared workspace, minimizes the detrimental impact of teleworking on commitment compared to remote working.

As per (Çiftci 2022) a Deloitte research says that 38% of participants from various sectors and departments believe hybrid work improves their productivity,while 39.2% believe it has neither good nor negative impact. This was attributed to a lower number of meetings, the freedom to concentrate without office noise and division, and the fact that work that requires individual focus is more comfortable (Sezgin, 2020), by the participants who responded positively. The review of the literature shows that, when remote working is included in the hybrid working model; it can be stated that positive aspects of traditional work, such as social relations and organizational commitment, coexist with positive aspects of hybrid work, such as flexibility at work, low labor costs, greater satisfaction, and lower stress levels for employees.

As per HBR article (Choudhury, 2020) it talks about working-from-anywhere, there are advantages for the employees and organizations.

> For individuals: the important benefit was the freedom to work from anywhere in the world. For dual-career couples, the difficulty of looking for jobs for both partners in the same location was done away with. Spending more time with family, better recreational opportunities hence improved quality of life also led to overall happiness.

Millennials were hugely happy with the work-from-anywhere concept since it gave them the opportunity to become "digital nomads," traveling the world while still employed. Cost of living was another theme, as employees could possibly work out of lost cost areas.

> For organizations: Work-from-anywhere led to increased employee engagement which is an important parameter for any organization. It also showed improvement in productivity for certain kinds of tasks, but it is yet to be seen if the same would apply for all kinds of tasks and roles. Fewer employees working in the office means smaller work space requirements and reduced real estate costs. WFA programs also help increase the organization's potential talent pool as employees based in different locations can be considered for different roles. Finally, WFA can help reduce attrition as employees are able to better take care of their priorities without compromising on their work aspects (Choudhury, 2020)

2.2.3 Shortcomings of the Hybrid work environment

Some of the key challenges faced by employees were increased working hours. The increased use of technology led to employees being expected to be available for more hours, working or logged in most of the time. It has also introduced a blur between work and non-work hours.

It also demanded for a new set of skills for employees and this led to an increased focus on employee training and customer relationship management to enable them to work more effectively, but the key issue was finding time for training. Employees had to train themselves online, attend webinars by subject matter experts, and volunteer for knowledge sharing sessions all this led to increased time commitments and time away from their core work.

> **Work related stress**

In the technology- enabled service sector, high levels of work-related stress have been reported. The stress was due to being connected as employees were expected to be connected most of the time due to technology. In a remote work situation team members have to continuously engage in telephonic conversations, online meetings, or training sessions with hardly any breaks. Many of them felt lonely, disconnected and isolated due to reduced interactions with colleagues. Looks like virtual meetings have not been able to fulfill the interpersonal bonding, commitment, team spirit and trust that fostered through physical presence at the workplace (Jaiswal, Arun, 2020).

> **Non-work related stress**

Non-work related stress was induced due to widespread fear of COVID virus, ambiguity related to its nature, lack of conclusive information about its impact, and an increasing number of reported cases and deaths across the globe. There were two opposing scenarios: employees staying alone felt depressed due to lack of interpersonal connection, isolation and lack of belongingness with the organization; while the employees with working spouses, children, and dependents were finding it difficult to balance their work and family demands with everyone being at home (Jaiswal, Arun, 2020).

> Productivity

There has been reduced levels of productivity as compared to working from the office. Some of the factors attributed by technology-enabled service sector employees for lower levels of productivity were poor internet connectivity, lack of adequate ergonomics,

uncertainty related to work outcomes, lack of schedule, and lack of motivation, despite working for longer hours than usual.

2.3 Impact of pandemic on hybrid environment

As seen in the above sections, hybrid work has been evolving over the years and some companies were experimenting with this model even prior to the pandemic. The early part of the pandemic forced organizations to have a 100% remote working and it also exposed some major challenges for organizations in managing remote work.

As per the following research, challenges faced in a hybrid work environment and also many solutions have been proposed for solving these challenges. (Gigauri, Oct 2020), (Kolluru, Dec 2021), (Jaiswal, 2020) and Post COVID-19 Work Strategies and Implications (Kolluru et al, Dec 2021), (Choudhury, Dec 2020) and (Haas February, 2022).

2.3.1 Communication

When the workforce is spread across, communication becomes difficult. Despite that it creates several communication challenges. In the transition to fully remote work everyone had had to overcome technological difficulties including using collaboration tools like Teams, Zoom etc. (Haas, 2022).

While tools like Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangouts can help people working in similar time zones but not for those spread far across. Therefore it became important for WFA organizations to become comfortable with asynchronous

communication, whether through a customized intracompany portal, or even a shared Google document in which geographically distributed team members write their questions and comments and trust that other team members in distant time zones will respond at the first opportunity. The good part was employees are more likely to share ideas, plans, and documents and welcome feedback. The pressure to present refined work is less than it would be in more formal, synchronous team meetings. It was noted that employees used to traditional communication methods like emails, phone calls, and meetings found it difficult to adjust to the change and had to provide training. (Haas, 2022).

However with the advent of hybrid work when employees started returning to the office, organizations realized that their video conferencing systems weren't fully geared up to the needs of hybrid working including how to operate them. Then there are the other practical difficulties hybrid work presents. There have been issues of logging from one system vs everyone logging from their individual systems, which could result in bandwidth constraints.

Another non-technological challenge that has been observed is that different individuals have differing ways of being present in calls. Some people are more comfortable conversing over virtual screens than others and this in addition to the power, status, and language differences that already exist within organizations. This creates new barriers to communication in work settings.

2.3.2 Coordination

All collaborative work involves coordination, but working in hybrid teams presents significantly more coordination challenges than working face to face. The risk is that what researchers have called "faultlines" can easily emerge between those who work together in person and those who work remotely. Because of the extra effort required to coordinate with remote teammates, they get left out of small exchanges and minor decisions made by those who are working together in the office. Over time, as people get accustomed to who's looped in and who's not, they can get left out of bigger conversations and more important decisions. This can also impact effective real time brainstorming, and problem-solving (Haas, 2022).

2.3.3 Knowledge sharing

Another challenge of remote working organizations is that employees may not reach out to each other as much, when they need help. A working handbook can be a good solution in such a scenario, where it can provide guidance and be a central repository. Employees can have the choice to edit the content. Ahead of meetings, organizers can post agendas to relevant sections so that invitees can read and be prepared. Post session recordings can also be provided to keep everyone on the same page.

2.3.4 Connection

Even bigger than the connection challenges brought out by technological communication and logistical coordination is the problem of social connections, and how they can be disrupted or lost entirely in a remote work environment. As a result there is this potential for people to socially and professionally, feel disconnected and isolated. Video Conferencing could be a

solution for this but still doesnt bridge the gap completely as compared to face-to-face meetings. Without in-person check-ins it is difficult to gauge signs like burn-outs and conflicts in teams. Many organizations keep informal get-togethers virtually or hobby sessions to help employees de-stress and also provide teams a chance to come together apart from work reasons. Use of professional networks and mentoring relationships are very critical for advancing in the workplace, and it has been observed that building and sustaining these is particularly challenging already for women and minorities. Many researchers have pointed out that personal connections are socially sustaining and important for everyone's psychological well-being. In this scenario, working in a hybrid environment creates two groups of individuals - a "dominant class" of those who feel like they're central to the organization and strongly committed to it and an "underclass" of those who feel peripheral and disconnected not only from the work, but also from the social life that creates meaning and bonds employees more closely to the organization. As a result the latter group may be less happy and less committed and are more likely to search for opportunities outside the organization (Haas, 2022)

2.3.5 Creativity

As per Harvard Business Review article, Creativity is the ability to create something novel and appropriate, creativity is essential to the entrepreneurship that gets new businesses started and that sustains the best companies after they have reached global scale (Amabile and Khaire, HBR Magazine, 2008).It is found that hybrid work impedes creativity in different ways. As far as collective creativity is concerned, people may come up with great

ideas in an office space through more fluid conversations, sidebars, and unexpected things that can happen when we kick ideas around with others or work intensively on solving a problem together. The brainstorm via zoom, using programmed times and formats for generating ideas may well not be able to generate quality ideas as the interactive face to face sessions (Haas, 2022)

Even individual creativity is hampered by reduced social interactions and lack of spontaneous conversations with colleagues, not seeing random artifacts in each other's cubicles, and even the not viewing changes of scenery involved in going from home to work. Though we know having time alone can help people generate novel ideas and insights, it isn't clear that working alone over many days or weeks will prove generative for employees who must be constantly creative or innovative.

2.3.6 Culture

One of the key concerns of senior leaders is how to socialize these newcomers and integrate them into the company's culture, whether they're interns, entry-level hires, or seasoned executives. The existing employees have all worked together closely before the pandemic and knew plenty about how to do so effectively, in addition to their understanding of the company's norms, values, and expectations. This becomes more acute as existing employees leave and new ones join (Haas, 2022)

Corporate culture is a critical element for signaling the organization's distinctiveness to potential new recruits, especially in industries where firms compete heavily for talent, such

as tech, consulting, or banking. When employees never or rarely come to the office or spend time together, it's very difficult to maintain the company's distinctive "feel" Further organizations may find it difficult to differentiate themselves from each other in the war for talent.

2.4 Challenges faced due to hybrid environment by people managers and HR

In the research by The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Resource Management Practices and Future Marketing (Kalogiannidis, 2021) and HRM Challenges and Opportunities in the Times of COVID-19 (Atkeson 2020) mentions that a major HR challenge created as a result of the pandemic is the significantly changed work conditions, due to remote working, changes in policies and processes.

The P-E fit theory says that people are inclined to and also get selected by organizations that have the culturals traits, values and work features similar to the beliefs, desires and values of that individual (He & Harris, 2020). Hence when the work environment changes the benefits derived from the organization also changes and both employees and organization have to find new ways of establishing that work relationship. Similarly due to the pandemic the work relationship changed for most employees (Kalogiannidis et al., 2020).

In A Study on COVID-19 Pandemic and Challenges for Human Resource Professionals (Anand, 2020) talks about how the pandemic situation has led to an unprecedented dependence on HR function for the employees well being and to support them in accepting

the changes brought about by the pandemic to the working conditions. As per Human Resource Management during Covid-19 Pandemic: An Insight on the Challenges for Human Resource Practitioners (Nchuchuwe, Adeyi, 2021) some of the Human Resources Management challenges brought out by having a hybrid work environment are an extension of issues that were faced when the work switched to completely remote during pandemic. Some of the key areas to focus are given below -

2.4.1. Mental Health, Wellbeing and Motivation

As per a Harvard Business Review article, (Greenwood, Anas, 2021) due to the pandemic, many employees experienced stress, anxiety and emotional well-being concerns as they themselves and/or their families got directly or indirectly impacted by it. The change in the work hybrid environment, especially the remote work aspect of it has brought in many changes which can potentially impact employee motivation negatively. Some of the factors include employees experiencing the fear of losing their jobs, facing the fear of increasing workload and reduced wages. Poor communication from supervisors, and constant stress were other factors This has impacted the wellbeing of employees and HR professionals need to support the teams and leaders to handle these. Employers had to up their wellness programs and insurance policies to ensure that employees and their families were taken care of.

2.4.2. Managing Remote and adaptable Work

While many organizations had remote working policies before the pandemic, the majority of them were forced to adopt remote working, also once the pandemic set in most organizations had to become digital. The HR had to ensure that the staff was equipped with modern technologies (laptops, internet access) and acquired required skills (Baska, 2020). HR also needed to equip managers to lead the workforce without on-site supervision. When employees started working from home, especially for married ones, the stress of having both partners at home as well as managing children at home in addition to managing work resulted in anxiety and stress (Soman, Mohanan, 2022) . To get effective work output people leaders need to set both individual goals as well as team goals as it has been proved by various reach completely remote workers will need to collaborate with at least 3-5 other teams while working. HR needs to enable leaders to emphasize individual and group targets in their discussions with team members. Changing the working conditions, making policy and process changes became the "new typical" work expectations for HR. (Rofcanin& Anand, 2020).

2.4.3. Handling Lack of Agility and Making quick modifications to policies

Prior to the pandemic, many HR teams were not used to being agile and quick, as most decisions had to be well thought out and executed in a planned manner. However during pandemic times taking quick decisions and actions became very important. Hence lack of agility could become a handicap that HR function could experience in such a situation (Karman, 2019).

The new work scenarios that emerged during pandemic and beyond have required rapid amendments to company policies to be in sync with Covid-19 guidelines. HR Leaders need to be accountable for the implementation of these policy changes on an ongoing basis which adds to their workload. It is also important for HR organizations to put in place some effective communication practices to ensure timely and accurate cascading of these (Elayan, 2021).

2.4.4. Rigor in Employee Communication

Communication tools underwent changes during the pandemic times and it was challenging for HR professionals to find the best tools to ensure that employees got all the relevant communication at the right time and via the most impactful channel. This otherwise has a risk of the relevant communication not cascading to the employee audience (Elayan, 2021).

When the work became remote it was very critical to manage communication with and among employees. The HR leaders had to identify different methods of communication to suit the needs of different workers especially for remote working. New communication tools like zoom, video conferencing, e-mails had to be introduced to bridge the communication challenges, even though many employees were not conversant with them.

2.4.5. Handling Uncertainty

Pandemic situations brought about a lot of anxiety and uncertainty as to what situations employees would have to further face. Hybrid working in itself was a huge change

for many and took time for employees to get used to. HR professionals had to specifically focus on making sense from the chaotic situation brought about by the pandemic-led hybrid working environment (Nangia, Mohsin, 2020).

2.4.6. Enhancing Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a major area of work for HR professionals and with a hybrid work environment this area got much impacted. Employees started working remotely leading to lesser options to meet face-to-face and engage and collaborate with other employees. The rejuvenation brought about by meeting and sharing with others was lost and HR professionals focused on bridging this gap (Chanana, 2020).

2.4.7 Building A Culture of compassion and trust

One of the qualities that gathered much significance in times of pandemic and hence hybrid working is empathy. The art of practicing compassion and trust became very significant. Different employees were going through different challenges in their personal and professional lives which had to be dealt with empathy. Wellness programs in many organizations started focusing on bringing these qualifications to the forefront and encouraging everyone to practice the same (Shah, 2021).

2.4.8 Moonlighting

Moonlighting means one person holding more than one job at a time (Dickey et al, 2011) . This is an increasing trend seen with the onset of a hybrid working environment

(George and George, 2022). Employees could moonlight because of various reasons like, better earning options, getting experience, pursuing some hobby-related work etc. With the remote working with no direct visibility into employees work hours and environment the chances of them indulging in moonlighting increased.

What this suggests is that the pandemic has drastically changed the operations of Human resource management. There needs to be a way to properly manage these changes as lack of them can create disorderliness and reduction in productivity. It is imperative for HR managers to be well work equipped in order to be able to handle the challenges as they emerge in the hybrid work environment.

2.4.9 Sustaining hybrid working in the post-pandemic environment

As the pandemic is subsiding, organizations have realized that having employees away from workplaces most of the time has had its own impact in areas like speed of execution, employees learn best when they are working side-by-side and 76% employers are concerned about the deteriorating company culture. This has made employers start encouraging team interpersonal skills collaboration, company culture and innovation.

According to a LinkedIn survey (The Economic Times, Sept 2022) of around 23,000 workers, employees are increasingly seeking out bosses who show empathy and compassion in the workplace. Additionally, 61% say soft skills in the workplace are just as important as hard skills. From an employee perspective as a result of this they have had to relocate, lose some of the flexibility offered by work from home, commuting challenges especially in

congested metros. This has really raised the question whether hybrid work is really sustainable long term and both people leaders and human resources need to come up with strategies which will help both organizations and employees.

2.5 Skills required to combat hybrid environment

The report by World Economic Forum (2018) anticipated that the trends towards online workers and platform workforces will increase in coming years and also outlines the skills needed by employees and leaders to operate in such an environment.

As per Economic Times HR world (Oct, 2021) Hybrid work culture requires leaders to up their skills to face emerging change.

As per the Randstad Work Monitor report, leaders of the hybrid working model will require varied skills and capabilities (Wright, Sept 2021). "A paradigm shift is required to prepare such leaders for the future who will need skills such as ability to make data-driven decisions/technical re-learning, quick adoption of digital and technological evolution, higher emotional intelligence for remote leadership, ability to instill managerial mindset among teams to drive autonomy and accountability amongst teams, learning agility and effective storytelling.

In the post-pandemic world, leaders need to ensure that organizational culture is not an unintentional consequence of their actions, and that they need to take actions to intentionally shape it. This helps in enhancing leadership including communication to share,

educate and empower, better listening, embracing diversity and enhanced motivation and collaboration.

Leaders need to spend more time developing, upskilling and recognising employees. They need to build the ability to manage change and ambiguity. They need to work on building trust and better connect with the employees

People skills need to take prominence over hard skills. A high level of emotional intelligence is required to bring collaboration, empathy, compassion and resilience while working with a dispersed workforce.

As per Competencies for Success in Remote and Hybrid Working Contexts by Roberta Sawatzky MA, CPHR Okanagan College School of Business Nathan Sawatzky Trust & Safety Lead, Supercell it is found that " K.S.A.O.s (Knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes) are particularly relevant in virtual teams—meaning that such KSAOs are more relevant for individual team members' and the team's success in virtual context than in traditional teamwork" (Drumm et al., para. 4). There was specific highlight on competencies that relate to technology, motivation and self-efficacy (para. 7). Team empowerment resulted in a team's sense of purpose, autonomy, and impact; ultimately, this empowerment reflects in higher levels of performance (Kirkman et al., 2004). In the same research it has been found that team empowerment may be more important to the performance of virtual teams than it is to the performance of collocated teams because of the unique nature of virtual team tasks'.

In the New ways of leading teams in a Hybrid environment (Hatfield and Pearce, 2021), Leaders need to focus on building dynamic leadership capabilities to handle an ever changing hybrid work environment with a mix of onsite and remote workers . The areas include the below.

2.5.1 Change management

In his research Lewin defined change management as a process that includes creating a perception that change is required, then transforming toward favorable behavior, and then maintaining that favorable behavior so that it becomes a habit (Lewin, 1947). Hiatt and Creasy defined change management as the implementation of processes and instruments to manage the human resources side of change from the current situation to the desired one in a way that ensures the achievement of the results expected through that change (Hiatt and Creasy, 2012)

As per (Hamdo, 2021), In modern organizations due to the competitive business environment, changing customers' preferences,rapid technological advancements and high diversity in workforce change is constant and managers and HR need to learn the techniques of managing this change. HR leaders should be aware that change is constant in the business world and they therefore need to keep themselves abreast of changes and its challenges. Any shortfall on their part can impact the organization achieving its goals.

They need to put in place programs to sensitize employees of the changes, its effects and implications on the activities of the organization, as well as its employees and other

stakeholders. Another key area to focus is learning and using that to help various employees understand what is expected of them in the changed environment. They need to also partner with other departments, including risk management, finance and IT to put in contingency plans. (McIlvaine, 2020).

Policies and procedures that would allow easy ways to handle the new challenges need to be looked into. In addition to policy introduction, there should be focus on enforcement through empowerment and listing rather than command and control, standard and hierarchy (Bingham, 2020). One of the easy ways to do this is to build trust especially with the experienced employees and providing them with constant support in handling new situations.

HR professionals should help leaders acquire leadership styles that are effective and efficient, yet flexible enough to accommodate sudden changes in the workforce, operation, business structure and environment. They need to ensure that human resource management systems are flexible enough to adapt to varying circumstances and are able to quickly readjust and redeploy policies and practices to suit the new situation (Agarwal, 2020).

Another area that the HR team needs to enhance their information management skills is to review the data that is getting collected through various sources and filter information with the aim of identifying reliable information from fake news and disinformation. This verified and accurate information will aid in the formulation of strategies and policies that will sustain the organization through different challenges.

2.5.2 Focus on Culture

In The impact of COVID-19 on Human Resource Management and the Way Forward experiment Findings(Rathnayake, 2020) it says organizations need to foster and maintain a corporate culture that treats everyone fairly. In the hybrid work environment different workers have different experiences in the workplace – some remote, some in-person. As new work scenarios emerge there is a need for organizations to look into their values and behaviors and refresh and reframe them to reflect the beliefs of the organization and its people in the new emerging environment. Leaders need to drive this culture consistently across the organization.

2.5.3 Focus on Productivity

As per Unlocking the COVID-19 Lockdown: Work from Home and Its Impact on Employees (Jaiswal, Arun 2020). One of the key areas that get impacted is productivity. The systems and processes that drove productivity in the physical workplace do not necessarily work as well in the hybrid one. There is also a feeling among the workforce that the current growth and development programs are suitable for remote or hybrid work. The mechanisms, practices and norms that helped managers measure productivity in an office environment must continue to evolve.

2.5.4 Demonstrating Empathy and Authenticity

In New ways of leading teams in a hybrid environment (Hatfield and Pearce, 2022) says, to manage a workforce that is distributed and asynchronous, which provides lesser opportunities for personal interactions, people leaders need to have a high level of empathy to help understand team members' work environment and challenges brought in by a hybrid work environment. Surveys have revealed that only 50% of managers are doing this. As the level of interaction at personal level reduces, leaders need to be authentic and seen as one also.

2.5.5 Drive Social Flexibility

In New ways of leading teams in a hybrid environment (Hatfield and Pearce, 2022) they have found that with the social changes introduced by pandemic there needs to be an increased focus on the ways that an organization supports individual and team well-being. During the pandemic, focus on the health and well-being of the workforce became business critical. Policies evolved to allow for flexible work schedules built around life factors like caregiving, school schedules, mental health needs, exercise preferences, and more.

2.5.6 Development programs for people managers and HR professionals in a hybrid work environment

In the above sections we have identified key skills required to manage in a hybrid work environment. It is equally important to design and roll out development programs for people managers and HR professionals in a hybrid work environment to build these skills. Some of the areas include integrating technology with communication for effective

collaboration, making virtually effective presentations and handling a virtual audience. In the article developing managers to succeed in the hybrid world of work (Anticole, 2021) magazine some of the areas to focus in these are highlighted

In a hybrid world of work, since the benefits of physical presence are missing, manager development programs must equip managers with the ability to leverage intrinsic motivation to achieve results. Gartner says understanding and aligning to internal drives within employees is the foundation of creating connections between employers and employees.

First, intrinsic motivation should be the aligning principle that guides what behaviors and competencies to prioritize for manager development. The number one objective of a manager development program should be teaching managers the ability to motivate their people to achieve results.

Second, programs must provide guidance on behaviors and processes so managers understand how to tap into the drives within their people.

Lastly, manager development programs must reframe managers' thinking so they see themselves as a catalyst to increase performance and engagement. Gallup's four decades of research on employee engagement is instructive: at least 70 percent of variance in employee engagement is caused by the manager.

In the article How to tailor training to a hybrid work environment Published in HR drive(Golden , 2021) says, with the onset of pandemic most organizations across industries turned to remote working and some continued with the same and then there are some that turned to hybrid mode of working where it was partially remote and partially from office. However remote and hybrid working still posed higher challenges for some categories of employees vis-a-vis others. One of the studies found that younger workers found it more challenging to keep up with productivity while working remotely. More than 53% of workers ages 18 to 29 in the survey said it was difficult to feel motivated since the beginning of the pandemic, and more than one-third of workers ages 18 to 49 said it was difficult for them to complete their work without interruptions. Learning and development can play an important role in resolving some of these challenges. There could be essentially 3 training focus areas.

2.5.6.a Individual employees

Training that focuses on self-management and mindfulness are key for individuals, managers and leaders. Similarly, topics such as productivity and well-being are also to be focused upon in remote work settings.

2.5.6.b Individuals working together

Given that we are in the digital communication era, means employees will need to be able convey ideas effectively through slideshows and presentations. Another important skill is storytelling and narration.

2.5.6.c Individuals and the larger organization

In a hybrid working environment, managers and leaders will need to act **as** coaches to their teams. This will help employees sustain productivity, focus on upskilling and also maintain high engagement.

2.6 Summary of gap areas

As per New ways of leading teams in a Hybrid environment (Hatfield , Pearce 2021), it's not possible to identify one "right" way to help leaders get ready for managing the hybrid workplace. The strategy should be based on the various factors that present in the organizational environment.

The constitution of the team and the various dynamics that exist within will dictate how the hybrid work environment will evolve for teams. The amount of coordination that needs to be done and the skills needed for the same will depend on many factors like team organization, maturity of the team, nature of the work e.g. onsite vs field operations functions vs business centric. One should also consider individual needs like their pain points, and gain points. After all, the leaders are in the forefront and they have to handle the challenges that emerge from the new work environment. The workforce transformation will be directly proportional to the efficiency and effectiveness of leaders to adapt to the changing environment. Some of the areas that leaders need to focus include -

Structuring the format and cadence of team communications. Have more dynamic check-ins with the teams. Introducing more skip level conversations with the team. Develop team vision and mission and also the outcomes that the teams need to achieve. Also set expectations around work hygiene factors like availability, working hours, email response expectations, use of collaboration and communications tools.

One can also look at having periodic pulse surveys to check in on how the team is doing, get regular feedback on things that are working and/or not working, and make adjustments accordingly. One of the key outcomes of this would be a thriving hybrid work environment where leaders are able to successfully increase employee engagement, enhance productivity, and build a workplace where the right values and behaviors thrive.

Managers need to develop a new level of agility and ambidexterity to ensure teams can operate effectively in remote, in-person, and hybrid work environments. Failure to do so can make organizations run the risk of losing recent productivity gains and experiencing higher workforce turnover. On the other hand those that build on the momentum of the remote working framework will gain a new competitive advantage.

2.7 Hypothesis Formulation

In Evolving performance management for the hybrid work environment (Sarin, 2022) has emphasized the importance of evolving performance management for the hybrid work environment and also brings out the importance of evolving the skills of managers. Other research cited in the preceding sections of this paper, brings out the relevant theories related

to the challenges thrown up by a hybrid work environment and related issues around managing team members in the same which are the objectives of this research.

Hybrid work culture requires leaders to up their skills to face emerging-challenges (Sharma, 2021) has brought out the need to identify critical skills needed by leaders, executives and human resources to handle the above challenges and ensure successful business outcomes in such an environment. In the first part of this section we will analyze the importance of acquiring new skills by these three groups. We have tried to capture them in 5 subsections and the groups for whom those skills are critical . subsections related to each of the skills. In each subsection we will come up with a hypothesis that will be used to measure the relationship between skills and their impact to business.

Hypothesis 1 - The hybrid environment has given rise to new challenges that people managers and HR professionals have most likely not encountered in the past

Researchers like Zimmerman (2011), (Hunsaker & Hunsaker, 2008), (Liu, 2011). (Cordery and Soo, 2008) (Holtbrügge et al., 2011) have given enough insights on remote working. In their two recent studies, Chafi et al. (2022) analyzes the challenges that are perceived to be in the work environment when moving into a hybrid model.

Hypothesis 2 - Organizations that are operating with the existing policies are more likely to manage hybrid environment well

The earlier studies from (Kalogiannidis, 2021), (Atkeson 2020) , (Agarwal, 2020). (Bingham, 2020) have shown the need for new policies including human resource ones to be adapted to work in a hybrid work environment.

Hypothesis 3: For people managers and HR professionals the existing processes and tools will most likely enable them to function well in a hybrid environment

Studies by (Rathnayake, 2020), (Jaiswal, Arun 2020) and (Sarin, 2022) have shown the need to enhance processes to adapt to the challenges introduced by hybrid work environment.

Hypothesis 4: Most organizations may likely have the necessary leadership and professional skills to lead and succeed in a hybrid work environment

The study by (Agarwal, 2020) talks about changed leadership style for HR professionals. In their research (Hatfield and Pearce, 2022) speaks about the need for new leadership skills.

Hypothesis 5: Organizations that are willing to adopt new development programs for people managers and HR professionals are more likely to succeed in a hybrid environment

The earlier studies by (Hamdo, 2021), (Mcllvaine, 2020), (Anticole, 2021) have indicated the need for organizations to put in new development programs to assimilate the changes in a hybrid work environment.

2.8 Summary

After reviewing the various literary resources available I have found that a hybrid work environment throws up new challenges and dimensions to managing the workplace both for Human Resources and leaders within every organization. The first part of the research would focus on identifying top areas of concerns, evaluating each of the above hypotheses and then preparing detailed surveys to gather in depth insights into those. I would then review the analytical data and look at existing skills and related development resources to address the emerging areas and also try to recommend new skills and developmental solutions that may need to be put in place to address the remaining ones.

As I looked at the various aspects of a hybrid work environment I came to realize that there is no one size fits all scenario possible. There is no right or wrong way to implement a hybrid work environment or train managers, leaders and HR to be prepared for it. It is a combination of different factors which could again be different for different industries and organizations.

That said, the endeavor has been to arrive at the key skills required by leaders and HR professionals as they combat this ever-changing hybrid work environment which is here to stay. Through research, I will strive to prove the hypothesis that I have laid down in the prior section and help everyone look at some meaningful conclusions.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

Though remote work has been in practice in different industries like IT and ITES for many years, Covid-19 pandemic has forced the adoption of the same in many other industries viz. Banking, Healthcare etc. In a hybrid workplace, which includes both work from home and work from the office environment at the same time, employees have the flexibility to avail of physical and digital workspaces.

According to different research most organizations are likely to adopt the hybrid work model especially IT services. Lot of research has been done on the challenges faced by human resources, team members and leaders with the introduction of a hybrid work environment and also many solutions have been proposed for solving these challenges. The main focus of this study would be to understand and arrive at the skills required by leaders at various levels and human resource professionals to effectively manage challenges and implement these solutions within their respective organizations.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

Operationalization of theoretical constructs involves defining and measuring abstract ideas to make them observable and testable. This entails detailing the specific procedures used to measure a concept in a study, ensuring that the construct can be quantified reliably and validly.

Key Elements of Operationalization:

1. **Defining Constructs**:

   ○ Clarifying what is meant by the abstract concept.

   ○ Ensuring that the construct is clearly delineated from other similar concepts.

2. **Measurement Methods**:

   ○ Selecting or designing tools and procedures to measure the construct.

   ○ Ensuring the methods accurately reflect the theoretical concept.

3. **Empirical Indicators**:

   ○ Identifying observable and measurable indicators that represent the construct.

   ○ Ensuring the indicators are reliable and valid.

By operationalizing theoretical constructs, researchers can convert abstract ideas into concrete data that can be analyzed, allowing for empirical testing of hypotheses and theories. This section of the thesis gives insights to the theoretical construct. This will be used to test the hypothesis.

3.2.1 Hybrid work environment

In this study, the term hybrid work environment refers to a flexible working model where team members are expected to work partly in the office, and rest away from the office which

can be either home or another workplace. In a hybrid work environment different scenarios are possible. Every employee divide their working week between working at an office premise or do remote working

In another scenario certain employees are designated to work from home and some others work from the office. The work from office group may be allowed to work from home at certain times and work from home employees are expected to work from office occasionally.

3.2.2 Skills for managing hybrid workforce

Every role requires a certain set of skills to perform the same. These could be technical skills, business and professional skills or leadership skills. Most of the roles have been usually performing in an office environment where most of the human interactions are face to face and or in a constrained environment where people leaders have direct access to team members and day to day visibility to their work, performance and behaviors.

In a hybrid work environment both human resources and people leaders have direct/day to day interactions so this throws up many challenges in managing productivity, promoting collaboration, work related communication. For senior leaders they need to make additional investments in security, connectivity, workplace infrastructure.

All this calls for learning a new set of skills in the workplace which is being referred to as skills for managing a hybrid work environment.

When we were trying to design the survey around understanding the skills for Human resource professionals and people leaders we realized that both these groups will require two unique sets of skills to manage a hybrid work environment. We zeroed in on the list of Professional skills as well as Leadership skills that should be built by these two groups to make the hybrid work environment better.

3.2.3 Productivity

In every work environment where employees are expected to produce results as part of their day to day activities, quantifying this has been a challenge even in a regular office place. Within a hybrid environment this becomes more acute due to the challenges already elaborated in the previous section. Employee productivity as the capability to produce goods and services in order to achieve the goals of the organization (Yunus & Ernavati, 2017)

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

India is one of the largest providers of Information Technology(IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services(ITES) services across the globe to various Multinational companies including technology and non technology based organizations across the globe. The approximate IT employee population in India in FY23 is 5.4 million (The Times of India, Mar 2023). Post pandemic, in an Indian express news paper article,as per the Return to Workplace survey conducted by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) around 70% of organizations are looking at hybrid work models. It also mentions "Organizations with a workforce of 1,000 or more are likely to adopt the

hybrid work model at 83% as compared to the tech industry average of 70%," adding IT services are likely to be the early adopters of a long-term hybrid work model. Hence We are going to focus on the Indian IT and ITES industry primarily.

The purpose of this study is to understand and arrive at the professional and leadership skills required by leaders at various levels and human resource professionals to effectively manage challenges related to managing teams in a hybrid work environment and identify and implement required solutions within their respective organizations in the Indian IT and ITES industry to address these skill gaps.

This study would look at the below key research questions -

Q1. What kind of skills human resource professionals need to build to manage the new age hybrid work environment ?

Q2. What kind of skills people leaders need to develop to manage the hybrid workforce?

Q3. How do senior leaders support teams to manage these workplace transitions and remain engaged and productive?

3.4 Research Design

Research methods are organized approaches for gathering and analyzing data to enhance our comprehension of a subject or problem. These methods are mainly divided into

two types: qualitative and quantitative. Furthermore, mixed methods incorporate aspects of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Here's an overview:

1) **Qualitative Research Methods -** Qualitative research is exploratory and seeks to understand the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into problems and helps develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Common qualitative methods include:

   - Interviews: In-depth, one-on-one conversations that allow for detailed responses.

   - Focus Groups: Group discussions to gather diverse perspectives.

   - Observations: Watching subjects in their natural environment to collect data on behavior and interactions.

   - Case Studies: Detailed analysis of a single case or a small number of cases.

   - Ethnography: Immersive research where the researcher observes society from the subject's perspective.

2) **Quantitative Research Methods -** Quantitative research aims to quantify the problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into statistics. It measures attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other variables and generalizes results from a larger sample population. Common quantitative methods include:

   - Surveys: Structured questionnaires designed to collect quantifiable data.

- Experiments: Controlled studies where variables are manipulated to determine cause-and-effect relationships.

- Longitudinal Studies: Research involving repeated observations of the same variables over time.

- Cross-Sectional Studies: Observational studies analyzing data from a population or a representative subset at a specific point in time.

- Secondary Data Analysis: Using existing data collected for other purposes to conduct new analysis.

3) **Mixed Methods -** Mixed methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches for a more comprehensive analysis, enhancing the richness and depth of understanding.

As seen above, each research method has its own strengths and weaknesses and is selected according to the research question, objectives, and the type of data being examined. The primary intent of this study is to conduct exploratory and qualitative research among IT Products and IT services organizations in India which have adopted a hybrid work environment after the pandemic, to understand the skills that need to be developed by human resource professionals and people leaders.

As part of the research design for this study, we used the survey method to understand the current state as well the challenges faced by the audience.

After looking at the nature of the study as well as the objective as stated above, we decided to use the questionnaire-based survey for the primary research. In a questionnaire survey we intend to understand the current situation as well as recommendations for the issues stated. A typical questionnaire-based survey consists of placing a series of questions on the demographic profile of a group of respondents, which is representative of the research group, their experiences and selection of options or human and social issues, their expectations, their level of knowledge or awareness of an event or problem, or any other factor of interest to researchers (Quivy, 1998). We need to ensure that the information captured is accurate, collect respondents' complete knowledge, needs or thoughts, and that the responses are not biased by the respondents' personal or professional experiences. To ensure this we have tried to follow a good rigor in the selection of the respondents to be surveyed, making the questions clear and unambiguous .

We also captured the experience of these human resource professionals and people leaders to identify skills that will help solve the challenges. It has been proven by (Evans & Mathur, 2005) that survey tool is good for areas which are emerging and where there are no databases existing which captures the data to be analyzed. In today's digital era, by using a survey technique we can reach a very wide audience as well as collect a varying set of responses.

We have ensured that the type of questions asked in the survey has a direct correlation with the research questions and the overall topic selected for the research. We also ensured

that type of questions and the format of the responses helped us collect the most accurate information.

As per (Tuckman, 2005) there are seven types of responses that can be used, according to the type of outcome desired - response by categories; in a table; on a scale; in order; and by listing; open ended responses; short answer (fill-in);

The survey that is going to be designed will have a set of close ended questions to collect the demographics as well specific information We are looking for to understand the priority and importance of areas. We will be using a few Likert rating scale responses in the survey. There will also be some open-ended questions too, to capture information which we are not aware of.

Using this diverse approach, as a first step, We intend to understand the details such as the prevalence of hybrid work environments in organizations, the familiarity of respondents about the hybrid work environment and the extent to which it has been deployed in their organizations. This would be followed by questions that will also help us understand the top 5 challenges faced in a hybrid working environment and also the high priority leadership and professional skills required by human resource professionals and people leaders to be more effective and productive in a hybrid work environment. We also intend to collect information on productivity and other impacts of hybrid work, as faced by the IT and ITES industry.

The intent is to choose two types of participants, human resource professionals and people leaders of varying experience across the IT and ITES industries in India. As We have to reach a wide audience, we intent to use an online survey tool to collect data. We would then use various analytical tools like Excel and SPSS tools to carry out a quantitative analysis to understand any patterns that may emerge.

To grasp the themes emerging we will apply qualitative data analysis on the data collected. In order to ensure that the survey follows ethical principles We will ensure that the confidentiality of survey participants by designing the survey to be anonymous and the same is maintained throughout the survey administration, data collection, data analysis and and reporting phases.

The survey header would be designed to obtain informed consent of the participants before administering the survey. This will ensure confidentiality and informed consent as expected. (Nayak & Narayan ,2019).

We are going to do comparisons with other studies of similar nature to help understand human behavior using a variety of methods, to offer a more balanced explanation of the study to readers. Using this approach in research design, we intent to provide a detailed understanding on the skills needed by human resource professionals and management personnel to effectively manage a hybrid work environment.

3.5 Population and Sample

With the advent of digital workplace and by the nature of work, IT organizations are very well suited for usage of hybrid work environments. India has emerged as the primary destination for not only IT and ITES activities but many multinational organizations have set up their global capability centers including research and development teams here. The hybrid work environment has been extensively in existence since 2021 and in the early days after the pandemic many organizations had announced their intent to make their work force turn to hybrid working.

As per an article in a leading business magazine (India Today, May 2022) over 90% tech firms are preferring hybrid work model . Thus we will be focussing on human resource professionals and people leaders including senior management professionals from various IT and ITEs organizations in India to conduct this study as they would have necessary information on the impact of hybrid work on the team members and.

As we have thousands of human resources professionals and many thousands of people leaders who can be tapped in to collect the pertinent and useful information relating to the research questions we have used a non-probability sampling, to select participants relevant for the study. (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

The researcher has used a combination of convenience and purposive sampling as she has tapped into her network and judgment as per Etikan et. al (2016) to shortlist the relevant audience from among the population targeted for the study. A total of 251 (Two hundred and fifty one) individuals were chosen who were exposed to the hybrid working environment. Some of the criteria used for selection were more than 5 years of experience in

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the IT and ITES field, primarily handling human resource management or people management responsibilities and understanding of the hybrid work environment in the IT sector.

3.6 Participant Selection

For the purpose of this research as we wanted to understand the skills needed for both the human resources function and people leaders in the organization, we primarily targeted 50 human resource professionals performing various HR roles, 100 senior management professionals and 50 first line people leaders. We targeted employees in these roles with 5-20 years overall experience within various organizations. We would predominantly target organizations who have deployed a hybrid work environment at least for one year in the IT Products and IT Services industries in India.

An Online Google forms based anonymous survey was used to collect the answers. The below figure 1 shows the distribution of the final sample population with their roles. (n=251) in figure 1.

Legend:
- HR professional (at all levels/positions)
- First line people leader
- Senior people leader
- Individual Contributor role

Pie chart values: 43.4%, 19.5%, 24.3%, 12.7%
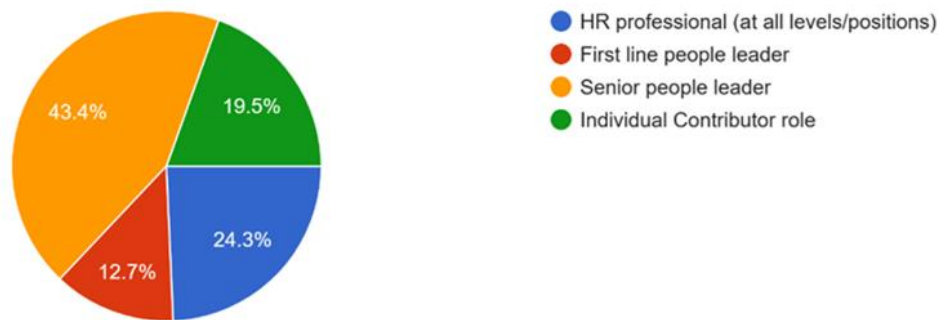
Figure 1 Current profile of the sample population

3.7 Instrumentation

This study utilized surveys to gather information from a diverse set of participants on various areas and skills related to the hybrid work environment. Given the need for consistent data collection and the relatively unexplored nature of this area in the Indian context, it was essential to collect both quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive analysis. Surveys are recognized as an efficient and flexible method for collecting and analyzing information in such scenarios (Couper, 2017).

The primary instrument used in this study was a survey, which facilitated efficient data collection from the target audience. The survey was designed to include both open-ended and closed-ended questions, enabling a dual approach for qualitative and quantitative analysis of the hybrid work environment.

Closed-ended questions were employed to gather structured data on demographics, prioritization of issues, and the top three skills necessary in a hybrid work setting. These

questions provided specific response options for the participants to choose from, which allowed for quick quantification of issues and faster data analysis.

In contrast, open-ended questions were included to explore areas such as ways to improve productivity and perspectives on adopting a hybrid environment. These questions enabled the capture of participants' diverse experiences, opinions, and unique perspectives, thereby enriching the depth and richness of the study.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure for this study involved several key steps to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the collected data.

1. **Survey Development and Review**:

    o   Initially, a survey was developed and reviewed with my mentor. Feedback from my mentor was incorporated into the survey.

    o   The questionnaire was then validated by a group of domain experts, including human resource professionals and people leaders. Their feedback was also incorporated, which helped in clarifying the questions and identifying any errors.

    o   Modifications were made to the wording of certain questions, and comments were added to ensure that respondents could correctly interpret and understand the questions in the context of the research.

2. **Survey Structure**:

- o The survey was structured to include demographic questions in the first part, followed by both quantitative and qualitative questions.

- o A Google Form was used for the survey, and a text message for sharing the survey via email and social media was crafted. This message included information on the intent of the survey, its benefits to the participants, confidentiality details, and an option for participants to provide consent for using their data for research purposes.

3. **Distribution and Response Monitoring**:

- o The survey was sent to over 500 human resources professionals and people leaders, along with a personal note soliciting their participation.

- o Respondents were given two weeks to complete the survey. Survey responses were monitored twice a week during this period. Dummy IDs were used to keep track of individual responses.

- o After the initial two weeks, 95 responses were received. A reminder was sent to all participants, and the deadline was extended by one week.

- o By the end of the three-week period, 141 responses were collected.

4. **Targeted Outreach**:

- o To balance the sample, an additional list of human resource professionals and first-line people managers was created, and the survey was sent to this targeted audience, increasing the responses to 189.

o   In the final two weeks, initial respondents were requested to cascade the survey to their networks, which further increased the responses to 251.

Overall, in a span of 10 weeks, 251 responses were collected, providing a sufficient sample size for the study.

3.9 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis entails methodically reviewing, cleansing, adjusting, and interpreting data to uncover important patterns, trends, and insights. This procedure uses statistical and computational techniques to derive valuable information that guides decision-making. Different methods and tools are employed in data analysis, customized to the data's characteristics and the objectives of the analysis. Common data analysis techniques are Descriptive statistics, Inferential statistics, Regression Analysis and Hypothesis testing.

Data Analysis Tools

Several data analysis tools are commonly used across different industries and domains. These tools offer various features and functionalities catering to different needs, from basic data manipulation to advanced statistical analysis and machine learning. The choice of tool often depends on factors such as the type of data, analysis requirements, and user preferences.

For the data analysis in this study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was employed. SPSS offers several advantages over other data analysis packages, making it the preferred choice for this research. Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences (SPSS) is an extensive software package employed for managing data, conducting statistical analysis, and creating visual representations. Its popularity spans across numerous domains like social sciences, market research, health studies, and beyond, owing to its intuitive interface and robust analytical features. The key reasons for using SPSS are it being a user-friendly interface, has comprehensive data management capabilities, advanced statistical analysis options and visualization tools.

1) **Cronbach's Alpha coefficient**

Cronbach's alpha, commonly known as alpha, is a metric used to evaluate the internal consistency or reliability of a set of test or scale items. It is frequently employed in psychometrics, survey research, and various other disciplines to determine the reliability of a composite score derived from the aggregation of multiple individual items. It helps in understanding the consistency of the measurement. The value of Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1. Higher values indicate greater reliability.

- ○ `High Alpha (≥ 0.80)`: Indicates that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

- ○ Moderate Alpha (0.70 - 0.79): Indicates that the items have acceptable internal consistency.

- ○ Low Alpha (< 0.70): Suggests that the items may not be measuring the same underlying construct, indicating poor internal consistency.

2) **Mean and Standard Deviation**

Mean and standard deviation are fundamental statistical measures used to describe the central tendency and dispersion of a dataset, respectively.

The mean, often referred to as the average, indicates the central tendency of a dataset. It is determined by adding up all the values in the dataset and then dividing by the total number of values.

The standard deviation measures the dispersion or spread of a dataset, showing how much the values differ from the mean. A larger standard deviation signifies more variability in the data.

3) **Correlation Coefficient**

The correlation coefficient is a statistical metric that assesses the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Represented by the letter " r ", its value ranges from -1 to 1.

4) **Regression Analysis**

Regression is a statistical method employed to investigate how changes in one or more independent variables (typically represented as X) relate to changes in a dependent variable (often denoted as Y). Its primary goal is to comprehend how alterations in the

independent variables affect the dependent variable, while also considering other potential factors that might influence the dependent variable.

In these kinds of research projects we need to clean, examine, interpret and finally synthesize the acquired data to come to some meaningful conclusions and find answers to the research objectives. For this research data analysis played a key role in understanding the problem and finding the solutions as not much data existed pertaining to this topic in an Indian IT Products and IT Services industries context.

As part of the data analysis process the response data exported from google forms was organized in an excel sheet to check for data validity. We then had to check for any omitted data and standardize the fields so that we had very consistent and accurate data.

To ensure the reliability of the variables used to test the hypothesis, we conducted a reliability test on each of the constructs. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each of the constructs. As can be seen in the table all the constructs have a reliability score of 0.6 or higher. The constructs that have 0.6 as their alpha is acceptable. The constructs that have 0.7 alpha show good reliability and finally the constructs that show alphas of 0.8 and 0.9 are highly acceptable.

Table 1 Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each of the construct

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Hybrid Challenges	4	0.713

Organization policies	6	0.6
Tools & processes	4	0.665
Adequacy of leadership and professional skills	4	0.85
Professional skills for SL	3	0.75
Professional skills for FL	3	0.76
Professional skills for HR	3	0.73
Leadership skills for SL	3	0.81
Leadership skills for FL	3	0.73
Leadership skills for HR	3	0.81
Adequacy of Development programs	3	0.91
Training Resources	5	0.8

3.10 Research Design Limitations

Like any empirical research study, the questionnaire-based survey method used in this research has several limitations worth highlighting.

Firstly, the reliance on questionnaires for data collection may affect the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information gathered. This approach might not fully capture the knowledge, needs, or thoughts of the respondents, potentially leading to superficial or insufficient responses. Additionally, respondents' answers may be biased by their personal or professional experiences. To ensure credibility, the methodology must adhere to the criteria outlined by Quivy (1998): rigorous sample selection, clear and unambiguous question formulation, alignment between the reference universe of questions and the universe of questionnaire administration, and interviewer integrity and professionalism.

Secondly, the data collected for this study is focused exclusively on the IT industry in India, specifically IT products and services. Although responses from other industries were captured under the 'others' category, these were minimal and thus may not provide a comprehensive perspective beyond the IT sector. Consequently, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other sectors.

Thirdly, the selection of participants was conducted using non-probability sampling methods, specifically convenience and purposive sampling. Given the national scope of the study, this sampling method may not ensure equitable coverage of all regions of India. Future research could benefit from a regionally stratified study to obtain more representative data across the country.

Additionally, the non-probability sampling method used in this study implies that generalizing the findings to the overall population of people leaders and HR professionals should be done cautiously.

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Finally, this research is a cross-sectional study, capturing data at a single point in time. As such, it cannot track changes over time, limiting its ability to study trends or long-term effects (Mills et al., 2010). The study does not account for events occurring before or after the data collection period, which constrains the ability to analyze temporal dynamics

3.11 Summary

In this chapter, we have described how the research problem was approached and the rationale used to identify, select, process and analyze the information relevant to understanding the research problems. We started with explaining the various theoretical constructs, then elaborated on the research purpose and the questions thereon. This was followed by the research design - the method used to decide on population sample, collect data and finally how that data will be analyzed using statistical tools like Cronbach's coefficient, Mean & standard deviation, Correlation and Regression.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the thesis, a concise summary of the data is presented in a visual manner and discussed. The chapter begins with a discussion on the characteristics of the firms and the entrepreneurs who participated in this study. This is followed by a detailed analysis of responses to the questions modeled to collect the data that was needed to validate the hypotheses and find answers to the research questions and ends with the presentation and discussion of the correlations, means, standard deviation and regression analysis results.

4.2 Characteristics of the Participants

The survey had 251 respondents which included 61 human resource professionals, 141 people leaders and 49 individual contributors. Among the people leaders more than 75% are senior people leaders. More than 80% of the participants are from the IT Products and IT services industry.

The below section describes some of the other demographic details of these participants. In this section we are looking at the age, gender, years of experience, role within the organization of the participants.

4.2.1 Age group analysis
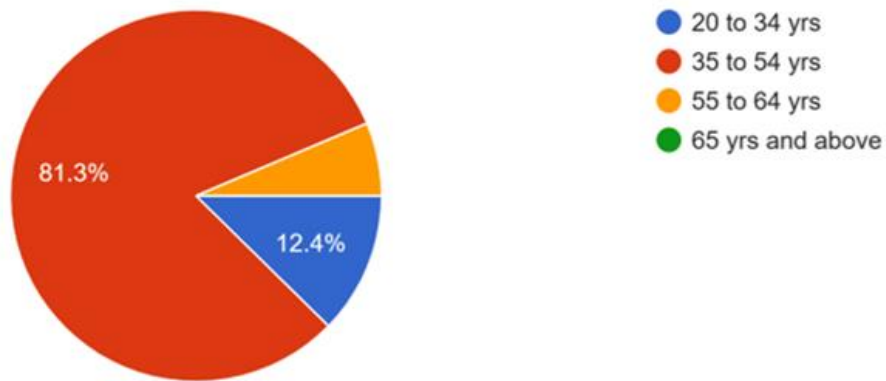
Figure 2 Age group of the sample population

As seen in the above figure, the majority of the respondents >83 % are in the 35 to 54 years which is the typical age profile of human resource professionals, senior people leaders and people managers in most Indian IT & ITEs organizations. This shows that we have been able to tap into the rich experience of these professionals to find answers to our hypotheses and research questions.

4.2.2 Gender distribution

In this research, out of the 251 individuals who participated in the survey study, the gender distribution was 67% male, 32% female and 1% preferred not to disclose their gender. In the Indian context even in the IT and ITES industries there is a clear gap between the number of female and male employees, especially at the higher levels of experience. When we compare it with the overall employee ratio in IT & ITES industries, the female representation at the workplace is around 30% (Business Today, Mar 2023), these numbers

are similar to the gender diversity numbers at senior levels in the IT & ITES industry. 60% of human resource personnel were female and the remaining 40% male. Among the people leaders only 20% were female employees and 80% were male employees.
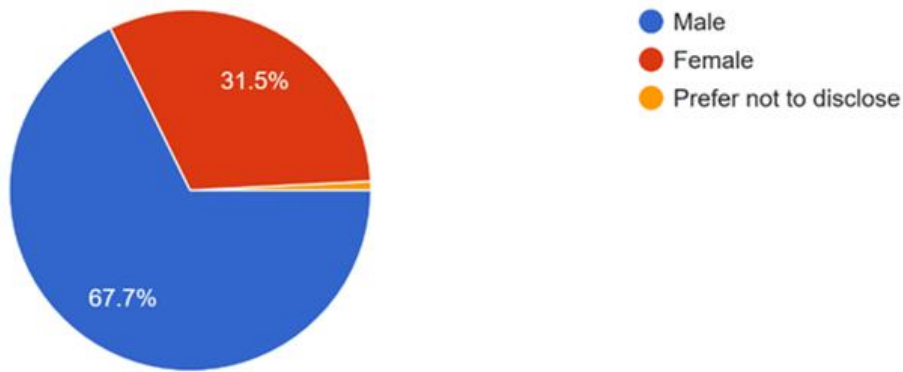
Figure 3 Gender distribution of sample population

4.2.3 Educational qualification

Almost all the respondents in the survey had graduation or above educational background as expected for the research audience as shown in the figure below. Majority 67% have completed graduation. Remaining 29% have done Post graduation. A small 4% has completed doctoral programs. 98% of the Human resources professionals surveyed had a postgraduation above and 75% of the senior people leaders the same.
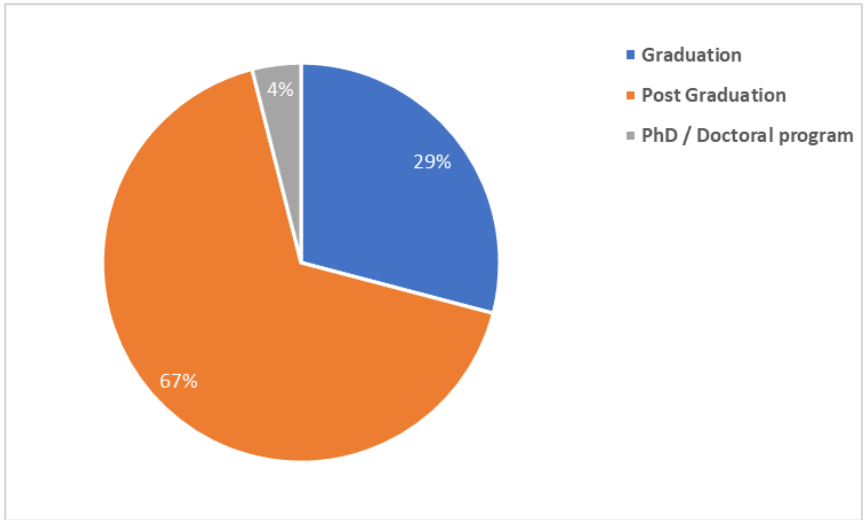
Figure 4 Educational qualification of the sample population

4.2.4 Work experience

It is good to note more than 90% of the participants have more than 10 years of experience, which is useful, as it helps to tap into their human resource and people management expertise to get the necessary insights on a new emerging research area like this. Of these more than 75% have greater than 15 years of work experience, which is critical to identify the kind of skills needed to manage work in a hybrid work environment. They would be able to easily point out what has worked and what can be done to improve. As the research subject is relatively new and also we are using a survey based questionnaire, the information provided by seasoned HR and senior management professionals, who have >20 years of experience, who constitute 60% of respondents will be quite valuable. Thus we feel there is a fairly good representation of varied experiences in this survey.
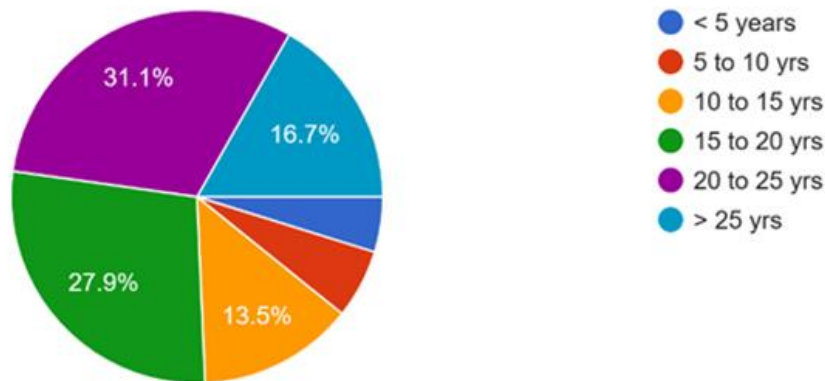
Figure 5 Work experience profile of the sample population

4.2.5 Role profile of respondents

Among the 251 responses, 43.4% were senior people leaders and 12.7 % first line people leaders together constituting 56.1%. Of the remaining 24.3% were human resource professionals. Thus 80.4 respondents were from the audience whom we wanted to research upon.

As envisaged in the research design the primary audience was human resource professionals and people leaders within the organizations.As part of conducting the survey we were able to collect responses from about 50 individual contributors within various organizations also which constitutes about 19.6% of the participants, which will help us bring an outside-in perspective in our research about the skills needed. We would be able to understand what correlation exists between the audience's view of the situation versus the team members who are being managed by the target audience.
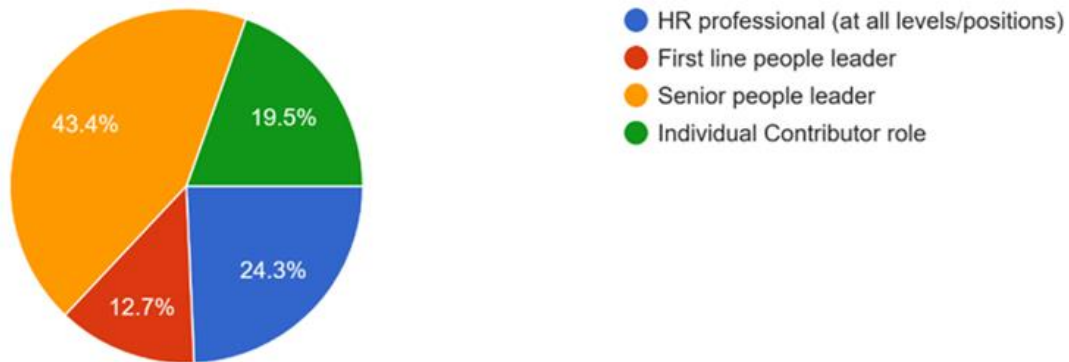
Figure 6 Current role profile of the sample population

4.3 Characteristics of the organizations

4.3.1 Industry type

The research was primarily targeted at IT Products & IT Services industries in India, however as part of data collection there were inputs coming in from employees in Non IT organizations which are in Automotive, Manufacturing, Pharma and Financial services areas. 81% responses were from the organizations in the IT Products & IT Services domain. 19% of the survey participants were from Non IT domain. In the IT domain, 45% were IT Services and 36% were IT Products. As India is a country predominantly providing IT Services to industries across the globe these results are as per expectations. The 36% in IT Products shows that product engineering is Information Technology is also gaining traction in India.

Both these industries by the nature of their work are quite amenable to hybrid work environments as seen in further sections.
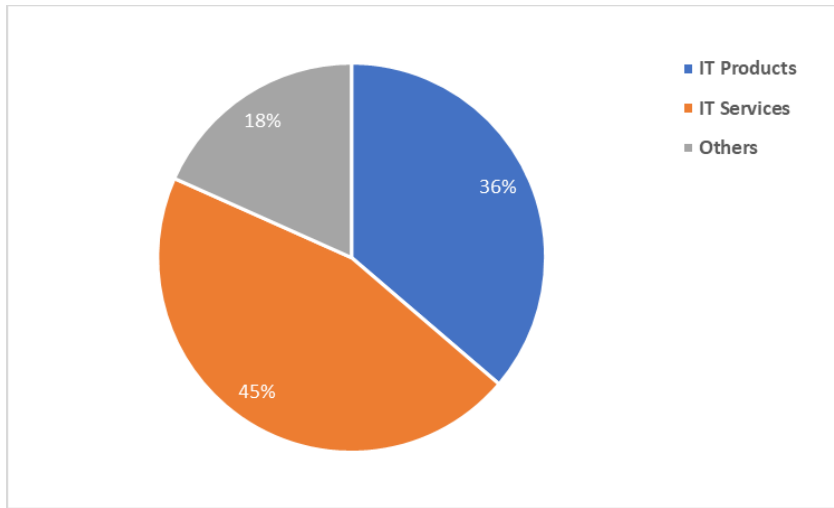
Figure 7 Type of industry that the sample population belong to

4.3.2 Size of the Organizations

For the purpose of analysis we had grouped the industries into four major categories with Small being <100 employees to Enterprise with > 5000 employees in their payroll. Majority of the respondents 76.9 % were from industries in the large employing (1000 to 50000) and Enterprise (>5000). Both these groups are quite useful to understand the patterns in people management, human resource management and productivity. 16.3% of the responses were from Medium (100-1000) employees and a small percentage of responses were from small organizations employing less than 100 employees.
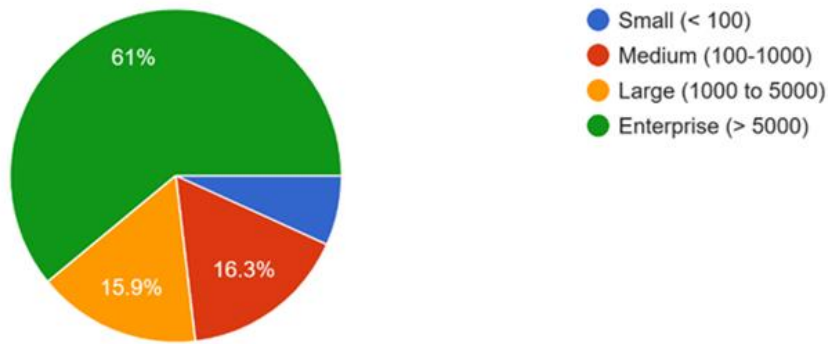
Figure 8 Organization size that the sample population belong to

4.3.3 Organizational working model

The main purpose of this research is to understand the additional skills that need to be acquired to effectively manage in a hybrid work environment. As a first step we wanted to understand the organizations where the respondents work have used the hybrid working environment. 78% of the respondents were working in organizations which had adopted a hybrid work environment. This gives us a fairly good confidence that the rest of the survey data that has been provided by respondents are relevant to the research as they have experience of working in a hybrid work environment as well as the challenges in such an environment.

Out of the remaining 22 % respondents 17% were having complete work from the office and a small 5% were having work from home. This is very atypical of a country like India where traditionally organizations have had only work from office, though most of them switched to work from home during the pandemic, but in the last 2 years majority of them,

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95% as per our research have switched back to either completely work from office or to a hybrid work environment.

When we compare the IT Products and IT services industries with other industries, the former had 85% operating in a hybrid work environment and only 50% of the later offered a hybrid work environment. This is as expected as the non IT jobs may not be very amenable to a hybrid work environment.
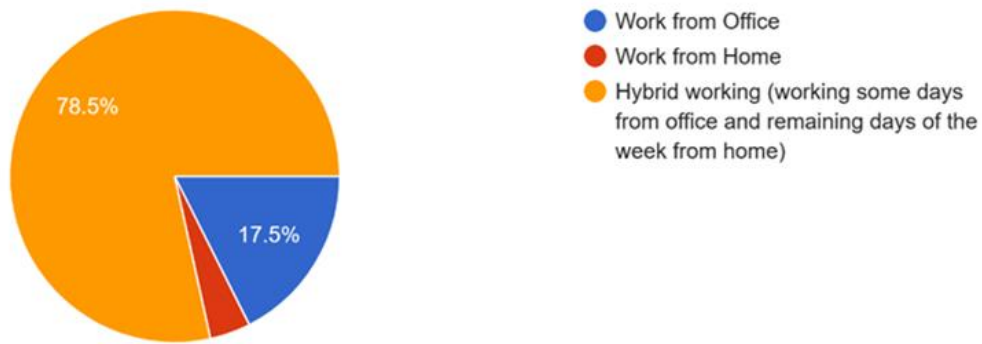
Figure 9 Organization working model of the sample population

4.3.4 In Office days for a hybrid work environment

During the pandemic years 2020 to 2022 it was 100% work from home for all employees in almost every organization. Once the pandemic subsided and as the countries opened up and based on almost two years of remote working and the feedback from various stakeholders including customers, employees etc. many organizations decided to bring back their employees back into office a few days in a week. Most IT companies seem to have

adopted an office-centered approach, with most preferring two or three days of in-office attendance (HFS, Mar 2024).

Majority of the employees because of the inherent flexibility offered by working from home did not want to come back to office and this led to many discussions and negotiations between management and employees on the number of the days employees are expected to work from office. As part of our research we wanted to understand the number of days employees were expected to work from the office in a hybrid work environment. This would help us understand the correlation between the number of days employees are expected to be in office and the characteristics of challenges and skills needed corresponding to that.

Data collected as part of this research showed that ⅔ rd of the organizations that is 65.7% , expected employees to be in office 2 or 3 days in a week. Of this 42.6% expected 3 days a week and 23.1% 2 days a week. About 4% expected employees to be in office 4 days a week and a very small 2% expected them to be in office at least 1 day a week.

About 27.9% of the organizations did not have any specific mandated days for employees to work from the office.
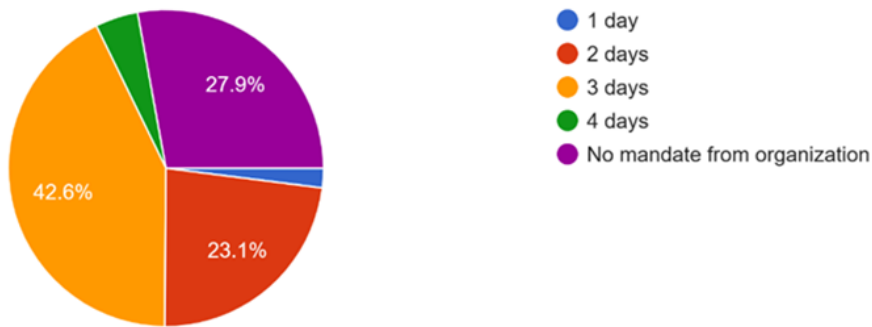
Figure 10 No. of days the organization has mandated to come to office for the sample population

4.3.5 Familiarity with Hybrid work environment

During research design we had determined that one of the key factors that will determine the quality of the data collected in the survey and its usefulness and relevance will greatly depend on the familiarity of the respondents with the hybrid work environment. This in addition to the earlier data which showed 78% who had worked in a hybrid work environment helps us to rely on the data. It's very good to note that 98% of the respondents are familiar with the hybrid work environment, with over 71% very familiar with it. About 20% were fairly familiar whereas another 7% were somewhat familiar. The relevance of this data is that the remaining inputs collected through the survey, around hybrid work environments will be more reliable as the respondents have a good understanding of it. The statistics are the same for both IT Products and Services as well as Non IT industries.
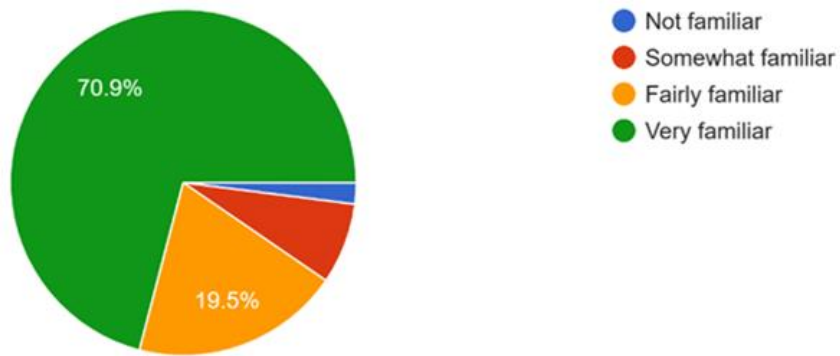
Figure 11 Familiarity of the sample population about hybrid work environment

4.4 Challenges in the Hybrid work environment

Of the sampled group about 36.6% has agreed that the hybrid working environment is more challenging than the work from office only approach that existed earlier. A significant number 47% is of the view that the Hybrid work is not more challenging than the work from office model that existed earlier. This was 3% more in the IT Products and IT Services industry. About 16.3% were neutral in their opinion.
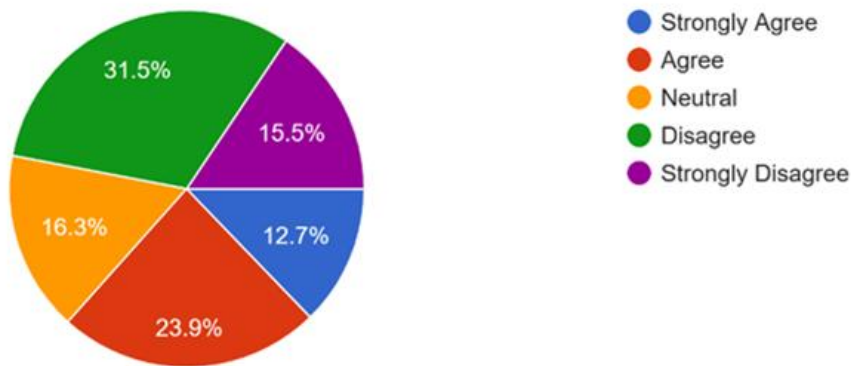
Figure 12 Sample population inputs on hybrid working being more challenging than work from office

4.4.1 Key Challenges faced in a Hybrid work environment

One of the primary intent of this research is to identify the skills needed to manage effectively in a hybrid work environment. The first step in this is to identify the challenges faced in a hybrid work environment and the next step is to identify the skills needed to address those challenges.

As can be seen from the figure below 51.8 % of the participants identified "Adherence to workplace ethics (eg: moonlighting, absenteeism)" as the biggest challenge. The second top most challenge was "Effectively managing a hybrid team, one that is partly in the office and partly virtual" which was highlighted by 47.8% respondents. Finally the third top most challenge identified by the respondents was "Monitoring productivity of the team" which was selected by 46.2% respondents. Having performance conversations/ difficult conversations with team members was also identified as a key challenge.
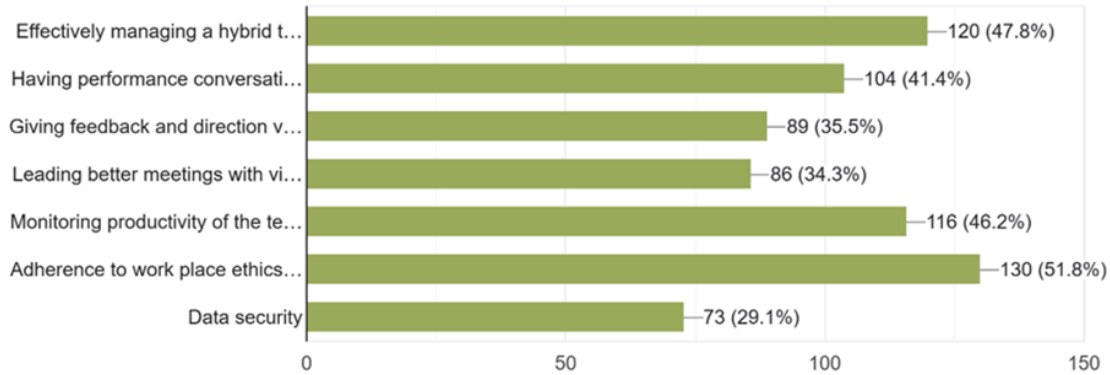
Figure 13 Challenges faced due to hybrid work environment

4.4.2 Impact of Hybrid work environment on productivity

About 51% of the respondents felt that the organizational productivity was the same or better than prior to the hybrid working environment being introduced. Only 18% felt that the organizational productivity was lower than before. It is interesting to note that nearly 30% of the respondents were neutral in their answer to this question. This shows that either organizations do not have mechanisms to collect the productivity data or they feel there is no change in productivity in a hybrid working environment. However when we look at the responses to the next open ended question we can see that there is an overall concern among respondents on the productivity in a hybrid work environment.
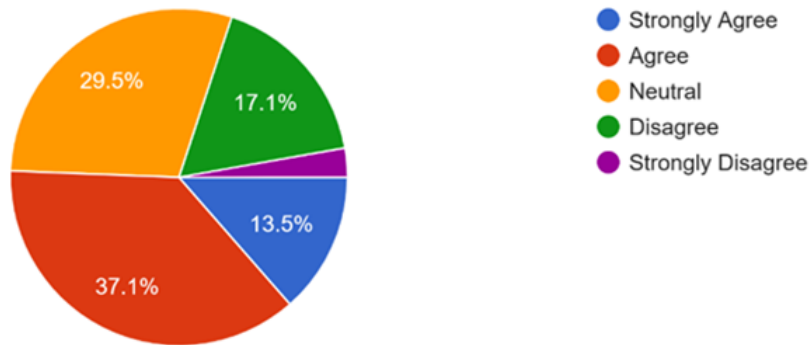
Figure 14 Sample population inputs on Organisation/team's productivity being same or better than prior to hybrid work arrangements

The above question was followed by an open ended question to capture their insights into improving productivity in a hybrid work environment. As this was an open ended question and the response to this question was collected in an open text format. The first step was to classify the response as those that mentioned that there are no issues related to productivity and those highlighted issues.

Among the respondents only 55 people (22%) felt that the productivity was adequate and no changes needed. A majority of them, 196 (78%) felt that productivity needs to improve in a hybrid work environment as depicted in the below figure.
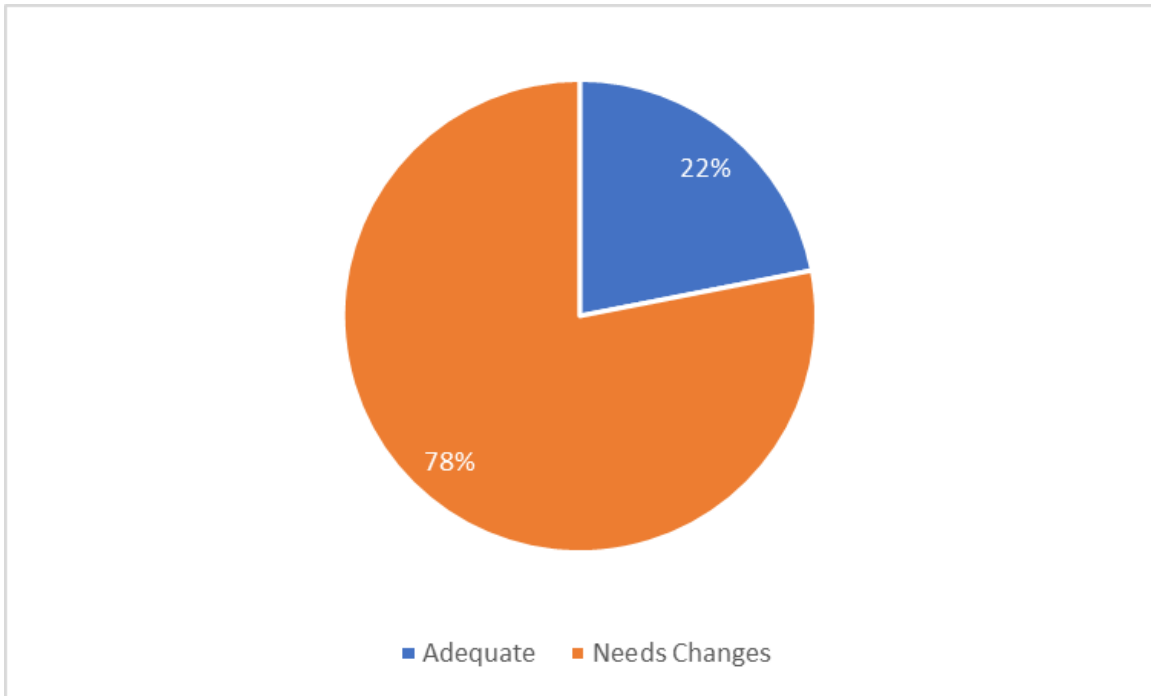
Figure 15 Number of respondents who felt there is a need to improve productivity in a hybrid environment

We then wanted to categorize the suggestions into broad areas which could be looked into as part of either developing skills, formulating policies or implementing processes. To facilitate this analysis we created domains to classify the issues in the responses such as Effective People Management, In Office policy, Productivity tools, Employee engagement, Communication, Human Resource Policies, Collaboration, Manager Followup, Empowerment, Trust. We then analyzed the individual responses and quantified as to how many responses were in a particular domain/referring to a specific issue. The resultant summary was plotted into a figure as shown below. The below figure shows these broad areas and the percentage of the respondents who suggested those areas.

Figure 16 The areas which needs to be looked into to improve productivity in a hybrid environment

As can be seen from the above figure out of the Top 10 suggestions the number one area was making the people management skills more effective with over 18% of the respondents selecting it. The second area was policies around working in Office within a hybrid environment which was mentioned by 17% of the respondents. The third one was the need to develop and deploy productivity tools to measure team and organization productivity in a hybrid work environment which was in the third highest area with 15% highlighting it. These were followed by areas such as employee engagement and communication.

4.4.3 Impact of Hybrid work environment on existing policies

A significant number of respondents 66.2% believe that policies that existed before the hybrid work environment are not sufficient in the new workplace. Only 16% agreed that

the policies are sufficient. Again about 16% of the respondents were neutral. This shows the need for revamping and re looking at policies in various areas to ensure that employee experience as well as organizational outcomes are met.
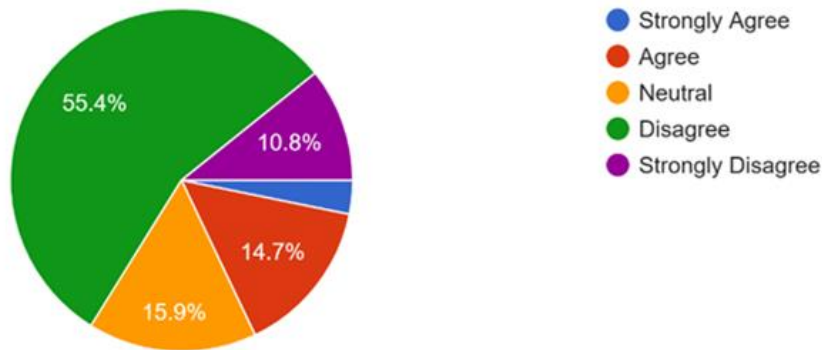
Figure 17 Policies before hybrid work environment are sufficient in current times

4.4.4 Policies that need to change

As we can see from the above figure, the majority of the respondents wanted the policies to be modified to meet the challenges of the hybrid work environment. As part of the survey we had asked the respondents to identify the top 3 policies that they felt needed to be changed to enable a better hybrid work environment. As per the below chart Work from home policy emerged as the no 1 priority followed by the Connectivity policy. The third area was Code of Conduct policy to cover topics like attendance, workspace discipline, meeting rules etc.
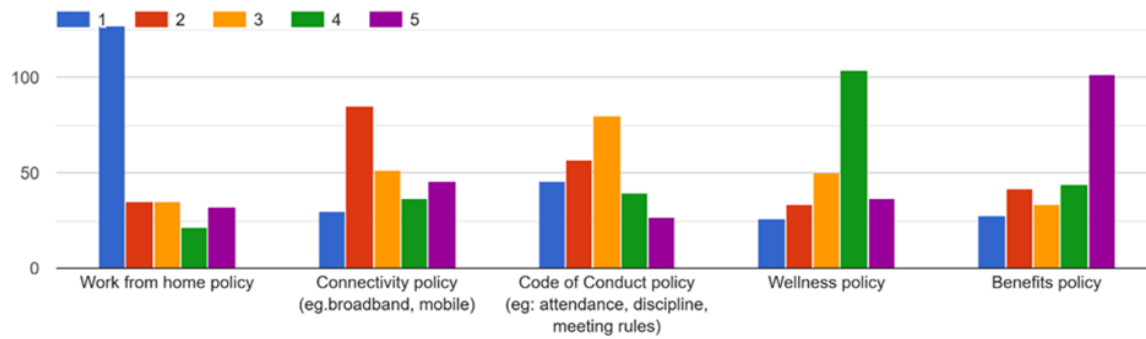
Figure 18 Policies before hybrid work environment are sufficient in current times

4.4.5 Processes in a Hybrid work environment

About 41% of respondents felt that existing processes within an organization from the time before hybrid work was introduced were sufficient enough to manage the work in a hybrid work environment. On the other hand, about 33% felt that the existing processes are inadequate to manage a hybrid work environment. 25.5% were neutral on this topic.
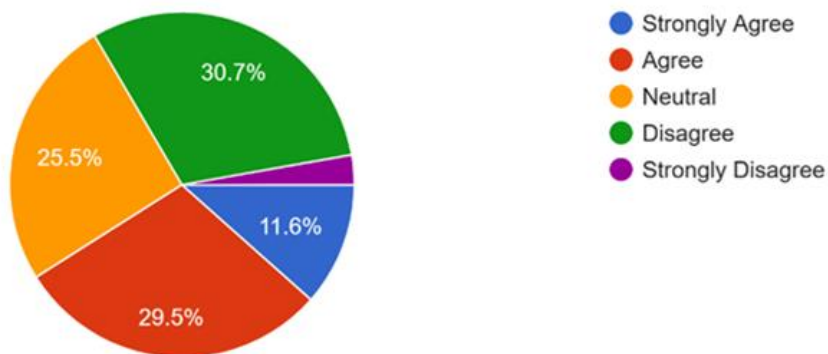
Figure 19 Sample population inputs on pre-hybrid processes functioning well in post-hybrid environment

4.4.6 Tools in a Hybrid work environment

In a hybrid work environment, due to a significant shift in the way people work and interact, digital tools especially play a critical role in enabling smooth working especially in areas of communication and collaboration. In their responses, 43.1 % of respondents indicated that existing tools are adequate even in the hybrid work environment. On the other hand about 41 % felt that the existing tools are not adequate to manage a hybrid work environment. Of the respondents 17.5% had chosen to be neutral on this topic.So we see almost a 50:50 divide between people who need enhanced tools and those that find them adequate.
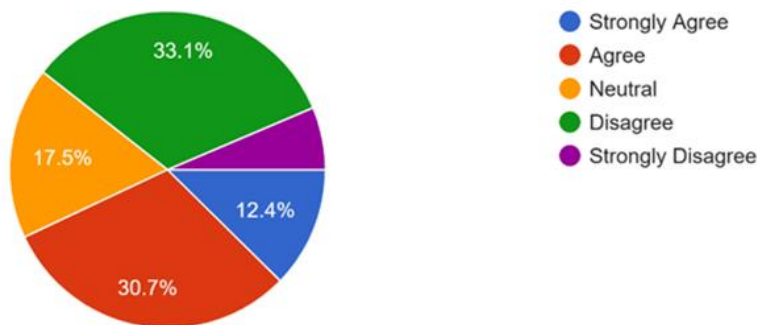
Figure 20 Sample population inputs on pre-hybrid digital tools functioning well in post-hybrid environment

4.4.7 Physical infrastructure in a Hybrid work environment

With the onset of pandemic, the possibility of letting employees work remotely for a long time and the resultant workspace real estate savings dawned upon many organizations, and many organizations had scaled down their physical infrastructure during the pandemic. Many of them even announced their intent to move into a completely remote work

environment. However within two years many organizations based on the reduced collaboration and other challenges they experienced during the two years of remote working started to switch to a hybrid work environment. In this question the intent was to estimate the adequacy of physical infrastructure to promote a healthy and safe hybrid work environment when organizations moved back to a hybrid work environment. We found that nearly 70 % of respondents expressed satisfaction over the physical infrastructure at the workplace to promote a safe hybrid working environment. Only a small percentage 14.5% felt there is a need to improve the physical infrastructure. About 15.5% had chosen to be neutral on this topic.
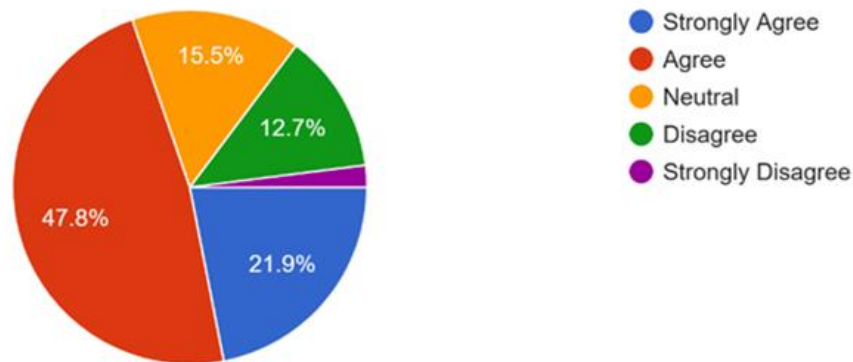
Figure 21 Sample population inputs on adequacy of physical infrastructure to work effectively in a hybrid work environment

4.4.8 Technology to support Hybrid work environment

In a hybrid working environment technology like tools play a key part in enabling a smooth, collaborative well connected work environment. The experience during the pandemic led to deployment of many cool technologies at workplaces. In response to this

question, we found that a significant majority 81.5 % found that the available technology was adequate to manage a hybrid workforce. About 11.6% were neutral and a small minority 7.2% felt there is a need for more technology at the workplace.
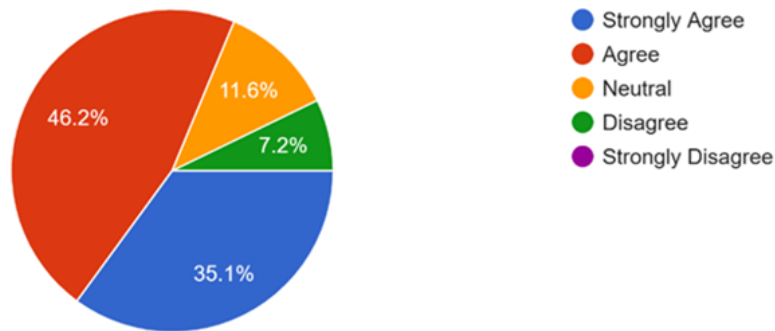
Figure 22 Sample population inputs on adequacy of technology options to manage hybrid workforce

4.4.9 Digital tools needed to work more productively in a hybrid work environment.

As this question was an open ended one and the responses to this question were in an open text format. Inorder to analyze the same we categorized the individual suggestions to specific topic areas then analyzed the individual responses and quantified as to how many responses were in a particular area. We found that there was a need for better digital tools to support the following areas - Collaboration, Communication, Productivity, HR Tools, Security, Artificial Intelligence & Analytics and Project Management. It was also noted that there were needs to improve the following digital infrastructure to ensure seamless connectivity, communication and collaboration in a hybrid work environment - Internet Connectivity, IT infrastructure, Office IT Infrastructure The summary of results was plotted into a figure as shown below.

Figure 23 – Suggestions on the digital tools that are needed to make you more productive in a hybrid work environment.
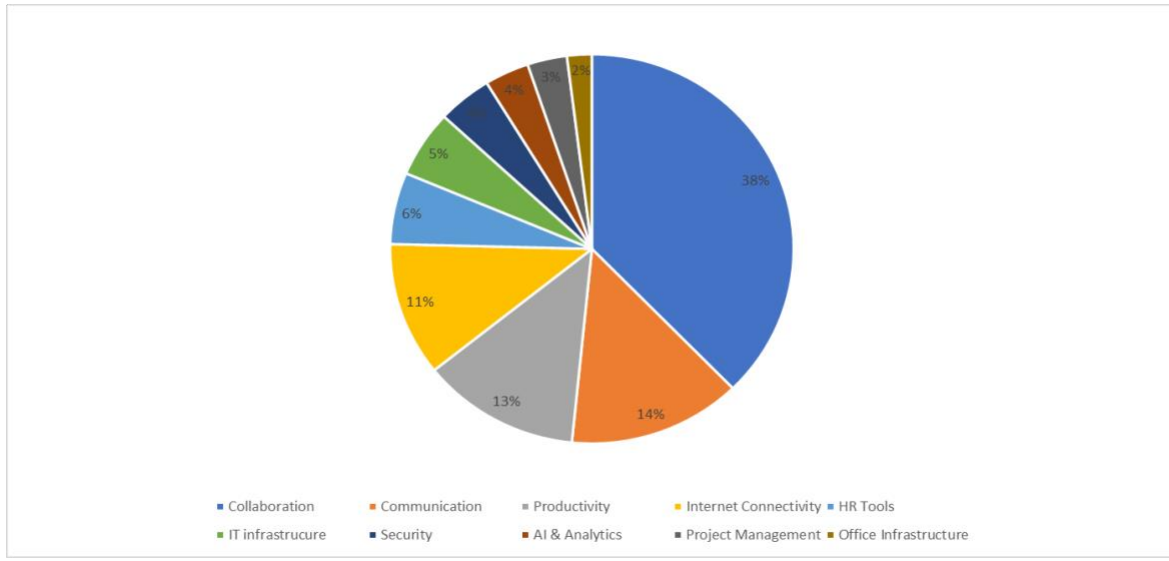
Figure 23 Suggestions on the digital tools that are needed to make you more productive in a hybrid work environment.

4.5 Skills needed to manage in a hybrid work environment

4.5.1 Self assessment of skills needed to manage a hybrid team

One piece of data we have tried to collect as part of this research is an individual's self assessment whether they have skills needed to manage team's in a hybrid work environment. A very high percentage of respondents, 84.1% felt that they have adequate skills to manage teams in a hybrid work environment. Among these 90% Senior people leaders and 87% of First line people leaders and HR team members agreed that they have the skills to manage a hybrid work environment.

Figure 24 – Sample population inputs on whether they have adequate team leading skills to manage hybrid workforce
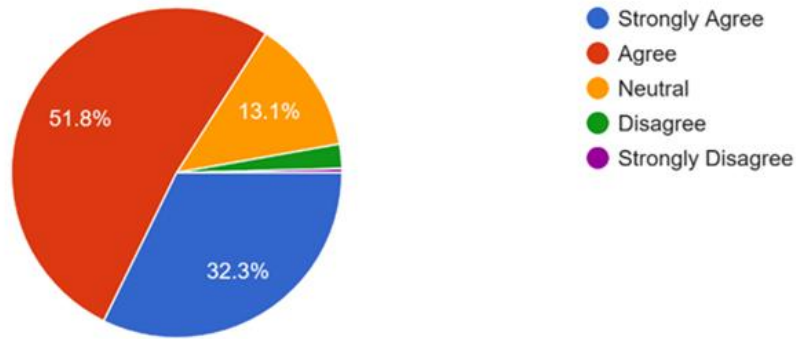
Figure 24 Sample population inputs on whether they have adequate team leading skills to manage hybrid workforce

4.5.2 Leadership and professional skills for Senior Leaders

Senior leaders play a very critical role in managing large changes like shifting into a hybrid work environment. For organizations to succeed they need to ensure that they have the necessary leadership and professional skills. A majority of the senior leaders 78.9% felt that the senior leaders have necessary leadership and professional skills to manage a hybrid work environment. While 12.4% were neutral, the remaining 7.9% felt that there is a skill gap that exists.
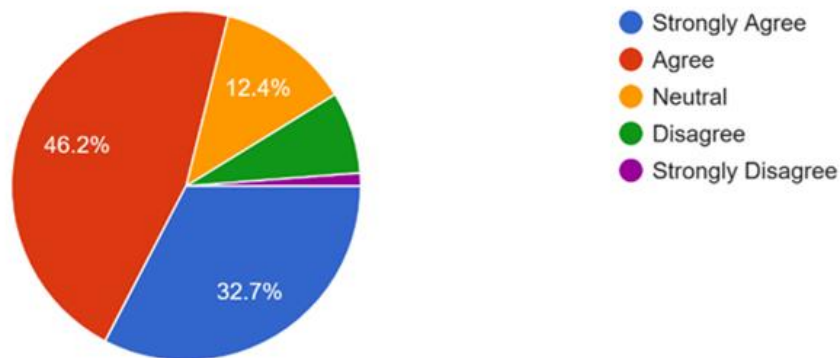
Figure 25 Sample population inputs on adequacy of leadership and professional skills of senior leaders

Professional skills for Senior Leaders

As hybrid work primarily involves ensuring work gets done among a geographically dispersed set of people who were otherwise colocated and performing the tasks within an office premise, Communication skills emerged as the top most Professional skills with over 81.7% choosing the same. Being Senior people leaders it's very important for them to connect with team members to engage them and get the best out of the teams, so Emotional Intelligence emerging as the second highest professional skill is not a surprise with over 53.8% choosing it. Even though collaboration has always been a critical piece of any team's output in a hybrid work environment Senior leaders enabling Collaboration emerged as the third top most skill with 53.4% respondents choosing it.

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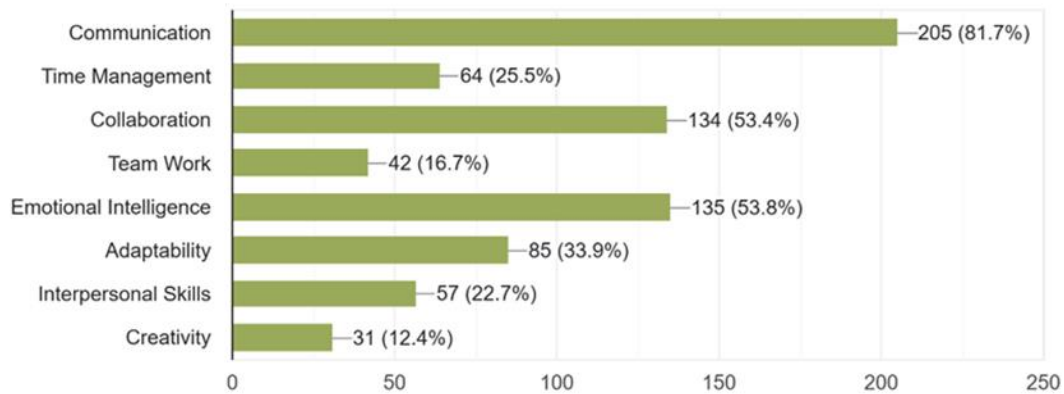
Figure 26 Criticality of professional skills for senior leadership in a hybrid work environment

Leadership skills for Senior Leaders

With most of the teams being remote and ensuring people remain productive, calls for a capability to enhance employee motivation within the work groups is very critical and 61.4 % identified this as a critical skill. With a lot of focus on diversity and inclusion a hybrid environment provides a larger opportunity to create diverse, dispersed teams. Maintaining inclusivity especially in situations where some team members work remotely more than others, senior people leaders play a critical role in building an inclusive environment at the workplace so building an inclusive work environment has been identified by 51.8 % as the second critical senior leader leadership skill. People management has always been a challenging task and with teams being virtual, managing Virtual teams is seen as the second top most leadership skill having 120 respondents (47.8%) choosing it.
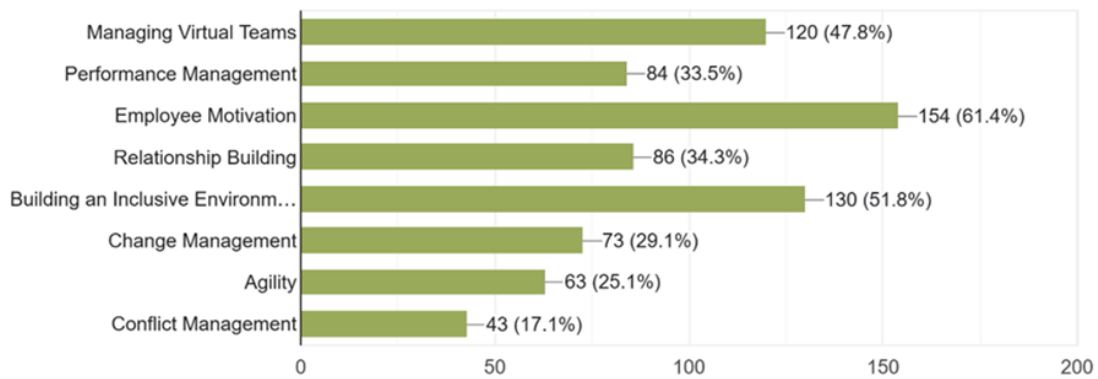
Figure 27 Criticality of leadership skills for senior leadership in a hybrid work environment

4.5.3 Leadership and professional skills for first line People Leaders

First line people leaders are the critical link between the organization and team members. "The first-line leaders who think future forward, act quickly, think clearly, and make good decisions amidst complexity; are open to feedback; help their teams align their individual career goals with the organization's goals; get the right things done; and model well-being will have the strongest organizational impact" (The RBL Group, Apr 2024). The first line people leaders play a very critical role in managing large changes like shifting into a hybrid work environment. For organizations to succeed they need to ensure that the people leaders have the necessary leadership and professional skills. Among the respondents, 72.9% felt that the people leaders have necessary leadership and professional skills to manage a hybrid work environment. While 15.1 were neutral, the remaining 12% felt that there is a skill gap that exists.

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Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

15.1%
10%
48.2%
24.7%
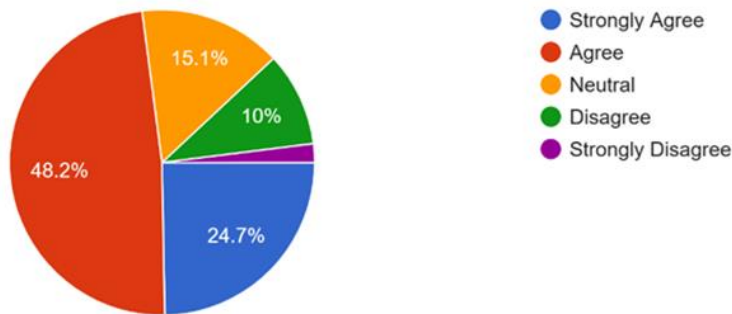
Figure 28 Sample population inputs on adequacy of leadership and professional skills of first line people leaders

Professional skills for First Line People Leaders

Over 69% (175 respondents) have identified communication as the top most critical professional skill for people leaders, as shown in the below figure. First line people leaders being the organizations front end to team members plays a critical role in two way communication between the organization and the teams. This becomes increasingly important when team members are dispersed and not within the same physical office space everyday. Effective collaboration between team members in a team is very critical for their outcomes and this is increasingly difficult in a distributed work environment, so as seen 49.8% have picked Collaboration as the next critical skill for first line people leaders. There is enough research to prove that team's productivity and engagement are directly dependent on the first line people leaders emotional intelligence. Liu and Cho (2018) showed that many studies have emphasized that emotional intelligence is more important than general intelligence in most managerial roles, especially leadership roles.

Thus it's not a surprise that 112 respondents that is about 44.6% have identified emotional intelligence as a critical skill for people leaders.
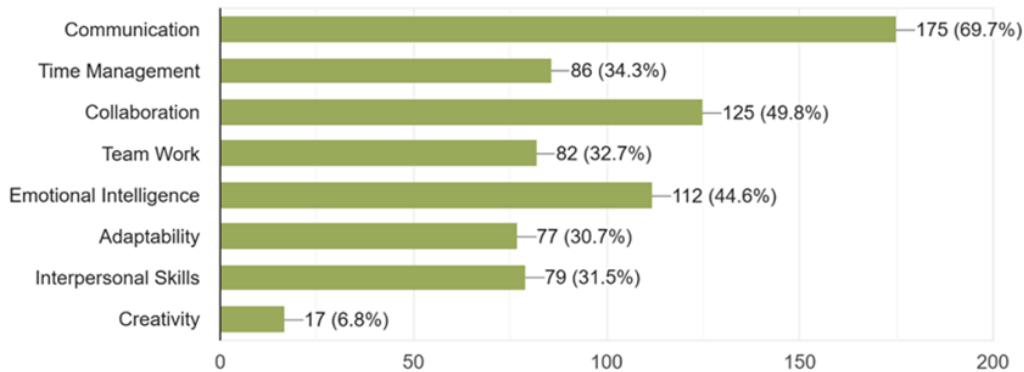
Figure 29 Criticality of professional skills for first line people leaders in a hybrid work environment

Leadership skills for First Line People Leaders

First line people leaders need to ensure that employees are engaged and motivated to produce the outcomes, especially when there is no direct, day to day connection between team members as well as team members and first line people leaders. Hence employee motivation is not a surprise to be the top most leadership skill identified for them with 150 respondents(~60%) identifying it. A first-line leader, you have always had to attract and retain the right talent to get the work done, ensure your team's goals and skills align to the organization's goals, and help your team be productive and engaged (The RBL Group, Apr, 2024). In a hybrid environment where most of the team is interacting in a virtual mode, it's quite obvious that managing virtual teams is seen as the second top most critical skill with 135 (53.8%) respondents selecting it. In some of the previous questions related to productivity showing trust, empowering team members, and effective people management

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have been shown as some of the top challenges. Thus relationship building coming as the third top most skill with 118 respondents (47%) is quite natural.
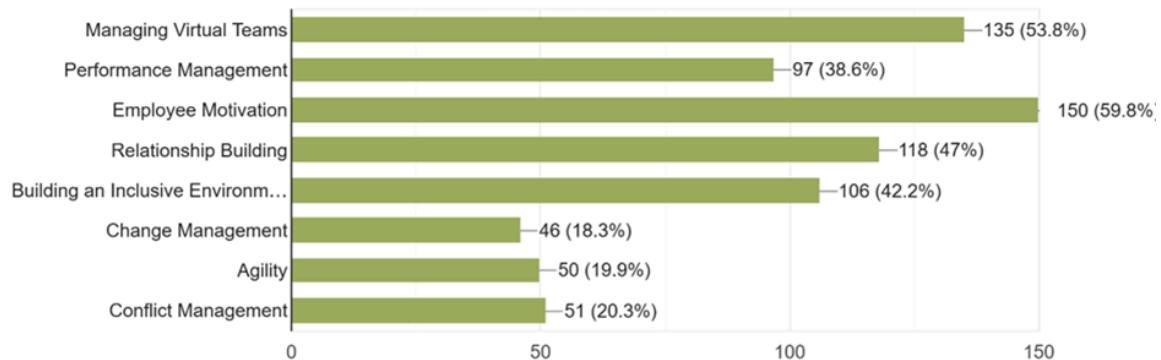
Figure 30 Criticality of leadership skills for first line people leaders in a hybrid work environment

4.5.4 Leadership and professional skills for HR team members

In a hybrid work environment, human resource professionals need to ensure that they deploy policies and procedures that would allow easy ways to handle the new challenges introduced by the new work environment. In addition to policy introduction, there should be focus on enforcement through empowerment and listening rather than command and control, standard and hierarchy (Bingham, 2020). This calls for a new set of leadership and professional skills for the human resource team which will help them to enable the senior management and people leaders to drive the organization to the next level of performance. More than 68.9% surveyed indicated that the human resource professionals have necessary skills to manage a hybrid work force. While 16.7% respondents were neutral in their response to this question. 15.5% of respondents felt that human resource professionals need to further

develop the skills to manage a hybrid work environment in IT products and IT Services industries in India .
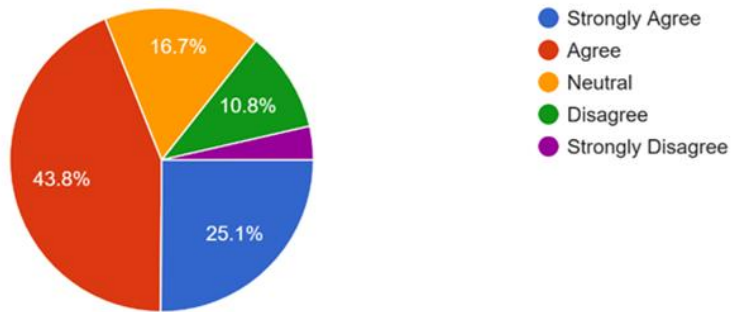
Figure 31 Sample population inputs on adequacy of leadership and professional skills of HR team members

Professional skills for HR professionals

To ensure that team members are aligned to organizational policies and also various wellness and hybrid work policy measures are introduced and practices within the organization the human resource professionals have to have a very strong set of communication skills. This is indicated by 184 (73.3%) respondents. Dealing with people and helping them cope up with the additional challenges introduced by hybrid work environments calls for a higher level of emotional intelligence in the part of the HR professionals as indicated by 137(56.7%) respondents. The HR professionals not only need to promote more collaboration within teams but also collaborate more with other functions and businesses so that they can understand on an ongoing basis the challenges introduced by

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the hybrid work environment but also dynamically adapt policies and programs to meet those challenges in partnerships with the rest of the business. Thus Collaboration is seen to have occupied the third spot among the top professionals skills, selected by 102 (40.6%) respondents.
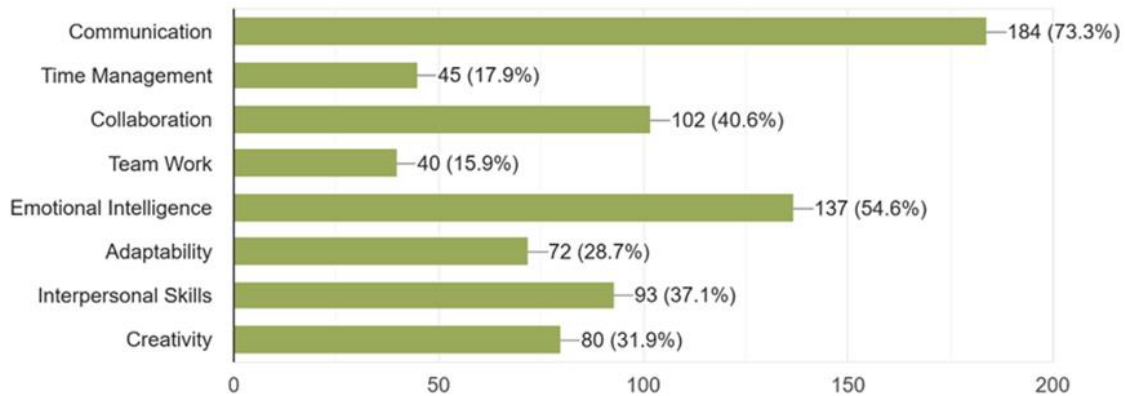
Figure 32 Criticality of professional skills for HR professionals in a hybrid work environment

Leadership skills for HR professionals

Employee motivation is cited by 171 respondents (68.25%) as the top leadership skill for HR professionals. Employee engagement is a key area which is affected by the policies and programs formulated and rolled out by the human resource professionals, they also need to work with the people leaders to keep the employee motivation high so that we are able to get the best out of the team members. This is followed by building an inclusive environment as selected by 141 (56.2%) respondents. Being the custodian of diversity and inclusion within an organization, it's very important that the HR professionals are able to ensure an inclusive environment where everyone's contributions are valued by the organizations irrespective of whether they are working out of an office or not.

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Relationship building emerged as the third top area as one being the flag bearers of employee care, they need to ensure that they maintain excellent relations not only with business leaders but also other functions , so that they can provide a enhanced employee experience in a hybrid environment, where the usual day to day connection with employees do not exit.
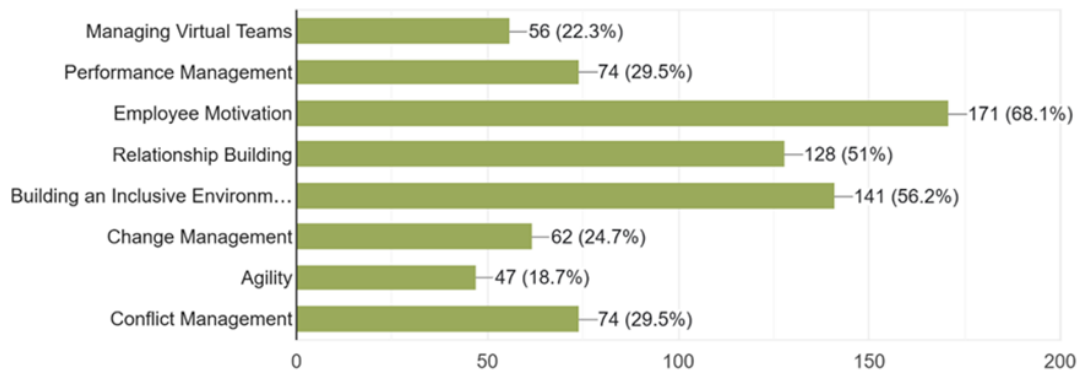
Figure 33 Criticality of leadership skills for HR professionals in a hybrid work environment

4.6 Development programs for team members, people manager and HR professional in a hybrid work environment

Once we have the adequacy of skills in an organization assessed the next step is to assess the availability of development programs and supporting policies within the organization to address the skill gaps identified. In this area, the majority of the participants agreed that they have necessary development programs for individual contributors, people leaders and human resources professionals, available within the organization.
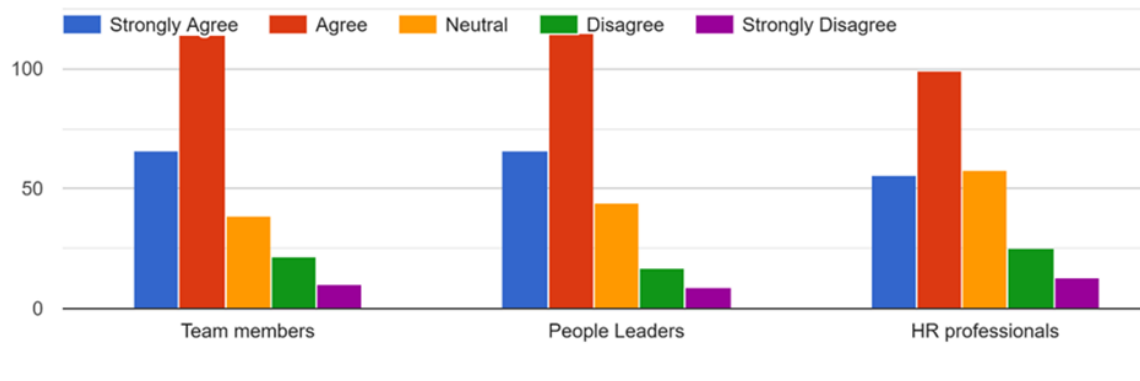
Figure 34 Sample population inputs on adequacy of development programs for team members, people manager and HR professionals in a hybrid work environment

4.7 Training resources needed to manage in a hybrid work environment

As regards the development programs for individual contributors, people leaders and human resources professionals, available within the organization the results have clearly shown that there is a need to develop new programs or enhance the existing programs to cover additional areas.

The number one area identified was training on effectively managing a hybrid work force, one that is partly in the office and partly virtual emerged as indicated by 186 respondents (74.1%). This was followed by training on having performance conversations with team members as selected by 148 (59%) respondents. The third priority was shared between two areas with 138 responses each i.e. (55%). The first one was tools/guidance related to HR or employee relation topics and the second one being training on leading better meetings with virtual teams. The training on having performance conversations/difficult conversations with 133 (53%) responses and guidance/decision tree to help determine which

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team members should/may work virtually with 124 (49.4%) responses also emerged as important among the Top 5 areas highlighted by the respondents.
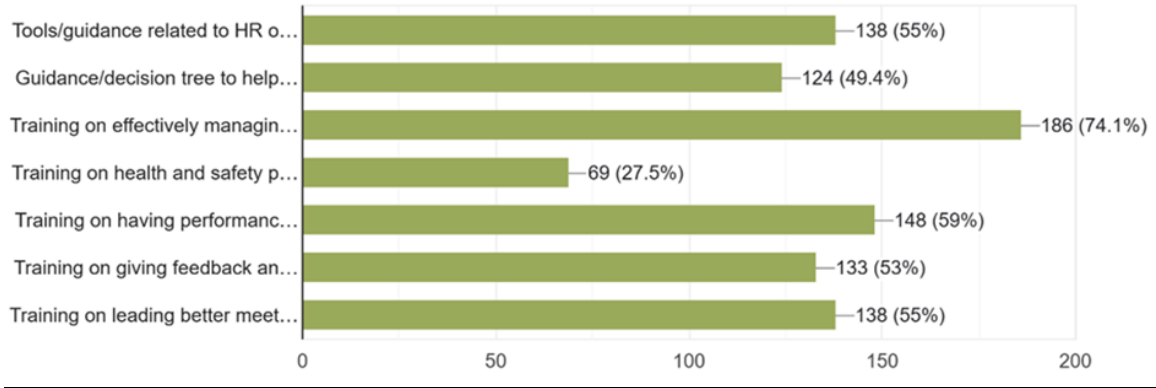
Figure 35 Sample population inputs on the training resources that will help manage hybrid work environment effectively

4.8 Inferential Analysis

4.8.1 Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean and Standard deviation are important statistical measures in quantitative research. Means are the average scores of responses to a question. The standard deviation on the other hand, tells the researcher how far the individual responses to a question deviate from the mean.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Hybrid Challenges	14.33	5.03

Organization policies	18.56	0.98
Tools & processes	9.90	2.92
Adequacy of leadership and professional skills	8.25	3.11
Professional skills for SL	10.90	3.12
Professional skills for FL	11.00	3.03
Professional skills for HR	12.54	3.34
Leadership skills for SL	11.82	3.49
Leadership skills for FL	11.22	3.15
Leadership skills for HR	12.86	3.22
Adequacy of Development programs	6.71	2.91
Training Resources	10.11	5.14

As we can see in Table 2, the average scores for Hybrid Challenges and Organisation policies are much higher than the rest of the variables which means that the respondents attributed

higher significance to these variables. The next set of variables that showed relatively high values were the variables on Professional and Leadership skills for Senior leaders, Firstline leaders and Human resource professionals and also Training resources. Lastly respondents gave the least scores to variables associated with Tools and processes, Adequacy of leadership and professional skills and Adequacy of Development programs.

4.8.2 Correlation

Correlation is the measure of the relationship between variables. The result of the correlations tells the researcher how strong the relationships between the variables used in the study are. The value ranges from absolute value of 1 to 0. The stronger the relation between the variables is, the closer the correlation value is to 1. Correlation can be positive and negative. In the case of a positive correlation, when one value of the variable increases, the other increases with it. The opposite happens in the case of a negative correlation. In a negative correlation, when one value increases, the other value decreases.

Table 3: Correlation

Table 3 Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Age Group	1.00															
Gender	-.13*	1.00														
Educational Qualification	-0.01	0.12	1.00													
Total years of work experience	.71**	-.21**	-0.02	1.00												
Hybrid Challenges	0.03	-0.05	-0.01	.13*	1.00											
Organisation Policies	0.11	0.06	0.10	.13*	.12*	1.00										
Tools & processes	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.07	.23**	1.00									
Adequacy of leadership and professional skills	0.01	0.03	0.10	-0.10	0.00	0.04	.44**	1.00								
Professional skills for SL	.16*	0.00	.19**	0.06	0.07	0.12	0.07	0.08	1.00							
Professional skills for FL	0.01	-0.05	0.07	0.04	.13*	-0.02	0.11	0.10	.25**	1.00						
Professional skills for HR	.13*	0.03	-0.03	0.12	0.09	0.12	-0.02	0.03	.15*	0.12	1.00					
Leadership skills for SL	0.05	.15*	0.05	0.07	0.02	.20**	0.01	-0.02	.20**	0.07	.15*	1.00				
Leadership skills for FL	-0.09	0.12	0.01	-0.01	-0.05	-0.03	-0.05	0.03	0.08	.13*	.20**	.21**	1.00			
Leadership skills for HR	0.01	.14*	-0.10	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.02	-0.06	0.03	0.08	.15*	.21**	.14*	1.00		
Adequacy of Development programs	0.00	0.00	0.07	-0.08	0.09	0.07	.43**	.63**	0.10	.21**	.14*	0.05	0.07	0.02	1.00	
Training Resources	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.02	0.06	.15*	0.09	-0.06	.16*	0.00	-0.06	0.10	-0.08	0.05	-0.04	1.00

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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As shown in table 3, we can see the correlation between the various variables considered for this research. The table shows that there are positive correlations between quite a few of the variables. One of the obvious positive correlations shows that higher the age group, higher the total years of experience. Tools and processes were positively correlated with the organization policies. Tools and processes were also positively correlated with adequacy of leadership and professional skills which means that higher the tools and processes score higher the value of the leadership and professional skills in an organization. Professional skills for first line leaders is also positively correlated to professional skills of senior leaders which means that organizations that had a high score for professional skills for first line leaders also had a high score for professional skills of senior leaders. This could be due to such organizations investing in the skill growth of their middle level and senior leadership.

The results also show that leadership skills for senior leaders is positively correlated to organization policies which goes to show that better the organization policies, senior leaders had higher leadership skills. Adequacy of development programs showed a strong positive correlation to 2 variables, that is tools and processes and adequacy of leadership and professional skills. This shows that an organization that invests in development programs had adequate leadership and professional skills in their workforce.

Though there are some negative correlations between some of the variables they are not very significant like the correlation between leadership skills for first line leaders with organization policies.

4.8.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in a research. The dependent variables are the variables that are being studied while the independent variables are the variables that influence the behavior of the dependent variables. For this study, the independent variable is Hybrid challenges whereas the dependent variables are Adequacy of leadership and professional skills, Organization policies, Processes and Tools, Professional skills for first line leaders, senior leaders and HR professionals, Leadership skills for first line leaders, senior leaders and HR professionals, Adequacy of development programs and Training resources.

In a research study, it is important for the researcher to find out in what way the independent variable affects the dependent variable. One statistical tool that is commonly used is regression analysis (Montgomery et al., 2012). With regression analysis, the researcher can examine the possible causal effect of one variable upon the other. The uses of regression go beyond examining the relation between dependent and independent variables, it also takes into consideration the "statistical significance" of relation between the dependent and independent variable.

As we can see in Table 4, the results show that there is a positive impact of Hybrid Challenges on Adequacy of leadership and professional skills but the score is low hence it means that there is a lot more that organizations can do to increase their leadership and professional skills to meet the Hybrid challenges.

Table 4 Regression

Dependent Variable	Regression Coefficient
Adequacy of leadership & prof skills	0.003
Organization policies	0.125
Processes & Tools	0.074
Professional Skills for Senior Leaders	0.07
Professional Skills for Firstline Leaders	0.131
Professional Skills for Human Resource	0.09
Leadership Skills for Senior Leaders	0.025
Leadership Skills for Firstline Leaders	0.053
Leadership Skills for Human Resource	0.018

Adequacy of Development programs	0.086
Training Resources	0.057

Further the study shows a positive impact of change in organization policies and Hybrid Challenges which goes to show that to face hybrid challenges organizations had to adapt and change their organization policies. Similarly Tools and processes also showed a positive impact to Hybrid Challenges again showing that to cope with Hybrid Challenges organizations had to make changes to their Tools and processes.

Professional skills for senior leaders, first line leaders and human resource professionals all show a positive impact to Hybrid Challenges which means that due to Hybrid Challenges, Professional skills for senior leaders, first line leaders and human resource professionals positively increased. This could be due to the need for skills to be upgraded to meet the Hybrid challenges. Similarly Leadership skills for senior leaders, first line leaders and human resource professionals all show a positive impact to Hybrid Challenges which means that due to Hybrid Challenges, Leadership skills for senior leaders, first line leaders and human resource professionals positively increased. This could be due to the need for skills to be upgraded to meet the Hybrid challenges.

Furthermore Adequacy of development programs and Training resources also were positively impacted by Hybrid Challenges which goes to show that development programs had

to be increased to copy with the challenges and also Training resources are to be increased to manage the Hybrid challenges.

4.9 Summary of Findings

In this chapter we saw both, the descriptive analysis of the results and the inferential analysis of the results. In the descriptive part we first saw the demographic spread of the respondents. Around 81.3% of respondents belonged to the 35 to 54 yrs age group. Gender-wise the spread was 67% male, 32% female and 1% preferred not to disclose their gender. When we look at educational qualifications we see that the majority of respondents at 67% have completed graduation, 29% have completed post-graduation and 4% have completed doctoral programs. Work-experience wise 90% of the respondents had 10 or more years of work experience. When we look at the role profile of the respondents , we see that 24.3% were HR professionals, 12.7% were first line people leaders, 43.4% were senior people leaders and 19.5% were individual contributors. Industry size wise we see that a whopping 61% respondents belonged to the enterprise category of industry size.

In terms of organization working model, a majority 78.5% belonged to the hybrid working category which helps get the appropriate responses required for this research. Over 98% of the respondents were familiar with the hybrid work environment with over 71% very familiar with it. With respect to challenges, around 37% respondents agreed that a hybrid working environment is more challenging that work from the office model and around 47% felt it was not as challenging whereas 16% were neutral about it.

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When asked about the top 3 challenges with respect to a hybrid work environment, close to 52% respondents called out "Adherence to workplace ethics" as the biggest challenge. This was followed secondly by "Effectively managing a hybrid team" at 48% and thirdly by "Monitoring productivity of the team" 46%. When asked about the impact of a hybrid work environment on organizational policies, 66% agreed that the policies that existed before hybrid work environments were not sufficient to operate in a hybrid work environment. When further asked about the top 3 policies that needed to undergo change , respondents rated "Work from home policy" as the topmost policy that needed change followed by "Connectivity" policy and "Code of Conduct" policy.

In terms of processes, 41% respondents felt that existing processes were enough, whereas 33% felt that existing processes were inadequate. On the other hand, 43% respondents felt the existing tools were enough whereas 41% felt that the existing tools were inadequate. When asked about digital tools. On physical infrastructure, 70% respondents expressed satisfaction over the current physical infrastructure at their workplace. In terms of technology options at office to manage hybrid workforce a whopping 82% felt that their organizations had the required technology to support a hybrid work environment.

On adequacy of team leading skills, around 84% respondents felt that they had adequate skills to manage teams in a hybrid work environment. The below table shows the summary of the top 3 professional and leadership skills that senior leaders, first line leaders and HR professionals felt were the most important.

Table 5 Top 3 Professional and Leadership Skills for Senior Leaders, First line people leaders and HR Professionals

	Professional Skills	**Leadership Skills**
Senior leaders	Communication Emotional Intelligence Collaboration	Employee motivation Building an inclusive environment Managing virtual teams
First line people leaders	Communication Collaboration Emotional Intelligence	Employee motivation Managing virtual teams Relationship building
HR professionals	Communication Emotional Intelligence Collaboration	Employee motivation Building an inclusive environment Relationship building

On the question around availability of development programs, the majority agreed that the required development programs were available for senior leaders, first line leaders and HR professionals to operate in a hybrid work environment in their respective organizations. When asked about what were the top training programs required to manage a hybrid work environment, "Training on effectively managing a hybrid workforce" was at the top of the list followed by "Training on having performance conversations". The third place was taken by 2 training namely "Tools and guidance related to HR" and "Training on leading better meetings with virtual teams".

The inferential analysis was done using statistical tools like Mean and standard deviation, Regression and Correlation. The mean and standard deviation scores showed that Hybrid challenges and organizational policies had much higher average scores followed by professional and leadership skills for senior leader, firstline leaders and human resource professionals. The correlation table showed positive correlation between quite a few variables like age group and total years of experience. Tools and processes positively correlated with organizational policies and also with leadership and professional skills. The results also showed that leadership skills for senior leaders positively correlated to organizational policies. Adequacy of development programs also showed positive correlation to 2 variables that are tools and processes and adequacy of leadership and professional skills.

The regression analysis was done considering hybrid challenges as the independent variable. A positive impact was found between hybrid challenges and adequacy of leadership and professional skills. Also, positive impact was found between hybrid challenges and organizational policies and tools & processes showing that these variables needed to change as per hybrid challenges. Further hybrid challenges also showed a positive impact on leadership and professional skills of senior leaders, Firstline leaders and HR professionals. This could mean that the skills had to be upgraded to meet the hybrid challenges. Finally, development programs and training resources also showed a positive impact with hybrid challenges, which means even these variables needed to change with increasing hybrid challenges.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the overall results are presented through both descriptive and inferential analysis. We looked at responses to each of the survey questions to understand the demographics of the respondents as well as their inputs on various aspects of the hybrid working environment. The survey responses were depicted through pie-charts and bar-charts to best showcase the responses received. We also did an exhaustive quantitative and qualitative analysis of the free text inputs that were provided by the participants . This helped us capture the practical issues that exist in a hybrid work environment and also prioritize them in not only identifying and implementing solutions but also to zero in on the specificity of the skills identified through subsequent questions. Furthermore inferential analysis was performed using a statistical tool called SPSS and specifically through statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation, correlation and regression. This further helped articulate the responses in a statistical manner and helped establish connection between the various variables.

CHAPTER V:
DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Results

In this section we are trying to conduct the analysis of the results we got from the survey in the previous section to find answers to the research question as well as the hypothesis we formulated earlier. This as per Creswell (2002), in a qualitative research is done for the researcher to identify the material that is the most pertinent to the research questions.

In this research we used Google forms to collect the data. The data was then exported to an Excel format. We had used the graph and data analysis features of the Google forms to conduct the preliminary analysis of the collected data and create the figures. We then used Microsoft Excel to do a detailed analysis of the data and also classification of the Open ended questions textual data and prepare the results depicted in the previous section. For the inferential studies the SPSS tool was used to conduct various types of analysis as shown in the Inferential section of previous chapter

During the pandemic, companies were forced to adopt a 100% remote working model, irrespective of the industry they were in. As the pandemic lasted for more than 2 years companies had to find ways to make working from home more efficient. Many organizations had even downsized their infrastructure as well as came up with policies and mechanisms to promote remote working extensively.

However prolonged teleworking and staying at home started to impact the quality of life of team members as well as the overall team and organizational productivity due to various issues that are elaborated in the literature review section of this paper. Organizations then realized that to promote better collaboration, innovation and camaraderie at the workplace it was needed to bring back the work force back into office at least for a few days in a week.

This led to the adoption of a hybrid work model in the workplace. Unlike other industries It Products and It Services industry is highly people centric and deals with the intellectual capital provided by individuals. This makes the IT industry more suitable for a hybrid work environment. On the other hand, the IT industry is highly dependent on Innovation and close collaboration between individuals who are either building complex IT products or creating and delivering advanced IT services to their clients. Thus the people's challenges in a hybrid work environment are much more complex in the IT industry. Unlike the developed countries where the basic internet infrastructure is very advanced and most individuals occupy their own dwellings, in India the limited infrastructure and internet connectivity as well as concepts like joint family brings in bigger challenges to operationalize the hybrid work environment.

In IT Products and IT Services industries, two key stakeholders who help manage the workforce and work environment are the human resource professionals and people leaders. Prior to the pandemic the policies, processes and tools in the organization were geared to handle a work environment where 99% of the workforce were in a physical office 99% of

the time. Remote working was allowed only on an exceptional basis though there were teams collaborating across the globe.

When this study was proposed in early 2022, the hybrid work was in a very nascent stage and there were many unknowns. It was clearly emerging that there were new challenges introduced by the hybrid work environment especially in the areas of communication, team collaboration, employee engagement. By 2023 many of these challenges were researched and solutions to them were recommended by various researchers. As part of the literature study it emerged that there were many solutions being practiced, not much focus was being paid on the skills that need to be developed in the key stakeholders viz: human resource professionals and people leaders to handle these solutions and deploy the solutions, especially in the Indian IT Products and ITServices industries. Thus this research was designed to understand the issues and challenges related to policies, process and tools and also the associated skills needed to effectively manage a hybrid working environment, using the data collected from human resource professionals and people across the industry. .

5.2 Discussion of Research questions

5.2.1 Research Question One

What kind of new skills human resource professionals need to build to manage the new age hybrid work environment?

The results clearly indicate that there are many a new challenges thrown up in the workplace by the hybrid work environment like moonlighting, absenteeism, reduction in

productivity, non-inclusivity of team members because of not being in office, less effective collaboration and communication because of everyone not being in an office environment all the time and this calls for human resource (HR) professionals to develop new policies and skills to address these challenges.

In our research more than 68.9% surveyed indicated that the human resource professionals have necessary skills to manage a hybrid work force in the Indian IT Products and IT Services industry. While 16.7% respondents were neutral in response to this question. 15.5% of respondents felt that human resource professionals need to further develop the skills to manage a hybrid work environment in IT products and IT Services industries in India.

Based on the responses it clearly emerges that in the Indian IT Products and IT services industry, among the leadership skills employee motivation is the top skill for HR professionals as indicated by 171(68.25%) and from professional skills Communication was the top skill as indicated by 184 (73.3%) respondents.

This is followed by building an inclusive environment as the second important leadership skill, selected by 141 (56.2%) respondents. In professional skills, as dealing with people and helping them cope up with the additional challenges introduced by hybrid work environments calls for a higher level of empathy, emotional intelligence is selected by 137(56.7%) respondents.

The third critical leadership skill is building an inclusive environment, as it is very important that the HR professionals need to ensure everyone's contributions are valued, voices heard and opinions considered by the organizations and no discrimination is practiced based on one's work location or the number of days someone is present in the office. With the expectation that HR professionals are the champions of effective collaboration within the organizations, not only to handle on an ongoing basis the challenges introduced by the hybrid work environment but also dynamically adapt policies and programs to meet those challenges in partnering with various other functions and business, Collaboration is seen to have occupied the third spot among the top professionals skills, selected by 102 (40.6%) respondents.

Thus we can see human resource needs to collaborate more and build strong relationships with other parts of the organization to ensure team members alignment to the organization and its culture. As a result the employee engagement within the organization would improve, helping to drive better organizational results.

Based on the questions related to organizational productivity, policies and processes there is a need for the human resources team to build necessary skills to look at the workplace policies and compensation and benefits policies and modify them appropriately. Some of the areas that they need to focus on include policies around expectations of working from home, Internet and Bring your own device policies etc. They also need to put in place necessary checks and balances to prevent absenteeism, moonlighting etc.

5.2.2 Research Question Two

What kind of skills people leaders need to develop to manage the hybrid workforce?

In their research "As per New ways of leading teams in a Hybrid environment" (Hatfield , Pearce 2021), the researchers have clearly found that there is no one "right" way for people leaders to manage their teams in a hybrid workplace. The leadership team consisting of Senior management, Human resource professionals need to devise a people leader development strategy looking into the organizational culture, company strategy, extent of hybrid work within the organization. The skills that need to be developed and the development programs for building those skills should be derived out of that strategy.

This research has shown that more than 72.9% surveyed said that the people managers have necessary skills to manage a hybrid work force in the Indian IT Products and IT Services industry. 15.1% of respondents were neutral in response to this question. At the same time 12 % of respondents felt that people leaders need to further develop the skills to manage a hybrid work environment in IT products and IT Services industries in India.

On the question about what skills to develop for people leaders, among professional skills communication was selected as the top most skill by over 69%. In a hybrid environment where the face-to-face interactions are limited and the team is distributed as a critical front end of the organization to the employee community, people leaders need to enable two way communication between the organization and the teams. In the leadership skills employee motivation merged as the top most leadership skill identified by ~60% of respondents.

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Thus to enable better employee motivation in a hybrid environment, people leaders need to extend additional support and enhance the positive content in their messages(Horwitz et al., 2006). In order to enhance team's effectiveness people leaders need to facilitate enhanced communication to enable knowledge sharing among team and also encourage team members to share more personal information as it will help their colleagues to understand them better and collaborate with them more effectively (Liu, 2010).

In the second spot in the list of professionals skills collaboration was picked by 49.8% of participants. Unlike in the past , when the team members are not co-located in the same physical workspace, it's very important that the people leaders foster an environment where additional barriers to collaboration in the work environment are lowered. From a leadership skills perspective, with most of the work getting executed virtually, managing virtual teams emerging as the second top most skillfor people leaders, with 53.8% respondents selecting it is not a surprise.

In the software products and services industry people are the key building blocks of the organization. People leaders need to have high levels of emotional intelligence to manage these people's resources. Emotional intelligence is also linked to the effectiveness of leadership (Sy, Tram & O`hara (2006) studied the role of emotional intelligence in satisfaction and job performance. Thus 44.6% identifying emotional intelligence as the third critical professional skill for people leaders in a hybrid work environment in this industry is quite natural. With team productivity being a high concern in a hybrid work environment, its

natural that 47% of respondents chose relationship building as the third critical leadership skill for people leaders.

5.2.3 Research Question Three

How do senior leaders support teams to manage these workplace transitions and remain engaged and productive?

As can be seen from the survey results there are many new challenges thrown in by a hybrid work environment. Some of the top areas that emerged as per the results above is adherence to workplace ethics (eg: moonlighting, absenteeism), effectively managing a hybrid team, one that is partly in the office and partly virtual, monitoring productivity of the team.

As can be seen by responses around organizational productivity, more that 78% of respondents felt that there is an opportunity to improve workplace productivity in a hybrid work environment. Further analysis using the open ended question on the areas that needed to be looked into improving team's productivity shows effective people management practices, policies and guidelines around "In Office work", focus on productivity tools and increasing employee engagement.

There was also feedback round enhancing HR policies to adapt to a hybrid work environment. In response to the question related to suggestion on tools that are needed to make hybrid work environment, in addition to communication and collaboration tools which are a fundamental need for a hybrid work environment, productivity tools, infrastructure for

better internet connectivity, HR tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics tools emerged as top areas to focus.

Most of the above issues can lead to serious hampering of employee engagement and workplace productivity. The senior leaders in the organization should work very closely with human resource teams to craft new policies and/or redraft existing policies to handle challenges around effective people management and managing virtual teams. They should also look into   new policies which can control absenteeism and stop moonlighting.

Once the policies are in place they should revisit the existing processes and tools including communication and collaboration tools and also the digital infrastructure to support more effective virtual interactions including the in office and employee's internet infrastructure to minimize the workplace disruptions as well as deploy productivity tracking tools to ensure the hybrid teams performance is same as previous.

The senior management should work in close collaboration with human resource professionals to identify the skill gaps that exist among them especially in areas around improving organizational communication especially around cascading organizational strategy, culture, goals and priorities and ensure everybody in the hybrid work environment are aware of the same. They need to work with people leaders to ensure that the individual teams despite being hybrid are aligned to these and are able to deliver organizational results accordingly.

In a hybrid work environment where the daily connect with the workplace is missing and also with different team members adopting a different mix of work from home and work from office a key area that gets impacted is the employee engagement and connect with organizations. The senior leaders need to collaborate with various functions like human resources, workplace solutions to devise new programs which can help fill this gap through innovative workplace and people practices. These will not only promote better teamwork among teams but also ensure that teams stay connected with organization and also able to de stress themselves.

They should ensure that an environment that promotes extensive collaboration is fostered within the organization and enable the deployment of digital tools which will enhance the communication and collaboration among the teams in a hybrid work environment. The organizational rewards and recognition policies need to be tailored to promote stronger collaboration.

Another concern area that needs to be supported is identifying clear metrics around organizational productivity in collaboration with human resource professionals. They should then work towards deploying the latest digital tools which can seamlessly collect data and measure productivity without being intrusive of individual privacy. This will also help tackle issues around absenteeism and moonlighting to some extent.

Senior leaders play a critical role in enabling people leaders to demonstrate empathy and increase employee motivation. They need to be role models for demonstrating empathy

especially in situations where employees are not in the workspace. They should revisit the organizational policies and culture map to identify areas which can impact collaborative work in a hybrid environment and come up with new ones which can foster employee motivation.

In today's global environment diversity and inclusion has gained a lot of importance and there is enough research to show that a diverse and inclusive workplace can produce better business results. "The business case is clear: When women are at the table, the discussion is richer, the decision-making process is better, and the organization is stronger" (Harvard Business Review, Dec 2020). When different teams operate in different models and even within teams there are individuals adopting different workplace approaches inclusion takes a big hit. This can result in specific individuals or teams getting impacted because of insufficient cascading of communications. Senior leaders thus have to ensure their organization provides an inclusive work environment and respects everyone's work ethics as long as it is aligned to overall organizational values and culture.

The management skills needed to manage teams which are always in office and virtual teams are totally different. This study has shown that the biggest areas of concern are managing virtual team meetings, performance management in virtual teams, maintaining employee engagement and motivation, handling productivity, issues like moonlighting and absenteeism.

As a first step the senior leaders need to pay attention to these areas and work with human resources and workplace teams to ensure that clear policies and guidelines around these are formulated. They need to then deploy processes and tools to practice and monitor these. They ended to ensure that people leaders and team members are educated as well as trained to handle these significant changes.

5.3 Discussion of Hypotheses

5.3.1 Hypothesis 1 - The hybrid environment has given rise to new challenges that people managers and HR professionals have most likely not encountered in the past

As can be seen in the results section more than 80% of the population who participated in this research are from medium to enterprise size IT Products and IT Services organizations in India. Also 75% of these organizations have deployed a hybrid work environment. This shows that we have a fairly good representation of organizations who are working in a hybrid work environment.

In the results section when we look at data pertaining to the challenges around hybrid work environments, about 40% of the respondents have indicated that a hybrid work environment is more challenging than the previous completely work-from-office environment. based on the overall responses as discussed in Section 4.4.1

However when we look at the following open text question which was about the challenges in a hybrid work environment, more than 78% of respondents had highlighted various challenges introduced by a hybrid work environment.

Among the challenges more than 50% had raised "Adherence to workplace ethics (eg: moonlighting, absenteeism)" as the biggest challenge. Though absenteeism was existent before, issues like moonlighting, where employees accepting and being employed at multiple jobs has seen a big jump, as the direct managers visibility and access to individual employees contributions and time spent at work has significantly reduced in a hybrid work environment. Thus the human resources organization should look at policies and guidelines around such practices and also put in place additional checks and balances to prevent such malpractices.

With employees performing the majority of their work outside the common workplace the concerns about data security, data privacy , Intellectual Property protection which are very critical for the information technology industry both in products and services space is increasing. Devising newer mechanisms and tools to protect these and also ensuring employees handle information in an ethical means has emerged as a new area with the physical security provided by a closed workspace missing. The use of public IT infrastructure by remote employees brings in additional challenges.

Until the pandemic hit the world, people leaders especially in the Indian IT industry were predominantly used to managing a team that had everybody working out of an office.

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During the pandemic period as everyone was asked to work remotely, many employees moved back to other cities and started working from there, as they had the opportunity to work out of a location of their choice. However with the use of communication and collaboration tools like Zoom and Teams, organizations were able to continue the work. Through weekly check in the people leaders were able to stay connected with their teams virtually. With the shift to a hybrid work environment where teams would operate both in the office and remotely the people and team management challenge increased. This was accentuated by the fact that some of the team members were not being in the same location as the primary office. Hence "Effectively managing a hybrid team, one that is partly in the office and partly virtual" emerging as the second biggest challenge which was highlighted by 47.8% respondents is not a surprise.

The third most top challenge identified by the respondents was "Monitoring productivity of the team" which was selected by 46.2% respondents. In the IT industry measuring productivity has always been an issue. However with the advent of various tools there has been great progress in measuring this. The movement of work into a hybrid work environment has added an additional level of tracking and measuring productivity. Most organizations have not effectively deployed the productivity tools. So it would be important for them to devise appropriate productivity measures, deploy appropriate tools and enable organizations to measure it.

Hypothesis 2 - Organizations that are operating with the existing policies are more likely to manage hybrid environment well

The responses in this research have clearly indicated, with over 2/3rd of respondents disagreeing that the policies that existed before the hybrid work environment are sufficient in the new workplace. A Forbes article on the topic says "If you're not developing hybrid work policies and communicating them to your employees clearly, you're doing a disservice to your company and harming employee retention and engagement" (Forbes, Jan 2023). It also indicates the need for revamping and revisiting policies in various areas, especially around workplace ethics, performance management and security to ensure that employee experience as well as organizational outcomes are met.

The additional information collected through the follow-on question, in order to identify the policies that they felt needed to be changed to enable a better hybrid work environment, points out that especially the work from home policy needs significant changes. This is quite natural because in a hybrid work environment most organizations seem to have given the employees the flexibility to work from home more than 2 days in a week. Clear guidelines need to be put in place around the number of days one needs to be in office and the time commitment to be in the workplace on those days so that meetings can be scheduled with everyone included. Research studies have shown that face time with peer team members greatly enhances the collaboration and also fuels innovation. "Interacting with people helps us understand what they care about" (Harvard Business Review, May 2023). The second area seems to be home and internet connectivity policy. With employees spending considerable amounts of time at work in their home environment, it's quite logical to provide them with high speed internet connectivity and associated computing and internet

infrastructure. The human resource needs to relook at the compensation and benefits policy along with their finance teams to make these part of work related expenses rather than company benefit.

Individual and team productivity has been an area that has been highlighted by various research as a big challenge in the hybrid work environment. "This challenge often stems from the absence of the structured environment they were accustomed to in a traditional office setting" (Ruff, J. Aug 2023). One of the key enablers to main productivity and also workplace ethics is to relook at the code of conduct policy with focus on topics like attendance, workspace discipline, meeting rules etc. This will help us even minimize issues like moonlighting.

Hypothesis 3: For people managers and HR professionals the existing processes and tools will most likely enable them to function well in a hybrid environment

With hybrid work in place for more than two years, many organizations have deployed the basic tools for virtual communication and collaboration and also adapted their existing processes to cater to a hybrid work environment. This is the reason why more than 40% of the respondents may have felt the tools and processes that they have at their disposal are sufficient enough to operate in a hybrid work environment.

However, looking at the challenges that have been highlighted by both human resource professionals and people leaders in the hybrid work environment and the data

around digital tools needed to be more productive clearly shows that a lot of support is needed especially around digital tools.

As effective communication and seamless collaboration are cornerstones of an efficient hybrid work environment these two have emerged as the top two areas where they need support. Some of the areas to look into are increasing the cadence of communications as messages need to be reinforced. To promote collaboration there should be a clear team vision and mission which will help the team stay focussed. There needs to be a clear articulation of the team's goals and objectives with everyone understanding the outcomes expected from them.

Processes and tools to measure and monitor productivity have emerged as the next biggest area. In a pre-pandemic work environment with everyone being in office during work hours, people leaders had absolute control over the work monitoring and supervision. In a hybrid work environment the people leaders need to heavily rely on technology and tools to do the same. This calls for more periodic status and performance reviews as well as tracking of the work progress which calls for enhancing existing tools and the usage of tools more rigorous.

Every leader should work collaboratively with their team members to establish team norms around the use of collaboration and communications tools, team member availability in office and while working remotely, team collaboration days and time, email etiquettes.

From an employee management perspective they need to stay connected with team members on a near real time perspective by scheduling more check-ins with the teams. The

senior leaders and human resource professionals need to schedule more skip level conversations with the teams to check the adherence to organizational culture and values.

With the work getting executed extensively in a distributed environment there is a big need for a secure, reliable and always on internet and application infrastructure to make the hybrid work more efficient. This has emerged as the next area that needs to focus. With employees operating more outside the office there is a need

In the last few years Artificial intelligence and data analytics have gained a lot of prominence in workplace and people management. Thus enhancing the existing processes and tools to make use of these capabilities to monitor and enhance collaboration and productivity among team members does look like a natural area for organizations to focus on. These technologies and tools can be further enhanced to handle the new challenges introduced by hybrid work environments like moonlighting.

Human resource policies are a key cornerstone for ensuring an engaged workforce especially in the IT industry which is highly manpower intensive. One of the key areas that human resource professionals need to focus is to have programs that will help in increasing the employee engagement as well keep the teams motivated. They also need to ensure that the workplace is very inclusive with no discrimination between a predominantly office based team and teams with large numbers of remote workers.

In order to ensure that the systems and processes are working they needs to increase the frequency of the pulse surveys to understand the state of organizational hygiene especially around people practices. They need to also ensure that after analyzing the

information from these surveys as to what is working and/or not working, remedial actions are tracked to closure in a timely manner.

Hypothesis 4: Most organizations may likely have the necessary leadership and professional skills to lead and succeed in a hybrid work environment

One of the key outcomes expected out of this research is to build a skills repository that would enable a thriving hybrid work environment where leaders are able to successfully increase employee engagement, enhance productivity, and build a workplace where the right values and behaviors thrive. As part of this research we have tried to focus on the leadership and professional skills needed by human resource professionals and people leaders to be successful in a hybrid work environment in the Indian IT industry.

We tried to look at this problem in two different angles using the data collected

1. Understand the respondents self assessment about the adequacy of skills that are needed to manage their teams in a hybrid work environment, in their role

2. Their prioritization of skills that are needed by senior leaders, people managers and human resource professionals to be successful in a hybrid work environment.

As regards the adequacy of skills needed to manage in a hybrid work environment a very high number of respondents (84%) felt that they possessed the skills needed to operate in a hybrid work environment. This is a good indication that the experiences during the pandemic and also transition into a hybrid work environment in the past two years have

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ensured that the organizations have built the base level skills that are needed to manage teams in a hybrid work environment.

However looking at the responses about the priority of skills needed for various roles as well as the need for development programs that have been identified by the respondents, we feel that there are some new skills that need to focus especially around handling employee motivation in a virtual environment, building an inclusive workplace, managing virtual teams with a mix of colocated and remote team members.

Hypothesis 5: Organizations that are willing to adopt new development programs for people managers and HR professionals are more likely to succeed in a hybrid environment

In this research we have tried to focus on two aspects of development programs for people leaders and human resource professionals. One the availability and adequacy of development programs for people managers and HR professionals to succeed in a hybrid environment. The other was the additional support needed to be more successful in a hybrid work environment.

As regards the availability of development programs within their organizations to manage and operate effectively in a hybrid work environment, it's quite good to note that all the three categories viz. team members, people leaders and human resource professionals either strongly agreed or agreed that they do have access to development programs needed. On the

other hand, looking at the data collected around development programs that each of the groups felt they needed, the following areas emerged as the ones that needed attention.

Training on effectively managing a hybrid work force, one that is partly in the office and partly virtual is a key area that has emerged with over 74.1% highlighting it. In the discussion around processes that are needed to improve productivity, effective people management practices was one of the top areas. Thus enabling people leaders to effectively manage a hybrid team seems to be a very critical need.

Individual performance management is a critical area for people leaders especially in the software industry. The hybrid nature of the workforce brings in additional levels of complexity as people leaders do not have an opportunity to physically meet with the team members on a daily basis. Thus training on having performance conversations with team members becomes a critical skill building topic. This was indicated by 59% of the respondents.

In any change management, especially in a people intensive industry like Information technology, human resources organizations play a critical role in facilitating the change and in establishing policies and norms around the change. Hybrid environment has brought in unique challenges like moonlighting, reduction in productivity, loss of connect with organization etc. The organizations are looking forward to human resources groups to enhance tools/guidance related to people management in a hybrid work environment to address these issues. The employee relations organization needs to step up their processes to address issues like moonlighting.

In the IT industry team meetings constitute a critical element of day today working, as it enables dissemination of critical organizational and status updates and also enables collaboration among individuals. Holding virtual team meetings introduces its own challenges especially around keeping employees engaged and also facilitating brainstorming, reviews etc. They also need to schedule and organize meetings to be inclusive. Thus for people leaders especially, leading better meetings with virtual teams is a critical skill to be developed.

In order to address the productivity issues as well as the new ethical issues around hybrid work environment, people leaders and human resource professionals need need to hold more difficult conversations as well as performance related discussions. Thus there is a need for training on having performance conversations/difficult conversations with team members.

In the hybrid work environment, many organizations have started mandating regular weekly attendance in the office. Also as seen in the survey results many organizations have mandated the minimum number of days team members need to operate out of the office. With employees having varying personal needs and constraints about in-office and remote working, there emerges a clear need for Guidance/decision tree from the human resources organization, to help determine which roles and which team members should/may work virtually.

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CHAPTER VI:
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

With the Covid-19 pandemic coming to an end, most organizations came out of "Completely work-from-home" mode to adopt a Hybrid work environment for their workforce which means a combination of working-from-office and working-from-home. This was a huge change to the ways-of-working, which the workforce was used to pre-pandemic and also during the pandemic time. This change also brought in a lot of challenges for each section of the workforce, be it employees or management.

This study looked at a section of the management in the Indian IT sector, namely Senior people leaders, First line people leaders and Human Resource professionals to understand their challenges with respect to hybrid work environments and also the professional and leadership skills that each of these cohorts needs to possess to effectively manage the new hybrid work environment.

This research has clearly shown that there are new challenges that have been introduced by the hybrid work environment. Some of the key ones include challenges around communication, collaboration, virtual team functioning, policies around working-from-office and working-from-home, productivity, absenteeism, performance management etc. in the Indian IT Sector.

It has also shown that human resource professionals, senior management and first line people leaders though they may have skills in many of these areas either need to enhance their existing skills around the above areas or develop new skills around topics like virtual team management, monitoring and improving individual performances of a mixed team, conducting virtual team meetings, building an inclusive work environment, handling issues like absenteeism and/or moonlighting which were not very pertinent in a completely work-from-office scenario.

The researcher had put forth 5 hypotheses to test the relationship with hybrid working and its challenges with other variables like organizational policies, processes & tools, leadership and professional skills and development programs. The findings from this study show that the variables have various degrees of positive relationship between them which shows that one has an impact on the other.

One of the key findings around policies that needed change was the Work-from-home policy, followed by Connectivity policy and Code of Conduct Policy. The study also found that there is a general concern about workforce productivity in a hybrid work environment. Issues like absenteeism, adherence to workplace ethics moonlighting have also been raised.

In addition to the policies there is also need for upgraded processes, use of technology and enhanced digital tools to address these issues From the support needed to enhance productivity perspective the key areas highlighted enhancing the people management skills of people leaders, clear policies around working in Office within a hybrid environment and

the need to develop and deploy productivity tools to measure and manage team and organization productivity in a hybrid work environment. .

From the skills perspective though respondents felt they have adequate skills to operate in a hybrid work environment, they have indicated a clear need for leadership and professional skills to operate in a hybrid work environment. On the professional skills aspect, Communication, Emotional Intelligence and Collaboration came out as the top 3 skills that all the 3 cohorts that are Senior people leaders, Firstline people leaders and HR professionals felt should be in the top 3 albeit at different ranks. On the other hand, among the leadership skills, Employee motivation, Building an inclusive environment, Managing virtual teams and Relationship building were the top skills that came from the research.

Finally the study also highlighted the top training and development resources that these 3 cohorts found important. Those resources included training on managing a hybrid workforce, having performance conversations with team members, training on leading better meetings with virtual teams and tools/guidance related to Human resources/employee relations.

6.2 Implications

This study has many significant contributions toward understanding hybrid challenges and the skills required by senior leaders, first line people leaders and HR professionals to effectively manage a hybrid workforce in the Indian IT industry. These

contributions have both theoretical and practical implications. In this section of the thesis, both the theoretical and practical contributions will be presented and discussed.

Theoretical Implications

This thesis has many theoretical implications. Firstly it addresses the problem of lack of empirical studies in the areas of skills required by senior leaders, first line people leaders and HR professionals. Many of the studies done on hybrid work environments focus on the challenges faced by the working professionals and how to mitigate it from their point of view. This study has focused on the management side that is of the people leaders and HR professionals who manage as well as support the working professionals.

The second implication is that instead of categorizing management as one cohort, the researcher has bifurcated them into 3 categories, namely Senior people leaders, First line people leaders and HR professionals as the challenges faced and skill-requirement for each of this category would be different. Furthermore the researcher has also categorized skills into professional skills and leadership skills so that the study can clearly determine the top skills in both categories for each of the cohorts namely Senior people leaders, First line people leaders and HR professionals.

Practical Implications

The first practical implication is that with this study, Indian IT organizations have ready guidance on the top organizational policies that should undergo change to effectively manage the challenges of a hybrid work environment. This could be a great starting point for

organizations who are struggling with managing the hybrid work environment and getting employees to return to office.

This study further provides guidance on a critical aspect that is the digital tools required to handle the hybrid work environment effectively. This is again an area that many organizations find it difficult to deploy and manage. If managed well this can help in employee productivity and engagement as these digital tools are the channels to maintain effective communication and collaboration in a hybrid workplace. In a hybrid work environment where the daily connection is minimal with the team members deployment of AI enabled productivity tools can really help boost the productivity of the organization. In today's digital workplace there is a large amount of data being generated, deploying data analytics can help generate views of employee hygiene and engagement which can be used by people leaders and human resource professionals to enhance the employee engagement.

Furthermore this study provides a ready reckoner of both professional and leadership skills that are required by their management that is Senior people leaders, First line people leaders and HR professionals. Organizations can conduct tests and analyze whether these skills are adequately present in their management cohorts or whether they need to be given training or development opportunities to develop and hone these skills further.

This research also provides guidance on top training programs that respondents felt would help the 3 management cohorts Senior people leaders, First line people leaders and HR professionals to effectively manage the challenges of a hybrid work environment. Overall this research has significant theoretical and practical implications which can facilitate an organization

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in the Information Technology industry in India to apply and gather benefits for its workforce and effectively manage a hybrid workplace.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

While it is true that this study makes several significant contributions towards organizations adopting hybrid work environments, it also has some limitations that serve as an opportunity for future researchers. The first limitation is that this research is focused on the Indian IT sector. As such the degree to which the results from this research can be applied to other sectors like Pharmaceuticals, Tourism, Manufacturing, Lifesciences, Automotive etc. are not known. In order to find out whether these results would apply to other sectors, future researchers should research with respect to those specific sectors.

The second limitation is that this research was conducted in India and hence the results would be based on the cultural, geographical, working styles, communication styles and working conditions prevalent in India and might not apply to the workforce in other countries. Future researchers will need to conduct similar research in intended countries to see how the results apply. Furthermore this research was conducted through a non-probability sampling method. This means that the extent to which these findings can be generalized to the rest of the workforce is limited. For future research a probability based sampling method can be used.

This research study is a cross-sectional study and hence the outcomes are applicable for a point in time. Future researchers will have to conduct studies over a period of time to track changes and study trends and long-term implications of a similar research.

One of the key challenges that came to light through the open ended questions in the survey was maintaining workplace ethics by preventing situations like moonlighting, absenteeism etc. in a hybrid work environment. Future researchers could focus on this specific challenge and understand more details and arrive at solutions to mitigate the same.

Lastly another key challenge that came from the open questions was that of improving productivity. Tracking and improving productivity has been a key area of concern for organizations adopting hybrid working environments. Future researchers could look at studying this specific challenge around productivity and arrive at ways to mitigate the same.

6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand how hybrid working challenges were impacting the specific management sections that is, Senior people leaders, Firstline people leaders and HR professionals and as a result what skills do they need to hone or build to effectively cater to the hybrid working challenges.

Based on this research questions were created and further 5 hypotheses were identified for the study. Survey questionnaire was duly created and sent out based on a non-probability based sampling method. The responses thus received helped accept/reject the hypotheses.

The main outcome of this study is a ready reckoner for organizations struggling with hybrid working challenges and finding it difficult to support their workforce through it. This study provides the top organizational policies that need change, the digital tools that are required, the professional and leadership skills that are required by the management and finally the top training programs and other development resources that are required to enable the management in a better manner.

This research has clearly shown that people leaders and human resource professionals need to develop a new level of agility and ambidexterity to ensure teams can operate effectively in remote, in-person, and hybrid work environments. Failure to do so can make organizations run the risk of losing productivity gains, impacting employee utilization levels and experiencing higher workforce turnover. On the other hand those that build on the momentum of the hybrid working framework will gain a new competitive advantage.

As we looked at the various aspects of a hybrid work environment we came to realize that there is no one size fits all scenario possible. There is no right or wrong way to implement a hybrid work environment or train managers, leaders and HR to be prepared for it. It is a combination of different factors which could again be different for different industries and organizations.

That said, the endeavor has been to arrive at the key skills required by people leaders and HR professionals in the Indian IT industry, as they combat this ever-changing hybrid work environment which is here to stay.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY COVER LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam, Greetings, I am Anjali Nair, a senior Human Resource professional and currently a doctoral research scholar with Swiss School of Business Management, Geneva.

I extend this invitation for you to take part in my research study titled "Leadership and Human Resource Management Imperatives in a Hybrid Work Environment " This survey is designed to delve into the impact and skills required to best navigate in a changing hybrid work environment. Your participation in completing this survey is pivotal for the advancement of my research. Rest assured, the survey is entirely anonymous and will only take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

All data collected will be used exclusively for research purposes **only** ensuring strict confidentiality and anonymity. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw at any point during the survey. I genuinely appreciate your time and participation.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

All data collected will be used exclusively for research purposes only ensuring strict confidentiality and anonymity. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw at any point during the survey.

1.Which of the below age groups do you fall under?

- 18 to 34 yrs

- 35 to 54 yrs

- 55 to 64 yrs

- 65 yrs and above

2.Which gender do you identify most with?

- Male

- Female

- Prefer not to say

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

- Secondary (Class 10)

- Higher Secondary (Class 12)

- Graduation

- Post Graduation

- Other:

4.How many total years of work experience do you have?

- < 5 years

○ 5 to 10 yrs

○ 10 to 15 yrs

○ 15 to 20 yrs

○ 20 to 25 yrs

○ > 25 yrs

5.What is your current role within your organization?

○ HR professional (at all levels/positions)

○ First line people leader

○ Senior people leader

6.Type of industry you are working in -

○ IT Products

○ IT Services

○ Other:

7.What is the size of your organization with respect to the number of employees?

○ Small (< 100)

○ Medium (100-1000)

○ Large (1000 to 5000)

○ Enterprise (> 5000)

8. What working model does your organization follow currently?

- ○ Work from Office

- ○ Work from Home

- ○ Hybrid working (working some days from office and remaining days of the week from home)

9. In a Hybrid environment, how many days does your organization mandate you to work from the office?

- ○ 1 day

- ○ 2 days

- ○ 3 days

- ○ 4 days

- ○ No minimum mandate from the organization

10. How familiar are you with working in a hybrid environment?

- ○ Not familiar

- ○ Somewhat familiar

- ○ Fairly familiar

- ○ Very familiar

11. In your opinion Hybrid work environments are more challenging than work from the office ?

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Agree (5)   Agree (4)   Neutral (3)   Disagree (2)   Strongly Disagree (1)

- ○ Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree

- ○ Neutral

- ○ Disagree

- ○ Strongly Disagree

12. What are the typical challenges that you have been facing because of working in a hybrid environment, choose top 3 . Multi answer choice with 3 limit

- ○ Effectively managing a hybrid team; one that is partly in the office and partly virtual

- ○ Having performance conversations/difficult conversations

- ○ Giving feedback and direction virtually

- ○ Leading better meetings with virtual teams

- ○ Monitoring productivity of the team

- ○ Adherence to work place ethics (eg: moonlighting, absenteeism)

- ○ Data security

13.My organization/team's productivity is the same or better than it was prior to our new hybrid arrangements

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

14. Do you have any insights into improving productivity in a hybrid work environment

15. The policies that existed before launch of hybrid work environment are sufficient to manage the new hybrid work environment well

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

16. Which among the below policies do you think, should undergo changes to manage hybrid environment effectively. Rank them, 1 being the highest and 5 the lowest.

Rank them, 1 being the highest and 5 the lowest.

	1	2	3	4	5
Work from home policy					
Connectivity policy (broadband, mobile)					
Attendance policy					
Code of Conduct policy (eg: discipline, meeting rules, availability)					
Wellness policy					
Any other policy, other than the ones mentioned _____					

17. The processes that existed before launch of hybrid environment enable me to function well in a hybrid environment also

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

18.The digital tools that have been deployed before hybrid work environment are sufficient to enable me to function well in a hybrid environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

19. My team has the required physical infrastructure to effectively work in a hybrid environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

20. I am comfortable with the technology options which permit us to have meetings with some employees working virtually and others working in a local office.

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

21. Please highlight the digital tools that are needed to make you more productive in an hybrid environment

22. I have the necessary skills to lead a team which may include a blend of virtual work employees and others who are physically in an office.

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

 23. My senior leadership have the necessary leadership and professional skills to lead and succeed in a hybrid work environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

24. My people leaders have the necessary leadership and professional skills to lead and succeed in a hybrid work environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

25. My HR team members have the necessary leadership and professional skills to lead and succeed in a hybrid work environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

26. Choose the top 3 professional skills which are critical for senior leadership in a hybrid environment

- ○ Communication
- ○ Time management
- ○ Collaboration
- ○ Team work
- ○ Managing virtual teams
- ○ Performance management
- ○ Emotional Quotient
- ○ Networking
- ○ Building an inclusive environment
- ○ Change management

27. Choose the top 3 professional skills which are critical for people leaders in a hybrid environment

- ○ Communication
- ○ Time management

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- Collaboration

- Team work

- Managing virtual teams

- Performance management

- Emotional Quotient

- Networking

- Building an inclusive environment

- Change Management

28. Choose the top 3 professional skills which are critical for HR professionals in a hybrid environment

- Communication

- Time management

- Collaboration

- Team work

- Managing virtual teams

- Performance management

- Emotional Quotient

- Networking

- Building an inclusive environment

- Change Management

29. Choose the top 3 leadership skills which are critical for senior leadership in a hybrid environment

- Managing virtual teams

- Performance management

- Emotional Quotient

- Networking

- Building an inclusive environment

- Change Management

30. Choose the top 3 leadership skills which are critical for people leaders in a hybrid environment

- Managing virtual teams

- Performance management

- Emotional Quotient

- Networking

- Building an inclusive environment

- Change Management

31. Choose the top 3 leadership skills which are critical for HR professionals in a hybrid environment

- Managing virtual teams

- Performance management

- Emotional Quotient

- Networking

- Building an inclusive environment

- Change Management

32. My organization has the necessary development programs for team members, people managers and HR professionals to succeed in a hybrid work environment

Likert Scale 1 to 5

Strongly Disagree (1)   Disagree (2)   Neutral (3)   Agree (4)   Strongly Agree (5)

33.Which of the following training or resources will help you effectively manage a hybrid work environment? (Select all that apply)

- Tools/guidance related to HR or employee relation topics

- Guidance/decision tree to help determine which team members should/may work virtually

- Training on effectively managing a hybrid team; one that is partly in the office and partly virtual

- Training on health and safety policies/guidelines

- Training on having performance conversations/difficult conversations

- Training on giving feedback and direction virtually

- Training on leading better meetings with virtual teams

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