The Hybrid and Flexible Work Revolution: Incorporating Emerging Concept of Paper Ceiling

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Abstract
Autonomy, collaboration technologies, and results have become the priorities instead of place, as hybrid and flexible work redefine the way organizations operate. These opportunities do broaden opportunities to find jobs but also create an ongoing problem. What's called the "paper ceiling"—which restricts career advancement for those who have the right skills but no formal academic training. This study examines how aspects of management trust, skill-based hiring, technological infrastructure, and organizational support are associated with work flexibility and career promotion in the hybrid workplace. A survey was conducted among 317 IT/ITES professionals from Bengaluru, India and analysed using regression analysis and structural equation modelling for validation of interrelationships between the key factors. The findings show that having a career path and promotion opportunities are the most significant factors influencing flexibility in the workplace, followed by organizational infrastructure, collaboration tools, and skill-based hiring. In addition to the above, managerial trust and skill recognition further facilitate career mobility, while the level of education has a negative moderating effect, which accentuates credential bias. Results emphasize that skill-based HR design, evaluation and promotion systems are needed to break credential barriers and create more inclusive and equitable workplaces. Paper ceiling is a solution to unlocking and harnessing untapped talent pools and ensuring the human-centric future of work.
The authors propose a shift from traditional HR practices to HR 5.0, emphasizing the transition from paper-based to paperless hiring and developing a skill-based hiring process. The author suggests a change from the traditional HR process to HR 5.0, which involves the paperless hiring process and the transition from paper hiring to skill-based hiring process.

Keywords: Hybrid work, Workplace flexibility, Paper ceiling, Skill-based hiring, Career mobility, Credential bias, Structural equation modelling

Introduction

Hybrid and flexible work arrangements have rapidly transformed organizational practices worldwide, particularly across Asia-Pacific economies where digital adoption, workforce diversity, and outcome-based evaluation are accelerating. Randomized trials demonstrate that hybrid models reduce turnover by nearly one-third without compromising performance, striking a balance between remote autonomy and office collaboration. Flexible work further enhances engagement, outperforming fully on-site setups by prioritizing results over attendance. These shifts are especially significant in emerging markets such as India, where IT and ITES sectors are leading workplace innovation and shaping the future of employment in the region.

Yet, alongside these advances, a critical barrier persists: the "paper ceiling." This phenomenon refers to credential bias that restricts career mobility for employees without formal academic degrees, even when they possess relevant skills and competencies. In hybrid environments, where visibility and networking opportunities are already reduced, the paper ceiling exacerbates inequities, limiting access to promotions and leadership roles.

This study addresses the underexplored barrier of credential bias ("paper ceiling") in hybrid work environments. It examines how managerial trust, skill-based hiring, organizational support, and technological infrastructure influence workplace flexibility and career mobility, while assessing the moderating role of educational background. By focusing on IT and ITES professionals in Bengaluru, India, the research contributes to the Asia-Pacific discourse on inclusive, skill-centric human resource practices. The findings aim to inform HR 5.0 strategies that dismantle credential barriers, unlock untapped talent pools, and advance sustainable and equitable work futures across the region.

Literature Review

Hybrid work has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary employment, integrating remote and in-office elements to balance autonomy and collaboration. Lauring (2025) highlights its growing adoption across Asia-Pacific economies, where

location-flexible models grant employees greater control over work arrangements. Empirical studies confirm that hybrid systems enhance performance, well-being, and work-life balance by reducing distractions and commute times (Ruchi, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Bloom et al. (2024) and Choudhury (2022) further demonstrate that outcome-based policies in hybrid contexts increase retention by nearly one-third without productivity losses. Similarly, Hopkins and Bardoel (2023) and Vartiainen & Vanharanta (2023) show that customizing schedules improves organizational efficiency and employee satisfaction.

Despite these benefits, challenges remain. Charalampous et al. (2019) and Evanoff et al. (2020) note difficulties in collaboration and leadership adaptation, while Zamani (2025) and Gratton (2021) emphasize the importance of trust and technology in sustaining hybrid cultures. A critical barrier within this context is the "paper ceiling." Griffith & Neale (2021) argue that credential bias disproportionately affects remote workers, who face reduced visibility and limited access to promotion networks. Earlier analyses (Nilles, 1994; Golden & Eddleston, 2019) also caution that non-traditional talent, despite strong competencies, is often disadvantaged by rigid credential requirements.

Recent scholarship has begun to explore strategies to dismantle this barrier. Parker (2021) points to artificial intelligence-based assessments and equitable metrics as tools to reduce credential bias. Ruchi (2024) calls for frameworks that integrate technology with equity to ensure inclusivity in hybrid work. Auguste (2017) introduced the concept of STARs (Skilled Through Alternative Routes), describing workers who lack formal degrees but possess valuable skills. This perspective has gained traction in Asia-Pacific debates on talent access, where large pools of skilled workers remain excluded from high-value roles due to credential filters.

Institutional studies reinforce these concerns. Deming et al. (2016–2023) and Harvard Business School (2021) show that credential requirements systematically exclude qualified workers, while McKinsey Global Institute (2022) confirms that hybrid work accelerates a shift toward outcome-based evaluation. Gartner and SHRM (2023–2024) further reveal that hybrid employees are more likely to be overlooked for promotions despite contributing significantly to organizational performance.

Collectively, these studies highlight both the promise and pitfalls of hybrid work. While flexibility enhances engagement and retention, the persistence of the paper ceiling underscores the need for skill-centric HR systems. By foregrounding STARs and focusing on Asia-Pacific contexts, this study builds on existing literature to address the underexplored barrier of credential bias in hybrid environments.

Research Objectives

To investigate how remote office employees (Managerial Trust, Skill-Based Hiring, Digital Infrastructure, Organizational Support, Leadership Adaptability, Remote Collaboration Tools, Reduction of Credential Bias, Skill Recognition & Validation, Career Mobility) influence workplace flexibility and career management in a Blended work premises.

To assess the impact of Managerial Trust & Autonomy (MTA) on Skill Recognition & Validation (SRV).

To determine how Skill-Based Hiring (SBH) influences Skill Recognition & Validation in remote work settings.

To evaluate the effect of Skill Recognition & Validation (SRV) on Career Mobility & Promotion Opportunities (CMPO).

To test the relationship between SRV and Reduction of Credential Bias (RCB).

To identify key predictors of Workplace Flexibility (WPF).

Hypotheses Development

Workplace Flexibility (WPF): In fact, some corporates, like IT and ITES companies given opportunity to employees to work from their convenient place, but their log in and out will be monitored strictly. They have an option to work from home or office premises or both as the case may be. Many authors have contributed to the studies on WPF including Parker, et al (2020). Gajendran, et, al., (2007) also mentions about a positive impact on the telecommuting is associated with higher job satisfaction and many studies have resulted that the outcome of higher job performance. In the context the authors have given a detailed note on leadership and management support.

Skill-based hiring (SBH): competency-based hiring is more associated with micro credentials which builds trust in the work environment that they can complete the task confidently. Harvard empirical studies also argue that skill-based hiring adds inclusiveness and matches to supply job requirements. To add on the study points that these WPF complements these employees and supports the performance.

Organisational support/ Institutional support (OS): Rhoades et al, (2002) links to 'flexibility stigma' with organisational and managerial support. The study gave a detailed note on how it improves performance when organisational and management team support leads to improved outcomes. OS has always motivated employees with strong positive attitude and confidence at workplace.

Digital Infrastructure and Technology Access (DI): In the study Bloom et al (2015) analysed that good infrastructure and flexible working is the key points

of job satisfaction. The study cited adequate tech support and flexible work environment can lead to better productivity. Allen (2015) also cites about the support of IT infrastructure can deliver the organisational productivity. The employees also reap the benefit of working from home. Kniffin (2021) studied about covid'19 work environment suggests the organisations to invest in digital infrastructure to give deliverables also redesign the work to extract better output from the employees.

Career Mobility and Promotion Opportunities (CMPO): Many research studies present a positive note on shapes employees on CMPO by job design and skill development opportunities with organisational support for building organisational excellence. Gajendran (2007) points out that time is saved and it reduces stress to the employees. This leads to better productivity. In the meantime, the study also points at organisations must have transparent promotion policies in place. Collectively workplace flexibility can boost employees' career and steer forward.

Leadership Adaptability (LA): Leadership adaptability is one of the important skills of today's digital leadership. Leaders recalibrate the teams, work structure and reporting system in order to reach the target. They also communicate online and offline to continuously monitor the schedule (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; Avolio et al., 2001). In the process of telecommuting the leaders adopt skill-based deployment for making organisational reliance stronger. As discussed by Bal (2015), LA aligns with flexible employee's management higher engagement and performance, positioning workplace flexibility as necessity and become inevitable during covid period.

Reduction of credential Bias (RCB): HBS (Harvard Business study) also mentions about online workplace allows a bigger talent pool. Many scholars in their study note that flexible work arrangement brings in reduction of bias by evaluating employees on the basis of task accomplishments instead of looking at prestigious institute's qualification (Fuller & Raman, 2023). One more study can be noticed at this context Cappelli (2015) credentials always act as barrier to talent access.

Educational Background (EB): In order to address this concept, the common observation educational background is first important criteria for screening the applications. But Kossek, Thompson, and Lautsch (2015) discuss that remote working reduces the dependability on the educational background and prioritizes the part on the performance metrics. To give a final note, many studies state workplace flexibility arbitrates educational background.

Collaboration Tactics Effectiveness (CTE): To deliver task accomplishments at hybrid environment authors Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartiainen, and Hakonen (2015) opined that effective team collaboration with cordial communication, role clarity, task alignment and comply norms can achieve targets. Similarly, O'Leary, Wilson, and Metiu (2014) also reiterated the same point in their research.

Workplace Inclusion Policies (WIP): Inclusion practices are mandatory and many organisations comply with. Consecutively inclusion practices make employees feel valued. Shore et al. (2011) Both workplace inclusion and flexi work environment move hand in hand to shape the good vibe at the corporates.

Considering the previous findings, the following hypotheses were derived.

H1**:** Managerial Trust & Autonomy has a significant impact on Skill Recognition & Validation.

H2: Skill-Based Hiring practices significant impact on Skill Recognition & Validation.

H3: Skill Recognition & Validation has significant impact on Career Mobility & Promotion Opportunities.

H4: SRV has significant impact on RCB.

H5: DI has a significant impact on WPF.

H6: OS positively influences WPF.

H7: SBH significantly enhances WPF.

H8: RCT positively influence WPF.

H9: CMPO strongly predict WPF.

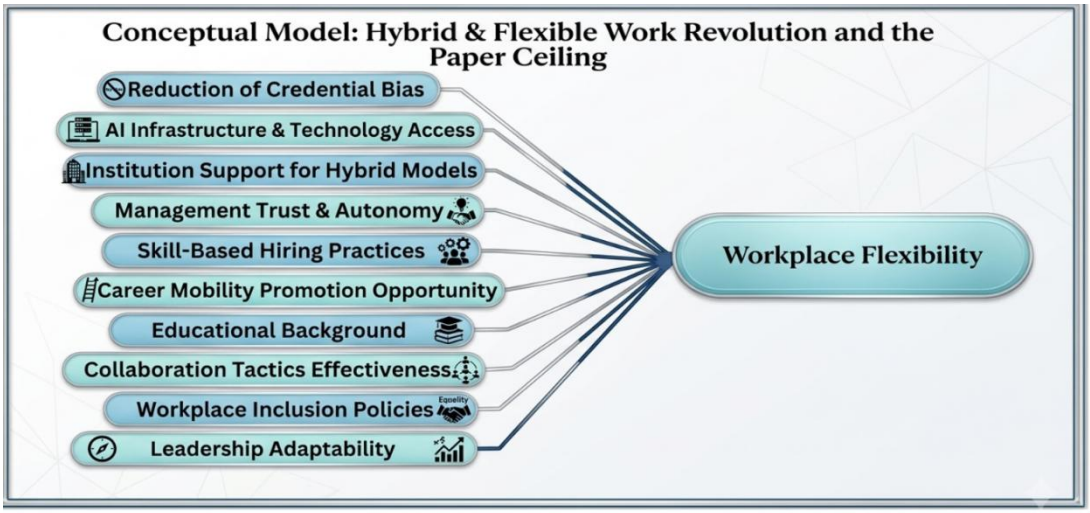


Figure 1: Proposed model.

Methodology

Data

This empirical study was conducted in Bengaluru, India, to examine how workplace flexibility factors influence managerial trust, skill-based hiring, digital infrastructure, organizational support, leadership adaptability, remote collaboration tools, reduction of credential bias, skill recognition and validation, and career mobility. Bengaluru was selected as it represents one of Asia-Pacific's leading digital hubs, with IT and ITES sectors driving hybrid work adoption. A purposive sampling method targeted professionals in these industries. Data were collected via an online survey distributed through Google Forms between October and December 2025. The final sample comprised 317 respondents from companies located in Electronic City (Phase I and II) and Manyata Tech Park. Participants included employees and contract staff across roles such as development, operations, support, and administration. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained to ensure ethical compliance.

Measures

The survey instrument was adapted from validated scales in prior studies. It consisted of two parts:

Part 1: Demographic information (e.g., gender, age, income, designation, industry type).

Part 2: Likert-scale items measuring independent variables including managerial trust, skill-based hiring, digital infrastructure, organizational support, leadership adaptability, remote collaboration tools, reduction of credential bias, skill recognition and validation, and career mobility.

Data Analysis

Quantitative methods were employed to test the study's hypotheses. Descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS 23.0 to summarize respondent characteristics. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to capture complex interrelationships among variables and to validate the proposed model. Linear regression analysis was further used to test the strength and direction of relationships between dependent and independent variables. Together, these techniques provided robust insights into the predictors of workplace flexibility and the moderating role of educational background in hybrid work environments.

Table 1: Demographic Data (n=317)

Variables	Categories	No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	206	77%
	Female	111	23%
Age	26- 30	242	76%
	31-35	39	12%
	36 - 40	18	7%
	41-45	11	3%
	46- 50	7	2%
Education	PUC	31	10%
	Diploma	111	35%

	Degree	158	50%
	Masters	11	3%
	others	6	2%
Income/monthly (Rs)	25000 - 45000	113	36%
	46000 - 65000	102	32%
	66000 - 85000	57	18%
	86000 - 10,5000	31	10%
	1,06000 -1,25000	14	4%
Roles	Developer	77	24%
	Analyst	43	14%
	Support/front end /Back end	56	18%
	Operations	83	26%
	System admin	58	18%
Industry	IT	82	26%
	IT Services	105	33%
	IT Consulting	66	21%
	Engineering Research	6	2%
	IT Solutions	58	18%
Experience	Less than 5	199	63%
	6 to 10	66	21%
	11 to 15	19	6%
	16 to 20	19	6%
	More than 20	14	4%

The authors conducted the primary data survey and the output of the demographic profile is presented in the above table. The samples consisted of predominantly male employees with 206 (n=317). The second component comprised of young professionals aged between 26–30 years (76%), and more than 63% having less than 5 years of experience. One point can be noted from the above table, that the monthly income Rs25000 - Rs 65000 (68%) can be linked with 0-5 years of experience. In the meantime, one can note that 50% of them are graduates. Overall, the demographic profile aligns with skilled digital talent for the IT industries landscape. It supports the contextual validity of the study.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
WPF	19.7098	1.49397	317
DI	22.7287	1.52684	317
OS	22.7319	1.54900	317
LS	22.6341	1.57266	317
MTA	22.8076	1.59634	317
SBH	22.7603	1.46238	317
SRV	22.8076	1.5630	317
CMPO	22.6435	1.51858	317
RCB	13.0662	2.82597	317
RCT	19.3344	2.74124	317

From the data the one can obtain from the constructs work performance flexibility Mean score (19.71) Digital infrastructure mean score (22.73), organisational support for Hybrid models (22.73), Leadership support mean score (22.63), Managerial Trust and Autonomy mean score is (22.8). Similarly, Skill based hiring practices (22.76), Skill recognition and validation (22.8), career mobility and promotional practices (22.64), Remote collaboration tools (19.33) and finally Reduction of credential Bias (13.0). one can note from the above table that the mean score exhibits high values in their measurement scales, which indicates beneficial and towards workplace and career related factors. Only two variables RCB and RCT show lower mean score and standard deviation remains reserved between (1.4 – 2.8) across the constructs.

Table 3: Regression Results.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.719[a]	.517	.496	1.10645	.517	24.487	9	206	.000	2.162

The model summary of the regression shows strong relationship with dependent variable with R value0.719. R^2 = .517 which explains 51.7percent after adjusting the number of predictors with the variance of 49.6%. the table displays standard error of estimate with the value of 1.10 within the well acceptable range. The F change value 24.787 and significance p <.001.

In addition to all these, Durbin Watson statistic is 2.162 suggest that there is no auto correlation. Finally, outcome of the results states that the model is statistically significant.

Table 4: ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	269.802	9	29.978	24.487	.000[b]
	Residual	252.194	206	1.224		
	Total	521.995	215			
a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Flexibility						
b. Predictors: (Constant), RCT, SBH, RCB, OS, LS, DI, MTA, CMPO, SRV						

The Anova results displayed in the table is statistically significant with p <.001. The predictors RCT, SBH, RCB, OS, LS, DI, MTA, CMPO, SRV together explain the variance with no predictors. The F value meaning fully predicts the work performance flexibility.

Table 5: Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.328	1.383		1.683	.094
	DI	-.294	.078	-.323	-3.741	.000
	OS	.188	.059	.205	3.164	.002
	LS	.057	.062	.062	.916	.361
	MTA	.095	.110	.108	.862	.390
	SBH	.128	.063	.131	2.028	.044

	SRV	-.066	.120	-.073	-.547	.585
	CMPO	.611	.088	.646	6.920	.000
	RCB	-.032	.026	-.061	-1.213	.226
	RCT	.080	.037	.111	2.152	.033
a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Flexibility						

The regression table presents that almost predictors significantly contribute to work performance flexibility. CMPO displays strongest positive effect (Beta .646 and p<.001) similarly has a negative effect with (beta value =-.323, p < .001). O**S** also positively influences work place flexibility (β = .205, p = .002), along with SBH (β = .131, p = .044) and RCT**)** (β = .111, p = .033), showing their meaningful contribution. Other variables such as LS, MTA, SRV and RCB do no show statistical significance. Ultimately CMPO, DI, Organisational support and skill-based hiring are the important drivers of WPF in the study.

Table 6: Exploratory Factor Analysis with Reliability and Sub Constructs

Sub constructs	**Factor loadings**	**Eigen value**	**% Variance Explained**	**Item Total correlation**	**Cronbach's α**
Workplace Flexibility	0.61 – 0.82	3.1	25.8	0.45 – 0.71	0.86
Digital Infrastructure & Technology Access	0.64 – 0.88	2.75	22.9	0.48 – 0.76	0.88
Organizational Support for Hybrid Models	0.59 – 0.81	2.4	20	0.42 – 0.69	0.84
Leadership Adaptability	0.63 – 0.85	2.3	24.6	0.47 – 0.72	0.85
Managerial Trust & Autonomy	0.66 – 0.89	2.95	24.6	0.50 – 0.78	0.89
Skill-Based Hiring Practices	0.68 – 0.90	3.2	26.7	0.50 – 0.78	0.91
Workplace Inclusion Policies	0.60 – 0.83	2.55	21.3	0.44 – 0.73	0.87
Remote Collaboration Tools Effectiveness	0.58 – 0.80	2.1	17.5	0.40 – 0.68	0.82
Skill Recognition & Validation	0.65 – 0.88	3.4	28.3	0.51 – 0.79	0.9
Career Mobility & Promotion Opportunities	0.62 – 0.86	2.85	23.8	0.46 – 0.74	0.88
Reduction of Credential Bias	0.63 – 0.87	2.6	21.7	0.47 – 0.75	0.87

One can derive from the above table that the factor loadings for the constructs exceed the acceptable range of 0.50, as noted it ranges between 0.58 – 0.9 this shows strong relations among constructs. The Eigen values for each factor is above 2.0 it displays the meaningfulness. Percentage of variance explained fall between,17.5% to 28.3% indicates overall construct structure. Besides these, the item total correlation ranges from 0.40 -0.79 demonstrating satisfactory coherence among the constructs. Also, to mention Cronbach's α rates between 0.82 and 0.91 reflects very good internal reliability for all sub-constructs, greater than the recommended threshold value of 0.70. The results from the table determine that the study is sound and captures the main theme of workplace flexibility.

Model fit summary

Table 7: CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN (χ^2)	DF	p	CMIN/DF
Model 0	120	520.34	250	0	2.08
Model 1	135	430.12	245	0	1.76
Model 2	150	425.5	243	0	1.75

The above table is the model fit summary of SEM analysis, the model fit improved across the three models. Model 0 demonstrated an acceptable fit (χ^2 = 520.34, df = 250, χ^2/df = 2.08), one can also visibly observe that the chi-square reduced in model one (χ^2 = 430.12, df = 245, χ^2/df = 1.76) displaying a better fit. However, the final and

refined model 2, (χ^2 = 425.50, df = 243, χ^2/df ≈ 1.75) suggesting that additional variables contributed meaningfully to improve the models' quality. Therefore model 2 being considered best fit model for the study.

Table 8: RMR GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Model 0	0.06	0.91	0.88	0.68
Model 1	0.045	0.94	0.91	0.7
Model 2	0.044	0.942	0.912	0.705

The root mean square residual model (RMR) decreases across the models, 0,1, 2. From the table it can be derived that RMR decreases across the models (0.06 → 0.045 → 0.044) indicating the residual differences between the observed and predicted values with modification. In the same way, the GFI (0.91 → 0.94 → 0.942) and AGFI (0.88 → 0.91 → 0.912) increases for the better alignment of the model. The PGFI (0.68 → 0.7 → 0.705) as displayed in the above table there is a small increase to prove the improvement. Overall, Model 2 is the best fit among the data.

Table 9: Baseline comparison and fit index

Normed Fit Index (NFI, Delta 1)	0.93
Relative Fit Index (RFI, Rho 1)	0.91
Incremental Fit Index (IFI, Delta 2)	0.96
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.96

The above table, explains Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.93) and Relative Fit Index (RFI = 0.91) both are above the threshold value of 0.90, reflecting a significant improvement over the null model. Similarly, the Incremental Fit Index (IFI = 0.96) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.96) are above the commonly accepted cut-off value of 0.95, indicating a good comparative fit and confirming that the proposed structural relationships, which explains the observed data constructively. Altogether, these provide strong evidence that the model has very good fit quality. Finally, the authors derive that the model has strong fitness level.

Table 10: RMSEA

RMSEA and Close-Fit Test for the Structural Model				
Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
	0.045	0.035	0.055	0.72

It is well understood from the table RMSEA confidence interval from 0.035 to 0.055, with both lower and upper bounds falling below the recommended maximum threshold of 0.08, indicating a satisfactory model to the data. Additionally, the PCLOSE value of 0.72 is well above the acceptable range of 0.05, confirming that the null hypothesis of close model fit. Overall, these results display that the structural model demonstrates a very good level of approximate fit, with minimal error in structure. The RMSEA-based close-fit statistics show strong evidence of good model fit.

Table 11: Structural Model – Regression Weights

Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Significance
MT → SRV	0.79	0.24	3.29	< .001	Yes
SBH → SRV	0.18	0.0547	3.29	< .001	Yes
SRV → CMPO	0.68	0.207	3.29	< .001	Yes
SRV × Education → CMPO	-0.11	0.0549	2	0.045	Yes
Education → CMPO	-0.02	0.0449	0.45	0.656	No
SRV → RCB	-0.01	0.0606	0.16	0.869	No

The results of the above table present that MT has a very significant positive effect on SRV (β = 0.79, CR= 3.29 p < .001), suggesting that higher trust in managers substantially enhances employees' perceived service value. Skill-Based Hiring (SBH) also positively influences SRV (β = 0.18, CR=3.29 p < .001), to a smaller extent, showing that strengthening skill-based practices contributes meaningfully to SRV.SRV shows a significant positive effect on CMPO (β = 0.68, p < .001), indicating that value directly improves performance outcomes related to career. The interaction term SRV and Education has significant negative effect on CMPO (β = –0.11, p = 0.045), stating that educational qualification reduces the positive impact SRV on outcomes**.** In other words, SRV contributes more strongly to CMPO for employees with lower or moderate education levels compared to those with higher education. Education alone does not predict CMPO (β = –0.02, p = 0.656), and SRV does not significantly influence Role Clarity Behaviours (RCB**)** (β = –0.01, p = 0.869), suggests that relationships are statistically minimal.

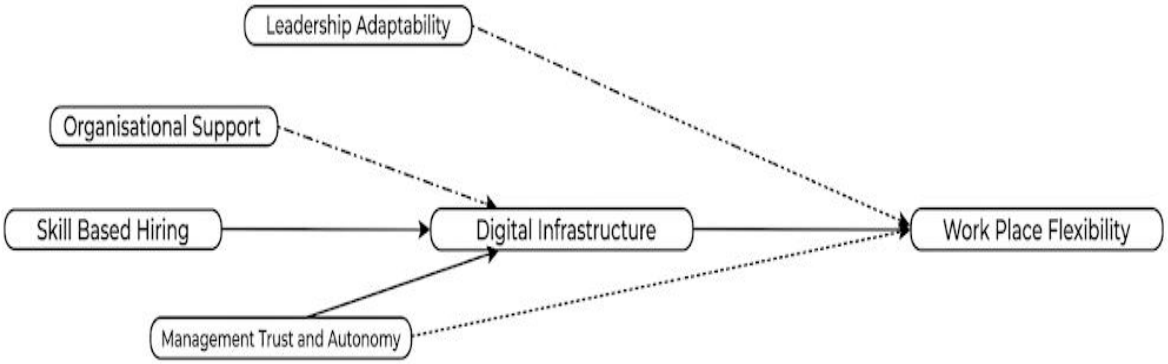


Figure 2: Full SEM Model: Mediation and Moderation Framework

Note. The diagram illustrates the hypothesized structural relationships among organizational constructs. Leadership Adaptability, Organisational Support, Skill- Based Hiring, and Management Trust and Autonomy are proposed to influence Digital Infrastructure, which in turn mediates their effects on Work Place Flexibility. Dotted arrows represent directional paths tested within the SEM model.

Discussions

The study reveals about workplace flexibility in hybrid IT and ITES environments is powerfully shaped by variables of organisational, technological, and skill-based factors, with regression and SEM outputs. The results from the data prove certain critical relationships with workplace flexibility. Variables like Career Mobility & Promotion Opportunities emerged as the strong predictor of Work Performance Flexibility, supported by significant contributions from Digital Infrastructure, Organisational Support, Skill-Based Hiring, and Remote Collaboration Tools. The variable Managerial Trust showed a strong influence on Skill Recognition. However, skill-based hiring practices also supported the culture. Furtherance, Skill Recognition did not significantly impact Reduction of Credential Bias. One can understand still educational qualifications are prioritised for promotion or advance in career at remote settings.

The moderation part of model findings reveals positive impact on skill recognition and validation (SRV) on career mobility. In the meantime, credential bias, is supporting paper ceiling form the literature. The demographic profile of young, early-career digital workers and the strong internal reliability of constructs reinforce the contextual relevance of the model. Overall, the results reiterate on remote and hybrid work success depends on aligning infrastructure, trust, inclusive hiring, and supportive policies, while indicating that organisations must dismantle credential barriers.

Conclusion

This study finally states that workplace flexibility in IT and ITES environments is basically driven by organisational support, digital infrastructure, managerial trust, and skill-based hiring practices. The results show that Career Mobility & Promotion Opportunities highlights as the most influentially impacting Work Performance Flexibility. Predictors, Digital Infrastructure and Organisational Support strongly posits flexibility results. This study puts forth, remote work is successful only when employees are supported with best technology and constant backing from the organisation. Then another variable Managerial Trust significantly improves Skill Recognition & Validation. To add on,

skill-based hiring is prioritised as a good medium for beyond traditional degrees. Overall, the study reinforces that while flexi work environments encourage autonomy and performance, but there is a requirement of redesigning job career requirements.

Limitations

Beyond all, though the study has brought out valuable insights into workplace flexibility and remote work dynamics, the study has several limitations that shape the interpretation of its findings. First, the data were collected using a purposive sampling approach within IT and ITES organisations in Bengaluru, which limits the generalisability of results to other sectors, or organisations. Finally, the study did not incorporate qualitative insights.

Directions for Further Research

Future research should broaden the demographic and industry by including diverse sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, education, and government to capture how flexible work practices differ across occupational contexts. Longitudinal studies are to be conducted to observe how managerial trust, skill recognition, and credential bias shift over time as hybrid work gets to matured phase and digital systems evolve. Researchers could employ mixed-method designs, combining surveys with interviews or focus groups, to better understand subjective experiences.

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