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The Hybrid and Flexible Work Revolution, Incorporating Emerging Idea of the Paper Ceiling

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Abstract

The hybrid and flexible work revolution have transformed organizational practices by emphasizing the importance of outputs, autonomy, and collaboration technologies over physical presence. Although such practices increase accessibility to work opportunities, they also point towards a developing limitation called the "paper ceiling," under which the growth of employees lacking academic credentials is hindered despite the presence of skills. This research attempts to identify the impact of workplace flexibility, which is dependent on managerial, organizational, technological, and skills-based factors. The study explores the potential use of skill recognition to eliminate the effect of credentials in hybrid work environments. The research used a survey with a list of 317 IT-related and ITES sector-based professionals in Bengaluru, India**.** In order to validate the data, the authors apply regression analysis, along with structural equation modelling (SEM), to validate multiple interrelated factors such as managerial trust, skill-based hiring, technological infrastructure, organizational support, collaboration technologies, skill recognition, career mobility, and reduction of credentials. The result specifies that career mobility, along with the availability of promotion opportunities, is the strongest predictors of workplace variability, facilitated by technological infrastructure, organizational support, skill-based hiring, and collaboration technologies. The development of managerial trust, along with skill-based hiring, promotes skill recognition, which has a strong impact on career mobility. On the contrary, educational background has a negative moderating effect on this event, identifying the presence of barriers in employment opportunities despite skills, based on credentials. The research identifies the importance of hybrid work, showcasing the need for skill-centric job design, evaluation, and promotion systems that are inclusive, reliable, and support healthy workplace variability.

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

Introduction

Randomized trials show that hybrid work reduces turnover by 33% without compromising performance by striking a balance between remote autonomy and office collaboration. By putting results ahead of attendance, flexible work expands on this, increasing engagement to 78% as opposed to 70% in fully on-site setups. In the midst of this revolution, the paper ceiling appears as a barrier in hybrid environments, were remote workers without elite credentials or physical visibility encounter obstacles to promotion, exacerbating talent access disparities.

Paper ceiling is a method which prevents skilled workers from jobs which require degree requirements. Organisations adopt to skill sets and refuse the paper ceiling to give access to the talent pool.

In case of traditional workforce during time of hiring due to strict HR policies a bachelor's degree is insisted by default. They can also opt for requires competencies and skill sets. In hybrid workforce there is lot of autonomy and flexibility which can be adopted to people with skillsets. Continuous performance appraisal techniques can be used to check the competencies of individuals based on their contribution to the organisation. When such kind of appraisal paves way to communication, collaboration, connectivity, recognition and equity.

Dismantling Paper Ceiling

Companies analyse the job specification and jot down jobs which require technical skills. These technical skills can be acquired through on the job training, in-basket exercises, attending some boot camps. The job description and specification need to be rewritten to make sure that the most important skills, experience, and core competencies are clear and match what the role needs.

Later the skills have to be assessed depending on the way it is structured and taking work samples. Managers who hire the skill-based team have to be educated on how to conduct skill-based interviews. Employees need to work towards advocating the change by sharing best practices by empowering people with special skill set as the new norms. Hybrid work is anchored on the 5Cs framework, which emphasizes effective communication, seamless collaboration, a strong culture, meaningful connectivity, and operational continuity.

These skills set have to be aligned with organisational goals. Communication is a skill set which does not require a basic degree. People who know to use Microsoft teaser zoom are people with skill sets. Communication in a way helps to reduce confusion, gives clarity and ensures inquilinity. Collaboration can be done through cloud-based platforms for real-time collaboration or flexible office spaces. If the team has a skill set of using these worldly tools it helps to enhance their collaborative skills.

Culture is adopting oneself to positivity through offline or virtual team building activities developing an inclusive environment that will enhance the brand of the employer. Connectivity is all about connecting resources to individuals at varied locations securely so that ensuring that work is not hampered and the team can give its best. Continuity is planning a technique which helps in functioning

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Literature Review

Lauring, 2025 defines that hybrid work integrates remote and in-office elements and its order of the day, depends on location and gives the employee autonomy. Ruchi (2024) and Wang et al. (2021) opine that hybrid boost performance, well-being, and work-life balance by encouraging flexibility and reducing distractions. Empirical studies show hybrid arrangements increase retention by one-third without productivity losses, outperforming fully remote or office-based setups Bloom et al., 2024; Choudhury, 2022 analysed how hybrid work enhances the benefits towards the organisation through its outcome-based policies and procedures. Hopkins & Bardoel 2023; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2023 highlighted how productivity can be enhanced by customizing on schedules, so that commutes can be reduced.

However, Charalampous et al., 2019; Evanoff et al., 2020. Explained how challenges exist when one collaborates and people have challenges in adapting to their new leaders. Zamani, 2025; Gratton, 2021 discussed how hybrid culture is dominating with only 2-3 remote office ratios, and it prioritises on trust and technology. Griffith & Neale, 2021 explained how paper ceiling leads to becoming a barrier in hybrid context because when we have people working remotely there is always a promotional bias that emerges as there is reduced visibility and network cannot be accessed. Nilles, 1994; Golden & Eddleston, 2019 critically analysed that the non-traditional talent is sometimes a disadvantage even though one has skill competencies

More authors like, Parker (2021) opined that some strategies, including Artificial Intelligence strategies like AI assessments and equitable metrics, aim to dismantle it. Ruchi, 2024 revealed that bibliometric analyses on how hybrid impacts, urging frameworks integrating technology and equity. Auguste, B. 2017 Coined the term STARs (Skilled Through Alternative Routes) to describe workers with paper ceiling that is without a valid bachelor's degree which resists them from hiring them for highly paid jobs.

Apart from the above discussed researches there are few studies done by the institutes like Deming, D. (Harvard) et al 2016-23 extensively researched that quality degrees exempted qualified workers due to their lack in credentials. Harvard Business School 2021 highlighted that a large part of the untapped talent pool gets missed out due to lack of credentials. In a study McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) 2022 – 2022 provided extensive data confirming that many knowledge workers feel the shift from traditional, permanent work to hybrid, flexible work is accelerating a focus on outcomes rather than how many hours a person has spent in their seat. Gartner et al SHRM2023 - 2024 indicated many hybrid workers are more likely to be overlooked for promotions or high-visibility opportunities than permanent workers even though they contribute better to the production.

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.

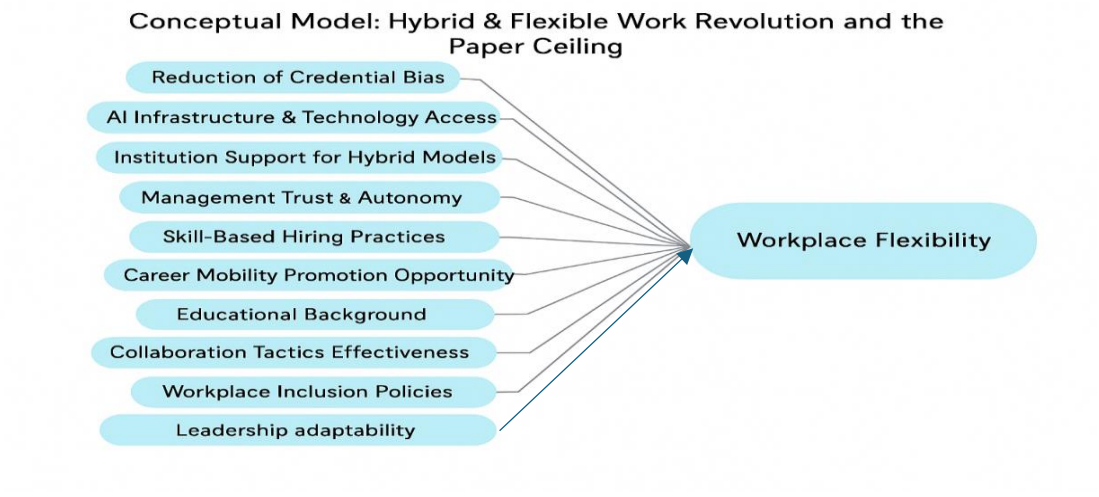

Figure 1: Proposed model

Methodology

Data

This empirical study was conducted in Bengaluru, India, to explore the influence of workplace flexibility factors on the Managerial Trust, Skill-Based Hiring, Digital Infrastructure, Organizational Support, Leadership Adaptability, Remote Collaboration Tools, Reduction of Credential Bias, Skill Recognition & Validation, Career Mobility. A purposive sampling method was used to target IT and ITES professionals. Data was collected via an online survey distributed through Google Forms between October, November and December and, 2025. The total sample comprised of 317 respondents from IT and ITES organizations. Data was collected from companies situated in electronic city phase 1, phase 11 and Manyata Tech Park at Bengaluru. The

respondents included employees and contract employees' roles such as support functions, operations and admins.

Measures

The survey questionnaire was adapted from previous validated studies. It consisted of two parts:

Part1: Demographic data was collected includes (e.g., gender, age, income designation, industry type).

Part 2: The questionnaire with Likert scales items measuring the independent variables (Managerial Trust, Skill-Based Hiring, Digital Infrastructure, Organizational Support, Leadership Adaptability, Remote Collaboration Tools, Reduction of Credential Bias, Skill Recognition & Validation, Career Mobility)

Data Analysis

This study uses quantitative assessment to attain objectives. For treatment of data the authors used SPSS 23.0 software. The descriptive data (table 1) summarises the details of respondents. Structural equation modelling was used to understand the complex relationships of the variable s and revealing path mechanisms. Linear Regression analysis is used to test the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables.

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%

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	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

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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			

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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[a]						
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

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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.

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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.

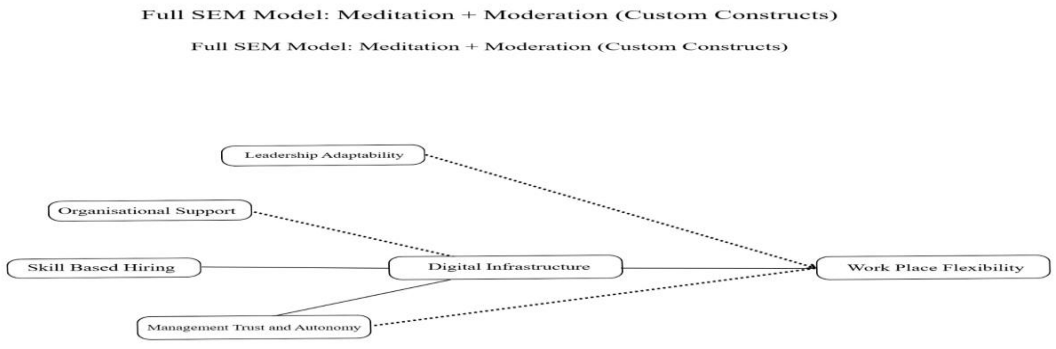

Figure 2: Final model

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

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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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