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Navigating the Blur: Human Resource Strategies for Employee Well-being in Hybrid Work: Insights from Chennai's ITES Sector

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Abstract

The study examines Human Resource strategies to mitigate stress arising from blurred work-life boundaries in hybrid work models in the ITES sector in Chennai City. Even though the organisations have adopted flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and workload management strategies, employees continue to report stress and difficulty balancing work and personal life. Existing literature largely focuses on the COVID-19 period, calling for a gap in understanding employee-centric HR strategies in India's ITES sector in the post-pandemic hybrid work environment. To address this, we adopted a quantitative research design and collected data from 121 employees selected through purposive sampling from ITES organisations in Chennai. The Findings highlighted that flexibility-oriented HR practices, managerial support, and structured wellness initiatives significantly reduce employee stress and enhance engagement, while inconsistent boundary-setting policies and after-hours connectivity remain key stress contributors. The study concludes that employee-centric HR strategies, reinforced by supportive organisational culture and managerial involvement, play a critical role in sustaining work-life balance and improving employee well-being in hybrid work settings.

Keywords: Hybrid Work Model, Work-Life Boundaries, Employee Stress, Human Resource Strategies, ITES Sector, Work-Life Balance, Work-Life Regulation, Managerial Support, Employee Engagement, Boundary Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, hybrid work has transitioned from a temporary solution during the pandemic to a more common practice in organisations. The organisations that implement hybrid work models; this trend is especially visible in the ITES industry in the digital era of work. Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). Hybrid work offers greater flexibility for employees, but it also brings new challenges, as workers may be constantly connected through digital tools, leading to increased pressure and difficulty in setting distance between work and personal life (Li, Xie, Zhou & Du, 2024). Constant connectivity can also lead to burnout; it is hard for employees to mentally detach from work (Maleksaeedi, Hogberg & Willermark, 2025). These examples indicate that while hybrid work gives employees more flexibility, it also changes how they experience work. In such environments, organizations with ongoing changes in work arrangements may require employees to adapt continuously. Chennai, being a major hub for the ITES industry, provides an ideal setting for analysing these issues due to the large volume of work and the emphasis on meeting client demands. Existing studies have looked into the relationship between hybrid work, technostress, and poor work performance (Banerjee & Gupta, 2023); the mismatch between flexible work policies and employee conditions (Shirmohammadi, Au & Beigi, 2022); and the importance of consistent policy implementation for managing boundaries (Kossek, Perrigino & Lautsch, 2023).

Statement of Problem

The implementation of the hybrid work system in the ITES industry in Chennai has led to changes in HRM practices, including how work is structured, how performance is managed, and how employees are available for work. However, the goal of hybrid work is to offer employees greater flexibility, which has created confusion around working hours, the scope of work, and employee availability. Without a clear HRM strategy in place, employees may face extended working hours, constant digital connectivity, and challenges in balancing work and personal life. This presents a challenge for HRM in maintaining employee health, satisfaction, and productivity. As hybrid work becomes the standard in the ITES sector, work-life regulation has emerged as a significant strategic issue in the industry.

Reviews of Literature

Recent studies on work and work-life balance highlight that many individuals continue to struggle with blurred boundaries, technostress, and overall well-being. Digital stress and technostress are ongoing concerns for workers (Maleksaeedi et al.2025; Banerjee & Gupta 2023). On the other hand, hybrid HRM systems offer promising potential, as they can increase employee engagement and reduce burnout (Liu et al., 2025). Hence, building a model requires a significant amount of resources and a culture that supports change (Hopkins & Bardoel 2023).

A policy alone is not enough unless it is implemented and clear boundaries are established (Kossek et al., 2023; Noble, 2025). When we look back at the experiences during the pandemic, we notice a combination of freedom and pressure, along with a divide between family-friendly plans and an increase in household responsibilities (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Connectivity can be both a useful tool and a source of stress (Farivar et al., 2024). Psychological resilience helps prevent people from burning out (Zhamshit, 2025) and leadership style plays a major role. A hands-off leadership approach often leads to burnout (Hopson, 2025), while expectations around after-hours communication can serve as both a demand and a form of support (Li et al., 2024). Cross-cultural studies show how HRM influences change (Gigauri, 2020) and the best combination of office and remote days is usually between six to ten days a week (Loncar et al., 2025). Different sectors in Indonesia faced various challenges (Pardosi et al., 2024), and together these studies show that hybrid work is a dynamic system. Therefore, in HRM actions, how policies are implemented, who leads, and how resilient individuals are all combine to affect well-being and productivity across different settings.

Research Gap

Research on hybrid work and work-life balance has grown significantly between 2023 and 2025, but there are still important gaps. Farivar et al. (2024) introduced some interesting thoughts on connectedness, but they did not include quantitative research. Hopkins and Bardoel (2023) examined Australian hybrid models, but they overlooked the blurred lines between work and personal life and ignored the ITES/India context. Li et al. (2024) looked at boundary issues but did not find effective HR solutions. Liu et al.(2024) worked mainly with China wellness but negated the boundary issue. Noble (2025) did mention ITES and a certain urban Indian context such as Chennai but did not discuss the specific issues that arise from hybrid work. So, there is an evident gap in the need for a contextual study within the ITES sector in Chennai, making use of employee perceptions to develop an efficient HR strategy that would regulate blurred work-life balance.

Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of employees working in hybrid ITES organisations.
2. To identify the challenges of hybrid work and their impact on employee well-being and work–life regulation.
3. To develop an effective HRM strategy to regulate blurred work–life boundaries and enhance employee well-being.

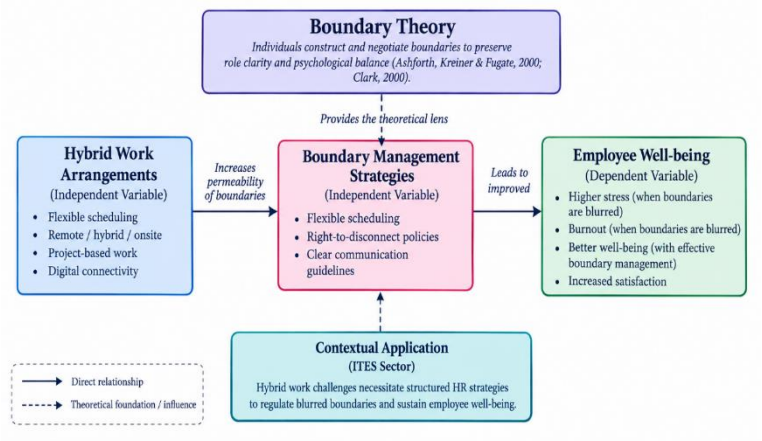
Research Methodology

The study adopted a purposive sampling design; the sample unit and size were 121 through a cross-sectional approach in the hybrid work model ITES sector

employees in Chennai city. The source of data was primary data collected through a questionnaire survey method, and secondary data were collected from academic articles and journals. The data were analysed using percentage analysis and Likert summated scaling Techniques.

Conceptual Framework

The Boundary Theory explores how employees create, maintain and manage boundaries between work and personal life. Boundary Theory shows that flexible and digitally connected work arrangements can blur these boundaries. This makes it hard for employees to separate work roles from personal roles. Boundary Theory research also shows that organisational policies and clear boundary-setting practices are important for managing these challenges. This is especially true when employees stay connected to work after working hours. Kossek et al., 2023 and Noble 2025 talk about this. Evidence from related work arrangements also shows that flexibility can give employees more control. It can also create challenges in managing work and family responsibilities. Shirmohammadi et al. 2022 talk about this too. So, the reviewed literature supports the importance of Boundary Theory. It helps in understanding how people manage work and life boundaries. This is especially important, with changing work arrangements. Boundary Theory fits this study because hybrid work models require employees to carry out work in locations and in different ways. This shift makes it harder for employees to separate their work life from their personal life clearly. Boundary Theory helps explain how changes in work organisation, flexible work arrangements, digital tools that connect people and company-defined limits between work and personal life can affect employees' ability to manage these two areas.



As a result, Boundary Theory provides a theoretical foundation for examining how dynamic and hybrid work models influence employees' flexibility and, in turn, their engagement in the IT sector.

Data Analysis

Objective 1: To study the demographic profile of employees working in hybrid ITES organisations, a percentage analysis was performed.

Table 1.1 – Demographic profile of the respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC	CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE
Gender	Female	54.55%
Age	25–34 years	47.11%
Marital Status	Married	57.02%
Work Experience	2–5 years	46.28%
Mode of Working	Hybrid	76.03%
Working Hours	9–10 hours	46.28%

Interpretation: The demographic profile showed that most of the people who answered are women (54.55%) between the ages of 25 to 34 years (47.11%) and married (57.02%). Most people have between 2 to 5 years of work experience (46.28%) and work in a hybrid mode (76.03%); however, the biggest group works 9 to 10 hours each day (46.28%). This shows that the sample mainly includes early-career, married employees who work in hybrid arrangements and have standard working hours.

Objective 2: To identify the challenges of hybrid work and their impact on employee well-being and work–life regulation, a Likert summated scaling analysis was performed.

Table 1.2 – Hybrid work challenges

PARTICULARS	N	SUM	MEAN
Hybrid work makes it difficult to maintain regular working hours.	121	393	3.25
Work often extends beyond scheduled working hours.	121	385	3.18
Employees are expected to remain available beyond working hours.	121	387	3.20
Work-related communication continues during personal time.	121	394	3.26
It is difficult to disconnect from work after working hours.	121	374	3.09
Hybrid work blurs the boundary between work and personal life.	121	388	3.21
Hybrid work makes it difficult to allocate sufficient time for personal activities.	121	379	3.13
Work responsibilities are sometimes unclear under hybrid work.	121	363	3.00
Changes in work arrangements create uncertainty about work responsibilities.	121	367	3.03
Hybrid work can increase workload.	121	372	3.07
Working from different locations makes coordination with colleagues difficult.	121	378	3.12
Frequent digital communication creates pressure to respond quickly.	121	377	3.12
Continuous digital connectivity can cause mental fatigue.	121	384	3.17
Hybrid work can affect concentration during working hours.	121	382	3.16
Hybrid work can negatively affect overall employee well-being.	121	384	3.17
AVERAGE MEAN SCORE		**3.14**	

Interpretation: The average mean score of 3.14 suggests that employees experience a moderate level of challenges under hybrid work. Work-related communication continuing during personal time (3.26) and difficulty maintaining regular working hours (3.25) are the most pronounced challenges, while unclear work responsibilities (3.00) are the least. This highlights the need for better work-life boundary management.

Objective 3: To develop an effective HRM strategy to regulate blurred work–life boundaries and enhance employee well-being was performed using a Likert summated scaling analysis.

Table 1.3 – HR strategies for employee well-being

PARTICULARS	N	SUM	MEAN
Flexible working-hour options should be provided for hybrid employees.	121	378	3.12
A right-to-disconnect policy should be introduced after working hours.	121	388	3.21
Clear guidelines should be established for maintaining work–life boundaries.	121	390	3.22
Workload monitoring should be carried out to prevent excessive work pressure.	121	370	3.06
Roles and responsibilities should be clearly communicated under hybrid work arrangements.	121	386	3.19
Managers should receive training on effectively managing hybrid teams.	121	379	3.13
Guidelines should be established for work-related digital communication.	121	404	3.34
Non-urgent communication outside working hours should be minimised.	121	400	3.31
Employee well-being assessments should be conducted regularly.	121	387	3.20
Stress-management and well-being programmes should be offered to employees.	121	396	3.27
Counselling or employee assistance services should be made available when required.	121	382	3.16
Work–life balance awareness programmes should be conducted periodically.	121	381	3.15
Flexible leave or time-off options should be made available when necessary.	121	384	3.17
A formal channel should be provided for reporting excessive work pressure.	121	373	3.08
Hybrid-work policies should be reviewed regularly using employee feedback.	121	372	3.07
AVERAGE MEAN SCORE			**3.18**

Interpretation: The average mean score of 3.18 suggests that employees moderately agree with the suggested HR strategies. Guidelines for digital communication (3.34), minimising non-urgent communication after hours (3.31) and stress-management programmes (3.27) record the highest means, while workload monitoring (3.06)

records the lowest. This highlights the need for communication-related and well-being support measures to improve employee well-being under hybrid work.

Findings

- Employees share thoughts about boundary management, hybrid work challenges and HR strategy alignment. Flexibility-oriented HR practices, managerial support and wellness initiatives are very important in shaping employees' workplace experience.
- Employees show familiarity with hybrid work concepts, with an average mean score of 3.14 that points to a moderate level of challenges. The biggest issues are Work-related communication continuing during personal time. (3.26) and difficulty keeping regular working hours (3.25). Unclear responsibilities (3.00) are the most severe.
- The hybrid model has made people rely more on communication tools, cut back on face-to-face interactions, and created confusion about boundary-setting guidelines. This confusion affects access to information and clarity of responsibilities.
- Organised HR interventions that make flexibility-oriented practices visible, give managers direction on workload distribution, and keep wellness initiatives ongoing are key to reducing stress and improving engagement.
- Employment types such as contract and trainee/internship roles should all be encouraged to access and benefit from structured boundary-management practices so that everyone is included in hybrid work arrangements.

Recommendation

Future studies can proceed with Longitudinal studies to measure the challenges across different Waves and also in other geographical and the study assessed the main demographic variables only, so future studies can include more demographic variables.

II. CONCLUSION

The study shows that Boundary Theory gives a base for understanding hybrid work problems, where unclear borders between personal life and work life create stress and confusion. The demographic picture shows that early-career married workers in setups feel the most pain, highlighting how important it is to have HR plans that fit them. The results find that the major problem is Work-related communication continuing during personal time. The effective ways to cut stress and raise engagement are HR practices that give flexibility, support from managers, and clear wellness programs. Overall, the findings stress the need for HR rules that are organised, apply to all and strengthen work-life boundary management in hybrid environments.

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