

SMART WORK, SMART LIFE: IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK ON WOMEN IN THE IT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the institutionalization of remote and hybrid work, reshaping both organizational practices and policy debates. While scholarship has extensively documented the benefits and challenges of telework, limited evidence exists on its gendered impact within the Indian IT sector and the governance mechanisms that can address these challenges. This study examines how remote work influences women's work-life balance, productivity, job satisfaction, and career progression, while situating the findings within the broader policy and governance frameworks.

A survey of 110 female IT professionals in India was conducted and analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression models. Results reveal that hybrid work is the most preferred arrangement, balancing autonomy with visibility. Yet, barriers such as limited visibility (52.7%), extended working hours (39.1%), and domestic interruptions (31.8%) persist. Regression findings show that organizational support ($\beta = 0.41, p < .01$) and flexible scheduling ($\beta = 0.36, p < .05$) enhance job satisfaction, whereas heavy domestic workloads reduce productivity ($\beta = -0.32, p < .05$).

The study extends boundary theory and the flexibility paradox to the Indian IT context, while also highlighting the role of governance and policy enablers. By aligning organizational practices with national gender equity policies, Digital India initiatives, and local-level support mechanisms such as community childcare and digital infrastructure, this research provides actionable insights for designing equitable hybrid work models.

Keywords: Remote Work, Hybrid Work, Women in IT, Work–Life Balance, Gender Equity

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of businesses has reshaped traditional working models, with remote work becoming a mainstream practice in the information technology (IT) sector. This shift has had profound implications for female employees, who often balance professional careers with caregiving and household responsibilities. Remote work provides greater autonomy and flexibility; however, it also risks reinforcing the gendered divisions of labor within households. Remote work has moved from an exception to a widespread arrangement in the IT sector (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). For women—who frequently shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care and household work—remote working arrangements can both relieve and intensify this pressure. On the one hand, teleworking reduces commuting time, creates opportunities for better time management, and enhances women's ability to integrate personal and professional commitments (Allen et al., 2021); On the other hand, the blurring of boundaries between home and work often results in longer working hours, constant availability, and increased domestic interruptions, which can undermine the intended benefits of flexibility (Chung, 2022).

In the Indian IT context, research has shown that while the industry offers advanced digital infrastructure, women continue to face heightened domestic expectations and visibility-related career barriers (Jansi Rani & Priya, 2023; Sharma & Kaur, 2024). Recent evidence also suggests that Indian women professionals experience intensified domestic workloads and

career progression hurdles during remote and hybrid work arrangements, indicating that gender inequities remain persistent even in technologically advanced sectors (Mehta & Sinha, 2022). Despite the global scholarship on remote work, few studies have addressed how remote and hybrid modalities affect women in the Indian IT sector. Existing studies primarily focus on Western contexts or general employee populations, overlooking the gendered dynamics of career visibility, work-life balance, and organizational support in India. This study aims to address this gap.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the research objectives and outlines the scope of the study. Section 3 reviews the relevant literature and theoretical perspectives on remote work and gender issues. Section 4 details the research methodology, including the design, sampling, and analysis techniques. Section 5 reports the empirical results, followed by a discussion of the findings in Section 6. Section 7 concludes the study with key insights, implications and directions for future research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze the impact of remote work on work-life balance for female IT workers.
2. Examined the effects of remote work on productivity and job satisfaction.
3. Identify organizational factors that support or hinder female remote workers' success.
4. Strategies for gender-sensitive remote work policies are recommended.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Author(s) & Year	Context / Country	Sample / Method	Key Findings	Identified Gap
Bloom et al. (2015)	China (telework experiment)	16,000 employees, experimental design	Remote work improved productivity but reduced visibility and promotion prospects.	Focused on general workforce, not gendered impacts in IT.
Allen, Golden & Shockley (2021)	Global	Systematic review	Remote work enhances autonomy and satisfaction but risks overwork and blurred boundaries.	Lacked gender-specific analysis in digital sectors.
Chung (2022)	Europe	Policy/theoretical analysis	Defined the 'flexibility paradox': autonomy can lead to self-exploitation.	Did not examine sector-specific or cultural differences.
Tan, Lim-Soh & Tan (2024)	Singapore	Longitudinal survey of women employees	Telework improved life satisfaction when organizational support was high.	Limited to Singapore; not generalizable to Indian IT context.
Castro-Trancón et al. (2024)	Europe (systematic review)	2010–2023 telework studies	Teleworking often worsened gender inequities without supportive policies.	No focus on South Asian cultural/industry dynamics.

Jansi Rani & Priya (2023)	India (IT sector)	Survey of IT women employees	Remote work increased domestic expectations and work-life conflict.	Small sample, COVID-specific, did not explore hybrid arrangements.
Sharma & Kaur (2024)	India (service sector)	Mixed methods	Women professionals reported career stagnation due to lack of visibility in remote roles.	Broader service sector, not IT-specific; hybrid preferences not studied.
Mehta & Sinha (2022)	India	Interview-based	Women faced intensified domestic workloads and reduced career support during remote work.	Qualitative, small-scale, no quantitative validation.

Table 1. Comparative Literature Review on Remote Work, Gender, and the IT Sector.

The literature shows that while remote work offers flexibility and autonomy, women continue to face barriers such as a lack of visibility, intensified domestic workloads, and challenges in career progression. Most global studies emphasize the flexibility paradox and organizational support, but few have explored these issues within India's IT sector. Existing Indian studies are limited in scope, often focusing on COVID-19 conditions or small samples, and rarely assess hybrid arrangements. This study addresses these gaps by providing empirical evidence from female professionals in India's IT sector, focusing on the interplay between organizational support, work-life balance, and career outcomes in remote and hybrid contexts.

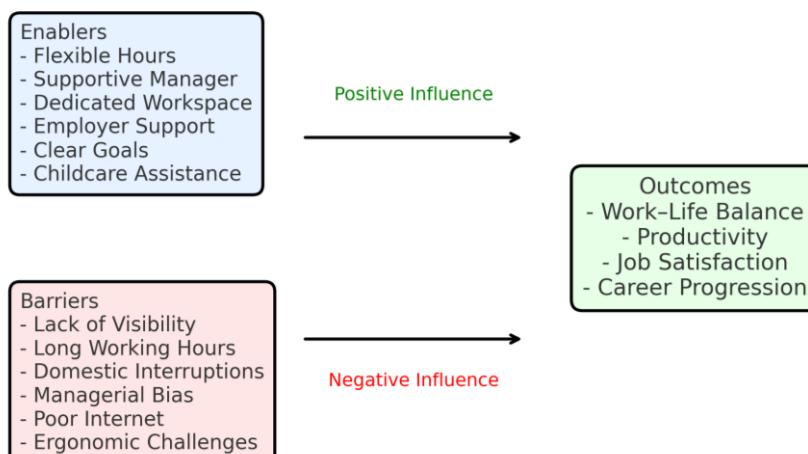


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Remote Work Enablers, Barriers and Outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study employed a cross-sectional survey-based quantitative design supplemented by descriptive and inferential analyses. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for a systematic examination of the relationships between remote work arrangements, women's professional outcomes, and organizational factors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design also facilitates the generalizability of the findings within the IT sector context.

Sampling and Participants: The population of interest consisted of women employed in various roles within the Indian IT sector. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to target

respondents with direct experience of remote or hybrid working. A total of 110 female professionals participated in the study. The sample represented diverse age groups, educational qualifications, and job roles, ensuring variability in the responses. Although purposive sampling ensured relevant respondents, it limited generalizability. A larger randomized sample could improve external validity. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Institutional Review Committee, and all participants provided informed consent.

Data Collection: Primary data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed based on validated constructs from prior studies on remote work, work–life balance, and career progression (Allen et al., 2021; Bloom et al., 2015; Chung, 2022). To strengthen content validity, the instrument was reviewed by academic experts and piloted with ten respondents before full deployment. Secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journals and institutional reports (e.g., ILO, 2021), were also incorporated to contextualize the findings.

Measures and Variables:

- **Work mode preference** (categorical: fully remote, hybrid, fully on-site).
- **Work–life balance** (measured using Likert-scale items adapted from work–life balance indices, aggregated into a composite score).
- **Perceived productivity** (self-reported change: decreased, same, or increased).
- **Job satisfaction** (measured using both single-item and composite Likert measures).
- **Organizational support** (capturing access to technology, policy clarity, and managerial support).
- **Domestic workload** (measured in hours per week spent on caregiving and household tasks).

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) were used to summarize demographic characteristics and work arrangement preferences. Cross-tabulations were used to examine the relationships between categorical variables. Simple and multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the impact of remote work on women’s productivity, job satisfaction, and work–life balance. The reliability of multi-item scales was tested using Cronbach’s alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). The following Cronbach’s α values were obtained: work–life balance = 0.78, job satisfaction = 0.82, organizational support = 0.81, and domestic workload = 0.73, confirming a good internal consistency. Regression analysis also reported model fit statistics, with R^2 values ranging from 0.28 to 0.37, indicating a moderate explanatory power.

Validity and Reliability: Content validity was established through expert review, while construct validity was supported by aligning survey items with established measures in prior literature (Allen et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2024). Reliability testing confirmed the internal consistency of the scales, as reported above. Triangulation with secondary data sources enhanced the robustness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to institutional and disciplinary ethical standards. Participation was voluntary, anonymity was ensured, and the respondents were informed about the study’s purpose. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and the data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely.

RESULTS

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents, work arrangement preferences, perceptions of career benefits, barriers and enablers of remote work, and the results of the regression analyses.

1. Age group and Highest Qualification

The study surveyed 110 female professionals employed in the Indian IT sector. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents' qualifications by age group. The largest cohort comprised women aged 31–35 years with postgraduate degrees (n = 32, 29.1%). Younger participants (20–25 years) were predominantly bachelor's degree holders (n = 24, 21.8%); The diversity in educational background indicates that the sample adequately represents different career stages.

Age Group	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Secondary School
20–25	24	0	0	0
26–30	0	12	11	0
31–35	12	32	0	1
36–40	1	4	1	0
40 and above	12	0	0	0

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' highest qualifications across age groups.

2. Work Arrangement Preferences

The respondents demonstrated a strong preference for **hybrid work models**. Figure 2 shows that hybrid arrangements were favored across most job categories, reflecting the perceived need to balance flexibility with career visibility. A smaller proportion preferred fully remote work, while very few opted for a complete return to onsite arrangements. These findings highlight women's desire for a blended model that combines autonomy and organizational engagement.

Preferred Future Work Arrangements

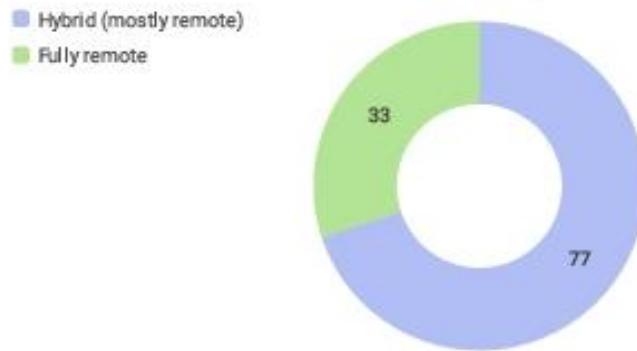


Figure 2. Presents Respondents' Preferred Work Arrangements Going Forward.

3. Work Arrangements by Job Role

Figure 3 indicates that preferences varied according to the job role. Women in managerial and leadership positions were more inclined towards hybrid work, whereas technical staff showed a relatively higher preference for fully remote work. This variation suggests that job roles moderate the relationship between work mode and professional expectations.

Distribution of Work Arrangements by Job Role

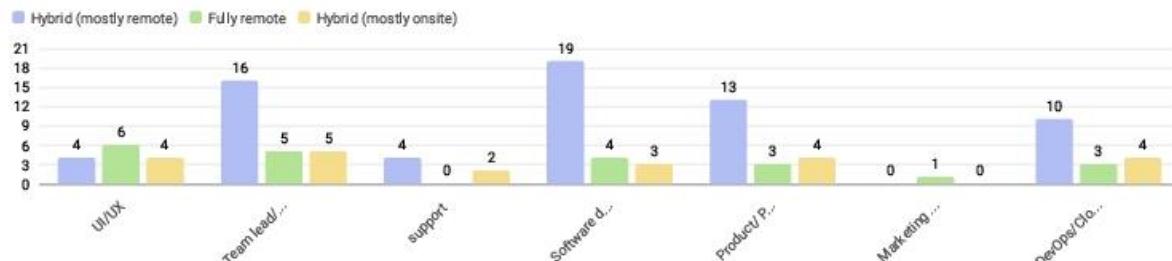


Figure 3. Respondents' Preferred Work Arrangements According to Job Roles.

4. Perception of Career Benefit

A significant majority of respondents perceived remote work positively for their careers, with 44 participants (40.0%) strongly agreeing and 55 (50.0%) agreeing to the statement. Only 11 (10.0%) disagreed, suggesting that remote work is broadly viewed as enabling career continuity and growth, although concerns remain among a minority (Table 2).

Response	Count
Agree	55
Strongly Agree	44
Disagree	11

Table 2. Respondents' perceptions of the career impact of remote work.

5. Barriers to Remote Work

The most frequently cited barrier was lack of visibility (52.7%), followed by long working hours (39.1%) and household interruptions (31.8%). Other barriers included managerial bias (27.3%) and inadequate Internet infrastructure (20.0%). Ergonomic challenges were mentioned by 9.1% of respondents (Table 3).

Barrier	Count
Lack of visibility	58
Long working hours	43
Household interruptions	35
Managerial bias	30
Poor internet	22
Lack of ergonomic setup	10

Table 3. The most frequently reported barriers to effective remote work.

6. Enablers for Success

Flexible working hours were the most frequently cited enabler (75.5%), followed by supportive managerial practice (65.5%). Access to a dedicated workspace (52.7%) and employer-provided equipment or stipends (49.1%) were significant contributors. Other enablers included clear performance goals (41.8%) and childcare assistance (25.5%) (Table 4).

Enabler	Count
Flexible hours	83
Supportive manager	72
Dedicated workspace	58
Employer stipend/equipment	54
Clear goals	46
Childcare help	28

Table 4. The most commonly cited enablers of successful remote work.

7. Inferential Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictors of job satisfaction and productivity among female employees. Organizational support and flexible hours emerged as significant predictors of job satisfaction, whereas a high domestic workload negatively influenced productivity. The results are shown in Table 5.

Predictor	B (β)	SE	t	p	Outcome
Organizational Support	0.41	0.11	3.62	< .01	Job Satisfaction
Flexible Hours	0.36	0.15	2.45	< .05	Job Satisfaction
Domestic Workload	-0.32	0.15	-2.18	< .05	Productivity

Model fit statistics: For Job Satisfaction, $R^2 = 0.34$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.31$. For Productivity, $R^2 = 0.28$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.26$. These values indicate a moderate explanatory power.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results Predicting Job Satisfaction and Productivity.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings of this study underscore the nuanced and multifaceted impact of remote work on female professionals in the Indian IT sector. A central outcome was the strong preference for hybrid work arrangements, which respondents valued for balancing autonomy and career visibility. This aligns with prior research suggesting that while flexibility enhances work-life integration, fully remote arrangements often reduce professional visibility and networking opportunities, thereby affecting long-term career progression (Bloom et al., 2015; Chung, 2022).

The high level of agreement (89.9%) regarding the positive contribution of remote work to careers reflects optimism about its role in sustaining women's professional participation. However, the persistence of barriers — most notably, lack of visibility (52.7%), extended working hours (39.1%), and domestic interruptions (31.8%) — illustrates the flexibility paradox (Chung, 2022), wherein autonomy simultaneously generates new forms of stress and work intensification. These challenges echo global findings that remote work, in the absence of organizational safeguards, risks reinforcing gendered divisions of labor and limiting women's professional mobility (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021; Castro-Trancón et al., 2024).

Simultaneously, the identification of critical enablers — such as flexible working hours (75.5%), supportive managerial practices (65.5%), and access to organizational resources (49.1%) — highlights the pivotal role of institutional support in shaping equitable outcomes. These findings corroborate prior studies emphasizing the centrality of managerial encouragement, ergonomic infrastructure, and outcome-based performance assessments in mitigating structural inequities (Allen et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2024).

Inferential analysis further reinforces these conclusions. Organizational support ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .01$) and flexible hours ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors of job satisfaction, suggesting that institutional interventions can directly enhance women's professional wellbeing. Conversely, a high domestic workload negatively influenced perceived productivity ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < .05$), reaffirming that unpaid care responsibilities remain a critical constraint for women in knowledge-intensive industries (Jansi Rani & Priya, 2023).

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the existing theories of work and gender.

- **Boundary Theory** is extended by showing that blurred professional–domestic boundaries are more pronounced in collectivist cultural contexts, such as India, where women face heightened domestic expectations.
- The findings enrich the understanding of the **Flexibility Paradox**, demonstrating that while hybrid work offers autonomy, it also reinforces visibility and workload challenges shaped by gender norms.
- By situating these insights in the Indian IT sector, this study adds a **non-Western perspective** to the predominantly Western-centric literature, advancing global discussions on gender, remote work, and organizational justice.

Practical Implications

This study also highlights actionable insights for organizations and IT managers.

- **Mentorship and Visibility Mechanisms:** Managers must formalize systems, such as structured mentoring, visibility-enhancing platforms, and rotational leadership opportunities, to ensure that women in hybrid roles are not overlooked for promotions.

- **Policy Development:** Organizations should design hybrid work frameworks that integrate gender-sensitive provisions to ensure equitable access to career growth opportunities.
- **Managerial Training:** Equipping managers with inclusive leadership skills can help address the unconscious biases that affect remote and hybrid employees.
- **Outcome-Based Evaluations:** Transparent performance evaluation systems should prioritize deliverables and outcomes over physical presence, reducing career penalties for remote workers.

Thus, the discussion reveals that the success of remote and hybrid models depends not only on technological readiness but also on deliberate, gender-sensitive organizational practices. Without targeted interventions, remote work risks becoming a mechanism of inequality, rather than empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Key Findings

This study examined the effects of remote and hybrid work on women in India's IT sector, focusing on work-life balance, productivity, job satisfaction, and career progression issues. The findings reveal a strong preference for hybrid work, which was viewed as the most effective way to balance flexibility with professional visibility. Simultaneously, barriers such as limited visibility, extended working hours, and intensified domestic responsibilities continue to constrain women's career progression. Regression analysis confirmed that organizational support ($\beta = 0.41, p < .01$) and flexible hours ($\beta = 0.36, p < .05$) significantly enhanced job satisfaction, while heavy domestic workloads reduced productivity ($\beta = -0.32, p < .05$). These findings highlight the dual nature of remote work—empowering in some respects but reinforcing inequity in others.

Original Contribution

Theoretically, this study extends **Boundary Theory** by showing that blurred professional-domestic boundaries are particularly pronounced in collectivist cultural contexts, such as India, where women face heightened domestic expectations. It also enriches the understanding of the **Flexibility Paradox**, demonstrating that autonomy gained through remote work can create new pressures if organizational safeguards are absent. By situating these insights in the Indian IT sector, this study introduces a **non-Western perspective** to a literature base dominated by Western contexts.

Practically, this study highlights the need for **gender-sensitive organizational interventions**. Hybrid arrangements should be designed with formal mentorship and visibility mechanisms, inclusive leadership practices, and outcome-based evaluations that safeguard women's career progression. These contributions emphasize that the success of hybrid work depends less on technology and more on deliberate, equity-oriented organizational strategies.

Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations, including its cross-sectional design, modest sample size, and focus on India's IT sector. Future research should:

- Future studies should employ **larger and cross-country comparative samples** to explore cultural differences in women's remote work experiences.
- Use **longitudinal designs** to capture the evolving effects of hybrid work on career outcomes over time.
- Integrate **qualitative interviews** to deepen understanding of women's lived experiences and provide richer insights into the nuances of remote and hybrid work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for organizations and policymakers in the IT sector.

1. Organizational Policy

- **Institutionalize Hybrid Work Frameworks:** Develop structured hybrid policies that balance flexibility with opportunities for professional visibility and networking, ensuring career advancement is not compromised.
- **Align with National Initiatives:** Align hybrid work frameworks with **Digital India** and **national gender equity policies** to ensure broader policy relevance and long-term sustainability.
- **Implement Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Introduce targeted measures such as flexible scheduling, equitable workload distribution, and childcare assistance to reduce the disproportionate domestic burden borne by women.

2. Managerial Practices

- **Mentorship and Visibility:** Create formal mentorship programs, leadership development initiatives, and rotational leadership opportunities to safeguard women's career growth.
- **Managerial Training:** Provide training to managers on inclusive leadership, addressing unconscious bias, and outcome-based evaluations to ensure hybrid workers are not penalized.
- **Work-Life Boundary Management:** Encourage realistic deliverables, clear working-hour guidelines, and organizational respect for personal time to reduce risks of burnout.

3. Governance and Public Policy

- **Alignment with National Programs:** Hybrid work frameworks should be strategically integrated with flagship initiatives such as Digital India and the National Policy for Women to ensure inclusivity, technological accessibility, and gender-sensitive workforce participation at the national level.
- **Local Government Interventions:** Local governments should be encouraged to establish community childcare centres, shared co-working hubs, and invest in digital infrastructure. These localized interventions can ease work-life balance pressures while expanding equitable access to hybrid work opportunities.
- **Gender-Sensitive Labor and Employment Policies:** National and state labour laws should embed gender-sensitive guidelines for remote and hybrid work. This ensures that employment policies safeguard women's participation, address digital divides, and institutionalize support mechanisms within evolving work arrangements.

4. Infrastructure and Technological Support

- **Enhance Ergonomic and Technological Support:** Offer stipends or subsidies for ergonomic setups, high-speed internet, and digital collaboration tools to minimize physical and technological barriers.
- **Strengthen Digital Infrastructure:** Ensure robust IT systems that facilitate seamless hybrid work while minimizing disruptions for employees across diverse geographies.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Policy Impact Assessment:** Establish systematic mechanisms to assess employee satisfaction, productivity, and gender equity indicators.
- **Track Gender Outcomes:** Track gender-disaggregated promotion data annually to monitor equity in career advancement opportunities.
- **Continuous Refinement:** Use feedback loops and employee surveys to adjust hybrid work policies in response to evolving workforce needs.

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