

From contentment to creativity: how hybrid work influences happiness and innovation in academia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study is to examine the moderating role of hybrid work on the relationship between happiness at work (HAW) and innovative work behavior (IWB).

Design/methodology/approach – Data was collected from faculty members of higher educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, India through self-administered questionnaires. Collected data was analyzed using partial least squares-structural equation modeling.

Findings – The findings revealed that HAW significantly predicted IWB, indicating that happy workers are more likely to take part in creative activities. Importantly, it was found that hybrid work significantly moderated the relationship between HAW and IWB.

Practical implications – Organizations are advised to consider the importance of fostering conducive working conditions for encouraging innovation among employees. It is also suggested that the relationship between HAW and IWB can be strengthened by hybrid work, underscoring the importance of flexible work schedules.

Originality/value – This research is the first to examine the moderating effect of hybrid work on the relationship between HAW and IWB.

Keywords Happiness at work, Engagement, Innovative work behavior, Hybrid work, PLS-SEM, Moderation, Academia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

One of the important changes in the nature of work and organizational practices over the past decade is the shift from traditional office-based settings to remote and hybrid work arrangements (Harris, 2015). The concept of “hybrid work” is not entirely new; it got substantial traction and global attention during the COVID-19 pandemic and came to be officially recognized as the well-known model, which consists of remote work systems and



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physical offices (Cook *et al.*, 2020). The challenges of the pandemic have accelerated this shift, which caused reorganization of working arrangements driven by shifting employee expectations and technological enhancements (Kumar and Das, 2022). Hybrid model is now an essential model for the future workforce that promotes flexibility and meets employees' needs for better work-life balance, less commuting and chances for professional renewal (Barrero *et al.*, 2021).

Although work from home have more options for flexible working and better health outcomes, there are drawbacks as well, like lack of personal interactions, resulting in stress due to loneliness (Charalampous *et al.*, 2019; Crawford, 2022). Such factors have given rise to the concept of the hybrid model that features some elements of remote model and also the possibilities for ideas and cooperation in typical office environment (Mauras *et al.*, 2021; Vyas, 2022). However, as much as it is important to find out the employees' experiences of change, it is equally important to establish that work restructuring influences employee behavioral outcomes and well-being.

One of the significant behavioral outcomes for organizational success is innovative work behavior (IWB). In an effort to enhance organizational performance and the competitiveness of the organizations, the initiatives taken by the employees to generate and implement novelty in terms of concepts, services or procedures are incorporated in IWB (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010; Dixit and Upadhyay, 2021). Earlier studies revealed that employees play as catalysts for organizational innovations. IWB has been related to supervisory behavior, job autonomy, professional skills and training, selective staffing and rewards and all these have been found to be the significant predictors of IWB (see, for example, Axtell *et al.*, 2000; Scott and Bruce, 1994; Messmann, 2012; Farrukh *et al.*, 2022). However, there is still limited understanding of attitudinal constructs particularly wider notions such as happiness at work (HAW) as antecedent to IWB (Farooq *et al.*, 2024). Although existing research has begun to explore the wide-attitudinal construct such as HAW as predictors of IWB (see, for example, Al-Shami *et al.*, 2023), there is still a lack of understanding regarding how this relationship is moderated by contextual factors like hybrid work arrangements. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by exploring the moderating role of hybrid work on HAW-IWB relationship. Based on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), this study makes an important contribution by simultaneously analyzing behavioral outcome in the form of IWB and attitudinal construct of HAW within hybrid work set-up.

As IWB is key to knowledge generation and institutional competitiveness (Blaskova *et al.*, 2015), its promotion is crucial particularly in developing countries. However, the factors shaping IWB in these contexts remains underexplored (Dixit and Upadhyay, 2021). Higher education institutions serve as an ideal context for this study due to their focus on innovation, human resource development, presence of autonomous and complex job roles (Gillespie *et al.*, 2001; Thurlings *et al.*, 2015; Ibusa *et al.*, 2020). These institutional characteristics make academia an ideal setting to investigate how hybrid work affects employee happiness and innovation. Apart from advancing the theoretical framework by examining the moderating effect of hybrid work on the proposed relationship, this research also offers practical implications tailored to the academic context.

Literature review

Innovative work behavior

Farr and Ford (1990) defined IWB as a discretionary and anticipatory behavior exhibited by people in an organization. This behavior includes coming up with new and useful ideas, concepts, plans, methods, objects or ways of doing things. Spreitzer (1995) defines IWB more specifically, emphasizing that people only transform the work, which involves coming

up with new and unique ideas or solutions that stand apart from the prior methods. On the other hand, [Scott and Bruce \(1994\)](#), described IWB as the creation of tangible, goal-oriented products, processes or services, stemming from identification of a problem and the formulation of the idea. This definition highlights the importance of innovation for improving organizational performance, focusing particularly on practical outcomes.

This paper uses [Janssen's \(2000\)](#) operational definition of IWB, which emphasizes its purposeful and deliberate nature, as well as its focus on shared benefits. Based on this definition, people displaying IWB are driven by the intent to bring forward and enact changes that could lead to benefits for themselves, group or the entire organization. The definition is divided into three phases: creative process embracing idea generation including brainstorming and problem-solving; idea communication, which is focused on the promotion of ideas mainly in the framework of official meeting and conferences; idea implementation, concerned with placing an emphasis on the effective implementation of an idea into practice.

Happiness at work

The fields of management and psychology have adopted different concepts of HAW that has a significant overlap with the general idea of happiness ([Fisher, 2010](#)). Notably, the construct such as job satisfaction, a well-established variable in organizational research has been extensively studied as both an independent and dependent variable holding significant importance and frequent usage ([Brief, 1998](#); [Cranny et al., 1992](#)). Other constructs include subjective well-being, which encompasses an overall evaluation of life and experiences considering both positive and negative emotions ([Diener, 1984](#)) and psychological well-being defined as a sense of fulfillment in life, encompassing aspects like purpose, autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships and self-acceptance ([Ryff, 1989](#)). The range of constructs related to HAW may seem confusing due to this diversity. In addition to this, [Warr \(2011\)](#) noted that some positive attitude measures predominantly focus on positive effect and job satisfaction neglecting crucial factors like meaningfulness at work. [Harrison et al. \(2006\)](#) put forward a higher-order construct that evolved from job satisfaction and organizational commitment. They suggested that future research should focus on job involvement or job identification within this broader construct.

To address this, [Fisher \(2010\)](#) developed a higher order construct of positive attitude which includes engagement, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. HAW is outlined as positive effect toward the job as well as its contextual elements and towards the entire organization. Fisher's definition also highlights the importance of the understanding of HAW compatibility principle and the fact that a host of positive attitude variables predict behavior better when they are congruent ([Harrison et al., 2006](#)). That is, employees who hold positive perceptions about the work, job or organization are likely to be committed, satisfied in their jobs and willing to show positive behavior.

Engagement. [Kahn \(1990\)](#) defined engagement as the psychological state in which organizational members are wrapping themselves up on their jobs and giving their psychological selves in their physical tasks assigned to them. In short, engagement, as defined by Kahn is a psychological state through which employees require not only physical presence at the workplace but also manifest psychological presence. Committed employees give their hearts and minds to their jobs, mobilizing cognitive and affective abilities to do their work to the optimum of their ability. In a similar vein, [Maslach et al. \(2001\)](#) described engagement in very close to Kahn's characterization of it as the psychological and emotional experience of continued fulfillment in a work role.

This study adopted [Schaufeli et al.'s \(2002\)](#) definition of engagement, similar to [Zigarmi et al.'s \(2009\)](#) conceptualization, understanding it as "employee work passion". In this

respect, engagement deviates from simple connotations of job satisfaction or commitment and even captures a higher-level passion and strength derived from motivation towards work. This view reflects Warr's concept of the purpose of work as an expectation that work should grant employees a purpose and engross them as the idea of meaningful work being central to workers' enthusiasm.

Job satisfaction. As defined by [Locke \(1976\)](#), job satisfaction is conceptualized as enjoyment or positive affective reaction to the evaluation of job or experiences related to job. Similarly, [Spector \(1997\)](#) provided a definition for job satisfaction which he described as "the degree to which persons have favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward their jobs" In contrast, [Schriesheim and Tsui \(1980\)](#) affirm that job satisfaction can be defined as an emotional response that is linked to the evaluation of the job or job experiences. This definition particularly stresses the role of appraisal process in the determination of job satisfaction saying that job satisfaction is not only product of appraisal as well as the characteristics of the job but also the subjective judgment and evaluation of the job experiences.

Affective organizational commitment. According to [Meyer and Allen \(1991\)](#), AOC is whereby an employee has emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organization. [Meyer et al. \(2002\)](#) also describe AOC in greater detail as being "a psychological state that ties one to the particular organization and that organization's objectives". The researchers identify affective commitment with other type of commitment like continuance and normative commitment. Continuance commitment is linked to the employee's assessment of the expenses involved in leaving the organization, whereas normative commitment is based on the employee's feeling of duty or obligation to remain with the organization. On the other hand, affective commitment is rooted in the employee's emotional connection and identification with the organization.

The current research adopts Allen and Meyer's conceptualization, considering AOC as sentiments directed toward the entire organization. Consequently, it emphasizes a distinct dimension from job satisfaction and engagement focusing on the unique aspect of emotional attachment and identification with the organization.

Hybrid work

In the aftermath of pandemic organizations encountered significant challenges in bringing employees back to the office as majority were likely to leave their jobs if they were expected to return to a five-day in-office schedule ([Selvi and Madhavkumar, 2023](#)). The pandemic-driven restrictions not only highlighted the renewed attention of public health initiatives but also triggered a rapid shift in organizational practices, leading companies to embrace flexibility and reconsider traditional work environments ([Groeger and Waldehagen Berg, 2024](#)). Thus, organizations across the globe shifted to remote work as a measure of necessity but the implementation of this model led to problems such as lack of communication, worsening of mental health and increased stress ([Selvi and Madhavkumar, 2023](#)).

In response to these challenges, organizations have adopted hybrid working models integrating both remote and onsite work to meet new demands of the workplace ([Mauras et al., 2021](#); [Lloyd and Hicks, 2023](#); [Vyas, 2022](#)). The development of hybrid work models has directly responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic with an intention of improving the quality of the working environment, and the overall quality of the employee's work-life balance, which in the long run will increase productivity ([Lenka, 2021](#)). This was accelerated by initial quarantining guidelines provided by the WHO, which revealed that occupations had to reform and advance the conventional work procedures ([Feiz Arefi et al., 2020](#); [Mauras et al., 2021](#); [Vyas, 2022](#); [Lloyd and Hicks, 2023](#)).

Happiness at work as a driver of innovative work behavior. This research is grounded in the argument that HAW encompassing engagement, job satisfaction and AOC leads to IWB. This relationship, as per the tenets of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), suggests that employees, motivated by financial and socio-psychological recognition, demonstrate commitment and superior performance when they feel valued by their organization. It was predicted that highly satisfied employees would engage in IWB (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Mustafa *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, empirical evidence from various studies (see, for example, Niu, 2014; Olanrewaju and Musa, 2019; Contreras *et al.*, 2022; Yuan and Ma, 2022) supports the idea that employees who are satisfied with their job and organization are more likely to exhibit IWB.

Employee engagement as important predictor of positive behavior, is expected to enhance productivity and performance compared to disengaged counterparts (Tims *et al.*, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2013). The blend of cognitive, emotional and physical energy characterizing employee engagement fosters conducive environment for innovation and supports the development of novel ideas and practices (Hakanen *et al.*, 2008). Recent studies affirm a significant positive impact of work engagement on employees' IWB (see, for example, Nazir and Islam, 2020; Pukkeeree *et al.*, 2020; Contreras *et al.*, 2022).

Job satisfaction, a key work-related attitude, combines affective and cognitive evaluations of job experiences (Brief, 1998). Scholars recognize job satisfaction as intrinsic motivation for employees' creativity (Amabile *et al.*, 1996; Schleicher *et al.*, 2004; Shipton *et al.*, 2006). As noted in prior literature, there is positive relationship between job satisfaction and IWB (see, for example, Niu, 2014; Mustafa *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, committed employees are more likely to engage in innovative behaviors in their workplace (Xerri and Brunetto, 2011; Xerri and Brunetto, 2013). AOC increases positive feeling and affiliation similar to the process of identification with the organization (Mustafa *et al.*, 2021). Previous empirical evidence has provided evidence suggesting that AOC has significant positive effect on employee creativity (Baas *et al.*, 2008). AOC encourages the workers' creative thinking and pushes them to discuss potential change in practices and approaches to work (Park *et al.*, 2018). In a recent study conducted by Yuan and Ma (2022), affective commitment was found to increase innovative behavior among employees.

Although several theoretical studies have examined different kinds of positive attitudes as determinants of IWB, this study goes a step beyond and investigates broader attitudinal construct, such as HAW as a predictor of IWB. In line with the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. HAW is positively related to IWB.

Hybrid work as moderator between happiness at work and innovative work behavior. The hybrid work model has become a revolutionary approach to workplace arrangements as it provides flexibility that encourages employee well-being and creativity. Research suggests that hybrid work can greatly increase employees' HAW by giving them the freedom and flexibility to manage their personal and professional lives (Hibob, 2021; Forbes, 2022). This happiness, in turn, leads to the achievement of other crucial outcomes such as the employee turnover and IWB (Lenka, 2021).

Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model as a theoretical lens, hybrid work may be understood as a job resource that not only mitigates certain job demands (e.g. commuting stress, rigid schedules) but also fosters employee motivation. Under the JD-R framework, job resources such as autonomy, flexibility and supportive work environment help offset job demands and promote engagement, job satisfaction and proactive behaviors like IWB

(Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Within this framework, HAW functions as a personal resource – a motivational force that boosts employees' capacity to undertake innovative tasks, provided the favorable environmental conditions are present.

While hybrid work environment encourages creativity by allowing more focused, access to diverse perspectives and decreased interruptions within work (Theurer *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2021), it also comes with certain hurdles such as isolation and blurred boundaries between work and life (Hilberath *et al.*, 2020; Biron *et al.*, 2023). Thus, hybrid work can be effective only when it is properly designed and managed. When executed effectively, hybrid work enhances employee well-being and also strengthens the effect of HAW on generating creative and innovative outputs (Cook *et al.*, 2020; Al-Madadha *et al.*, 2022; Naqshbandi *et al.*, 2024).

In line with the JD-R model, hybrid work may act as a potential moderator by influencing the conditions that allow workplace happiness to foster innovation. When hybrid work is effectively used as a job resource, it enhances how HAW drives IWB by creating an environment conducive to exploration, collaboration and implementation of novel ideas.

H2. Hybrid Work moderates the relationship between HAW and IWB.

Methodology

Sample and target population

The target population for this research was faculty of the higher educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, India. As the study constructs are inherently personal and subjective, individual academic employee was chosen as unit of analysis. There are a total number of 362 higher educational institutions which includes 209 private colleges, 141 government colleges and 12 universities. Data were collected from 25 educational institutions proportionately based on their relative size in the overall population. Consequently, 14 private colleges, 10 government colleges and one university were chosen by employing systematic random sampling. After deciding the sampling frame, the next step was to fix the sample size. As the population size of this study was large, Cochran (1963) sample size estimate was used. Based on this estimate, the sample size of 240 was found to be sufficient. Although the faculty were asked to fill questionnaires, only 250 responded out of 350 and the response rate stands at about 71.4%. Systematic Random Sampling technique was applied to collect the data where elements are chosen from a target population with equal intervals starting from random point from each college and a university under study.

Measurement

In the present study, IWB was measured by using the scale developed by Janssen (2000). The scale consists of nine items and was used due to its high reliability and validity. Furthermore, this scale has been used in different cultures and contexts enhancing confidence in its appropriateness for the present study (see, for example, Dincer and Orhan, 2012; Al-Omari, 2017; Akram *et al.*, 2018).

For measuring HAW, the shortened version of HAW (SHAW) scale was used. This scale, developed by Salas-Vallina and Alegre (2021) comprises of nine items. It was found to be appropriate for the study as it fits well with the operationalization of the study as well as due to its high reliability and validity (see, for example, de Waal, 2018; Salas-Vallina and Alegre, 2018; Salas-Vallina, 2020).

Hybrid work was measured by using the seven-item measurement scale developed by Odabashi (2024). This scale assesses key dimensions such as flexibility in working hours,

productivity based on number of hours worked, the efficiency of communicating and collaborating, the adequacy of technology and tools provided and work–life balance. As a relatively new and standardized scale, it offers greater distinction and precision in respondents' feedback. Given its high reliability, the scale was considered appropriate for the current study.

A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 denoting “Strongly Disagree” to 5 denoting “Strongly Agree” was used for all the constructs of the present study.

Data analysis. The data underwent analysis through partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was chosen as it efficiently handles complex models with moderating effects (Hair *et al.*, 2021a). It consists of two models: the measurement model and the structural model. Furthermore, literature suggests two different ways to measure unobserved latent constructs as reflective measurement model and formative measurement model. In this study, the authors used disjoint two-stage approach for testing reflective–formative model. For testing the moderating effect of hybrid work, product indicator approach was used as prior research has shown its efficiency in producing more robust results (Henseler and Fassott, 2010).

Common method bias

Harman's one factor (or single-factor) test was used using SPSS for addressing common method bias, which involves performing a factor analysis with the number of factors limited to one and no rotation method used. Data is considered to be affected by common method variance if a single factor appears with more than 50% of the explained variation. As depicted in Table 1, the findings revealed that the first factor explained 43.40% of the variation, which is below the threshold for total variance.

Validating the reflective measurement model

The association between constructs and their respective indicators was evaluated using a measurement model as depicted in Figure 1. The measurement model requires the scale to demonstrate robust reliability and validity. In validating reflective constructs four crucial aspects must be considered: the reliability of individual indicators, the internal consistency of latent variables, the convergent validity of the constructs and the discriminant validity of the latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2021a).

The reliability of the scales used in this study meets the established minimum requirement by Nunnally (1978): all constructs in the model surpass the criteria with composite reliability exceeding 0.7 and Cronbach's alpha surpassing 0.60 (Table 2). Convergent validity was also assessed using average variance extracted (AVE) and the AVE values for all variables exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Table 2). In addition, all items demonstrated robust factor loadings surpassing the designated threshold of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria and heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio. It is the degree to which a construct is clearly different

Table 1. Harman's one factor test

Factor	Total	Initial eigenvalues		Extraction sums of squared loadings		
		% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	10.851	43.404	43.404	10.851	43.404	43.404

Note(s): Extraction method: principal component analysis

Source(s): Authors' own work

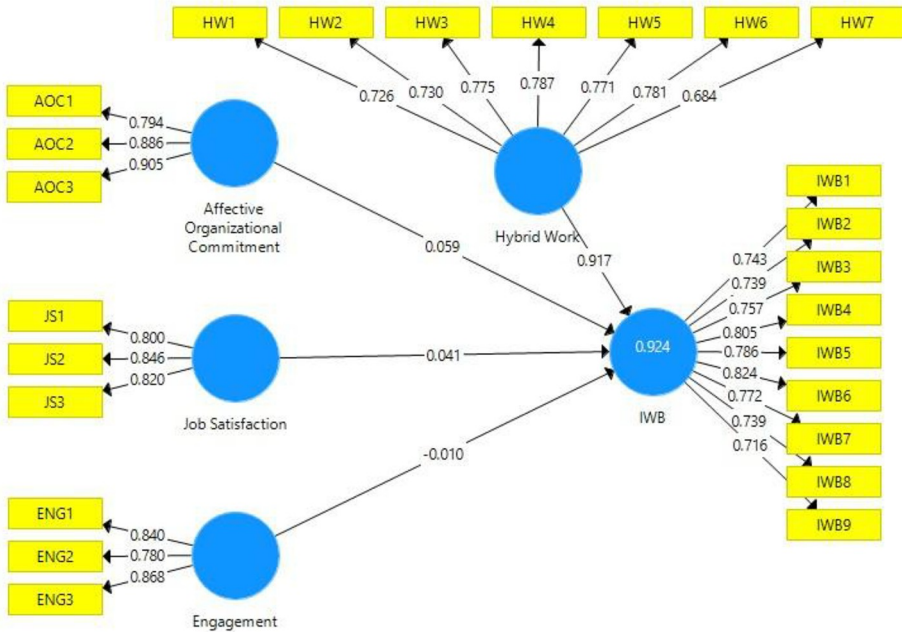


Figure 1. Reflective measurement model
Source: Authors' own work

from other constructs based on empirical evidence. Using Fornell–Larcker criteria, the present study established discriminant validity as the square-roots of AVE values for constructs were greater than the correlations between the constructs (see Table 3). The HTMT ratio is the ratio of average correlations among indicators across constructs to the average correlations among indicators within the same construct. It was revealed that the correlation among all constructs was under 0.90 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), thus confirming discriminant validity (see Table 4).

Validating the formative measurement model

In the present study, HAW is formulated as higher-order formative construct consisting of three dimensions, namely, engagement, job satisfaction and AOC as depicted in Figure 2.

According to Sarstedt *et al.* (2019), two steps must be followed for validating formative measurement constructs. First is the assessment of the collinearity issues. In PLS-SEM, the level of collinearity is assessed through variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values less or equal to 5 indicate no collinearity issue (Hair *et al.*, 2021b). As all the VIF values were below 5 (Table 5), there is no collinearity issue. Next, the statistical significance and importance of outer weights needs to be examined. All outer weights were deemed significant, except for engagement, whereas, the outer loadings for each indicator comprising HAW were statistically significant (Table 5). Consequently, the higher-order construct was validated, affirming the reliability and validity of the reflective and formative measurement model.

Table 2. Factor loadings, VIF values, AVE, CR and alpha

Items	Loadings	VIF	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
<i>Innovative work behaviour</i>					
IWB1	0.743	2.670	0.586	0.927	0.911
IWB2	0.739	3.201			
IWB3	0.757	3.216			
IWB4	0.805	2.595			
IWB5	0.786	2.615			
IWB6	0.824	3.190			
IWB7	0.772	3.017			
IWB8	0.739	3.088			
IWB9	0.716	2.944			
<i>Happiness at work</i>					
ENG1	0.840	1.672	0.689	0.869	0.774
ENG2	0.780	1.461			
ENG3	0.868	1.728			
JS1	0.800	1.478	0.676	0.862	0.760
JS2	0.846	1.604			
JS3	0.820	1.546			
AOC1	0.794	1.688	0.745	0.897	0.830
AOC2	0.886	2.034			
AOC3	0.905	2.217			
<i>Hybrid work</i>					
HW1	0.726	2.006	0.564	0.900	0.871
HW2	0.730	2.402			
HW3	0.775	2.369			
HW4	0.787	1.948			
HW5	0.771	2.112			
HW6	0.781	2.410			
HW7	0.684	1.671			

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 3. Discriminant validity assessment by Fornell–Larcker criteria AVE > r

	AOC	ENG	HW	IWB	JS
AOC	0.863				
ENG	0.421	0.830			
HW	0.441	0.396	0.958		
IWB	0.485	0.398	0.751	0.765	
JS	0.642	0.506	0.472	0.507	0.822

Note(s): Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE, whereas the other entries represent the squared correlation

Source(s): Authors' own work

Structural model assessment

The first step in structural model assessment involves examining multicollinearity using VIF. The VIF values were below the threshold value of 5 (Hair *et al.*, 2021b), signifying the absence of multicollinearity concerns. Following this, the study evaluates the hypotheses to determine the significance level using 5,000 bootstrap samples at a 95%

Table 4. Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations HTMT ratio < 0.90

	AOC	ENG	HW	IWB	JS
AOC					
ENG	0.521				
HW	0.506	0.484			
IWB	0.547	0.470	0.891		
JS	0.811	0.660	0.580	0.609	

Source(s): Authors' own work

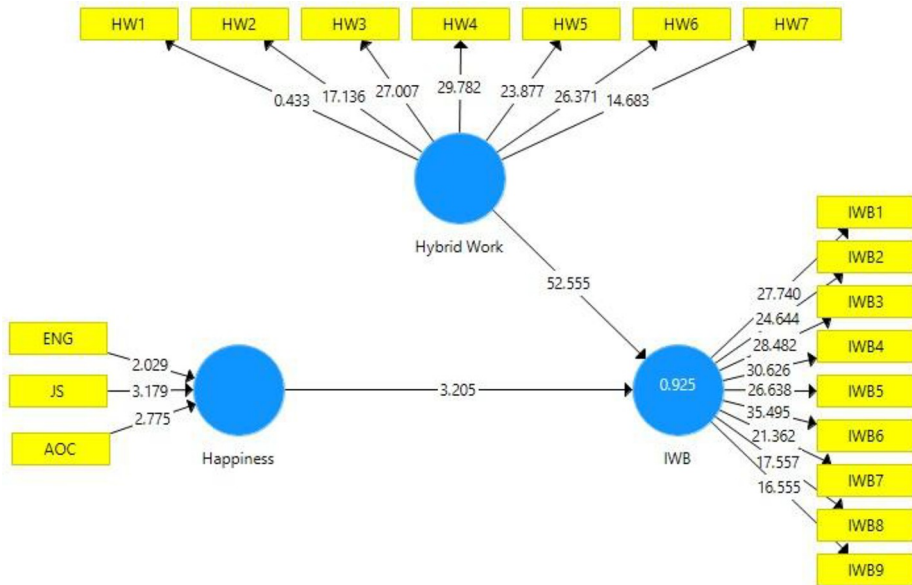


Figure 2. Formative measurement model

Source: Authors' own work

Table 5. Indicator weights of higher-order formative construct

HOC	LOC's	Outer weights	t-statistics	p-values	Outer loadings	VIF
HAW	Engagement	0.279	2.029	0.043	0.704	1.374
	Job satisfaction	0.474	3.179	0.001	0.001	1.923
	Affective organizational commitment	0.440	2.775	0.006	0.861	1.738

Note(s): ***HOC = Higher-order construct, LOC = Lower-order constructs

Source(s): Authors' own work

confidence interval. The results are highlighted in Figure 3 and Table 6. Table 6 indicates that all the hypotheses were accepted. *H1* was related to the association of HAW and IWB. *H2* was related to assessing the moderating role of hybrid work between HAW and IWB.

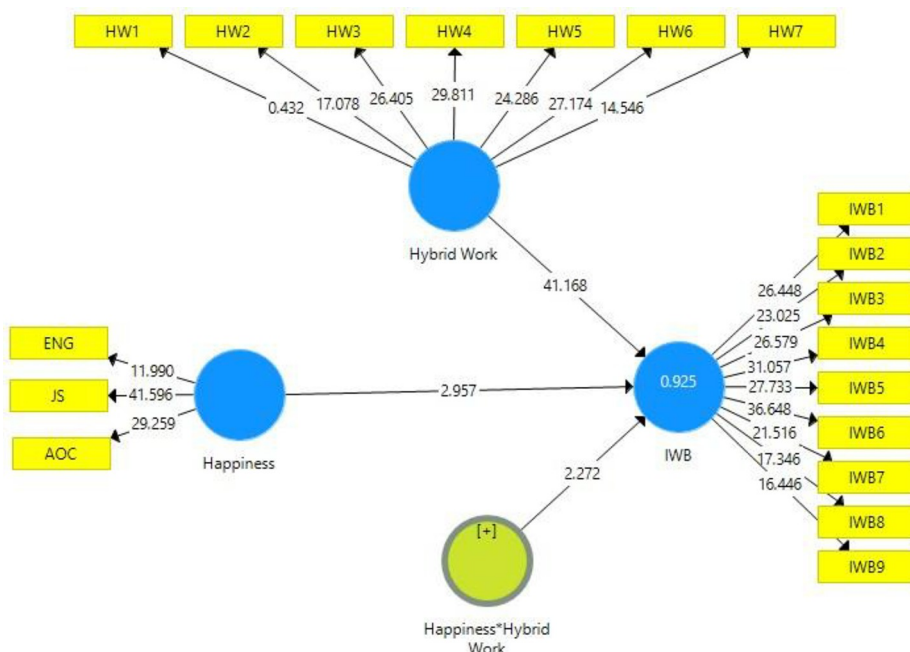


Figure 3. Structural model
Source: Authors' own work

Table 6. Path coefficients

Hypotheses	Original sample (β)	STDEV	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>p</i> -values	Decision
HAW \rightarrow IWB	0.072	0.024	2.940	0.003	Supported
HAW*HW \rightarrow IWB	0.034	0.015	2.260	0.024	Supported

Source(s): Authors' own work

For *H1*, bootstrapping results revealed that there is a positive and significant impact of HAW on IWB ($\beta = 0.565$, $p = 0.003$) as shown in Table 6 and Figure 3. Next, explanatory power of the model was assessed. R^2 value for IWB was found as 0.925 which is over 0.1 (Falk and Miller, 1992). Regarding *H2*, results revealed a significant moderating effect of hybrid work between HAW and IWB ($\beta = 0.034$, $p = 0.024$) as shown in Table 6 and Figure 3. The assessment of predictive relevance was assessed through the Q^2 value with the endogenous construct yielding a Q^2 value of 0.528 thus establishing predictive relevance.

Discussion

The current study examined the impact of HAW on IWB and also assessed the moderating role of hybrid work on the relationship between HAW and IWB among academics in higher education. Previous literature has highlighted the empirical relationship of different attitudinal variables and IWB (see, for example, Niu, 2014; Pukkeeree et al., 2020; Yuan and Ma, 2022).

This study considered broader vision of positive attitudes and found a significant positive relationship between HAW and IWB. These results are in line with the previous studies (see, for example, [Mustafa et al., 2021](#); [Contreras et al., 2022](#); [Torlak et al., 2023](#)). Fisher (2010) defines HAW as a combination of engagement, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, which together form a set of positive attitudes that shape behavior. This view is also consistent with the results of the study because the interrelated dimensions of HAW contribute to the creation of environment for innovative behavior among academics. In sum, the findings support HAW conceptual definition and underscore the necessity of a comprehensive approach to positive attitude to predict and enhance IWB.

Hybrid work moderated the relationship between HAW and IWB. Flexibility and autonomy provided by hybrid work promotes the balance between personal and professional life and therefore increases the satisfaction of workers ([Hibob, 2021](#); [Forbes, 2022](#)). This happiness in return enhances completion and the creation of ideas required in innovation ([Naqshbandi et al., 2024](#)). Also, it provides continuous time for creative thinking ([Theurer et al., 2018](#); [Thi Minh Ly et al., 2023](#)). However, addressing different problems mentioned earlier as its drawbacks, such as isolation or a lack of distinction between work and personal life is necessary for it to work ([Vyas, 2022](#); [Biron et al., 2023](#)). It is imperative that organizations create plans for enabling the benefits of flexibility within workforce to prevail in that structure and guarantee that flexibility works efficiently as a work utility instead of a demand ([Knight, 2024](#)). When such details are, however, resolved, the hybrid work act as a tool that can enhance employees' happiness and creativity ([Cook et al., 2020](#); [Hilberath et al., 2020](#)).

Theoretical contribution

This study advances the HAW and IWB literature. First, HAW has been found to have a positive and significant effect on IWB. Thus, the current study extends the idea that employees who are happy at workplace are likely to show more engagement, satisfaction and commitment with their roles that lead the way to IWB. The study argues that organizations should improve HAW through using approaches such as providing professional development opportunities, recognizing and rewarding employees, encouraging work–life balance and developing a supportive company culture to foster IWB. Notably, this study contributes to the scant literature by exploring higher-attitudinal construct of HAW as a predictor of IWB. Second, this study examines the higher education context, where a scarcity of research exists on the role of employees' attitudes as predictors of IWB. Third, a notable contribution of the current study is the provision of new empirical evidence for the HAW and IWB scales within the context of higher education in India.

In addition, the study adds to the body of knowledge on workplace innovation and employee happiness by emphasizing the moderating role of hybrid work in promoting IWB. It advances the knowledge of how hybrid work can be a contextual factor that affects the relationship between happiness and IWB. The current study focuses on flexible work environments as important innovation enablers rather than individual or structural factors.

In addition, the study builds on the JD-R theory by showing how hybrid work acts as a job resource contributing to enhancement of such positive psychological state like happiness that is essential for developing an innovation culture ([Theurer et al., 2018](#); [Biron et al., 2023](#)). This research, therefore, enriches the understanding of innovation in the current workplaces by introducing hybrid work into the happiness–IWB framework.

Managerial implications

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the integration of e-applications and information technology in education have underscored the importance of IWB, especially in

higher education system which has been affected significantly. The findings of this study revealed that the happiness levels of the faculty members significantly affect the IWB. Hence, it is argued that higher educational leaders need to induce and sustain HAW among academics for raising the level of IWB at workplace. To achieve this, measures that can be adopted include staff support by training, development and motivational strategies that increase engagement. Managers must also ensure that all the HRM policies are adopted in line with the changes taking place within an organization to increase the degree of satisfaction among employees. The use of High-Commitment Work Systems can positively influence academics' psychological commitment and organizational identification, which will improve their ties with the institution. Also, guaranteeing that men and women should have work-life balance by encouraging the supportive organizational environment will enable academics to recover, develop positive feelings, which in return will enhance higher levels of HAW and IWB among academics.

Furthermore, the present study revealed that hybrid work significantly moderates the relationship between HAW and IWB. The present study offers practical implications for managers intending to improve IWB by increasing employee happiness in a hybrid work setting. First, it is important for the managers to understand the significance of hybrid work models in nurturing creativity. Work environments can be created in organizations that encourage creativity and enhance job satisfaction since organizations can allow employees to decide how they balance work from home and work from the office (Hibob, 2021; Vyas, 2022). Besides from satisfying the specific needs of the staff, it also creates the flexibility that supports creativity and problem-solving. Second, organizations require significant investments towards the infrastructure and resources within which effective hybrid work is delivered. This means providing essential digital tools that allow workers, especially the new ones, get prepared for a flexible working environment, as well as ensuring that proper communication is enhanced and that the workers are trained adequately. Such initiatives are crucial for both the employee satisfaction and the innovative productivity (Biron *et al.*, 2023; Knight, 2024). Third, the challenge managers have to face with is the dual nature of hybrid work as a stressor or an enabler that has to be monitored and addressed. This can be achieved through promoting an inclusive culture in an organization so that the contributions of all the employee are valued, irrespective of the place they work, while also setting specific objectives and carrying out regular follow up (Forbes, 2022; Cook *et al.*, 2020). Possible negative effects thus can be minimized to an extent of ensuring that engagement levels remain high and creativity remains high as well if issues such as isolation or hazy boundaries are addressed. Finally, it is possible to enhance the effectiveness of hybrid work strategies using such additional factors as general organizational objective. Managers should align the innovation-based targets with work arrangements such as hybrid work framework using the approach of using the level of employee happiness as the key performance indicator. Besides promoting work-life balance, this integration will ensure organizational effectiveness through innovation.

Limitations and future research directions

The present study has several limitations which provides directions for future research. First, the cross-sectional study approach used in this study limits causal relationships between HAW, hybrid work and IWB. Longitudinal research is needed to understand the time aspects of these interactions more comprehensively. Second, owing to the use of self-administered questionnaires, some method variance might exist in the study as participants might provide responses based on their current emotional states or perceiving responses that are socially acceptable. Future studies may address this limitation by using different sources of data such

as peer or supervisory ratings of IWB. Third, the study is focused on a specific sector or region to which the results of the analysis cannot be applied to other industries or may not be relevant for other cultures as well. Consequently, hybrid work practices and their consequences may vary depending on the organization and cultural characteristics. Comparative studies from other industries and geographical locations would enhance the generality of the results. Fourth, the present study does not consider the impact of individual differences that could moderate the relationship between hybrid work, happiness and IWB including personality traits or work values. Future research could give more detailed insights regarding the impact of hybrid work on different employee groups by including such variables. Finally, the rapid evolution of hybrid work due to post COVID organizational changes and advent of new technologies is emphasizing the need for further research. Future research should examine the long-term effects of hybrid work as it continues to evolve.

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Further reading

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