Effect of hybrid working on employee engagement

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Abstract

Purpose: During the COVID-19 pandemic, partial homeworking or hybrid working gained popularity among employees and employers across the world. Since then, many organisations continue to implement hybrid working as a high performing work practice (HPWP) to improve employee performance. This study explores the effects of hybrid working on employee work engagement on the scale of the level of energy, work involvement, concentration, and enthusiasm. This study also investigated the factors that influence employee engagement in hybrid work.

Research methodology: Using a cross-sectional study design with snowballing sampling technique, interview data of twenty nine IT employees were collected. Interview data were analysed thematically using NVivo software.

Results: The qualitative analysis of interview data reveals that despite some factors of homeworking that affect work engagement negatively, hybrid working has potentials to improve work engagement through increasing their work and family life balance and reducing commuting exhaustion.

Conclusions: Hybrid working can enhance employee engagement by reducing commuting stress and supporting better work-life balance, particularly in terms of energy and flexibility. However, challenges such as communication barriers and work-family conflicts especially among female employees may hinder its effectiveness. With adequate organizational support and clear structure, hybrid working can serve as a strategic approach to boosting employee engagement.

Limitations: Qualitative analysis of only twenty six sample of only one organization is not sufficient for generalizing. A quantitative analysis using data of broader sample may provide a result generalizable to other types of organizations or regions.

Contribution: This study contributes to the understanding of factors that influence employee work engagement by emphasizing the benefits of hybrid working to improve employee engagement, an important facilitator of higher performance.

Novelty: This research made a comparison between homeworking, onsite working and hybrid working, and explored the factors of different work arrangement that influence employee engagement, an area that has not received enough attention in the existing literature.

Keywords: *Commuting Exhaustion, High Performance Work Practices, Homeworking, Hybrid Working, Work Engagement, Work-Life Balance*

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1. Introduction

Studies have identified that employee engagement is associated with shareholder returns, operating income, profitability, productivity, creativity and innovative behavior, customer satisfaction,

organizational and financial accomplishment, lower absenteeism and shrinkage, more in-role and extra-role behavior, and higher organizational commitment (Joo, Zigarmi, Nimon, & Shuck, 2017; Turner, 2020). Therefore, the main focus of human resources management (HRM) practices remains engaging employees with their work for organizational growth. Work flexibility in terms of employees' opportunity to select time and location is one such HRM practice that has been in use since the last few decades. Sung and Ashton (2005) listed flexible working (e.g., opportunity to select time and locations, sharing job, etc.) as one of the high performance work practices (HPWPs) categorized as reward and commitment practices that "facilitate a greater sense of belonging and commitment to the organization" (Sung & Ashton, 2005).

Organizations started practicing work flexibility in the form of homeworking, partial homeworking, or hybrid working decades before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020). Before the pandemic, flexible working opportunities were mainly offered in the IT sector (Radonić, Vukmirović, & Milosavljević, 2021). During the full lockdown period of the pandemic in many organizations, employees had to work remotely from home for health safety reasons (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020). Later, when the full lockdown was lifted off, many organizations shifted to hybrid working to reduce the number of employees at the workplace. Before the outbreak of corona virus at the end of 2019, a survey conducted by LinkedIn indicated that working from home has become an attractive concept for both employers and employees, as it entails many advantages, including better work-life balance, enhanced productivity, and lower costs for buildings and infrastructure (Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, & Casuneanu, 2020). This indication was reinforced during the pandemic, when working from home became a viable solution, with some evidence of increased employee productivity leading to a normal work pattern after the pandemic (Davidescu et al., 2020). However, during the pandemic, remote or homeworking was mandatorily imposed by the respective governments where employees' choices, abilities, and nature of job were not considered (Wang, Liu, Qian, & Parker, 2021).

In a 2021 survey, 50% of employees across the European Union, 50% of the US, and 80% of Canadian employees expressed their desire to work on a hybrid basis (Felstead, 2022). In addition, some employers noticed improved productivity as well as organizational development as a result of implementing hybrid working (Davidescu et al., 2020). Although some studies have emphasized the benefits of homeworking or remote working, how hybrid working affects employees' work engagement is still not known. An earlier study by Ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, Hetland, and Keulemans (2012) focused on the effects of new ways of working, a flexible work design, on work engagement. It is possible that hybrid work may either positively or negatively affect employee engagement or may have both positive and negative effects, as hybrid working also combines homeworking and onsite working. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether hybrid working positively or negatively affects employee engagement. This study also aims to identify the factors that influence work engagement in hybrid working. A contribution of this research to the existing literature is that it provides empirical evidence of the effects of hybrid working imposed by the government or the employer on employee engagement. In addition, this study draws attention to the factors that influence work engagement in hybrid work.

The following part of this paper begins with discussions on the literature on work engagement and hybrid working, including partial and full homeworking. The next section provides details of the research strategy, ethics, research instrument, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Following this, the findings of the study are presented. The final section concludes with highlighting limitations of the study, theoretical implications, and future research directions following a brief discussion on the results of the research.

2. Literature review
2.1. Definition of Hybrid Working
Although hybrid working is gaining popularity across the world, among both employees and employers, the literature on it remains limited. Existing literature tends to suggest that hybrid working is a flexible work arrangement that offers opportunities to work both from home and onsite (Davidescu et al., 2020); thus, people can work from multiple locations (Halford, 2005). The IT sector has vastly used flexible working arrangements even prior to the pandemic, as they have advanced their capabilities in using

technology (Milasi, González-Vázquez, & Fernández-Macías, 2021). Digital communication technologies such as e-mail, smartphones, and distributed meeting software have facilitated remote communication with colleagues, supervisors, or clients (Petani & Mengis, 2023; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). In hybrid work arrangements, employees are allowed to work in different locations, but on a regular basis, they have to work onsite (Felstead, 2022). Building on Halford (2005), Davidescu et al. (2020), and Felstead (2022), hybrid working can be defined as a work arrangement in which employees can work at least one day of a week remotely from home with the support of an electronic communication system.

2.2. Definition of Engagement

Many scholars have contributed to conceptualizing and exploring the effects of employee engagement; however, there is still no unanimous definition or method to measure engagement (Turner, 2020). Even though the conceptualization of engagement can be traced back to Kahn (1990), it has become a very popular term among HR practitioners and researchers over the past two decades (Hameduddin & Lee, 2021; Hamilton Skurak, Malinen, Näswall, & Kuntz, 2021; Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022) since organizations have started to understand the value of employee engagement for business outcomes including growth in performance, innovation, and productivity (A. B. Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Kahn (1990) defined engagement as a person's preferred state of mind that simultaneously creates a physical, mental, and emotional connection to work (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). Later, Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) defined engagement as a distinctive concept opposite to burnout, and as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." The definition includes three main components of engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to working full of energy; dedication refers to the state of deep involvement in work with a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration; and absorption refers to the state of being fully captivated and concentrated in work that makes it difficult to move away from work undertaken (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In short, employee engagement refers to enthusiastic involvement in work by being fully immersed in high levels of energy (A. Bakker, 2017; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012) leadtvoluntarilygetg to the extra mile (Kang & Sung, 2017). The conceptualization and operationalization provided by Schaufeli et al. (2002) using the UWES Utrecht Work Engagement Scale of employee engagement is aligned with the best research on engagement and leads to effective decision making, even though this approach is characterized as a narrow concept (Christian et al., 2011; CIPD, 2024; Shuck, 2011). Therefore, building on Schaufeli et al. (2002), in this study, employees' work engagement has been measured via markers of their level of energy, involvement, concentration, and enthusiasm.

2.3. Findings of Existing Research

A few studies have investigated the relationship between flexible working and employee engagement (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012); (Gerards, De Grip, & Baudewijns, 2018). A Dutch study indicated a link between work flexibility, a new way of working (NWW), and employee engagement. The NWW that studied is characterized as having autonomy to choose time and place of work (multi-located) and having facility of electronic communication. Based on their study findings, Ten Brummelhuis et al. (2012) suggest that the new way of working has the potentials to enhance employee's daily work engagement reducing their work related exhaustion provided that there is effective connectivity and efficient communication among colleagues. In addition, in a Dutch study, Peters, Poutsma, Van der Heijden, Bakker, and Bruijn (2014) found that working remotely from home has the potential to foster work engagement by increasing employees' job autonomy. Unlike Ten Brummelhuis et al. (2012); Peters et al. (2014); Gerards et al. (2018) reveal that location-independent work and work flexibility do not affect work engagement positively.

In the context of the pandemic, Palumbo (2020) investigated the effects of working remotely from home on the work-life balance of public sector employees in 27 European countries and found that homeworking positively and significantly affects work engagement, although some home-based employees are more prone to experience both work-life conflicts and higher levels of fatigue. This result is supported by the study findings of Ten Brummelhuis et al. (2012), who note that only singles enjoy the benefit of working from home and flexible work schedules by getting relief from work-family

conflicts. Palumbo (2020) concluded that the perception of organizational support and flexible working arrangements boosted remote workers' engagement.

Study results of Kniffin et al. (2021) demonstrated that employees who can accomplish complex tasks without coworker support are more productive when working from home. In contrast, a UK-based survey during the pandemic identified less interaction with colleagues and ineffective communication as the biggest disadvantages of working from home (Cartmill, 2020). Despite having some drawbacks, employees enjoy working at home (Felstead, 2022), have the opportunity to save time that enables them to spend more time with their families and to maintain family responsibilities (Lapierre, Van Steenbergen, Peeters, & Kluwer, 2016), and help them to avoid stressful commutes to the workplace that reduce the energy for work (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

Although there is growing interest in hybrid working, only a few studies have investigated the effects of partial homeworking or hybrid working on employees and their work performance. Halford (2005) and Davidescu et al. (2020), Petani and Mengis (2023); Radonić et al. (2021). For instance, the study findings of Radonić et al. (2021) suggest that for employees, hybrid working provides more flexibility in work and opportunities to balance work-life. (Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022) also identified that although working from home is challenging for maintaining work and family obligations, this arrangement helps maintain positive relationships with family.

In light of the available literature, this study attempted to examine the influence of hybrid working compared to on-site or homeworking on employee engagement and add empirical evidence to the existing literature. This study was conducted on public sector employees, as there is little information about public sector employee engagement in hybrid working. According to Hameduddin and Lee (2021), public organizations function in a distinct setting, provide services to numerous constituents, and look for multiple sources of legitimacy. Research suggests that public sector employees are driven by a special sense of public duty and selfless intentions (Hameduddin & Lee, 2021), and public employees are strongly motivated by the mission of their organization (OECD, 2021). Hence, the research questions that this study addresses are as follows:
1. In what ways does hybrid working affect employee engagement?
2. What factors influence employee engagement in hybrid work?

3. Methodology
This paper is part of larger research conducted to complete my dissertation between July and September 2022, which also explored the effects of hybrid work arrangements on employees' well-being and gendered differences in experience. To complete this study, a cross-sectional research design with qualitative analysis was selected. Data were collected by interviewing 29 employees working in an IT department in a public sector organization in Bangladesh. To interview the target sample, a semi-structured interview schedule was used. The interview schedule was structured by incorporating questions related to employees' work experience, work engagement, and some demographic information. The measurement of work engagement was based on (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Using the snowball sampling technique, the target sample, who were allowed to work from home at least one day of a week, was selected for interview. After obtaining approval from the ethics committee for the study, the target sample was sent an email request to participate in an interview. Of the 50 contacted employees, 29 responded to participate in the interview. Therefore, the response rate was 58%. In total, 29 interviews were conducted on the Zoom platform from July to September 2022. Prior to starting the actual interviews, a pilot interview was conducted.

Three interviews from a total of 29 interviews were excluded as they reported that they no longer worked in a hybrid arrangement, resulting in a data set of 26 employees. Among the 26 employees, 13 were women and 13 were men; 23 were married and 14 had children. The employees reported that in the later period of the pandemic, when full locked-down was lifted off, they started working on an average of two days a week from home. Notably, working from home was relatively new in Bangladesh; therefore, none of the participants had previously experienced working from home prior to the COVID-

19 pandemic. At the beginning of the interview, the participants were asked to describe their work experience in a hybrid work arrangement. They were also asked questions regarding the impact on their personal life, mental and physical health, work effectiveness, commuting, communication, involvement, enthusiasm, level of energy, and ability to concentrate at work while working in this arrangement. On average, each interview took 12–15 minutes to complete.

Each interview audio was recorded and then transcribed. Each data file was anonymized to maintain confidentiality and data security. The transcripts were then incorporated into NVivo software and coding was conducted line by line. Following previous recommendations of D O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) for coding qualitative data, both priori codes derived from literature and posteriori codes drawn inductively from the collected data have been developed. Important sentences, paragraphs, or words used by the participants were then annotated while coding all 26 interviews. Similar codes were then grouped based on the frequency of recurrence, and the codes were hierarchically arranged. After hierarchical arrangement of codes, a thematic analysis was then conducted adopting an inductive approach as recommended by D O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) identifying links between different the codes.

4. Result and discussion
4.1. Result
This section presents the findings of the thematic analysis of the interview data in line with the objectives of this study. Two major themes identified from this study are discussed below.

Theme 1: Effect on Work Engagement
In this study, work engagement was measured in terms of the level of concentration, energy, involvement, and enthusiasm. The above theme was generated from the questions: Can you please describe your level of energy while working hybrid? How much involvement do you feel in your work? How do you feel about your concentration level? Could you please tell you about your level of enthusiasm while working in a hybrid arrangement? The responses of the participants are summarized below and presented in figure 1.

Higher Level of Energy
Most of the participants (15 out of 26) mentioned that they felt a higher level of energy when they worked from home. This is because they do not need to commute to the workplace, and commuting is considered exhausting due to heavy traffic and pollution. For example, one respondent (M-4) mentioned, 'Working from home is a bit different from working onsite. During homeworking, the disturbance of the outside does not affect me, as I do not need to travel to the office. That's why I find higher energy in this arrangement.' Therefore, working from home enables employees to begin working full of energy.

No Effect on Involvement
54% of the participants (14 out of 26) did not experience any differences in involvement with work in hybrid work arrangements, although eight out of 26 participants mentioned that they found themselves highly involved when they worked in the office space. One participant (M-17) shared, 'Although the home environment is different, I do not think it affects my performance. I feel the same level of involvement when I work from home.' One participant (F-28) explained the reason for higher involvement in the workplace: 'In the office, involvement is more and even stronger compared to working from home because a virtual environment does not give that feeling of involvement.'

Low Concentration at Home
Most of the participants (12 out of 26) mentioned that they could concentrate more on their work in the workplace compared to working from home, while seven out of 26 respondents mentioned that they could concentrate equally at home and in the workplace. The reason for low concentration at home is explained by one respondent (M-17): 'At home, sometimes concentration breaks when I find my family members around me.' Another employee (M-11) shared: 'Sometimes concentration breaks because I do not have an office setup at home.' The reason for lower concentration is explained by a female

participant (F-6): 'I have two children. Whenever I work onsite, I can concentrate completely. However, whenever I work at home, my kids roam around me. That's why my concentration shifts to them.'

Low Enthusiasm at Home
The response to the question about the level of enthusiasm in hybrid work arrangements is mixed. Nine out of 26 participants mentioned that they felt more enthusiastic about work when they were onsite, whereas eight participants found no effect on enthusiasm whether they worked at home or onsite, seven participants found higher enthusiasm both at home and onsite, and only two participants found a higher level of enthusiasm working at home. The reason for low enthusiasm in homeworking is probably the lack of effective interaction with coworkers, which also works as refreshment for employees (respondent M-7), and the difference between home and workplace environments (respondent F-9). On the contrary, one respondent (M-11) shared: 'As hybrid working provides the flavor of both environments, I feel enthusiastic. If I feel exhausted working at the office, working the next day from home, refreshes me.'
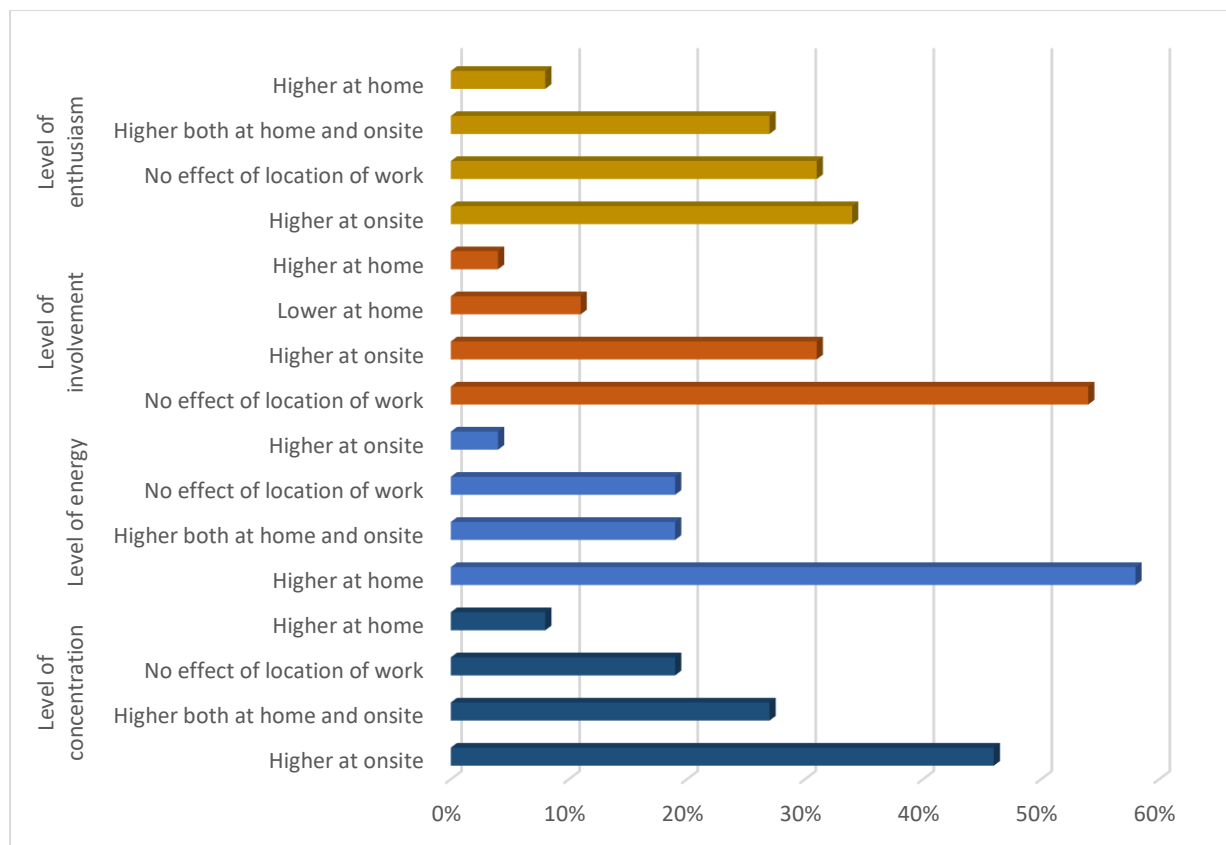

Figure 1. Measurement of Work Engagement

Theme 2: Factors Affecting Work Engagement
Ineffective communication, long working hours, detachment from the workplace, less commuting exhaustion, balanced work and family life, lower interaction with coworkers and their support, work-family conflicts, ineffective supervision, and opportunities for self-development are the aggregated sub-themes that have been derived from the codes created using NVivo. These sub-themes were created from the interviewee's response to the questions related to the overall experience of hybrid working. These factors influence work effectiveness and engagement. These sub-themes are summarized below, and the factors that negatively affect engagement are presented in Table 1.

Ineffective Communication
All 26 employees who participated in the interview stated that they used WhatsApp, Messenger, and email to interact with their colleagues and seniors when necessary. They also used Zoom and Microsoft Teams for convening meetings online. They mentioned that they used to call their colleagues, seniors,

and subordinates over phone for urgent communication. Twenty-three out of 26 participants (88%) mentioned that while communicating online, they faced connectivity loss at the time they worked from home. This is probably because at-home employees cannot arrange an Internet connection with the required bandwidth. Therefore, as work accomplishment is mostly dependent on Internet connectivity, disruptions in Internet connectivity affect work effectiveness.

Long Working Hours
Eighteen out of 26 participants (69% respondents) mentioned that when they started working online from home, their weekly working hours increased, even though no work schedule was maintained. This is reflected in the statement of one employee (F-8): 'But there is no time limit for meeting. At any point in time, the authority convenes meetings that stretch working time. Most often we attend meeting online even after office hours from home.' Employees find that, compared to working from home, during onsite work, it is easier to maintain a work schedule. After office hours, the rest is for family and personal life. However, on days of homework, they need to remain aware that seniors can assign tasks at any time.

Detachment from Workplace
Seventeen out of 26 participants (65%) mentioned that when they worked from home, they felt detached from the workplace because, like the office setup, the necessary work equipment was not available, they did not get support from colleagues, and they missed work-related social interactions. One respondent (M-27) expressed: "Though I remain connected with my colleagues online, I miss my colleagues and the office environment when I work from home."

Less Commuting Exhaustion
65% (15 out of 26) of respondents stated that in hybrid working, their weekly commuting time reduced, which helped them avoid commutation-related exhaustion (53%) due to heavy traffic (27%) or pollution (8%). One respondent (M-17) shared his experience of working in hybrid arrangements: "Mentally I feel better working from home. Due to heavy traffic, I get exhausted on the days I work onsite."

Work-family Life Balance
Half of the respondents (13 out of 26) mentioned that hybrid work arrangements enabled them to spend more time with their family than on-site working. They can use this saved time to maintain family responsibilities, including childcare responsibilities and taking care of aged persons at home (four out of 13 female respondents). Homeworking enables female employees to look after their young children and older and sick parents. One respondent (F-15) shared that she did not feel anxious about her child while working at home. Thus, this arrangement provides an opportunity for employees to balance their work and family life.

Lower Interaction with Coworkers and Their Support
Compared to onsite working, in hybrid working, there are less direct interactions with *coworkers*. 38% of the total respondents (10 out of 26) reported that in hybrid working, due to lack of opportunity to communicate directly, they cannot discuss any issues with coworkers and seek suggestions and decisions from seniors immediately when necessary. For instance, one interviewee (F-8) mentioned: "In the office, I can meet my colleagues and talk to them. We can coordinate with seniors and colleagues when we meet them in an office. The tasks that we cannot solve at home can be solved the next day onsite. The benefit of working onsite is that I can seek decisions from my seniors by consulting with them directly."

Work-family Conflicts
According to 38% of respondents (10 out of 26), it was difficult for them to evade family issues while working from home, which sometimes caused work-family conflicts. Some employees, especially female employees, had to maintain dual responsibilities simultaneously when they worked from home. While working from home, female employees have to look after their young children and also have to do household work simultaneously. Consequently, female employees cannot always fully concentrate on work during homeworking. One respondent (F-28) shared: 'Sometimes it happens. My parents live

with me. My father was not well most of the time. So, I always have worries in my mind, and sometimes I get distracted from work. This affects me when I work from home.' Another respondent (M-20) shared, "When I work from home. I cannot avoid my children around me and sometimes some family issues. So, it is difficult to separate work time and family time."

Ineffective Supervision
Seventeen respondents reported that they supervised employees who worked with them. Nine out of 17 employees (34% of respondents) found the supervision of subordinate employees ineffective while working from home. For some employees, it was difficult to supervise and monitor the activities of subordinates effectively remotely. Employees also found it difficult to supervise remotely because the nature of their work required on-site physical presence. One respondent (F-9) stated: "Sometimes I face problems. When I try to communicate with them sometimes either I do not find them connected online or they are unreachable by phone."

Opportunities for self-development
23% of the respondents (six out of twenty-six) stated that in hybrid working, they got enough time for their self-development. Hybrid working, by allowing the employees to work part of the week from home, help them to save some time that they can use for work-out or for personal development. One respondent (M-7) said, "Overall, hybrid working is a good experience. By working one or two days from home, I can save the traveling time that I can spend for my personal development. It also increases communication and bonding among colleagues."

Table 1. Factors that affect work engagement negatively

Sl. No.	Negative outcomes of working from home	References	Response in %
1	Disruptions in internet connectivity	23	88%
2	Long working hours	18	69%
3	Feeling of detachment from the workplace	17	65%
4	Less discussion and support from colleagues	10	38%
5	Work-family conflict	10	38%
6	Ineffective supervision online	9	34%

4.2. Discussion
The main aim of this study was to examine the effects of hybrid work patterns on work engagement. The findings of this study indicate that hybrid working as a flexible work arrangement combines the advantages of both onsite working and homeworking; therefore, it can be used as a motivational tool for enhancing employee engagement. In light of previous research (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012); Chung and Van der Lippe (2020), this study was conducted with the understanding that hybrid working will combine the pros and cons of both onsite and homeworking. Thus, this arrangement will minimize the cons of both onsite and homeworking and will provide a better work environment that will improve employee engagement. Previous studies have shown that hybrid working has some benefits for employees such as saving money, saving time, work-life balance, positive family relationships, less commuting exhaustion, etc., which makes it popular among employees and thus increases employees' job satisfaction (Radonić et al., 2021); (Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022); Siddika (2023). In addition, some previous studies have demonstrated that flexible working arrangements, such as homeworking, allow female workers to maintain family responsibilities (Chung and Van der Lippe (2020); Siddika (2023) and enjoy a higher level of life satisfaction (Mahmod, 2022). This study's results showed that, instead of solely homeworking or onsite working, hybrid working has the potential to improve employee work engagement. Among the four measurement criteria of work engagement, according to the interview responses, employees' concentration and enthusiasm remain higher at the workplace than at work from home. On the other hand, the energy level is higher at home, and no effect on involvement is identified by employees whether they work from home or work onsite. This study finds that compared to male employees, female employees' concentration and enthusiasm are higher on-site (presented in figure 2).
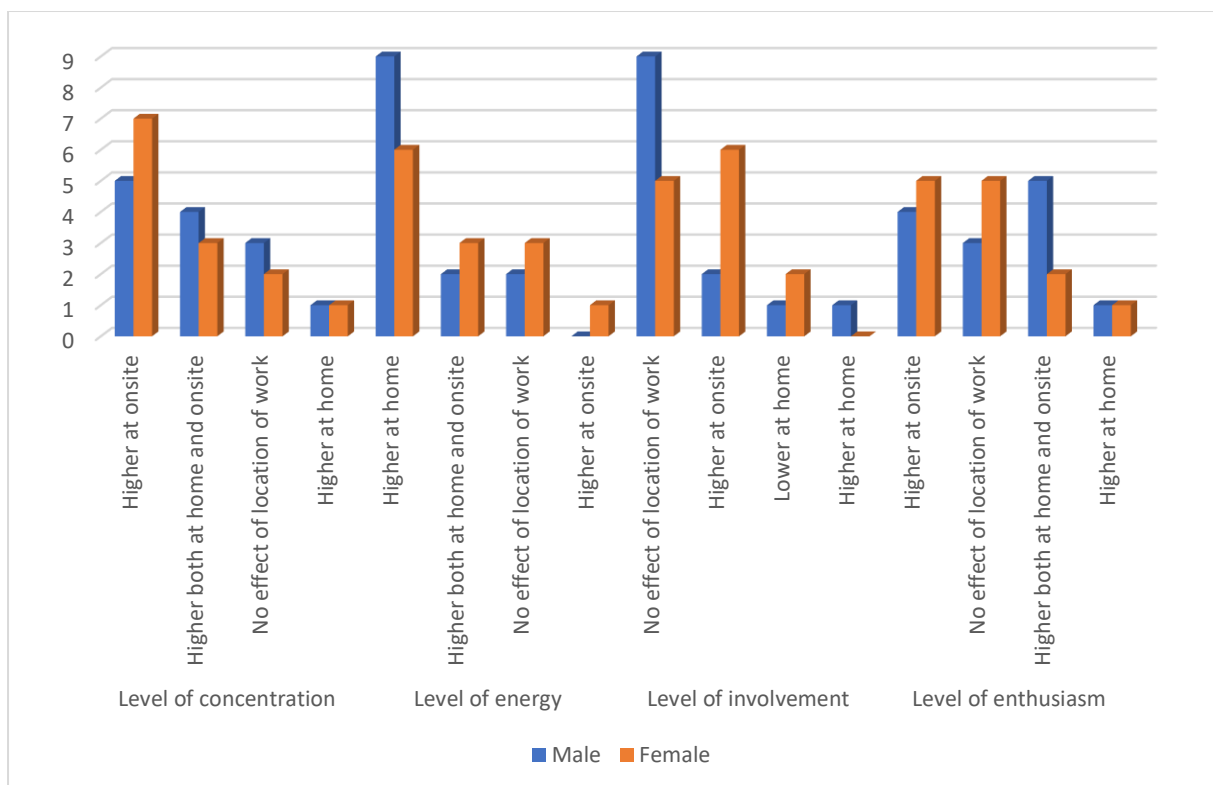
Figure 2. Effect on work engagement: Gendered difference

This study also identified some other advantages and disadvantages of hybrid working that affect employee work engagement. In hybrid working, employees experience less commuting, and thus can save time and experience low exhaustion, thereby saving energy to engage fully in work. They can also avoid daily commuting exhaustion due to heavy traffic and pollution. Hence, reduced stressful commuting positively affects employees' work engagement. This arrangement also enables employees to maintain their family responsibilities and use the saved time for self-development. These factors are motivating and can thus improve work engagement. This result is supported by a previous study by (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012), who showed that flexible working has the potential to foster work engagement. In line with the studies of Radonić et al. (2021) and (Wontorczyk & Rożnowski, 2022), this study finds that having the facility of maintaining family responsibilities and hybrid working improves employees' work-life balance.

Despite having positive motivating factors, factors such as difficulties in online communication, long working hours, detachment from the workplace, less interaction with coworkers and inability to seek their support, work-family conflicts, and difficulties in supervising remotely from home negatively affect employees' engagement (presented in Table 1). A possible reason for these negative outcomes is that during the days employees work from home, they experience connectivity loss. At home, employees cannot arrange internet connections with higher band-with, which causes ineffective communication. Earlier research by Cartmill (2020) also showed that ineffective communication with coworkers is one of the biggest disadvantages of working from home. According to (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012), effective electronic communication prevents employees from feeling isolated and exhausted, thus increasing employee engagement.

In addition, low interaction with coworkers and difficulties in seeking decisions and suggestions from seniors also prevent employees from effectively engaging in work on the days they work from home. These results indicate that some employees are more comfortable with face-to-face communication compared to remote online communication. This finding further supports the argument that the social distancing policy during the pandemic limited employees' opportunities to obtain support from colleagues (Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, most respondents mentioned that they felt detached from the

workplace where they used to obtain logistics support. Previous study of Cartmill (2020) and Mohapatra, Madan, and Srivastava (2023), and Wood et al. (2021) also showed that homeworking lower interaction with colleagues. Probably due to lack of effective interaction with coworkers and social support, and feeling of detachment, most of the participants felt lower concentration and enthusiasm at home compared to working onsite. This result is also supported by Palumbo (2020), who found that the perception of organizational support boosts employees' work engagement.

This study identified that hybrid working during this pandemic hindered employees' job autonomy. During the pandemic, hybrid working was implemented mandatorily for the purpose of social distancing, and employees had enjoyed little freedom in when and where to work. This imposed practice led them to work longer hours owing to management demands having the facility to accomplish tasks remotely from home. Similarly, earlier study of Wheatley (2012) identified longer working hours as an outcome of work from home. Employees who experience longer working hours also face work-family conflicts on the days they work from home. In the socioeconomic context of Bangladesh, female workers experience multitasking when they work from home and thus encounter work-family conflicts. As a result, women's concentration at home is lower than that of their male counterparts. Female employees feel more involved in working onsite than working from home. This is probably because female employees at home also need to concentrate on family issues simultaneously. Finally, most employees reported that they did not experience lower involvement with work, whether they work from home or work onsite. This is probably because public sector employees are guided by the mission of their institutions and are thus self-motivated.

The findings of this study indicate that hybrid work has beneficial effects for employees. Therefore, the minimization of negative factors will increase employee work engagement. Hence, organizations can use hybrid working as an effective motivational tool for increasing employee satisfaction, which is also suggested by previous study of Davidescu et al. (2020).

5. Conclusions
5.1. Conclusion
This study examined the impact of hybrid working on employee engagement, focusing on the dimensions of energy, involvement, concentration, and enthusiasm. The findings indicate that hybrid working offers a balanced alternative to full-time homeworking or onsite working by combining the advantages of reduced commuting stress and improved work-life balance. Employees reported higher energy levels while working from home, and their involvement remained consistent across work settings. However, concentration and enthusiasm were generally higher when working on-site. Despite these benefits, several challenges, such as ineffective online communication, extended working hours, reduced interaction with colleagues, and difficulties in supervising subordinates remotely, negatively influenced engagement. These issues were particularly significant among female employees because of their increased domestic responsibilities. Overall, this study concludes that hybrid working can serve as an effective strategy to enhance employee engagement and well-being, provided that its drawbacks are mitigated through appropriate organizational support, planning, and infrastructure.

5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications
This study has several notable practical implications. First, the results of this study revealed that as a high-performance work practice (HPWP), hybrid working provides an opportunity to reduce daily commuting to the workplace and commuting exhaustion. As a result, employees can start working full of energy when they work from home. This is positively related to one of the vital components of measuring work engagement. Second, the findings of this study also indicate that hybrid working has the potential to increase work engagement by improving employees' work-life balance, enabling them to maintain family responsibilities, and facilitating their well-being. Previous research on work engagement also shows that employee well-being is associated with work engagement (Hamilton Skurak et al., 2021). Third, this study's findings suggest that organizations can use hybrid working as an effective motivational strategy to upgrade work engagement and improve performance by providing a healthy work environment beneficial for the organization. Therefore, employers are advised to implement hybrid work in all possible sectors in which employees can work with higher engagement.

This is also because research finds that hybrid working has some well-being outcomes and thus increases employee satisfaction (Niebuhr, Borle, Börner-Zobel, & Voelter-Mahlknecht, 2022); (Siddika, 2023).

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study was conducted as part of my dissertation. Therefore, owing to time constraints, some limitations could not be avoided. First, as a sample of study by snowballing technique, only some of the employees of public sector organizations were chosen, which is not adequate for generalizing. Second, questions related to other factors, such as individual personal characteristics, skills, and family composition, were not included in the questionnaire for data collection. Finally, employing both quantitative and qualitative analyses would be a more viable method for measuring employees' work engagement level both at home and onsite. Further research can be conducted with diverse and extended samples considering these points to increase applicability and to generalize the findings to assist employers in optimizing the potential of hybrid working.

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