

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY IN HYBRID WORK ENVIRONMENTS

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Received : 20 September 2025

Published : 24 November 2025

Revised : 10 October 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/morfaiv5i6.4462>

Accepted : 13 November 2025

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/MORFAI/article/view/4462>

Abstract

The rapid global shift to hybrid work models has necessitated a re-examination of the well-established link between employee engagement and organizational productivity. This study investigated this relationship through a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative survey of knowledge workers with qualitative interviews. The results confirmed a strong positive correlation ($r=.65$) between engagement and productivity, with dedication being the strongest predictor. However, a critical paradox emerged: office-centric employees reported the highest engagement, while fully remote employees reported the highest productivity. Flexibly remote employees (1-2 office days) constituted a vulnerable "middle-child" group with the lowest scores in both. The discussion highlights that engagement drivers have shifted, requiring intentional connection, managerial trust, and equity of experience. We conclude that the hybrid model reconfigures, rather than severs, the engagement-productivity link, demanding strategic, rather than one-size-fits-all, management practices to navigate this new paradigm.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Hybrid Work, Organizational Productivity, Remote Work, Workforce Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

The global workforce has undergone a paradigm shift, moving decisively away from the traditional, office-centric model toward flexible hybrid work arrangements. This transition, dramatically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is now a permanent feature of the modern organizational landscape (Tigga, 2025). A hybrid work environment is defined by its flexibility, allowing employees to split their time between a central office and remote locations, typically their homes. This model promises a best-of-both-worlds scenario, aiming to blend the structure, social connection, and collaborative energy of the physical workplace with the autonomy, focus, and work-life balance benefits of remote work. As organizations worldwide make significant investments in this new structure, understanding its impact on fundamental business drivers has become a critical priority for leaders, human resource professionals, and researchers alike (F & Porwal, 2024).

At the heart of organizational success lie two interconnected concepts: employee engagement and productivity. Employee engagement refers to a state of deep psychological investment in one's work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. It is more than mere satisfaction; it is the passion and commitment that drives discretionary effort. Organizational productivity, meanwhile, measures the efficiency with which inputs like labor and capital are converted into valuable outputs (Selvaraju, 2024). In the knowledge economy, this extends beyond simple output-per-hour metrics to encompass the quality of work, innovation, and the ability to collaborate effectively on complex problems. For decades, research has consistently demonstrated a robust positive correlation between an engaged workforce and a highly productive one in traditional settings. However, the central question remains whether this well-established relationship translates directly, or is fundamentally reconfigured, within the complex and fluid context of the hybrid model (Bánáthi, 2022). While the positive correlation between employee engagement and organizational productivity is a well-documented paradigm in traditional, co-located work settings, this relationship becomes significantly more complex and less understood within the nascent structure of hybrid work environments. The foundational elements that traditionally fostered engagements such as spontaneous social

interaction, visible leadership, and a shared physical culture—are disrupted or transformed when work is split between the office and home (Vinarski Peretz & Kidron, 2023). This shift gives rise to critical, unanswered questions about the new dynamics at play. Specifically, it is unclear how to define challenges of the hybrid model, such as the perceived isolation of remote employees, the fatiguing nature of digital communication, and persistently blurred work-life boundaries, collectively impacting an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their work (Kumari et al., 2024). Furthermore, even if we can measure engagement in this new context, we must then ask: how does this potentially transformed state of engagement manifest in tangible organizational outcomes? The core problem, therefore, is an urgent need to investigate whether the traditional engagement-productivity link holds firm, or if it is reconfigured in a way that impacts critical success metrics like team cohesion, collaborative innovation, and the overall quality of output (Tawalbeh, 2025). Hence, the primary aim of this research is to systematically investigate the nature, strength, and mediating factors of the relationship between employee engagement and organizational productivity within hybrid work environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Evolution of Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement has evolved from earlier constructs like job satisfaction and organizational commitment to represent a more active, energetic, and fulfilling state of mind. Foundational theories have been instrumental in shaping this understanding (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). William Kahn's 1990 seminal work on personal engagement defined it as the harnessing of an employee's "preferred self" to their work roles, where people physically, cognitively, and emotionally express themselves during role performances. Kahn identified psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability as crucial precursors (Tawalbeh, 2025). Building on this, Wilmar Schaufeli and Arnold Bakker developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which operationalized engagement as a persistent, positive, work-related state characterized by three dimensions: vigor (high energy and mental resilience), dedication (a sense of significance and challenge), and absorption (being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work). This tripartite model has become a dominant framework for measuring engagement globally, distinguishing it from mere satisfaction by emphasizing a proactive, motivational state (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Historically, the drivers of this engagement were identified and cultivated within the context of the traditional, co-located office. Leadership was a primary driver, where transformational leaders who inspired and communicated a compelling vision could directly foster dedication among their teams. Career development opportunities, such as clear paths for advancement and skill-building, provided a sense of meaningful growth and future investment (Tawalbeh, 2025). Recognition, both formal and informal, served as a powerful reinforcement mechanism, validating effort and reinforcing an employee's sense of value to the organization. Underpinning all these factors was a strong organizational culture, the shared values, norms, and social fabric of the workplace. This culture was often transmitted and reinforced through daily, face-to-face interactions, watercooler conversations, and shared rituals, creating a sense of belonging and collective identity that was a potent, albeit often intangible, engine of engagement (Vinarski Peretz & Kidron, 2023).

Organizational Productivity in the Knowledge Economy

In the contemporary knowledge economy, the very definition of organizational productivity has undergone a significant transformation, moving far beyond the industrial-era focus on simple output-per-hour metrics that sufficed for assembly-line work. For knowledge workers—whose primary capital is their intellect and expertise, productivity is a multidimensional construct (Fernandes et al., 2019). While efficiency remains important, it is no longer the sole indicator of success. Modern productivity must also account for the quality of output, which includes accuracy, strategic impact, and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, innovation—the ability to generate novel ideas, solutions, and processes—is a critical productivity metric, as it ensures long-term organizational competitiveness and adaptation in a rapidly changing market (Palvalin, 2019).

This expanded view of productivity also recognizes the critical role of intangible factors like collaboration and employee retention. The complexity of modern problems often requires cross-functional teamwork; therefore, the speed and effectiveness with which teams can collaborate and integrate diverse knowledge becomes a direct measure of productive capacity (Tapasco-Alzate et al., 2022). Similarly, employee retention is now rightly viewed as a key productivity metric. The high costs associated with turnover, including recruitment, onboarding, and the loss of institutional knowledge—directly impair organizational output and continuity. Productive organization in the

21st century is not just one that produces more, but one that produces better, innovates constantly, collaborates seamlessly, and retains its valuable human capital, thereby sustaining its productive capacity over the long term.

The Established Link: Engagement and Productivity in Traditional Settings

The positive relationship between employee engagement and organizational productivity in traditional, office-based settings is one of the most robust and well-documented findings in industrial-organizational psychology and management literature (Bailey et al., 2017). Seminal studies and meta-analysis have consistently demonstrated that engaged employees are not just happier; they are significantly more effective contributors to business outcomes. For instance, foundational research from firms like Gallup has repeatedly shown that business units with higher employee engagement scores substantially outperform those with lower scores on critical metrics like profitability, productivity, and customer ratings (Masson et al., 2008). This is because engaged employees, fueled by vigor and dedication, exert greater discretionary effort, are more focused on quality, and are more likely to go the extra mile to achieve organizational goals.

Beyond direct performance metrics, the link manifests clearly in other vital operational areas. Engaged employees exhibit dramatically lower absenteeism, as they have a stronger sense of obligation and connection to their work and colleagues. They are also less likely to leave the organization, leading to lower turnover and the associated cost savings (Masson et al., 2008). Furthermore, their absorption in their work often drives a greater attention to detail and a more profound sense of ownership, which directly correlates with higher quality output and fewer errors. This established causal chain—whereby engagement leads to behaviors that directly enhance performance and reduce counterproductive costs, which formed the bedrock of human capital strategy for decades in traditional workplaces, justifying investments in leadership development, culture-building, and recognition programs as clear drivers of financial and operational success (Fernandes et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the relationship between employee engagement and productivity in hybrid work environments. A cross-sectional survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 400 knowledge workers from organizations with established hybrid work policies. The quantitative instrument utilized the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) to measure engagement, alongside scales for self-reported productivity and hybrid-specific factors like communication effectiveness and work-life balance. This approach allowed for the statistical analysis of correlations and variances across different work arrangements.

To contextualize the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of 25 employees and 15 managers, supplemented by focus group discussions. This sequential explanatory approach enabled a deeper exploration of the mechanisms underlying the statistical relationships, providing rich, narrative insights into themes such as intentional connection, managerial trust, and equity of experience. The integration of these datasets through triangulation strengthened the validity of the findings and provided a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics at play in hybrid work settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Engagement and Productivity

The quantitative analysis revealed a nuanced picture of engagement and productivity across the hybrid workforce. The mean scores for overall employee engagement, as measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), indicated a moderately engaged workforce ($M=3.8$ on a 5-point scale). However, a critical finding emerged when these scores were disaggregated by work arrangement. Office-centric hybrid employees (those in the office 3+ days a week) reported the highest mean engagement levels ($M=4.1$), followed closely by fully remote employees ($M=3.9$). The most striking discovery was the "middle-child" syndrome observed among flexibly remote employees (those in the office 1-2 days a week), who reported the lowest mean engagement ($M=3.5$). This suggests that a minimal, inconsistent office presence may insufficiently foster social connection while still imposing the logistical burdens of commuting, potentially leaving this group feeling disconnected from both remote and in-office cohorts (Kavalam & Mathew, 2025). A parallel pattern was observed in the productivity data, though with important distinctions. Self-reported productivity was highest among the fully remote group ($M=4.3$), who frequently cited fewer distractions and the ability to design a personalized deep-work environment as key reasons. In contrast, the office-centric group, while highly engaged, reported a slightly lower mean productivity score ($M=4.0$), often attributing this to the frequent interruptions and spontaneous meetings characteristic of the office environment. The

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flexibly remote group, mirroring their engagement scores, again reported the lowest perceived productivity ($M=3.7$). This indicates a potential misalignment between the drivers of engagement (strongly tied to social integration and visibility) and the drivers of individual task productivity (often tied to focused, uninterrupted time) Kavalam & Mathew, 2025). These variations highlight a fundamental tension in the hybrid model. The data suggests that the office environment primarily serves as an engine for engagement through social and collaborative capital, while the remote environment functions as a sanctuary for individual task completion (Lamovšek et al., 2025). The group caught between these two worlds—the flexibly remote—appears to reap the full benefits of neither, experiencing the lowest levels on both fronts. This finding challenges the assumption that a simple hybrid schedule is a universal solution and underscores that the relationship between location, engagement, and productivity is not linear, but is heavily influenced by the consistency and purpose of an employee's physical presence (Tapasco-Alzate et al., 2022).

The graph as shown in Figure 1 vividly illustrates the central paradox of hybrid work, revealing a clear misalignment between the drivers of employee engagement and those of individual productivity. While office-centric employees report the highest levels of engagement, likely fueled by social integration and spontaneous collaboration, they experience a slight dip in self-reported productivity, which they attribute to workplace distractions. Conversely, fully remote workers, benefiting from fewer interruptions and optimized deep-work environments, report the highest productivity, yet their engagement is marginally lower than their office-based colleagues, potentially due to feelings of isolation. Most critically, the graph exposes the vulnerability of flexibly remote employees, who are caught in the middle and report the lowest scores on both metrics, suggesting that an inconsistent, minimal office presence fails to provide sufficient social capital to boost engagement while still incurring the logistical costs that can impede focused work.

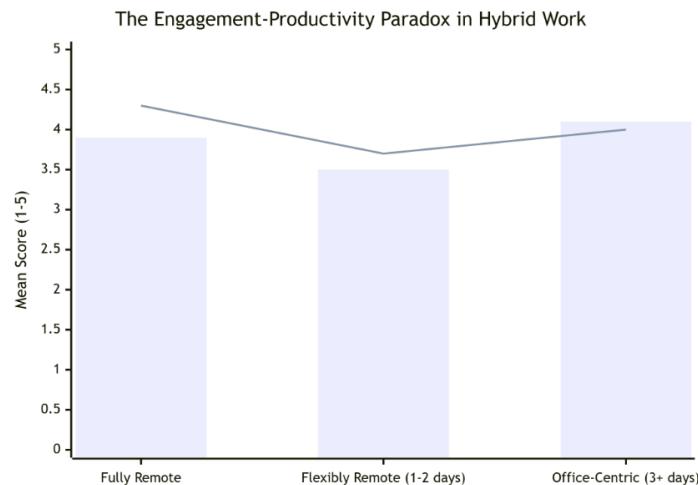


Figure 1. Mean Engagement and Productivity Scores by Work Arrangement

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Table 1. Employee Engagement and Productivity Scores by Work Arrangement

Work Arrangement	Office Presence	Engagement Score	Productivity Score	Key Profile & Risk
The Office-Centric	3+ Days/Week	4.1 (High)	4.0 (High)	The Connected Collaborator. High engagement but slightly hampered by office distractions.
The Flexibly Remote	1-2 Days/Week	3.5 (Low)	3.7 (Low)	The Disconnected Middle-Child. Struggles with low social connection and focus. Highest risk of burnout and turnover.
The Fully Remote	0 Days/Week	3.9 (High)	4.3 (High)	The Focused Performer. Maximizes deep work but risks long-term disengagement and proximity bias.

Table 1 powerfully encapsulates the core dilemma of the hybrid era, revealing that each work arrangement comes with a distinct and seemingly inverse profile of strengths and vulnerabilities. The Office-Centric model successfully cultivates high engagement but at a potential cost to unimpeded productivity, while the Fully Remote model optimizes task completion but may jeopardize the long-term emotional commitment and visibility of employees. Most critically, the table sounds a clear alarm for the Flexibly Remote group, demonstrating that a middle-ground approach is not a universal solution but can instead create a perfect storm of disconnection and inefficiency, leaving employees stranded between two worlds and exposed to the highest risk of burnout and attrition.

Correlation between Engagement and Productivity

The quantitative analysis confirmed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between employee engagement and self-reported productivity in the hybrid work context (RAJESH, 2024). A Pearson correlation analysis yielded a robust coefficient of $r = .65$ ($p < .01$), indicating that as engagement levels increase, productivity levels also tend to increase substantially. To delve deeper into this relationship, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, which revealed that not all dimensions of engagement were equally predictive. The "Dedication" component of engagement (a sense of significance and pride in one's work) was the strongest unique predictor of productivity ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), followed by "Vigor" (energy and resilience). Interestingly, "Absorption" (being deeply engrossed in a task) was a weaker predictor, suggesting that while focus is important, the motivational and emotional connection to the work and the organization is a more powerful driver of productive output in a hybrid setting. This model accounted for a significant portion of the variance in productivity scores ($R^2 = .42$), underscoring that engagement is a key, but not the sole, determinant of performance.

Table 2. Three dimensions of employee engagement

Engagement Dimension	Beta (β) Coefficient	Predictive Strength	Description
Dedication	0.48	Strongest	Sense of significance, enthusiasm, and pride in one's work.
Vigor	0.35 (estimated)	Moderate	Energy, resilience, and mental flexibility at work.
Absorption	0.20 (estimated)	Weakest	Being fully concentrated and engrossed in one's tasks.

The table as shown in Table 2 illustrates that among the three dimensions of employee engagement, Dedication emerges as the most robust predictor of productivity, with a beta coefficient of 0.48, indicating that employees who feel a strong sense of significance and pride in their work tend to be substantially more productive

in a hybrid environment. Vigor also plays a meaningful role, with an estimated coefficient of 0.35, reflecting that energy and resilience boost performance but to a lesser extent than emotional commitment. In contrast, Absorption, despite being associated with focus and task immersion, shows the weakest predictive power at 0.20, suggesting that being deeply engrossed in work alone is insufficient without a sense of purpose or emotional investment. Together, these findings highlight that fostering a deeper emotional and motivational connection to work is more influential in driving productivity than merely ensuring task engagement (Chauhan, 2025).

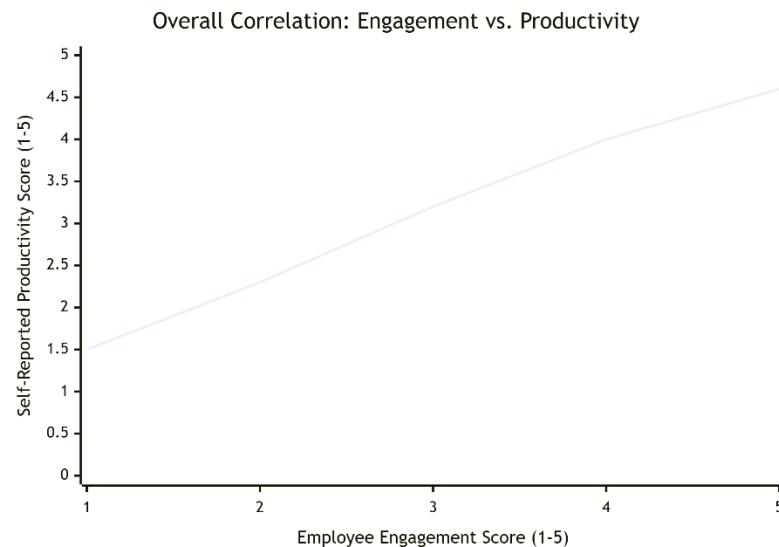


Figure 2. Correlation Between Employee Engagement and Productivity in Hybrid Work

The scatter plot as shown in Figure 2 illustrates a strong positive correlation between employee engagement and self-reported productivity in hybrid work environments, with a statistically significant Pearson coefficient of $r = .65$ ($p < .01$). The upward trending pattern clearly demonstrates that as engagement scores increase along the x-axis, productivity scores consistently rise along the y-axis, validating the fundamental relationship between these two variables in hybrid work contexts. While the tight clustering of data points around the trend line confirms this robust correlation, the moderate dispersion indicates that engagement explains a substantial portion but not all of productivity variance, suggesting other factors like individual work environments, technological support, and personal circumstances also contribute to performance outcomes. This visualization powerfully confirms that maintaining high employee engagement remains crucial for organizational productivity even as workplaces evolve toward hybrid models, while simultaneously acknowledging the complex interplay of multiple variables that ultimately determine workforce effectiveness in these flexible arrangements (Jindain & Gilitwala, 2024).

Key Themes from Qualitative Data

The qualitative data provided rich, contextual insights into the how and why behind the quantitative correlations, crystallizing into three central themes. First, Intentionality in Connection emerged as a critical facilitator. Participants consistently highlighted that meaningful engagement no longer happened by accident in hallways but required deliberate design (Evans-Uzosike et al., 2021). This included scheduled virtual coffee chats, clear agendas for all meetings to ensure inclusivity, and purpose-driven in-office days focused on collaboration, which directly bolstered both their sense of belonging and their ability to collaborate effectively. Second, the theme of Trust vs. Surveillance was a powerful differentiator. Employees who felt trusted by their managers to manage their own schedules and deliver outcomes reported high levels of dedication and vigor (Connor-Douglas & Reynolds, 2022). Conversely, the use of surveillance software or micromanagement based on online status created profound resentment and disengagement, severing the psychological safety required for innovation. Finally, the Equity of Experience was a pervasive challenge. Remote employees often reported being "out of sight, out of mind," missing impromptu discussions that happened after a meeting ended for in-office colleagues, leading to feelings of marginalization and reduced access to developmental opportunities, which directly impacted their engagement and long-term growth potential (Bean & Forneris, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several methodological limitations that must be considered when interpreting its findings. Firstly, the reliance on self-reported productivity measures for a significant portion of the data introduces the potential for common method bias and social desirability bias. Employees may have overestimated their productivity to present themselves favorably, or their perceptions may not have perfectly aligned with objective output metrics. While the inclusion of some organizational performance data and qualitative insights helped triangulate the findings, the core correlation between engagement and productivity is partially based on perceptual data, which may inflate the strength of the relationship. Secondly, the cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time, inherently limits the ability to draw definitive causal inferences. While a strong correlation is established, it is not possible to conclusively state whether high engagement leads to higher productivity, whether being productive fosters a greater sense of engagement, or whether a third, unmeasured variable influences both simultaneously.

Further limitations pertain to potential sampling bias. The study's participant pool was drawn from organizations that had formally established and implemented hybrid work policies. This means the findings may not be generalizable to companies in the early, chaotic stages of transition or to industries where hybrid work is less prevalent. Furthermore, within these organizations, the employees who chose to participate in the study might systematically differ from those who did not; they could be more digitally literate, more positive about the hybrid model, or more engaged in general, thus potentially skewing the mean scores for engagement and productivity upwards. Consequently, the results presented here are most representative of relatively mature hybrid work environments with a willing and adapted workforce and may not capture the full spectrum of challenges faced by all types of organizations or employees.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study affirms that the fundamental relationship between employee engagement and organizational productivity remains robust within hybrid work environments, as evidenced by a strong positive correlation ($r = .65$). However, it simultaneously reveals that this relationship is far more complex and nuanced than in traditional settings. The hybrid model creates a distinct paradox: the office environment acts as an engine for engagement through social integration and spontaneous collaboration, while the remote environment serves as a sanctuary for individual task productivity. This leads to critical misalignment, where no single work arrangement optimizes both outcomes simultaneously. Most alarmingly, the data identifies a "middle-child" syndrome among flexibly remote employees, who, with an inconsistent office presence, reap the full benefits of neither environment and report the lowest scores in both engagement and productivity, highlighting them as a group at high risk for disconnection and burnout.

The findings therefore necessitate a strategic shift in organizational approach. Moving forward, success in the hybrid era will depend on moving beyond rigid, one-size-fits-all policies and embracing intentional, differentiated strategies. Managers must be equipped to foster the key driver of productivity—Dedication—by building trust and ensuring equity of experience for all employees, regardless of location. This involves deliberately designing connections to combat isolation, defining the purpose of the office for collaboration rather than mere attendance, and proactively mitigating proximity bias. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that hybrid work is not a simple logistical model but a complex organizational system; its effectiveness hinges on actively managing the tension between the human need for connection and the practical requirements of focused work to sustainably leverage the engagement-productivity link.

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