Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development
Volume: 08 / N°: 02 (2025), P:103-120
ISSN : 2661-7986 EISSN: 2773-2606

The Hybrid and remote work models: unconventional methods to improve the educational process - evidence from the Algerian higher education system

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Received:30/03/2025 ***Accepted:02/08/2025*** ***Published:01/09/2025***

Abstract:

The study aims to explore. the impact of hybrid. and remote work. models on the higher education sector, as it is one of the vital sectors that has been greatly affected by technological developments and transformations imposed by global crises, such as the. Covid-19. pandemic. The study. focuses on analyzing. the impact of these models. on the organizational performance, customer experience, and employee well-being, while highlighting the challenges and opportunities presented by these new patterns of work.

The study suggests that. remote and hybrid working. models represent. a strategic opportunity. for the higher education sector to enhance operational efficiency and flexibility, provided that the associated regulatory and technical challenges are addressed. It is also imperative for universities to develop flexible policies and sustainable strategies to support these transformations and ensure their long-term success.

Keywords: remote work, hybrid work, employees' performance, higher education system, Algeria..

JEL Classification: I21, I23, D83.

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Introduction

In light of the acceleration of technological transformations and economic and social changes, hybrid and remote work models have emerged as one of the most prominent innovations in human resources management and administrative organization. These models have demonstrated great ability to enhance business continuity and operational flexibility. Some companies implemented it, but many others were hesitant to switch to this kind of arrangements, or even try it. However, after the Covid-19 pandemic, which imposed a new reality that forced organizations to adopt unconventional working methods to ensure continued productivity and support employees.

Hybrid and remote work are modern trends that combine the benefits of office work with digital technologies, allowing employees greater freedom to determine where and when they work. Despite the clear advantages of these models, such as improving productivity, reducing operating costs, and enhancing the balance between work and life, they pose complex challenges such as managing performance, building a cohesive organizational culture, and ensuring digital security.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive view of hybrid and remote work models by exploring their theoretical and applied roots, analyzing their associated benefits and limitations, and studying their impact on organizations and individuals. The study also seeks to shed light on the policies and strategies that organizations can adopt to make the most of these models, focusing on elements that support their sustainability in the future, such as the use of smart technology, enhancing digital skills, and redefining the standards of interaction and communication in the workplace.

This study also looks to the future of work as technology continues to advance, and explores how to develop organizational policies that support flexibility and creativity while maintaining high levels of performance and job satisfaction.

A- study problematic: We tried, through this research, to answer the following: do hybrid and remote work effect the educational process? And if yes, At what extent?

The following sub-questions emerged from the main question:

- does the infrastructure of hybrid and remote work influence the educational process in higher education?
- does the work-life integration to hybrid and remote work have an impact on the educational process in higher education?

- Is the organizational support of hybrid and remote work beneficial to the educational process in higher education?
- does the organizational culture of hybrid and remote work influence the educational process in higher education?

B- Study objectives: this study aims to

- Explore how hybrid and remote work models impact performance in higher education system and achieving organizational goals.
- Assess instructor's satisfaction and the extent of adaptation to new work patterns, in addition to measuring the effectiveness of these models from the perspective of instructors.
- Identify obstacles facing universities when implementing hybrid and remote work models, such as the technological gap, time management, and ensuring effective communication.
- Analyze the impact of these models on the balance between work and personal life, and their impact on the effectiveness of the educational process through saving operational costs and increasing employment opportunities.

C- Importance of the study:

- Keeping pace with shifts in the work environment and helping universities adapt to the requirements of the digital era.
- The study provides insights into how to exploit hybrid and remote work models to improve productivity and develop human resource management strategies.
- The study contributes to enabling higher education institutions to build work systems that are resilient and adaptable to future crises, such as the global pandemic.
- Providing innovative solutions to increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover, supporting organizational stability.

D- Study hypotheses:

- **The main hypothesis (H0):** hybrid and remote work systems do not have a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university.
- **The 1st sub-hypothesis:** the infrastructure of hybrid and remote work does not have a significant impact upon

improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university.

- **The 2nd sub-hypothesis:** the work-life integration in hybrid and remote work does not have a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university.
- **The 3rd sub-hypothesis:** the organizational support of hybrid and remote work does not have a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university.
- **The 4th sub-hypothesis:** the organizational culture of hybrid and remote work does not have a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university.

1- Theoretical background:

Remote work has been an option for years, but many companies were reluctant to embrace it. Then came COVID-19, a highly contagious virus that sparked a global pandemic. First detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, the virus spread rapidly through. person-to-person contact, causing severe respiratory infections. With no vaccine available in the early stages, the pandemic tragically claimed millions of lives worldwide. (Bacarra & Decenorio, winter 2022, p. 2425)

Digital technologies-like personal computers, smartphones, laptops, software, and the internet-make remote work possible, allowing employees to work away from their employer's office, either full-time or part-time. When this work is done from home, it's often called telework. During the COVID-19 pandemic, telework became much more common, and after the crisis eased, hybrid work-where employees split their time between home and the office-became a popular option.

The pandemic pushed higher education to accelerate its digital transformation. As a result, universities had to adapt to the growing demand for online courses - something that was challenging but ultimately beneficial for well-established institutions. One of the biggest hurdles was figuring out how to provide online services without the need for physical branches while also finding ways to improve the student experience. (Perera & Tilakasiri, 2024, p. 68)

In 2022, about (18%) of workers in the EU, Norway, and Iceland primarily worked from home. But remote work wasn't just limited to teleworkers - many employees worked from other locations too. Around (6%) worked at clients' premises, (5.5%) at outdoor sites like construction areas, city streets, or farms, (3.5%) in cars or other vehicles, and (2%) in public spaces like coffee shops or airports. While most workers (65%) still worked at their employer's location, remote work was a reality for nearly a third of the workforce in these countries. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 2).

1.1. The Rise of the Modern Workplace

The concept of remote work - also called teleworking or telecommuting - has come a long way over the years. It first emerged in the 1970s during the oil crisis as a way to cut down on commuting and save energy.

In the 1980s and 1990s, new technologies like personal computers, fax machines, and the early internet made remote work more feasible. However, most companies were hesitant to embrace it, worried about productivity, communication challenges, and a lack of managerial oversight. In the early 2000s, remote work slowly gained traction as globalization, the knowledge economy, and better internet infrastructure made it more appealing. Businesses started seeing the advantages—saving on office costs, tapping into a broader talent pool, and improving employee satisfaction. Still, telework remained more of an exception than the norm.

By the 2010s, mobile technology and cloud computing completely transformed remote work. With smartphones, high-speed internet, and advanced collaboration tools, teams could now work together seamlessly from different locations. Despite these innovations, many companies still leaned toward in-office work, valuing face-to-face interactions and traditional management styles. (strandt, 2024, p. 54)

For instance, Rize Education provides a flexible hybrid degree pathway in high-demand, data-driven fields like digital marketing, public health, public administration, and data analytics. Several colleges, including Adrian College, Newberry College, Centenary University, Tiffin University, and Rochester University, have adopted this hybrid model. By partnering with Rize Education, institutions can bring in experienced hybrid faculty who are experts in their respective fields. As remote work continues to grow in the post-COVID-19 era, faculty and staff must adapt to both virtual and in-person environments. This shift requires them to effectively

collaborate across different locations and communicate seamlessly with diverse audiences worldwide. (Ricevuto & McLaughlin, 2022)

1.2. Benefits of remote and hybrid work:

Remote and hybrid work setups come with both advantages and challenges for employees and companies alike, as follows:

1.1.1. work Flexibility:

One of the biggest perks of remote work for employees is the flexibility to manage their time. This is especially valuable for those juggling family responsibilities. Working from home allows them to care for their children, attend medical appointments, or support elderly parents - without needing to take time off.

For employers, this flexibility translates into lower absenteeism. Instead of losing a day of work for personal commitments, employees can balance both, ensuring productivity remains steady while also meeting their personal needs. It's a win-win for everyone. (Bacarra & Decenorio, winter 2022, p. 2427).

1.1.2. Productivity and Efficiency:

Employee preferences play a crucial role in shaping the future of office work, but companies also need to consider how remote work impacts productivity. Research indicates that productivity in remote settings varies based on multiple factors, including digital competence, distractions, stress levels, communication, resources, social interactions, autonomy, and work-life balance. However, country-specific influences and subjective self-assessments make it challenging to draw clear conclusions about productivity trends. (Allstrin, Grafström, Stern, & Weidenstedt, 2022, p. 3)

1.1.3. Profitability:

Remote work can be a double-edged sword for SMEs in the services sector when it comes to profitability. On one hand, it helps cut operational costs like rent, utilities, travel, and office equipment. On the other hand, it can introduce hidden expenses, such as IT maintenance, cybersecurity, employee training, and tax implications.

The overall impact on profitability depends on several factors, including how extensively remote work is implemented, the size and nature of the business, market conditions, competition, and legal or regulatory requirements. For some SMEs, the savings may outweigh the costs, while for others, the added challenges could reduce their bottom line.

1.1.4. Innovation:

Remote work can be both a catalyst and a challenge for innovation in SMEs within the services sector. On the positive side, it can spark creativity, bring together diverse perspectives, encourage experimentation, and support continuous learning. By allowing employees to work in environments that suit them best, remote work can lead to fresh ideas and out-of-the-box thinking.

However, it can also create barriers to innovation by making collaboration more difficult, reducing spontaneous interactions, complicating coordination, and limiting knowledge sharing. The overall impact depends on several factors, such as the type of innovation being pursued, how often teams work remotely, the team's structure and dynamics, and the tools and incentives in place to foster innovation. Finding the right balance is key to ensuring that remote work enhances rather than hinders creativity and progress. (Sunil, Satish, & Pushpender, 2023, p. 19)

1.1.5. Job satisfaction and work-life balance:

Research shows that remote work often leads to higher job satisfaction, thanks to greater autonomy and flexibility. Many employees appreciate the ability to better balance their personal and professional lives, which can reduce stress and improve overall well-being. This flexibility is especially beneficial for those with family responsibilities, allowing them to manage work around personal commitments more effectively.

However, remote work isn't without its downsides. Feelings of isolation and the blurring of boundaries between work and home life can negatively affect job satisfaction and mental health. This is where hybrid work models come in - they offer the best of both worlds by allowing for in-person collaboration while maintaining flexibility. Studies indicate that employees in hybrid setups tend to experience lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction compared to those working exclusively from home or in an office.

1.3. Disadvantages of remote and hybrid work:

Remote and hybrid work come with several benefits. Working from home, for instance, saves time and reduces stress by eliminating the daily commute. It also allows for a better work-life balance and can lead to higher productivity and improved focus.

However, telework also has its downsides. It can lead to prolonged sitting, increased time pressure, longer working hours, and feelings of

social isolation. Striking the right balance - whether through hybrid work or conscious efforts to manage time and social interactions - can help mitigate these challenges while maximizing the benefits. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 2)

A survey by Gensler found that many U.S. workers want to return to the office, at least part of the time, because they see in-person collaboration as essential to their jobs. They also believe that socializing with colleagues can have a lasting positive impact on their careers and workplace relationships.

At the same time, the survey highlighted the importance of integrating the benefits of remote work-like increased flexibility-into the modern workplace. This suggests that the future of work isn't about choosing between remote or in-office setups but rather finding a balance that supports both productivity and employee well-being. (Gensler Research Institute, summer/fall 2020).

Remote and hybrid work can negatively affect workers' health and increase the risk of musculoskeletal issues, such as neck, wrist, and finger pain, often caused by improper equipment setup. Additionally, inadequate lighting may lead to eye strain and other health concerns. Working from home can also impact employees with caregiving responsibilities -most often women- differently. Depending on their personal circumstances, they may experience either an improvement or a greater struggle in balancing work and personal life. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 2)

While this work-life model is often seen as an opportunity to better balance professional and personal responsibilities, it can also have downsides. Working from home can blur the lines between work and personal life, sometimes to the extent that they become indistinguishable. Even before the pandemic, digitalization had already raised concerns about boundary issues, leading to discussions and research on the topic. However, the rise in remote work has amplified these challenges, as unclear boundaries can contribute to stress and anxiety. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 10)

Digital technologies play a vital role in enabling remote work, but their prolonged use comes with both psychosocial and physical risks. These risks become more severe when long working hours and heavy workloads limit opportunities for breaks. On a psychological level, constant exposure to digital tools can lead to **technostress** - a state of anxiety and fatigue

caused by the challenge of keeping up with ever-evolving technology. This struggle to adapt can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and mentally exhausted. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 2)

Working with digital technologies can also lead to **virtual presenteeism**, where employees continue working even when they're unwell, often avoiding sick leave. This is especially common in remote work settings and can increase the risk of burnout over time. Additionally, prolonged screen exposure poses other risks, such as frequent headaches and **digital eye strain**, also known as **computer vision syndrome**, which can cause discomfort and vision-related issues. (European Agency for Safety and Health at work, 2024, p. 2)

The hybrid work model depends heavily on technology, requiring more technical staff to maintain reliable work systems and communication channels. At the same time, ensuring data security has become a top priority. (Bacarra & Decenorio, winter 2022, p. 2430)

Remote work comes with its own set of challenges. While it can enhance individual productivity, it often makes team collaboration more difficult. The lack of spontaneous, informal interactions -common in physical office settings- can hinder team cohesion and creativity. Additionally, remote teams may face difficulties coordinating across different time zones and navigating communication barriers, making seamless collaboration more challenging. (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007)

1.4. Challenges of remote and hybrid work:

Infrastructure plays a vital role in the effectiveness of a work-from-home setup. According to FastLane (2020), while employees initially favored remote work, they faced challenges that needed to be addressed- one major issue being difficulty accessing official documents.

Additionally, employee happiness significantly influences both their work and overall well-being. A strong commitment to organizational ethics and corporate social responsibility can contribute to a more positive and fulfilling work environment, ultimately leading to greater job satisfaction.

Remote work reshapes organizational structures by enabling employees to work beyond the office and outside traditional working hours. One of its biggest advantages is increased productivity, which continues to drive the adoption of remote work policies even in the post-pandemic era. Additionally, organizational functions and employee performance rely

heavily on digital infrastructure, with hardware and software systems playing a crucial role in maintaining efficiency and connectivity. (Perera & Tilakasiri, 2024, p. 74)

Another challenge is preventing employee burnout, as remote workers often put in longer hours and take fewer breaks. Many fear being seen as unproductive, leading them to overwork in an effort to prove their dedication. While this may benefit the company in the short term, it can leave employees feeling exhausted, dissatisfied, and ultimately at risk of burnout. (Bacarra & Decenorio, winter 2022, p. 2430)

1.5. Remote and Hybrid work in the higher education institutions:

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities worldwide have faced significant challenges in transitioning their workforces to fully remote or hybrid models to maintain operations.

Beyond this shift, many faculty and staff are also navigating the complexities of sustaining long-term remote and hybrid work while recruiting and onboarding employees virtually. The rise of "work from anywhere" employment, coupled with international hiring, has created new opportunities for collaboration in research and partnerships that were previously seen as impractical or unattainable.

To ensure employee satisfaction and engagement, institutions must implement thoughtful policies that support a balanced work environment. Examples of such policies include adequate medical leave for parents, strict enforcement of sexual harassment policies, transparent salary structures, flexible work schedules, and formal mentorship and sponsorship programs.

As ICT infrastructure continues to expand in higher education, campus leaders have access to a wide range of digital tools to create equitable, long-term work environments that foster both employee well-being and institutional success. (Chan, Lin, & Bista, 2023, p. 15)

2- The empirical study.

2.1. Questionnaire Reliability and Validity Analysis

For the purpose of the study, we used the five-point Likert scale to measure responses intensity. The scale was scored from 1 to 5 where the

number (1) means Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Disagree or Agree, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. The reliability of each scale was estimated by calculating the Cronbach's alpha Coefficient, which is acceptable in management and behavioral studies if it exceeds the value of 0.70 (Mohammed & Sliman, 2019). The following table shows the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (which reflects the reliability of the questionnaire) that reached (0.894), which is significant and acceptable for the purpose of the study.

Table 1 : Questionnaire Reliability test

Axis	Nbr of Items	Cronbach Alpha
infrastructure	05	0.818
Work-life integration	05	0.748
Organizational support	05	0.792
Organizational culture	05	0.839
Improvement of educational process	10	0.847

Source: SPSS V21 outputs

2.2. Characteristics of the Study Sample.

- **Gender**: 36 % of respondents were men, whereas 64% were women.
- **Age**: 20 % under 30 years old, 38 % between 30 and 39 years old, 32 % between 40 and 49 years old, 7 % between 50 and 59 years old, 3 % of the respondents are more than 60 years old. This shows that the majority of the respondents are young.
- **Educational level**: 55% of the respondents have at least a bachelor degree, 30% of the respondents have a master degree, whereas the other 15% of respondents have high school degree only.

2.3. The descriptive analysis of respondents' answers.

We divided the questionnaire of this study into two main axes: knowledge sharing (organizational culture, work environment, knowledge sharing behaviours, and information & communication technology) and competitive advantages (cost leadership and differentiation) as shown in

table (1).

Table (1): means and standard deviations of the study's variables

Item	Mean	Std dev
Hybrid and remote work	3.82	0.721
infrastructure	4.42	0.752
Work-life integration	3.65	0.681
Organizational support	3,76	0.745
Organizational culture	3,55	0.839
Improvement of educational process	3,92	0.773

Source: SPSS V21 outputs

As shown in the table (1), the overall mean of factors that form the hybrid and remote work axis was greater than the arithmetic mean (3), which means that Algerian higher education system is very interested in implementing this new work system, and give this notion a great attention. More precisely, statistical means for the dimensions Infrastructure, work-life integration, organizational support and organizational culture are all above moderate with the following means (4,42), (3,65), (3,76) and (3,55). Which means that the studied sample of professors do believe that remote and hybrid work exist in their institution. Furthermore, they really consider the Importance of its sub-variables and on top of them the infrastructure which facilitates (or hinder) the process of working remotely.

Concerning the improvement of educational process, Table (1) shows that the mean of this axis was equal to (3,92). This indicates that the studied sample agrees on the questions brought in this section.

2.4. Hypotheses testing

Table (2) reports the Regression between infrastructure and improving the educational process in higher education.

Table (2): Regression Coefficient between the infrastructure and improving the educational process in higher education

Independent variable	dependent variables	The constant α	Regression coefficient ß	Coefficient of determination R^2	sig
infrastructure	**Educational process**	1.793	0.392	0.153	0.000

Source: SPSS V21 outputs

The table shows that there is a significant positive impact of the infrastructure on the dependent variable (The educational process in higher education). The impact can be summed-up in the following linear equation:

$$f(x)_{\text{(educational process)}} = 0.392\, x_{\text{(infrastructure)}} + 1.793$$

According to these results, we can reject the first sub-hypothesis of the study and replace it with the alternative hypothesis: "the infrastructure of hybrid and remote work has a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university".

Table (3): Regression Coefficient between the work-life integration and improving the educational process in higher education

Independent variable	dependent variables	The constant α	Regression coefficient ß	Coefficient of determination R^2	sig
Work-life integration	**Educational process**	2.015	0.263	0.069	0.000

Source: SPSS V21 outputs

Table (3) shows that there is a significant positive impact of the work-life integration on the dependent variable (The educational process in higher education). The impact can be summed-up in the following linear equation:

$$f(x)_{\text{(educational process)}} = 0.263\, x_{\text{(work-life integration)}} + 2.015$$

According to these results, we can reject the second sub-hypothesis of the study and replace it with the alternative hypothesis: "the work-life integration in hybrid and remote work has a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university".

Table (4): Regression Coefficient between the organizational support and improving the educational process in higher education

Independent variable	dependent variables	The constant α	Regression coefficient ß	Coefficient of determination R^2	sig
Organizational	**Educational**	1.679	0.410	0.168	0.000

As shown in table (4), there is a significant positive impact of the organizational support on the dependent variable (The educational process in higher education). We can summarize the impact in the following linear equation:

$$\boldsymbol{f(x)_{\text{(educational process)}} = 0.410\, x_{\text{ (organizational support)}} + 1.679}$$

According to these results, we can reject the third sub-hypothesis of the study and replace it with the alternative hypothesis: "the organizational support for hybrid and remote work has a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the studied university".

Table (5): Regression Coefficient between the organizational culture and improving the educational process in higher education

Independent variable	dependent variables	The constant α	Regression coefficient ß	Coefficient of determination R^2	sig
Organizational culture	**Educational process**	1.747	0.381	0.145	0.000

Source: SPSS V21 outputs

The table (5) shows that there is a significant impact of the organizational culture on the dependent variable (educational process). The relationship can be summed-up in the following linear equation:

$$\boldsymbol{f(x)_{\text{(educational process)}} = 0.381\, x_{\text{ (organizational culture)}} + 1.747}$$

According to these results, we can reject the fourth sub-hypothesis of the study and replace it with the alternative hypothesis: "The organizational

Table (6): Regression Coefficient between the hybrid and remote work

culture has a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level (α≤0.05) in the studied university".

Table (6) reports that there is a significant positive impact of the hybrid and remote work on the dependent variable (The educational process in higher education). We can summarize the impact in the following linear equation:

$$f(x)_{\text{(educational process)}} = 0.420\, x_{\text{ (hybrid and remote work)}} + 2.340$$

According to these results, we can reject the main hypothesis of the study and replace it with the alternative hypothesis: "hybrid and remote work has a significant impact upon improving the educational process at the significance level (α≤0.05) in the studied university".

3- Conclusion:

In light of the rapid transformations witnessed by the world of business and education, hybrid and remote work models represent a great opportunity to redefine the work environment and education methods in a way that enhances productivity, work-life balance, and the flexibility of institutions in facing future challenges. This study aims to shed light on the impact of these models in improving organizational performance, increasing employee satisfaction, and expanding the scope of work and education opportunities.

Through analyzing the hypotheses, the study reached a number of key findings, these are as follows:

- Hybrid and remote work models contribute positively to improving teachers productivity when the appropriate tools and infrastructure are provided.

- Enhancing the balance between personal and professional life is positively reflected in teachers' satisfaction and their engagement with the institution.
- The university's organizational culture embraces working remotely, but need some further efforts to adapt it to this model of work.
- Technical and organizational challenges, such as weak digital infrastructure and difficulty interacting between individuals, still constitute an obstacle to achieving the full success of these models.

4- Recommendations:

- universities must develop digital infrastructure through Investing in technology and infrastructure to support remote work tools and effective communication.

- Universities have to enhance flexibility policies by Adopting policies that allow employees to combine remote work with physical presence in a manner that suits the nature of work.

- Universities should provide training programs to enhance work skills in hybrid environments, including time management and the use of digital tools.

- Universities should also adopt flexible evaluation methods based on outputs rather than working hours.

- Provide technical support to teachers in remote areas to ensure fair access to these models.

- Universities must enhance the culture of communication and harmony by designing virtual and in-person group activities to enhance the culture of teamwork and belonging.

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