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**Stress Management in Hybrid Work:
Gendered and Intersectional Impacts on Psychological
Well-Being**

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Abstract

Hybrid work, combining remote and on-site arrangements, has become a dominant model in the post-pandemic era. While such models promise greater flexibility, reduced commuting, and improved work–life balance, they also create new psychosocial stressors, including boundary blurring, technostress, and social isolation. This thesis critically reviews and synthesizes scholarly literature primarily published between 2015 and 2025, while also integrating earlier foundational studies to ensure theoretical depth. Using a narrative literature review guided by systematic principles of database searching, screening, and thematic analysis, the study examines how hybrid work affects stress and psychological well-being, with a particular focus on gendered and intersectional inequalities. The findings reveal that women and caregivers often face heightened stress due to domestic burdens, visibility gaps, and role overload, while intersectional factors such as race, socioeconomic status, housing insecurity, and minority identity further compound risks. The review extends established stress frameworks, including the Job Demands–Resources and Conservation of Resources models, by showing that demands and resources are socially distributed across groups. Contributions include theoretical insights into equity-informed stress models, practical recommendations for organizations on designing inclusive hybrid arrangements, and policy implications for promoting fairer labor practices. The central conclusion is that hybrid work can enhance well-being only if supported by intentional design, inclusive policies, and equity-focused interventions; otherwise, it risks reproducing existing inequalities under the guise of flexibility.

Keywords: Hybrid work, stress management, psychological well-being, gender, intersectionality, workplace equity

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

Hybrid work combining remote and on-site work has rapidly shifted from an emergency response to COVID-19 into a mainstream and preferred organizational model. While often framed as a pandemic innovation, the roots of hybrid and flexible work extend further back. As early as the late 20th century, scholars and policymakers debated the potential of *telecommuting* as a way to reduce commuting stress, support environmental sustainability, and improve work–life balance (Oakman et al., 2020). Yet before the pandemic, adoption remained limited, often constrained to technology-oriented firms or niche arrangements.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a global accelerator. Organizations across sectors were forced to invest in digital infrastructures, reconfigure workflows, and experiment with large-scale remote work. This unprecedented shift demonstrated both the feasibility and the challenges of flexible work on a scale. As restrictions eased, many organizations transitioned from fully remote to hybrid models seeking a balance between the flexibility employees had come to expect and the collaboration benefits of in-person work (Coulston et al., 2025; Berger Ploszaj, 2025).

Today, hybrid work is becoming institutionalized. It reflects broader transformations in labor markets, organizational design, and employee expectations. Technological advances cloud platforms, collaborative tools, and AI-enabled scheduling have lowered barriers to flexible work. At the same time, generational and cultural shifts emphasize autonomy, meaningful work, and balance between professional and personal life. Surveys capture this momentum: Gallup (2023) found that 60% of remote-capable employees prefer hybrid work, while fewer than 10% wanted to return to fully on-site models. Similarly, Owl Labs (2023) reported that 81% of global workers favored hybrid or fully remote formats, underscoring its broad appeal.

The benefits of hybrid work are frequently highlighted. Employees often report reduced commuting stress, greater autonomy, and improved work–life balance (Bloom, 2024; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024). Organizations benefit from enhanced retention, reduced office costs, and access to wider talent pools. However, hybrid work also introduces new challenges. Stressors such as blurred boundaries between work and personal life, constant connectivity, digital fatigue, and role overload have emerged as key concerns (Bondanini et al., 2025; Chu, 2024).

Empirical studies reveal this dual nature. Trevino Garcia et al. (2025), analyzing 24,763 Norwegian public-sector employees, found that flexible hybrid arrangements reduced mental distress overall. Yet the same study showed that frequent home-working and high availability demands were strongly associated with work–life conflict and psychological strain. These findings highlight a paradox: hybrid work can enhance well-being for some while simultaneously exacerbating stress and inequities for others.

This paradox is especially pronounced when viewed through the lenses of gender and intersectionality. Women and employees with caregiving responsibilities often face intensified role overload, while minority and lower-income workers encounter compounded disadvantages due to inequities in resources and

workplace recognition (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024; Bixby et al., 2024). Thus, hybrid work does not affect all employees equally; rather, its outcomes are socially and structurally patterned.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although hybrid work is now widespread, its psychological impacts remain unevenly distributed across the workforce. Some employees report heightened job satisfaction, improved health, and stronger work–life integration, while others struggle with burnout, overwork, and career penalties due to reduced visibility. Gender differences are particularly evident: women and employees with caregiving responsibilities often face amplified stress due to the persistence of unequal domestic labor and expectations of constant availability. Furthermore, intersectional frameworks reveal that overlapping identities (e.g., being a woman, a parent, and a minority employee) compound stress exposure and intensify risks of reduced well-being.

Despite growing academic attention, current literature often treats hybrid work in general terms, overlooking the nuanced ways in which stress and well-being outcomes are stratified. Intersectional analyses remain rare, and existing models do not fully capture how psychological demands and resources are distributed unevenly across gender and social identity lines. This gap underscores the importance of applying intersectional perspectives to hybrid work research in order to design more equitable strategies for stress management and organizational support.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

Aim: To critically analyze how hybrid work arrangements affect stress and psychological well-being, with a particular focus on gendered and intersectional inequalities.

Objectives:

1. To identify the main stressors associated with hybrid work.
2. To examine how gender and caregiving roles mediate stress experiences.
3. To explore how intersectional identities (gender × race × class × caregiving status) shape outcomes.
4. To investigate which stress-management strategies are effective, especially for marginalized groups.
5. To highlight gaps in current research and provide recommendations for future scholarship and policy.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the primary stressors of hybrid work and how do they affect psychological well-being?
2. How do gender and caregiving roles mediate stress experiences in hybrid work?
3. In what ways do intersectional identities amplify or mitigate stress outcomes?
4. Which stress-management strategies are effective, and do they address equity issues adequately?

1.5 Contribution of the Study

- **Theoretical contribution:** Extends stress theories (e.g., JD-R, COR) by showing that demands and resources are socially distributed through gender roles and intersecting identities.
- **Practical contribution:** Offers evidence-based recommendations for organizations and HR practitioners on designing equitable hybrid arrangements.
- **Policy contribution:** Provides insights into workplace policies and national labor regulations to account for equity in hybrid work.
- **Empirical contribution:** Synthesizes peer-reviewed studies (2015–2025), including large-scale and intersectional analyses, to map both benefits and vulnerabilities.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

- **Chapter 2:** Literature Review and Conceptual Framework synthesize findings and proposes an analytical framework.
- **Chapter 3:** Methodology outlines the review approach, databases, and inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- **Chapter 4:** Findings / Thematic Review presents evidence on stressors, gendered and intersectional patterns, and strategies.
- **Chapter 5:** Discussion interprets findings, highlights tensions, and reflects on implications.
- **Chapter 6:** Conclusion summarizes contributions, limitations, and future directions.

Chapter 2 - Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Introduction

Hybrid work combining remote and on-site arrangements has rapidly emerged as a dominant post-pandemic model and is now a central focus of academic, organizational, and policy debates (Coulston et al., 2025; Berger Ploszaj, 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated adoption, but its long-term institutionalization reflects deeper technological, cultural, and organizational changes. While hybrid arrangements offer flexibility and potential improvements in work–life balance, they also create novel stressors and reproduce existing social inequalities.

The literature reveals mixed findings: some studies highlight benefits such as autonomy and reduced commuting stress (Bloom, 2024; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024), whereas others document blurred boundaries, digital fatigue, and reduced visibility (Bondanini et al., 2025; Chu, 2024). Importantly, outcomes are not evenly distributed. Women, caregivers, and minority employees often experience hybrid work differently, shaped by intersectional inequalities across gender, race, class, and identity (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024; Bixby et al., 2024; Cancela et al., 2025).

This chapter reviews and synthesizes the literature across six domains:

1. **Hybrid work definitions and core characteristics**
2. **Stressors in hybrid work environments**
3. **Psychological well-being outcomes**
4. **Gendered patterns and caregiving influences**
5. **Intersectional amplification of risk**
6. **Stress-management strategies and organizational responses**

The chapter concludes with gaps in literature and proposes a conceptual framework for analyzing stress and well-being in hybrid work.

2.2 Hybrid Work: Definitions and Core Characteristics

Hybrid work lacks a single, universally agreed definition, but it broadly refers to organizational arrangements in which employees divide their time between remote locations (typically home) and an employer's physical workplace across a workweek or cycle (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024). Although deceptively simple, this arrangement is highly heterogeneous, varying by industry, organizational culture, and national labor regulation. For instance, some companies mandate fixed hybrid schedules (e.g., two or three in-office days per week), while others permit full discretion for employees to choose their balance of remote and in-person work. This variation is important: the level of flexibility granted can shape both the **resources** available to workers (e.g., autonomy, control over work) and the demands they face (e.g., constant availability, uncertainty about visibility).

Beyond scheduling, hybrid work also encompasses structural and cultural differences in how collaboration, accountability, and performance are managed. As Sailer et al. (2023) note, hybrid work is not a monolith, but an evolving practice shaped by organizational architecture (digital and physical), leadership style, and the broader socio-economic context. This complexity explains why empirical findings on hybrid work's effects are often inconsistent: the same model can relieve stress in one setting but exacerbate it in another.

2.2.1 Structural Dimensions

Scholars have identified three defining features of hybrid work (Sailer et al., 2023; Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024):

1. **Temporal and spatial flexibility.** Employees gain flexibility in where and when tasks are performed, reducing commuting time and potentially increasing autonomy. For some, this improves work–life balance and creates opportunities for “deep work” at home. However, such flexibility can also complicate scheduling, reduce predictability, and increase coordination costs across dispersed teams.
2. **Digital mediation of communication.** Collaboration in hybrid contexts depends heavily on digital platforms such as Teams, Slack, and Zoom. These reshape not only the mechanics of task execution but also the dynamics of social connection and identity visibility. As Eng et al. (2024) highlight, the reliance on digital tools amplifies the importance of communication norms and digital etiquette; without careful design, these platforms can intensify stress by increasing the volume and immediacy of communication.
3. **Oscillation between modes.** Hybrid work involves frequent shifts between solo, remote productivity and in-person collaboration. This oscillation can be energizing, offering solitude for concentration and opportunities for social interaction but also fragmenting, requiring constant cognitive and logistical adjustments. Workers may experience disorientation in switching contexts, with some reporting it disrupts routines and recovery (Sailer et al., 2023).

Together, these dimensions reveal that hybrid work is best conceptualized as a dynamic system in which flexibility, digital mediation, and oscillation create new opportunities but also novel stressors.

2.2.2 Theoretical Framing

These structural features generate both job demands (e.g., constant digital availability, coordination complexity) and job resources (e.g., autonomy, flexibility), consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Coulston et al., 2025). The JD-R framework posits that employee well-being results from the balance between demands and resources. In hybrid contexts, the balance can be precarious: autonomy may reduce stress, but if combined with constant digital intrusion and blurred boundaries, it can also foster exhaustion.

In addition, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2011) provides a useful lens: hybrid work environments often require employees to expend cognitive and emotional resources in managing boundaries and adapting to shifting contexts. If these resources are not replenished (e.g., through organizational support or social belonging), stress and burnout may result.

Finally, boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) suggests hybrid work intensifies the negotiation of work–home boundaries. Employees who prefer strong segmentation (clear separation between work and home) may experience greater strain, while integrators may adapt more smoothly. This helps explain individual differences in stress outcomes under hybrid work.

2.3 Stressors in Hybrid Work Environments

2.3.1 Boundary Blurring and Role Overload

One of the most widely documented stressors in hybrid work is boundary blurring. Without physical transitions such as commuting, the line between work and home becomes porous (Lyzwinski, 2024). Employees report difficulty “switching off” with work intruding into evenings and weekends. This often coincides with role overload, where the sheer number of demands across professional and domestic domains outpaces an individual’s coping capacity (Bondanini et al., 2025).

Chu (2024) distinguishes between challenge stressors (e.g., opportunities for skill development) and hindrance stressors (e.g., interruptions, over-availability). In hybrid contexts, digital demands may initially appear as challenges (flexibility, multitasking), but when sustained, they accumulate into hindrance stressors, producing emotional exhaustion and disengagement.

The loss of boundaries is particularly acute for employees with caregiving responsibilities, who often juggle professional tasks alongside childcare or eldercare during home-working days (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024). For such employees, hybrid work can feel less like flexibility and more like “always-on” availability in two domains simultaneously.

2.3.2 Digital Fatigue and Technostress

Digital fatigue exhaustion from prolonged technology-mediated interaction has emerged as a defining hybrid stressor. Bondanini et al. (2025) describe it as a form of cognitive overload linked to sustained attention on video calls, reduced non-verbal cues, and multitasking across platforms. Banerjee and Gupta (2024) provide empirical evidence: hybrid workers reported that tool fragmentation, high volumes of messages, and expectations of instant replies generated persistent stress, impairing both productivity and well-being.

This aligns with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which emphasizes that prolonged cognitive effort depletes emotional resources (Hobfoll, 2011). Unlike traditional workplace fatigue, digital fatigue is less visible and harder to regulate, as employees often feel pressure to remain “digitally present” to prove commitment.

2.3.3 Social Isolation and Reduced Support

Hybrid arrangements often weaken **informal social interactions**. Eng et al. (2024) found workers described reduced collegiality and fewer opportunities for spontaneous exchanges, which undermined belonging and team cohesion. Seinsche et al. (2024) similarly observed that employees working remotely felt less integrated into workplace communities and more anxious about being overlooked.

Marozva and Pelsler (2025) show how academics in hybrid settings often reported diminished mentoring and professional development, compounding feelings of invisibility. Reduced access to informal networks deprives workers of key stress-buffering resources, such as peer support and recognition, thereby heightening vulnerability to anxiety and career insecurity.

2.3.4 Organizational Ambiguity and Inequity

Ambiguity in hybrid policies can be as stressful as workload itself. Mustajab (2024) found that unclear expectations about office presence fostered perceptions of unfairness and uncertainty about performance evaluation. Such ambiguity creates fertile ground for **proximity bias** the tendency to favor employees who are physically present which disadvantages those who rely more heavily on remote days, often due to caregiving needs (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024).

This dynamic introduces **inequity stress**: employees may feel penalized for exercising flexibility, especially women and minority workers who are more likely to take remote options. Over time, this erodes trust in organizational fairness and increases psychological strain.

2.3.5 Physical Health Risks

Although often overshadowed by psychological outcomes, hybrid work also introduces physical risks. Wahlström et al. (2023) used accelerometer data from 165 hybrid workers and found that home-working days involved significantly longer sitting bouts and fewer breaks compared to office days. Such sedentary behavior is associated with musculoskeletal strain, poor metabolic health, and reduced mood regulation.

Oakman et al. (2020) similarly documented increased sedentary behavior in remote workers during the pandemic, linking it to fatigue, weight gain, and long-term health risks. These findings underscore that hybrid stress is not confined to the psychological domain but extends into physical well-being, creating a psychosomatic loop where physical inactivity worsens mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression.

2.4 Psychological Well-Being Outcomes

The effects of hybrid work on psychological well-being are ambivalent and context-dependent, reflecting both potential benefits and substantial risks.

Positive outcomes. Many studies highlight the protective potential of hybrid work. Employees frequently report higher job satisfaction, improved work–life balance, and reduced stress associated with commuting (Bloom, 2024; Berger Ploszaj, 2025). Autonomy is a central mechanism: when employees can exercise control over when and where they work, hybrid arrangements provide resources that buffer stress and increase engagement. Bloom (2024) showed that structured hybrid models significantly improved retention and morale without reducing productivity, while Berger Ploszaj (2025), analyzing European survey data, found that hybrid flexibility correlated strongly with reduced perceived stress and enhanced satisfaction across genders.

Negative outcomes. Conversely, other research warns of heightened risks. Oakman et al. (2020) documented that working from home was associated with sleep disruption, musculoskeletal discomfort, and mental health strain, particularly when extended over time. Chaput et al. (2025) similarly reported that employees working from home more frequently showed elevated risks of depression, anxiety, and poor sleep hygiene, especially where organizational support was lacking. These studies emphasize that flexibility alone does not guarantee well-being if it is paired with high digital demands or insufficient recovery.

Dual outcomes. Trevino Garcia et al. (2025), in a large-scale Norwegian study of 24,763 office workers, provide strong evidence of hybrid work’s dual nature. On one hand, flexible hybrid arrangements were associated with lower levels of overall mental distress. On the other, more frequent WFH days and greater expectations of constant availability significantly increased work–life conflict and psychological strain. This paradox illustrates the JD-R model in practice: autonomy and flexibility (resources) can mitigate stress, but if overshadowed by technostress, blurred boundaries, or social isolation (demands), psychological well-being declines.

Overall, the evidence suggests that hybrid work functions as a conditional resource: beneficial where organizational design is intentional and supportive, but harmful where ambiguity, overload, or inequity dominate. This underscores the importance of organizational context in shaping outcomes.

2.5 Gendered Patterns in Hybrid and Remote Work

A recurring theme in the literature is that hybrid work is not experienced equally across genders. Gender roles, caregiving burdens, and cultural expectations strongly mediate psychological outcomes, often leaving women at greater risk of stress and burnout.

2.5.1 Gender Differences in Outcomes

Evidence consistently shows women report higher stress and lower well-being than men in remote or hybrid contexts (Lyzwinski, 2024; Castro-Trancón et al., 2024). For men, the autonomy and flexibility of hybrid work often translate into improved satisfaction and reduced stress. Oakman et al. (2020), however, found that for women, the same flexibility frequently exacerbated role conflict as they took on increased domestic responsibilities. This divergence illustrates that resources (autonomy, time saved from commuting) are not distributed evenly but are filtered through gendered household dynamics.

2.5.2 Caregiving and the “Double Shift”

Caregiving responsibilities are a central determinant of hybrid work experiences. Corrente et al. (2024) documented how professional women balancing childcare and eldercare reported significantly higher stress than men in equivalent positions. Hybrid work, rather than easing the burden, often intensified it by enabling and sometimes expecting simultaneous professional and domestic performance.

Cano et al. (2024) provide further evidence that the interaction of caregiving with housing insecurity exacerbates risks: women with both caregiving responsibilities and unstable housing conditions experienced significantly poorer sleep quality, higher chronic fatigue, and greater psychological strain compared to men or women without these compounding vulnerabilities. These findings echo Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 2011), showing how women in hybrid contexts face resource depletion across multiple domains, with insufficient opportunities for recovery.

2.5.3 Visibility and Career Penalties

Another recurring stressor is the visibility gap. Women who spend more time working remotely often risk being perceived as less committed, leading to fewer informal networking opportunities and diminished access to career advancement (Bloom, 2024; Shockley et al., 2024). This reflects the persistence of proximity bias, where managers unconsciously reward those physically present.

Shockley et al. (2024) warn that unless performance evaluation systems explicitly adapt to hybrid work, these biases will reinforce existing gender inequalities. The result is a paradox: while hybrid work may improve immediate work–life balance and retention for women, it simultaneously creates career insecurity and long-term stress tied to advancement prospects.

2.6 Intersectionality: Amplifying and Shaping Risk

2.6.1 Intersectionality as framework

Crenshaw's (1989) seminal concept of intersectionality highlights how overlapping social identities such as gender, race, class, disability, and sexuality produce unique and layered forms of vulnerability. Rather than simply adding categories (e.g., gender + race), intersectionality emphasizes how systems of power (patriarchy, racism, classism, heteronormativity) interact to create distinct lived experiences of stress and exclusion.

In the context of hybrid work, this means that two employees with the same gender identity may experience radically different stress trajectories depending on their race, caregiving status, income, or minority identity. Workplace stress researchers increasingly call for intersectional approaches, arguing that single-axis analyses risk obscuring the compounded disadvantages experienced by marginalized groups (Burgess, 2025; Salim, 2025). Intersectionality thus provides an essential lens for analyzing hybrid work outcomes, where flexibility and autonomy may empower some while amplifying vulnerabilities for others.

2.6.2 Compounded disadvantage

Race and class. A growing body of evidence shows that hybrid work outcomes are stratified along racial and socioeconomic lines. Moller et al. (2024) found that combining work with caregiving reduced depressive symptoms among White employees but not Black employees, reflecting broader systemic inequities in access to supportive resources and workplace recognition. Similarly, Bixby et al. (2024) reported that lower-income workers were less likely to benefit from hybrid flexibility because they lacked access to stress-buffering resources such as ergonomic home workspaces, reliable digital infrastructure, or paid caregiving. These disparities demonstrate that hybrid work amplifies existing structural inequalities rather than operating as a neutral benefit.

Gender-diverse employees. Cancela et al. (2025), in a systematic review, highlighted that transgender and gender-diverse workers face dual stressors: ongoing discrimination and microaggressions within organizations, coupled with the isolating effects of hybrid arrangements. While digital platforms provide flexibility, they may also intensify exclusion by shifting discriminatory behaviors into private channels (e.g., chat groups, virtual meetings), where accountability is limited. This aligns with minority stress theory, which shows that marginalized identities experience chronic strain due to stigma, concealment, and identity conflict.

Sexual and racial minorities. Sarno et al. (2021) found that sexual and gender minority people of color reported identity conflict and intersectional stigma, leading to chronic psychological strain. Hybrid arrangements, which often reduce face-to-face visibility, do not automatically alleviate these burdens and can sometimes exacerbate them by weakening access to in-person support networks and mentorship opportunities.

Together, these studies confirm that intersectionality shapes not just the quantity of stressors but also the quality of stress experiences how discrimination, resource deprivation, and identity conflict intersect to create chronic and cumulative strain.

2.6.3 Socioeconomic and occupational contexts

Intersectional inequalities are also evident in occupational hierarchies. Berger Ploszaj (2025) found that the benefits of hybrid work varied sharply by job status: higher-status professionals gained satisfaction and well-being from flexibility, while lower-paid workers often faced rigid hybrid mandates, less autonomy, and reduced access to organizational supports. For the latter, hybrid arrangements were less a matter of choice than of imposed schedules, creating added stress without the buffering benefits of flexibility.

This stratification highlights the need to integrate socioeconomic context into stress models like JD-R and COR. Autonomy, flexibility, and managerial support commonly treated as universal resources are in fact unequally distributed. Lower-income or precarious workers may face hybrid systems that increase demand without corresponding resources, resulting in heightened exhaustion and vulnerability. Conversely, higher-status employees can leverage hybrid models to enhance recovery, satisfaction, and career sustainability.

2.7 Stress-Management Strategies

The literature highlights that effective stress management in hybrid work requires multi-level interventions. Individual coping is important but insufficient if organizational cultures and policies fail to address structural inequalities. Similarly, technology design and equity-sensitive policies can either mitigate or amplify stress depending on implementation.

2.7.1 Individual coping

Hybrid workers frequently rely on boundary management tactics to maintain separation between work and non-work domains. Seinsche et al. (2024) found that employees developed routines such as structured schedules, physical workspace separation, “do-not-disturb” protocols, and negotiated caregiving arrangements to manage overlapping demands. These tactics helped sustain recovery time and reduced role conflict, particularly when households respected these boundaries.

Chu (2024) emphasizes the role of personal resources in buffering stress. Employees with proactive personality traits (e.g., high self-discipline, assertiveness in setting boundaries) reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion, even when demand was high. This aligns with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2011), which highlights the protective role of individual resources in preventing resource depletion.

However, the evidence consistently stresses the limits of individual coping. Seinsche et al. (2024) note that workers cannot indefinitely compensate for organizational expectations of constant availability. When autonomy is low, or when workloads are structurally excessive, individual strategies are insufficient. Without systemic changes, individual coping becomes an unequal resource, more accessible to higher-status employees with greater control over schedules.

2.7.2 Organizational practices

Organizational-level interventions have the greatest leverage in shaping well-being. Eng et al. (2024) found that hybrid workers valued clear hybrid policies, predictable scheduling, and opportunities for informal and formal social connection. These measures reduced uncertainty and mitigated isolation, enhancing engagement and satisfaction.

Mustajab (2024) highlights the importance of inclusive HR practices:

- **Manager training** to lead asynchronously and recognize remote contributions.
- **Equitable workload distribution** to prevent overburdening caregivers.
- **Access to resources** such as ergonomic support or mental health services.

Shockley et al. (2024) stress that performance evaluation systems must adapt. Traditional metrics that reward physical presence unintentionally penalize remote workers, particularly women and caregivers. Adopting hybrid-sensitive metrics for example, focusing on outputs rather than presence helps counter proximity bias and reduces gendered career penalties.

These practices map directly onto the **Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model**: by reducing demands (e.g., excessive availability) and enhancing resources (e.g., clarity, recognition, social support), organizations directly influence psychological outcomes.

2.7.3 Technology and digital wellbeing

Digital ecosystems are central to hybrid work, yet poorly managed technology infrastructures create technostress and cognitive overload. Bondanini et al. (2025) argue that organizations must design for digital well-being, recommending:

- **Meeting caps** to limit back-to-back video calls.
- **Asynchronous collaboration tools** to reduce pressure for instant responses.
- **No-meeting windows** to preserve focused work time.
- **Reduced tool fragmentation**, streamlining the number of platforms employees must manage.

Banerjee and Gupta (2024) found that constant switching between platforms (Zoom, Teams, Slack, email) was strongly linked to strain, while organizations that provided integrated systems reported higher satisfaction and lower technostress.

From a COR perspective, technology either preserves or depletes resources. Poorly designed systems accelerate exhaustion; well-structured digital environments conserve cognitive resources and protect well-being. Thus, technology management is not a neutral background factor but a core determinant of stress outcomes in hybrid work.

2.7.4 Equity-focused interventions

A recurring theme in the literature is that “neutral” policies often reproduce inequalities unless explicitly equity oriented. For example, flexible scheduling without caregiving support can advantage men more than women, as the latter disproportionately shoulder domestic responsibilities (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024).

Gender-sensitive interventions include:

- Formal caregiving leave.
- Subsidized childcare or eldercare.
- Equitable workload adjustments for employees with caregiving roles.

Cancela et al. (2025) emphasize protections for gender-diverse and transgender employees, who face heightened risks of discrimination and exclusion. Policies must go beyond formal “non-discrimination” statements to include inclusive career-development opportunities, anti-bias training, and mechanisms to address digital microaggressions in hybrid communication spaces.

Bixby et al. (2024) and Burgess (2025) further argue for addressing socioeconomic disparities: ensuring access to ergonomic equipment, reliable digital infrastructure, and mental health resources for lower-income employees. Without such interventions, hybrid work disproportionately benefits higher-status workers who already possess these resources.

Equity-focused policies thus extend stress management beyond individual resilience, reframing it as a matter of organizational justice and social equity.

2.8 Gaps in Literature

Despite growing research on hybrid work, several gaps remain that limit a comprehensive understanding of its impact on stress and well-being:

- **Limited intersectional analyses**
Much of the scholarship isolates gender or race as single axes of analysis, rather than exploring how overlapping identities shape hybrid work experiences. Intersectional approaches are increasingly called for, as studies show that disadvantage often compounds when gender intersects with race, class, or sexuality (Burgess, 2025; Salim, 2025).

- **Hybrid heterogeneity underexplored**

Many studies treat “hybrid work” as a uniform category, overlooking important variations in schedule types, levels of employee autonomy, and sectoral differences. Evidence suggests that stressors and resources differ substantially depending on whether hybrid models are fixed or flexible, employee-driven or management-imposed (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2024).
- **Lack of longitudinal evidence**

Most available studies are cross-sectional, limiting the ability to assess long-term outcomes of hybrid arrangements. Without longitudinal data, it is unclear whether well-being benefits or stressors accumulate over time and how they affect different groups differently (Oakman et al., 2020; Chaput et al., 2025).
- **Inconsistent measurement of outcomes**

Measures of psychological well-being vary widely across studies, ranging from self-reported satisfaction to clinical indicators of distress. This inconsistency complicates synthesis and reduces the comparability of findings across contexts.
- **Contextual and sectoral bias**

Research is disproportionately concentrated in Western, white-collar contexts, leaving out lower-paid occupations, service sectors, and non-Western settings. This narrow focus risks overlooking the distinct vulnerabilities faced by workers in less privileged socioeconomic and cultural environments.
- **Policy and intervention gap**

Few studies evaluate the effectiveness of equity-oriented organizational or policy interventions, such as caregiving support schemes, meeting caps, or anti-discrimination training. Even when such initiatives are discussed, rigorous evaluation designs are rare, making it difficult to draw conclusions about their impact on stress outcomes (Shockley et al., 2024).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodological approach used to conduct the literature review on *Stress Management in Hybrid Work: Gendered and Intersectional Impacts on Psychological Well-Being*. The aim of this review is to synthesize and critically analyze existing scholarly research to understand how hybrid work arrangements affect stress levels and psychological well-being, with particular attention to gendered experiences and intersectional dynamics.

Given that the body of literature on hybrid work, stress management, and intersectionality is relatively new and interdisciplinary, a narrative literature review with thematic analysis was chosen as the methodology. This approach allows for flexibility in examining a wide range of studies, while also enabling the identification of recurring themes, theoretical perspectives, and gaps in current knowledge. Unlike a systematic review, which is more rigid and protocol-driven, the narrative review is well-suited to a bachelor's thesis because it balances comprehensiveness with accessibility and interpretive depth.

3.2 Rationale for the Review Methodology

The choice of a narrative literature review is guided by three key reasons:

1. **Breadth and Diversity of the Topic;** the research area spans organizational psychology, gender studies, occupational health, and intersectionality theory. A narrative review makes it possible to integrate insights from these diverse domains.
2. **Emerging and Evolving Literature;** Hybrid work and its psychological implications have gained prominence particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. A rigid systematic protocol could exclude relevant conceptual and exploratory works that do not fit narrow inclusion criteria.
3. **Bachelor-Level Feasibility;** the narrative approach provides a structured yet manageable way to collect, synthesize, and analyze literature without the extensive resources required for a full systematic review.

For transparency, however, elements of systematic rigor (e.g., database searching, inclusion/exclusion criteria) have been integrated to strengthen credibility.

3.3 Search Strategy

A structured search strategy was applied to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, reviews, and empirical studies relevant to the research questions.

3.3.1 Databases

The following academic databases were consulted due to their wide coverage of social sciences, psychology, and health research:

- **Scopus**
- **Web of Science**
- **PsycINFO**
- **PubMed**
- **Google Scholar** (supplementary search for grey literature and recent preprints)

3.3.2 Keywords and Search Terms

Search terms were designed to capture the central concepts of the study:

- **Hybrid work / Remote work / Telework / Flexible work**
- **Stress / Stress management / Psychological well-being / Mental health**
- **Gender differences / Gender roles / Women / Men / Non-binary**
- **Intersectionality / Multiple identities / Inequality / Diversity**

Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to combine terms, for example:

- (“hybrid work” OR “remote work” OR “telework”) AND (“stress” OR “psychological well-being”)
- (“gender differences” OR “women” OR “men” OR “non-binary”) AND (“stress management”)
- (“intersectionality” OR “diversity” OR “inequality”) AND (“mental health” OR “well-being”)

3.3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters
- Published between 2015–2025 (to capture recent developments in hybrid work)
- English language
- Focused on stress, well-being, gender, or intersectionality in the context of hybrid/remote work
- Both qualitative and quantitative studies

Exclusion criteria:

- Articles not directly related to stress management or well-being
- Studies outside the workplace or organizational setting
- Non-academic sources (blogs, magazines, opinion pieces) unless cited for background context

3.4 Screening and Selection Process

The initial database searches yielded over 200 records. To ensure the final sample was both relevant and manageable, a multi-stage screening and selection process was carried out. This process was guided by the main principles of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, though adapted and simplified to suit the scope of a bachelor's-level thesis.

The procedure consisted of four key stages:

1. Identification

All records retrieved from the selected databases were collected using the predefined search terms. At this stage, no filters were applied beyond the initial database parameters.

2. Screening

Duplicates were removed, and the remaining titles and abstracts were screened to exclude clearly irrelevant studies (e.g., those outside the fields of organizational psychology, occupational health, or gender studies).

3. Eligibility

Full texts of the potentially relevant studies were reviewed to confirm they met the established inclusion criteria (peer-reviewed, 2015–2025, English-language, and focused on hybrid/remote work, stress, well-being, gender, or intersectionality). Earlier foundational studies predating 2015 were included selectively where they provided essential theoretical grounding.

4. **Inclusion**

The final sample consisted of approximately 20–25 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. These formed the basis for the literature synthesis and thematic analysis presented in the findings chapter.

3.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction involved systematically recording key information from each selected study, including:

- Author(s), year, and country of study
- Research aim and methodology
- Sample characteristics
- Key findings related to stress, gender, intersectionality, and psychological well-being

The extracted data were then organized into themes using a thematic analysis approach. This involved:

1. **Initial coding**

Assigning labels to recurring ideas (e.g., “digital fatigue,” “boundary management,” “caregiving responsibilities”).

2. **Theme development**

Grouping codes into higher-level themes (e.g., “Stressors in hybrid work,” “Gendered coping strategies,” “Intersectional disparities”).

3. **Synthesis**

Comparing themes across studies to identify consistencies, contradictions, and research gaps.

3.6 Limitations of the Methodology

Several limitations should be acknowledged:

- **Database Scope**

While multiple databases were searched, some relevant studies may have been missed, especially those in non-English publications.

- **Narrative Approach**

Unlike systematic reviews, this method may introduce subjectivity in study selection and interpretation.

- **Time frame**

The 2015–2025 range prioritizes recent literature, which may exclude earlier foundational works on workplace stress and gender.

- **Emerging Research Area**

Hybrid work is still evolving, and findings may become outdated as workplace practices shift.

Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology provides a robust yet flexible framework suitable for addressing the research aim at the bachelor's level.

Chapter 4 – Thematic Review

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the findings of the reviewed literature on stress management in hybrid work, with particular emphasis on gendered and intersectional impacts on psychological well-being. The chapter draws on 30 peer-reviewed studies, systematic reviews, and conceptual contributions published between 2015 and 2025. A thematic analysis was used to identify four main themes:

1. **Stressors in hybrid work**

key psychosocial and physical demands associated with hybrid arrangements.

2. **Gendered experiences of stress and coping**

how men, women, and gender-diverse individuals experience hybrid work differently.

3. **Intersectional influences**

how overlapping identities (race, social class, caregiving status, disability, gender identity) shape outcomes.

4. **Stress-management strategies**

responses at individual, organizational, and policy levels.

Together, these findings provide a comprehensive picture of how hybrid work arrangements influence employee well-being, with implications for equity and inclusion.

4.2 Stressors in Hybrid Work

Hybrid work offers potential benefits such as flexibility and reduced commuting, but the literature consistently identifies new and exacerbated stressors. These stressors are multidimensional, spanning psychological demands, technological overload, social challenges, and physical health risks.

4.2.1 Boundary Blurring and Role Overload

One of the most prominent stressors is boundary blurring between work and home roles. Hybrid and remote work arrangements often erase clear temporal and spatial distinctions, leading to role overload and difficulties in recovery (Seinsche et al., 2024). The blurring of boundaries manifests in longer working

hours, pressure to be constantly available, and increased interference between personal and professional obligations.

Trevino Garcia et al. (2025), in a large Norwegian study of 24,763 office workers, found that flexible hybrid work reduced mental distress, but it was also strongly associated with increased work–life and life–work conflict. Similarly, Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2024) emphasized that hybrid work entails constant shifts between solo and collaborative modes, contributing to fragmented workdays and cumulative stress.

These findings resonate with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model: hybrid work increases job demands (role overload, blurred boundaries) while autonomy and flexibility act as resources that buffer stress if adequately supported (Coulston et al., 2025).

4.2.2 Technostress and Digital Fatigue

The reliance on digital platforms introduces unique forms of stress labeled as technostress and digital fatigue. A mixed-methods study by Banerjee & Gupta, 2024 showed that constant switching between digital tools, high expectations of availability, and video-call overload are common complaints among hybrid professionals. These demands were strongly correlated with role conflict and reduced well-being.

Bondanini et al. (2025) characterized this as the “dual impact of digital connectivity”: while digital tools enable flexibility and productivity, they also heighten cognitive load, undermine focus, and create continuous partial attention. Employees reported exhaustion after extended video meetings, contributing to emotional depletion and burnout.

Chu (2024) adds that digital demands function as both challenge stressors (stimulating, but resource-draining) and hindrance stressors (frustrating barriers to effective work). When not balanced by adequate resources, both contribute to emotional exhaustion, which mediates withdrawal behaviors in hybrid contexts.

4.2.3 Social Isolation and Reduced Belonging

Hybrid work can also reduce informal social interactions and weaken team cohesion. Marozva and Pelser (2025), studying academics, reported that employees experienced **weakened belonging**, **delayed feedback**, and **strained collegial relationships** in hybrid environments. Newer staff in particular struggled with visibility and integration into organizational culture.

Eng et al. (2024) found that hybrid workers often identify lack of social connection and limited informal interactions as major stressors, affecting both morale and mental well-being. This aligns with Oakman et al.’s (2020) review, which noted that remote and hybrid work arrangements risk increasing loneliness and anxiety if not mitigated by proactive communication strategies.

Bloom (2024), however, reported that well-designed hybrid arrangements (with structured in-office days) can maintain collaboration while avoiding isolation. This highlights the importance of organizational design in mitigating social stressors.

4.2.4 Physical Behavior Changes and Health Risks

Physical behavior changes are another under-recognized stressor. A study of 165 hybrid workers (938 days of accelerometer data) found that working from home (WFH) days were more sedentary, with longer uninterrupted sitting bouts compared to office days (Wahlström et al., 2023). These physical risks have implications for long-term health and psychological well-being, as sedentary behavior correlates with fatigue, sleep disruption, and poorer mood regulation.

Intersectional evidence also shows that housing conditions shape health outcomes. Cano et al. (2024) demonstrated that women experiencing housing insecurity and moderate caregiving burdens reported worse sleep quality, chronic fatigue, and stress symptoms compared to more secure peers.

4.3 Gendered Experiences of Stress and Coping

Gender plays a central role in shaping hybrid work outcomes. The literature consistently finds that women experience higher stress levels in hybrid and remote work contexts, primarily due to caregiving responsibilities, gender norms, and reduced workplace visibility.

4.3.1 Caregiving Responsibilities and Domestic Burden

Hybrid work often intensifies the “double shift” for women. Castro-Trancón et al. (2024), in their systematic review, concluded that teleworking reinforces gender inequalities by increasing women’s unpaid domestic and caregiving workload. Corrente et al. (2024) similarly found that professional women reported significantly higher stress levels during COVID-19 compared to men, as they balanced work tasks with childcare and eldercare.

Cano et al. (2024) confirmed that women with reproductive workloads and housing insecurity faced disproportionate mental health risks, including poor sleep and psychosomatic complaints. These findings illustrate how gender interacts with material conditions to shape stress.

4.3.2 Gender and Psychological Well-Being

Wells (2023) reported that women in remote and hybrid settings consistently experienced higher anxiety and lower well-being compared to men, particularly when caregiving demands were high. Oakman et al. (2020) similarly emphasized gender disparities in their rapid review, noting that men were more likely to benefit from increased autonomy, while women experienced elevated stress.

At the same time, Bloom (2024) found that hybrid arrangements significantly improved job satisfaction and retention among women, suggesting that when organizational support is present, hybrid work can act as a protective factor rather than a stressor.

4.3.3 Visibility, Career Penalties, and Gender Norms

Another theme is the **visibility gap**. Women who spend more time working remotely often face reduced career advancement opportunities, leading to insecurity and stress (Bloom, 2024). Shockley et al. (2024) note that hybrid work can unintentionally reinforce gendered career penalties if promotion and performance evaluation remain biased toward physical presence.

4.4 Intersectional Influences on Psychological Well-Being

Gender alone does not fully explain variations in hybrid work stress. An intersectional perspective highlights how race, socioeconomic status, caregiving status, housing, and gender identity compound risks.

4.4.1 Race and Socioeconomic Status

Bixby et al. (2024) argue that socioeconomic inequalities significantly influence access to stress-buffering resources such as ergonomic workspaces, caregiving support, and flexible scheduling. Lower-income employees often face prescriptive hybrid schedules and lack access to supportive infrastructure, which exacerbates stress.

Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study (2004–2018) shows that combining work with caregiving duties was associated with fewer depressive symptoms for White men and women but not for Black men and women (Moller et al., 2024). This demonstrates that race moderates the mental health effects of hybrid work and caregiving, reflecting broader structural inequalities.

4.4.2 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Cancela et al. (2025), in a systematic review, reported that transgender and gender-diverse employees face significant workplace stressors, including discrimination, reduced inclusion, and microaggressions in digital communication. Hybrid work did not automatically alleviate these challenges and sometimes exacerbated feelings of exclusion from informal in-office networks.

Sarno et al. (2021) highlights that individuals with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., racial and sexual minorities) experience intersectional minority stress, which manifests as identity conflict, stigma, and chronic psychological strain.

4.4.3 Housing Insecurity and Caregiving Burden

Cano et al. (2024) demonstrated that women facing both housing insecurity and caregiving responsibilities suffered disproportionately from stress, poor sleep, and chronic fatigue. These findings confirm that material insecurities interact with gender to worsen outcomes.

4.4.4 Underrepresented Groups in Hybrid Work

An exploratory case study by Bhowmick et al. (2024) found that software professionals from underrepresented groups (LGBTQ+, neurodiverse, and disabled employees) valued hybrid flexibility but also reported higher isolation and lack of infrastructure support. This underscores the need to consider how intersectional status influences both benefits and harms of hybrid models.

4.5 Stress-Management Strategies

The literature identifies a range of strategies at individual, organizational, and policy levels. Importantly, strategies are not equally accessible to all groups, reinforcing the need for an equity lens.

4.5.1 Individual Coping and Boundary Tactics

Employees frequently adopt boundary management strategies such as establishing work schedules, setting digital limits, and creating separate workspaces at home (Seinsche et al., 2024). These tactics help preserve recovery time and reduce role conflict.

Chu (2024) found that individuals with high proactive personality traits experienced less emotional exhaustion from hybrid stressors, indicating that personal resources can buffer stress. However, such strategies cannot fully compensate for structural inequities (Banerjee & Gupta, 2024/2023).

4.5.2 Organizational Practices and Leadership

Organizational support is consistently identified as critical. Eng et al. (2024) reported that hybrid workers valued clear policies, structured schedules, and opportunities for social connection as essential for well-being. Mustajab (2024) emphasized that flexible scheduling, manager training, and inclusive HR practices mitigate stress and foster equitable participation.

Shockley et al. (2024) recommended that organizations adopt hybrid-friendly performance metrics to avoid penalizing employees who spend less time in the office, a practice particularly important for women and caregivers.

4.5.3 Policy and Equity-Oriented Interventions

Equity-focused policies are essential to prevent hybrid work from reinforcing inequalities. Castro-Trancón et al. (2024) call for gender-sensitive hybrid policies, including caregiving leave and fair distribution of workload. Cancela et al. (2025) argue for inclusive policies to protect gender-diverse workers from discrimination and ensure equitable access to career opportunities.

4.6 Gaps and Divergences

Despite rapid growth in the literature, several gaps remain:

1. **Limited intersectional analysis**

Most studies still treat gender or race independently rather than analyzing intersecting identities.

2. **Variability in hybrid configurations**

Few studies differentiate between voluntary vs. mandatory hybrid work, making it difficult to generalize outcomes.

3. **Longitudinal evidence**

The majority of studies are cross-sectional, limiting understanding of long-term stress and coping trajectories.

4. **Underrepresentation of gender minorities**

Empirical evidence for non-binary and transgender workers remains scarce.

5. **Intervention evaluations**

Few studies rigorously test the effectiveness of organizational policies aimed at stress reduction and equity.

4.7 Summary of Findings

The literature shows that hybrid work introduces both protective and harmful elements for psychological well-being. Stressors such as boundary blurring, technostress, and social isolation are common, while flexibility and autonomy can enhance well-being when adequately supported. Gender remains a powerful determinant, with women disproportionately affected by caregiving burdens and visibility penalties. Intersectional analyses reveal that overlapping identities (e.g., gender × race × class) further compound risks. Finally, effective stress management requires a multilevel approach: individual coping tactics, organizational practices, and equity-oriented policies.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings of the literature review. Whereas Chapter 4 synthesized the evidence thematically, this chapter critically discusses the patterns, tensions, and contradictions that emerge. The discussion situates the findings within established theoretical frameworks, highlights their implications for equity and organizational practice, and identifies avenues for future research.

5.2 Hybrid Work Stressors in Theoretical Perspective

Hybrid work emerged as a double-edged phenomenon. On the one hand, flexibility and autonomy reduce commuting stress and support well-being (Bloom, 2024; Trevino Garcia et al., 2025). On the other, employees face blurred boundaries, technostress, and social isolation (Seinsche et al., 2024; Banerjee & Gupta, 2024/2023; Marozva & Pelsler, 2025).

These dynamics align closely with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Hybrid work expands *demands* through constant digital connectivity and role conflict, while simultaneously offering *resources* such as autonomy. The balance between these determines outcomes. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2011) further explains why prolonged demands without replenishment (e.g., endless virtual meetings) lead to emotional exhaustion.

Crucially, stressors are not inherent to hybrid work but are shaped by organizational design. For example, unstructured hybrid arrangements foster isolation, while structured models maintain collaboration (Bloom, 2024). This highlights the importance of policy and managerial practices in shaping whether hybrid work functions as a demand or a resource.

5.3 Gendered Inequalities in Hybrid Work

A consistent thread in the literature is the persistence of gendered inequalities.

5.3.1 Caregiving and the “Double Shift”

Hybrid work often exacerbates domestic burdens for women, who disproportionately shoulder childcare and caregiving responsibilities (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024; Corrente et al., 2024). While flexibility allows some women to manage responsibilities more effectively, studies show this often comes at the cost of reduced recovery and increased fatigue (Cano et al., 2024). This demonstrates how hybrid work interacts with entrenched gender norms rather than neutralizing them.

5.3.2 Visibility and Career Progression

Women working more remotely risk reduced visibility, undermining advancement opportunities (Shockley et al., 2024). This paradox greater satisfaction and retention (Bloom, 2024) but diminished recognition reflects how organizational cultures still equate physical presence with commitment. The result is that flexibility becomes both an enabler of short-term well-being and a potential barrier to long-term career growth.

5.3.3 Gendered Coping

Women are more likely to adopt boundary strategies to manage hybrid stress (Seinsche et al., 2024). Yet individual coping is insufficient when organizational expectations of constant availability persist. This underscores the need for systemic change, not just personal adaptation.

5.4 Intersectionality: Compounding Inequalities

While gender provides insight, intersectional evidence reveals a more complex picture.

5.4.1 Race, Class, and Structural Inequalities

Studies show that hybrid benefits are unevenly distributed. For example, combining work and caregiving reduced depressive symptoms among White employees but not among Black employees (Moller et al., 2024). Similarly, Bixby et al. (2024) emphasize that lower-income workers often lack access to stress-buffering resources such as ergonomic workspaces or paid caregiving. These findings highlight how hybrid work intersects with **systemic inequalities**.

5.4.2 Gender-Diverse and Marginalized Groups

Transgender and gender-diverse workers face heightened stress from exclusion and microaggressions, sometimes exacerbated in hybrid contexts (Cancela et al., 2025). Minority stress theory (Sarno et al., 2021) helps explain why overlapping marginalized identities amplify psychological strain. Case studies of underrepresented groups (Bhowmick et al., 2024) similarly show that while hybrid arrangements offer flexibility, they can deepen isolation if not paired with inclusive practices.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that hybrid work cannot be assessed in isolation from broader structural inequities. Stress is not evenly distributed but compounded by the intersections of gender, race, class, and identity.

5.5 Critical Tensions in the Literature

Several contradictions emerge:

- **Flexibility vs. Conflict:**

Flexibility reduces mental distress (Trevino Garcia et al., 2025) but also increases work–life conflict. This suggests that flexibility alone is insufficient without boundary-supportive policies.

- **Satisfaction vs. Penalty:**

Hybrid work enhances satisfaction (Bloom, 2024) but can penalize career advancement for women (Shockley et al., 2024). This tension reflects structural gender bias.

- **Challenge vs. Hindrance Stressors:**

Digital demands can motivate but also exhaust (Chu, 2024). Sustained demands transform “challenges” into hindrances, raising questions about workload sustainability.

- **Intersectional Blind Spots:**

Most studies isolate single identities. Where intersectionality is considered (e.g., Moller et al., 2024; Cano et al., 2024), compounded disadvantages emerge, suggesting current scholarship underestimates inequality.

5.6 Implications for Theory and Practice

5.6.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings extend the JD-R and COR models by highlighting that demands and resources are socially distributed. Hybrid stressors are mediated by gender norms, socioeconomic status, and organizational culture. Intersectionality adds explanatory power by showing how multiple identities shape the distribution of demands and resources.

5.6.2 Organizational Implications

- **Design hybrid models intentionally:**

Structured schedules reduce isolation (Bloom, 2024).

- **Support caregivers:**

Gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible leave and equitable workload distribution, are necessary (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024).

- **Address proximity bias:**

Performance evaluations must adapt to prevent penalizing remote workers (Shockley et al., 2024).

- **Inclusive practices:**

Training managers and investing in equitable resources (technology, ergonomics) support marginalized employees (Cancela et al., 2025; Bixby et al., 2024).

5.6.3 Policy Implications

National and organizational policies must move beyond generic flexibility to address structural inequities. Without attention to housing insecurity, caregiving, or minority stress, hybrid work risks reproducing rather than alleviating inequality.

5.7 Limitations and Future Directions

The reviewed literature has several limitations:

- Over-reliance on **cross-sectional data**, limiting causal conclusions.
- Focus on **white-collar, Western contexts**, excluding precarious or non-Western workers.
- Narrow treatment of **gender as binary**, neglecting non-binary and trans experiences.
- Limited evaluation of **interventions**; most studies describe problems rather than testing solutions.

Future research should:

1. Use **longitudinal methods** to assess hybrid work's long-term effects.
2. Employ **intersectional designs** integrating gender, race, class, and identity.
3. Examine hybrid work in **diverse global and labor market contexts**.
4. Rigorously evaluate **organizational interventions** for stress reduction and equity.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Restating the Aim

This thesis reviewed and synthesized scholarly research on stress management in hybrid work, with particular attention to gendered and intersectional impacts on psychological well-being. The purpose was not only to map existing findings but also to interpret how hybrid work interacts with social identities and organizational structures to shape unequal outcomes.

6.2 Summary of Core Insights

The review highlighted five central insights:

- **Hybrid work is ambivalent.** It offers flexibility and autonomy but also generates new stressors boundary blurring, digital fatigue, social isolation, and organizational ambiguity.
- **Outcomes depend on context.** Well-designed hybrid models can reduce stress and improve satisfaction (Bloom, 2024), while poorly managed ones heighten exhaustion and disengagement (Chu, 2024; Bondanini et al., 2025).
- **Gender remains decisive.** Women are disproportionately affected by caregiving burdens, reduced visibility, and unequal cultural expectations of availability (Castro-Trancón et al., 2024; Corrente et al., 2024).
- **Intersectionality deepens inequalities.** Stress exposure and coping capacity vary across race, class, housing conditions, and gender identity (Moller et al., 2024; Cano et al., 2024; Cancela et al., 2025). Hybrid work reflects and often amplifies these inequities.
- **Stress management must be systemic.** Individual coping is insufficient; organizational design, inclusive HR practices, and equity-oriented policies are decisive.

6.3 Interpretation of Findings

The findings challenge the portrayal of hybrid work as a universally positive “future of work” model. Instead, hybrid arrangements act as a **mirror of organizational and societal structures**: when supported by equitable cultures and policies, they become a resource; when inequities persist, they reproduce and magnify disadvantages.

Theoretically, the review extends the **Job Demands–Resources model** and **Conservation of Resources theory** by showing that demands and resources are socially distributed rather than evenly shared. Gender norms, socioeconomic status, and systemic inequities filter how hybrid stressors are experienced.

By integrating insights from **stress research, gender studies, and intersectionality theory**, this thesis contributes a more holistic understanding of hybrid work’s uneven impacts. It highlights that focusing on averages risks obscuring the lived realities of marginalized groups, particularly those who face overlapping disadvantages.

6.4 Implications

- **For theory:**

Stress models must incorporate equity and intersectionality as core dimensions rather than add-ons.

- **For organizations:**

Hybrid work design must be intentional, with clear policies, inclusive performance metrics, and resources that address caregiving and minority stress.

- **For policy:**

Broader support caregiving provisions, anti-discrimination protections, and digital health guidelines are essential to prevent hybrid work from reinforcing inequalities.

6.5 Future Research

Several gaps remain:

- The need for **longitudinal studies** tracking hybrid work’s cumulative effects.
- **Intersectional designs** capturing overlapping identities and diverse vulnerabilities.
- Research on **non-Western and precarious labor markets**, moving beyond white-collar samples.
- Rigorous **evaluations of interventions**, particularly equity-focused policies.

6.6 Final Reflection

Hybrid work is now embedded in the future of employment, but its promise remains conditional. This thesis demonstrates that hybrid arrangements can foster psychological well-being only when organizations and policymakers actively address the gendered and intersectional inequities shaping workers' experiences. Without such interventions, hybrid work risks reproducing existing inequalities under the guise of flexibility.

The central contribution of this thesis is to show that stress management in hybrid work is not merely a matter of individual resilience, but of organizational justice and social equity. The challenge ahead is to design hybrid systems that not only accommodate diverse workers but also support, include, and empower them.

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