Reconfiguring Employment Relations through Hybrid Work and Employee Voice in the Era of Distributed Work in Ibadan

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Abstract

Hybrid work is exponentially revolutionising the nature of working relationships, allocating greater discretion, managerial control and opportunity for employee voice between physical and virtual environments. Nonetheless, there is still limited evidence of the impact of digital access on employee influence in Nigerian organisations. The study explored the relationship between autonomy in hybrid-work arrangements, employee voice, digital communication, hierarchy in the workplace and perceived reconfiguration of employment relations in selected organisations in Ibadan. A multistage selection procedure was reported for a total of 427 employees who were selected for a cross-sectional questionnaire survey. Mean, standard deviation and multiple linear regression model were presented. The most common hybrid work model was balanced (40.0%). The highest autonomy ratings were given to scheduling autonomy (M = 3.82) and locational discretion (M = 3.76) followed by employee feedback influencing management decisions (M = 3.38). The reported model explained 61% of the variance in perceived employment-relations reconfiguration ($R^2 = 0.61$; $F(4, 422) = 165.34$, $p < .001$); employee voice had the largest positive standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 9.17$, $p < .001$), while hierarchy was negatively associated ($\beta = -0.18$, $t = -4.02$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that hybrid working is a new approach to work which is based on autonomy, voice, digital connectivity and less hierarchical constraints. Transparency of the rules for hybrid work, responsiveness of voice systems and protection against intrusive digital monitoring are needed.

Keywords: Hybrid work, employee voice, employment relations, digital communication, workplace hierarchy, Ibadan

Introduction

Globally, hybrid work is more of a restructuring of work instead of a mere shift of location. It brings together both on-site and remote work, which alters the way employees exercise discretion, how managers monitor work, how colleagues coordinate work and how employees voice concerns. These changes have consequences for employment relations because the employment relationship is not just about the exchange of labour in return for payment, it is also about the sharing of power, participation, trust and control in organisations. A two-day-per-week work-from-home policy in a Chinese tech firm was shown to boost employee satisfaction and lower turnover rates without hurting performance ratings, according to data from a randomised trial of 1,612 workers at the company (Bloom, Han, & Liang, 2024). The results, however, may not be extrapolated to Nigerian organisations where digital infrastructure, occupational structure and management practices may differ.

This relationship is characterised by employee voice, or the sharing of ideas, concerns and suggestions about work that are meant to have an impact on organisational decisions. Digital platforms can help communication to be faster and can broaden the access to meetings, but access to a channel does not equate with safe communication and response from management. Nyfoudi, Kwon and Wilkinson (2024) highlight the importance of human-resource practices and the effectiveness of HR systems in influencing employee voice. The study of the Nigerian telecom workers also reveals the importance of high-performance work systems and stewardship climate and trust in supervisors for voice behaviour (Badru et al., 2024). The results indicate that technology should be explored in conjunction with the organisational relationships in which the contributions of employees are received and acted upon.

The issue raised in this study is not just the existence of hybrid working in Ibadan workplaces, but rather the extent to which it occurs. Whether the increased discretion over time and location, the access to voice mechanisms, and the effectiveness of digital communication are related to perceived changes in employment relations and whether workplace hierarchy limits these changes. Hybrid options can help provide more flexibility and more digital monitoring. Similarly, virtual meetings can be used to speak but do not ensure that employee feedback is used to make decisions. These tensions require the separation of access to communication from consequential participation, and autonomy from freedom from managerial control.

Ibadan is a relevant setting, as it is a significant urban and administrative hub in southwestern Nigeria, where professional, administrative, managerial and technical workers work in both public and private institutions whose activities could allow for some remote or digitally mediated work. However, the study cannot be said to be more suitable than Lagos or Kano without comparative evidence. This is because it is not based on an unproven assumption of metropolitan superiority, but on an analysis of hybrid-work relations in the organisations that were sampled. The findings are therefore only generalisable to the eligible employees within the selected organisations, with the caveat of an adequate sampling frame and representative sample.

The study is unique in combining autonomy and managerial control, employee voice and influence, digital communication and workplace hierarchy in one employment-relations model. The empirical value of it is dependent on the transparent definition of each construct and on statistical tests that correspond to the research questions. The cross-sectional design can only establish associations, but not that hybrid work led to changes in employment relations.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The general aim was to investigate the relationships between perceived reconfiguration of employment relations between employees in selected organisations in Ibadan and the variables of hybrid-work autonomy, employee voice, digital communication and workplace hierarchy.

The specific objectives were to:

- Explain what hybrid working is and how employees who are eligible for it report feeling about hybrid working and their levels of autonomy and managerial control;
- review staff access to voice mechanisms, and staff perceptions of their influence on work decisions; and
- measure employees' perceptions of digital communication and the continued existence of hierarchical structures in the workplace; and
- Assess the independent links between hybrid-work autonomy, employee voice, digital communication and workplace hierarchy with reconfiguration of employment relations.

The null hypotheses were:

H01: Autonomous use of hybrid work is not significantly related to perceived reconfiguration of employment relations.

H02: Employee voice is not significantly associated with perceived reconfiguration of employment relations.

H03: Digital communication is not significantly related to the perceived reconfiguration of employment relations.

H04: There is no significant relationship between workplace hierarchy and perceived reconfiguration of employment relations.

Literature Review

The integration of Hybrid Work, Autonomy and Managerial Control

Hybrid work is a working arrangement where employees work at a company's location and at another location, typically with the aid of information and communication technologies. It should be differentiated from the completely remote and from flexible scheduling without a change in work place. In the realm of employment relations, it's not just about the number of days away from the office; it's also about how much control workers have over their work location and schedule, how clearly their performance is defined, their access to resources, and how much managerial oversight they receive. Bloom et al. (2024) offer experimental support for the effectiveness of a structured hybrid model in terms of satisfaction and retention without compromising performance in the organisation examined. The findings are significant, but not generalisable; that is, it will not be possible to conclude that all hybrid arrangements yield the same results.

Hybrid working can spread control instead of taking it away. Staff have more time and space flexibility, and managers will have to place greater trust in digital activity indicators, output targets and scheduled check-ins. The question is then: is autonomy substantive (as an organisational opportunity to arrange one's work within clear responsibilities) or conditional (as a result of more intense surveillance)? The average scores reported by the study indicate that participants felt there was a high level of scheduling and location discretion and that they will continue to monitor their child's digital activities. These are descriptive ratings and do not necessarily imply that the combination of working from home and the workplace had a negative or positive impact on autonomy or control.

Employee Voice, Participation and Influence

Employee voice encompasses the employees' informal or formal dissemination of ideas, thoughts, and concerns, which they hope will affect the way the organisation functions. Voice can be direct (talk to a supervisor, or participate in a virtual meeting) or representative (communicate with a union or staff representative). Having a channel is just one of the components of a successful voice system. Employees also require psychological and procedural safety (sense of management considering their input) and feedback on what follows after. Nyfoudi et al. (2024) define employee voice in terms of HR practices and HR-system strength, and Badru et al. (2024) found that HPWS and trust-based conditions are factors in voice behaviour in a sample of 376 customer-contact employees in the telecommunications industry in Nigeria.

The most common voice mechanism mentioned in the present manuscript was virtual staff meetings, and the least common voice indicator was perceived influence of feedback on managerial decisions. Combined, these descriptive trends indicate a potential expression-influence gap: employees might have avenues for expressing themselves, but may not be as confident that what they contribute to the decision-making process actually influences it. This interpretation should be validated using the appropriate scale items and should not be

interpreted as a cause-and-effect relationship.

The Use of Digital Communication and the Hierarchy in the Workplace

Digital communication includes all aspects of communication related to work, such as email, messaging systems, video meeting and collaborative applications. Some of the benefits it can offer are speed, asynchronous exchange and increased access to colleagues in different locations. It has some drawbacks, such as the lack of equality in access, information overload, less informal interaction, and the fact that the record of exchanges remains, while also potentially increasing managerial control. Organisational hierarchy is not a thing of the past when it comes to digital channels. The messages that are heard and the ideas that are implemented may be influenced by seniority, status, gendered power relations and supervisory discretion.

Skountridaki, Lee and Rouhani (2024) demonstrate that employees' hybrid preferences can be linked to the dissatisfaction with the workplace and the issues of employee voice. Their analysis suggests that location preferences and voice are related work place issues, not that remote access is inherently influential. In the current study, the mean for rapid communication was higher than the mean for supervisor access, and the respondents indicated that there were hierarchical barriers in digital communications. This pattern is consistent with the hypothesis that quicker communication and more equal participation are two different outcomes.

The Integrating Outcome is Employment Relations

Employment relations has to do with the formal and informal relationships between employers, employees, and their representatives, and authority, cooperation, conflict, participation, fairness and the regulation of work. These relations are performed in both the physical and digital world in hybrid settings. In this study, ‘perceived reconfiguration of employment relations’ needs to be operationalised as a distinct dependent construct, in a way that involves several items measuring changes in autonomy, participation, communication, accountability and the way in which workplace concerns are managed. It should not just be a rehash of the four predictors, because the regression has the potential of measuring the outcome on variables that are conceptually similar to the explanatory variables.

Conceptual Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature can be synthesised in five ways: (1) clarify the concepts; (2) compare the claims and evidence; (3) critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of the constructs; (4) relate the constructs to each other; and (5) identify the remaining empirical question. There is existing evidence that hybrid working can help satisfy and retain employees in specific circumstances, that voice is partly about organisational systems and trust, and digital communication is not always a barrier to hierarchy. The evidence presented here, however, does not provide any evidence of how these dimensions interact to influence perceived employment-relations reconfiguration among the eligible workers in Ibadan. The study is able to answer this contextual and analytical question if there is a good documentation of its outcome measure and sampling frame.

Theoretical Framework

Influential sociological formulation of Social Exchange Theory in 1964, social relationships are a process of exchanges in which individuals give valued resources and form expectations of reciprocity over time (Blau, 1964). Exchanges may include material resources as well as less tangible resources like respect, trust, support, discretion and recognition. At work, employees can be motivated and contribute positively when they feel treated fairly and supported by the organisation, and they may lack trust and willingness to cooperate when they feel they are not being treated fairly or supported by the organisation. The assumptions underlying this study are: (1) actors prize resources offered by others; (2) exchanges create reciprocal expectations; (3) trust is

built over time of repeated exchanges, not in advance; and (4) power may emerge when one party has control over resources valued by the other. The theory is relevant to hybrid working because these assumptions are applicable to the experience of autonomy, reliable communication and genuine voice as organisational resources, and intrusive monitoring and unresponsive management as evidence of an imbalanced exchange.

The theory's importance lies in the linking of organisational practices to relational outcomes and the fact that the quality of treatment may be important beyond the formal contractual provisions. It also provides an opportunity to view employee voice as more than just a communication channel: employees are more likely to voice their opinions if they feel that management will listen and respond fairly. There are some flaws in the theory. In employment relationships, reciprocity is not always reciprocal or consensual - there is an imbalance of power and resources between the employee and the employer. Employees can act in compliance, not because they feel a fair exchange, but because they are economically dependent on the entity or because it is formally required or because they fear sanctions. However, Social Exchange Theory may also downplay structural factors such as the insecurity of the labour market, occupational inequality and institutional factors. It should therefore be used in conjunction with a focus on hierarchy and organisational power, and not as an assumption that all workplace relationships are mutually beneficial.

According to Social Exchange Theory, autonomy, employee voice and effective digital communication could be positively related to perceived employment-relations reconfiguration if they are felt as meaningful organisational support for the employee. On the other hand, restrictive hierarchy can be negatively correlated with that. The theory does not make these relationships empirical, so the hypotheses have to be tested against the survey data.

Methods

The study adopted the quantitative approach with cross sectional survey design. A structured questionnaire was suitable for gathering similar answers regarding work arrangements, autonomy, voice, digital communication and hierarchy at one time. The design allows for the estimation of distributions and associations between measured variables. The study was carried out in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibadan is one of the important urban centers, having public and private institutions and a variety of administrative, professional, managerial and technical jobs. The city was chosen as the geographical context for the researchers to investigate eligible workers in organisations with hybrid or distributed working arrangements. The target population was employees on the payroll of the selected public and private organisations in Ibadan who had worked under a hybrid or distributed arrangement for at least six months. The respondents had an age of 18 years or older and were experienced enough to evaluate the study constructs.

The study was a multistage process consisting of grouping the sectors, random selection of eligible organisations, proportional allocation of employees to the organisations and systematic random selection of employees from the lists of employees in the selected organisations. Cochran's large-population formula was used in the manuscript: $n_0 = Z^2p(1 - p)/e^2$. With $Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.50$ and $e = 0.05$, $n_0 = 384.16$, rounded up to 385 for a minimum integer sample. The finite-population considered: $n = n_0/[1 + (n_0 - 1)/N]$. The data were collected by structured questionnaire (self-administered) in paper and electronic format. Items were created for use in this study. The paper includes expert review for face and content validity and a pilot study with employees included in the sample. Categorical variables were summarised using frequencies and percentages and Likert-scale items were summarised using means and standard deviations. The responses were anonymous, the participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained and the data was used for academic purposes.

Results

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic

Category

n

%

Age

18-29 years

78

18.3

30-39 years

146

34.2

40-49 years

119

27.9

50 years and above

84

19.7

Sex

Male

238

55.7

Female

189

44.3

Education

Bachelor’s degree

176

41.2

Postgraduate degree

251

58.8

Length of service

Below 5 years

117

27.4

5-9 years

164

38.4

10 years and above

146

34.2

Work arrangement

Mostly remote

86

20.1

Balanced hybrid

171

40.0

Mostly office-based hybrid

103

24.1

Flexible as-needed arrangement

67

15.7

Total

Valid respondents

427

100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 depicts the demographic and work-related characteristics of the 427 respondents. The largest age group was employees aged 30-39 (34.2%) followed by aged 40-49 (27.9%). The respondents were spread across all four age categories with 18.3% from 18-29, 19.7% from 50 years and above. There was a moderate gender difference, with males representing 55.7% and females 44.3% of the sample population. More respondents (58.8%) had a postgraduate degree than those who had a bachelor's degree (41.2%). In terms of length of service, the highest number of people served five to nine years (38.4%) and 34.2% served 10 or more years. The most prevalent work pattern (40.0%) was balanced hybrid, mostly office-based hybrid (24.1%), mostly remote (20.1%) and flexible as needed (15.7%).

Table 2: Hybrid-Work Autonomy and Perceived Employment-Relations Reconfiguration

Indicator

Mean

SD

Rank

Hybrid work increases control over work scheduling

3.82

0.91

1

Employees exercise greater discretion over work location

3.76

0.94

2

Hybrid work has strengthened employee accountability

3.69

0.96

3

Managers rely less on physical presence for supervision

3.61

1.02

4

Digital monitoring has increased managerial oversight

3.48

1.08

5

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 reveals that hybrid work is seen as improving employee autonomy and changing managerial supervision and accountability. Control over work scheduling and increased control over work location were the most important factors (M = 3.82, SD = 0.91; M = 3.76, SD = 0.94, respectively). The findings demonstrate that hybrid working is flexible for employees to organise their work and decide where to do their work tasks. The third position (M = 3.69, SD = 0.96) was strengthened employee accountability, meaning that there is more discretion with more accountability for outcomes of work. Reduced need to be present to supervise was the fourth most commonly mentioned goal (M = 3.61, SD = 1.02). The mean for digital monitoring was 3.48 (SD = 1.08), indicating that managerial supervision is still important, but not as salient. In precis, hybrid working seems to strike a balance between employee discretion and organisational accountability.

Table 2 further illustrates that the respondents rated discretion over schedule as the highest (M = 3.82, SD = 0.91) followed by discretion over work location (M = 3.76, SD = 0.94). The flexibility scores indicate that flexibility in the timing and location of work was the most positive of the five indicators. The average scores for the two sub scales of increased employee accountability and decreased managerial dependence on physical presence for supervision were 3.69 (SD = 0.96) and 3.61 (SD = 1.02), respectively. The lowest mean (3.48, SD = 1.08) was for digital monitoring and greater managerial control. This was ranked 5th but the mean score is still above the middle of a typical 5-point agreement scale, so it should not be seen as an opposition to monitoring. The range in standard deviations (0.91 to 1.08) also indicate that there may be some differences in experiences and perceptions among respondents.

Table 3: Employee Voice and Perceived Employment-Relations Reconfiguration

Voice indicator

Mean

SD

Rank

Employees can freely express workplace concerns

3.71

0.93

1

Employees feel safe speaking through digital channels

3.57

1.00

2

Management considers employees' suggestions

3.54

1.01

3

Employees participate in work-policy discussions

3.42

1.05

4

Employee feedback influences managerial decisions

3.38

1.07

5

Source: Field Work, 2026

As illustrated in Table 3, there is a gradient from those who can raise concerns to those who feel that they have a strong influence on decisions taken by the organisation. The mean score of Freedom to express workplace concerns (M = 3.71, SD = 0.93) was significantly higher than all other scores. The perceived safety of verbal communication on digital channels was 3.57 (SD = 1.00) and the perceived attitude of the management towards the ideas of employees was 3.54 (SD = 1.01). The mean of participation in work-policy discussions was 3.42 (SD = 1.05). The lowest rating was for the extent to which employee feedback is believed to affect managerial decisions (M = 3.38, SD = 1.07). The 0.33-point gap between the top and bottom indicators signifies that there is an important difference: respondents had a more positive attitude towards expression than towards decision influence. Less uniform experiences on these crucial dimensions of employee voice are also suggested by the somewhat greater standard deviations for policy participation and feedback influence.

Table 4: Digital Communication, Hierarchy and Perceived Reconfiguration

Indicator

Mean

SD

Rank

Digital platforms facilitate rapid workplace communication

3.94

0.84

1

Digital communication supports employee collaboration

3.78

0.89

2

Virtual communication improves access to supervisors

3.63

0.97

3

Digital platforms have broadened employee participation

3.59

0.98

4

Hierarchical barriers persist in digital interactions

3.51

1.06

5

Source: Field Work, 2026

As presented in Table 3, there is a gradient from those who can raise concerns to those who feel that they have a strong influence on decisions taken by the organisation. The mean score of Freedom to express workplace concerns (M = 3.71, SD = 0.93) was significantly higher than all other scores. The perceived safety of verbal communication on digital channels was 3.57 (SD = 1.00) and the perceived attitude of the management towards the ideas of employees was 3.54 (SD = 1.01). The mean of participation in work-policy discussions was 3.42 (SD = 1.05). The lowest rating was for the extent to which employee feedback is believed to affect managerial decisions (M = 3.38, SD = 1.07). The 0.33-point gap between the top and bottom indicators illustrates that there is an important difference: respondents had a more positive attitude towards expression than towards decision influence. Less uniform experiences on these crucial dimensions of employee voice are also suggested by the somewhat greater standard deviations for policy participation and feedback influence.

Table 5: Reported Regression Model

Predictor	Standardised β	T	p as reported
Hybrid-work autonomy	0.31	6.84	< .001
Employee voice	0.42	9.17	< .001
Digital communication	0.24	5.36	< .001
Workplace hierarchy	-0.18	-4.02	< .001
Model	$R^2 = .61$	F (4, 422) = 165.34	< .001

Source: Field Work, 2026

As indicated in Table 5, the regression model was significant, $F (4, 422) = 165.34$, $p < .001$, and explained 61% of the variance in perceived employment-relations reconfiguration ($R^2 = .61$). Employee voice had the largest positive standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 9.17$, $p < .001$), followed by hybrid-work autonomy ($\beta = .31$, $t = 6.84$, $p < .001$) and digital communication ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 5.36$, $p < .001$). Workplace hierarchy signified a negative association ($\beta = -0.18$, $t = -4.02$, $p < .001$). Higher scores on the voice, autonomy and digital communication scales were correlated with higher scores on the outcome scales while stronger hierarchical constraints were correlated with lower scores on the outcome scales, when other predictors were

held constant.

Discussion of Findings

The results signify that hybrid work is related to higher levels of perceived discretion in work schedule (M = 3.82) and work location (M = 3.76). However, flexibility does not mean losing control of the management; there is a reduction in reliance on physical presence (M = 3.61) and digital monitoring (M = 3.48) with strengthened accountability (M = 3.69). Rather, employment relations appear to be moving towards a place where employees have discretion, but are monitored with digital systems. This is in line with Bloom, Han and Liang's (2024) randomised controlled trial of 1,612 workers, which demonstrated that hybrid working had a positive effect on job satisfaction and decreased employee attrition without negatively impacting performance ratings.

Gensler, Iseke, and Abendroth (2024) demonstrate, however, that the algorithmic direction of control does not necessarily result in a decrease in perceived autonomy; the use of algorithmic monitoring can actually lead to an increase in autonomy. Evidence from Nigeria can be used for a context comparison. Adigun and Abdulazeez (2025) in their study on 293 freelancers in Lagos State, found positive correlation between work flexibility, working from home and job satisfaction. Maganda et al (2025) also investigated the relationship between remote working and employee productivity in Nigerian Breweries Plc. Besides, the findings of these studies corroborate the relevance of flexibility and digital working arrangements in Nigeria but the findings do not align with the current study which focuses on employment-relations reconfiguration. It indicates that companies should find a balance between employee autonomy and performance measures and not assume that they can always be monitored digitally rather than face to face.

Voice findings are a key factor in the difference between being able to speak and being able to be heard and have a voice that has an impact on decisions. Freedom to express concerns (M = 3.71) and safety in using digital channels (M = 3.57) were fairly positive. The mean scores for participation in policy discussions (M = 3.42) and influence of feedback on managerial decisions (M = 3.38) were lower. This is a gap that suggests that there may be more opportunities for communication than substantive engagement in organisational governance. In their study, Badru et al. (2024) found that high-performance work systems were positively correlated with employee voice and that supervisor trust was an important mediator, based on data collected from 376 Nigerian telecommunication customer contact employees.

In a similar vein, Ajonbadi, Adekoya, Mordi, Cronk, Islam and Taofik (2025; published in 2026) examined voice and representation of Nigerian platform workers, highlighting the importance of representation mechanisms in digitally-mediated work. These studies support the separation of opportunities that allow communication and mechanisms that allow workers to have an impact on decision making. Globally, Nyfoudi, Kwon, and Wilkinson (2024) explain that employee voice perceptions are influenced by organisational practices and cues that employees receive regarding the importance of speaking up. Labrado-Antolín, Rodríguez-Ruiz and Fernández-Menéndez (2024) also studied the relationship between perceived proximity and employee voice and teleworkers' well-being. The findings, therefore, suggest that the digital voice channels are not sufficient if management is not responsive to the employees' suggestions (feedback, consultation and visible consideration of the employees' suggestions).

The two highest means in the study were for digital communication (M = 3.94) and collaboration (M = 3.78). Better access to supervisors (M = 3.63) and greater participation via digital platforms (M = 3.59) were less marked, however, as were hierarchical barriers which remained (M = 3.51). The pattern indicates that communication technologies can help information to flow but they do not necessarily change the authority in an organisation. Staff can speak up more but not be part of the hierarchy in decision-making. Algorithmically (not humanly) monitored autonomy was found to decrease autonomy and increase resistance in four experiments, while monitoring as developmental (not evaluative) decreased these effects (Schlund & Zitek, 2024).

McAlpine et al. (2025) also indicated that the transition to working from home and the extent of working from home in a work unit are relevant for the employees' working from home experiences of autonomy and isolation. The findings suggest that digital tools have a variable effect when used alone and without management practices and work context. Adeyinka Mutiu and Gbajumo-sherrif, Elegbede (2025) in a systematic review of remote work identified infrastructure and unequal access to digital resources as some of the challenges to the development of remote work in Nigeria. Their analysis is not limited to the platforms of digital communication, but also includes the organisational and infrastructural contexts in which employees use them, as this is relevant to the present finding. Therefore, organisations need to integrate digital communication with easy consultation processes, welcoming meeting practices and avenues to raise unresolved issues.

The regression results show that the most reported standardised coefficient (β) is for employee voice ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$), followed by hybrid-work autonomy ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$) and digital communication ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$). Hierarchy had a negative effect on the outcome ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .001$). The model explained 61% of the reported variance ($R^2 = 0.61$; $F(4, 422) = 165.34$, $p < .001$). The results depict that employment-relations reconfiguration correlates with voice, discretion and communication, but with a lower level of hierarchical constraints, it correlates with less positive outcomes.

The role of employee voice is of special interest. It implies that there is more to changing employment relations than technological change, because workers need to have ways of influencing workplace decisions that are meaningful. The findings of Badru et al. (2024) and the proposed conceptual model by Nyfoudi et al. (2024) are consistent with the importance of trust, organisational practices and voice climate.

The findings imply that there is a re-negotiated discretion, communication and management authority in the shift to hybrid working, rather than the end of hierarchy. Relatively high scores for scheduling autonomy and digital communication co-exist with lower scores for decision influence and existing hierarchical barriers. The actual challenge for organisations in Ibadan is how to transition from the access to participation using the digital medium. This needs to be accompanied by clear monitoring, trusted supervisory relationships, feedback systems that are responsive and employee engagement in decision making that impacts work. The study has a local impact because it indicates that the quality of the distributed employment relations is not only one of the availability of digital tools, but also one of the distribution of voice, discretion and decision-making power.

Conclusion

The results reveal that hybrid working is linked to a restructuring of employment relations, including greater autonomy for the employees, digital communication and opportunities for employee voice. The most important autonomy indicators were scheduling flexibility and autonomy over the work location, while the most important autonomy indicator in total was the communication speed. Nevertheless, the level of employee voice was higher than the level of substantive participation, as employees' concerns were expressed but not necessarily acted upon. Regression results also found that employee voice was the most significant positive predictor, with hybrid work autonomy and digital communication also emerging as significant positive predictors, and workplace hierarchy emerging as a negative predictor of employment-relations reconfiguration. In general, sustainable hybrid employment relations demand that organisations go beyond technological flexibility and implement participation, accountability of leaders and inclusive decision-making, while not assuming that association equals causation.

Recommendations

- HR Managers should create clear hybrid-work policies that include scheduling flexibility,

performance expectations, accountability measures and appropriate digital monitoring and will be reviewed quarterly.

- To enhance effective employee voice, establish monthly digital feedback sessions with the Departmental Heads and Line Managers, record employees' suggestions and communicate the outcome of the decisions made, including why some suggestions are not being accepted.

- ICT Managers to ensure that employees and supervisors are trained and have the ability to use ICTs effectively and that there is equitable access to information for remote and on-site workers.

- Senior Management should review practices of hierarchy on an annual basis, remove barriers to participation by decentralising decisions where appropriate and set up confidential reporting systems.

- Researchers and Organisational Monitoring Teams should carry out regular employee surveys and longitudinal studies to measure changes in autonomy, voice, communication and employment relations and to check for any enduring links between them.

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