Research Article

New normal for gold and white-collar workers: The hybrid way

Altın ve beyaz yakalı çalışanlar için yeni normal: Hibrit yol

Mustafa Değerli[1] (iD)

[1] Dr., Graduate School of Informatics, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey, mustafa.degerli@metu.edu.tr

ORCID: 0000-0001-8001-4661

Abstract

The latest COVID-19 pandemic brought about salient alterations concerning several characteristics of people's lives and routines. One of these major aspects relates to some people's working places and customs. Unambiguously, the way gold and white-collar workers work has been altered due to the practices applied in response to the latest pandemic. Organizations and people experiencing remote working had an all-inclusive opportunity to evaluate trade-offs regarding working in offices and working from home or other convenient places. This paper defines and discusses the hybrid way, the new normal for gold and white-collar workers. Advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and success factors are also deliberated in this paper. Purposefully, mixed method research was conducted to get and distil experiences and views of gold and white-collar workers regarding the new current normal of working. Pertinent data to be analyzed and evaluated were collected from 2405 people (2365 questionnaires and 40 interviews). The outcomes concluded that the new normal for gold and white-collar workers are the hybrid way (a mix of working in offices and remotely from homes or other convenient places). Facets (items related to policy, tools, and steering) to consider are also discussed in the paper. This paper contributes to the management body of knowledge by providing additional evidence to the hybrid way of working for gold and white-collar workers. As experiences and views of workers are shaping the pertinent success and enhancements, this paper will be valuable for managers of organizations involving gold and white-collar workers, relevant policymakers, and other researchers exploring the new normal.

Keywords: New Normal, Hybrid Working, Remote Working, Workplace, Workforce Management, COVID-19 Pandemic

Jel Codes: J53, L50, M54

Öz

Son yıllarda yaşanan COVİD-19 salgını, insanların yaşamlarının ve rutinlerinin çeşitli özelliklerine ilişkin belirgin değişiklikler getirdi. Bu önemli değişimlerden biri, bazı insanların çalışma yerleri ve gelenekleri ile ilgili oldu. Altın ve beyaz yakalıların çalışma biçimleri, şüphesiz son pandemiye karşı uygulanan tedbirler sonucunda değişti. Uzaktan çalışmayı deneyimleyen kuruluşlar ve kişiler, ofislerde çalışma ve evden veya diğer uygun yerlerden çalışmayla ilgili ödünleşimleri değerlendirmek için kapsamlı bir fırsata sahip oldular. Bu makale, altın ve beyaz yakalılar için yeni normal olan hibrit yolu tanımlamakta ve tartışmaktadır. Avantajlar, dezavantajlar, zorluklar ve başarı faktörlerine de bu makalede yer verildi. Bu amaçla, altın ve beyaz yakalı çalışanların yeni çalışma normali ile ilgili deneyimlerini ve görüşlerini almak ve değerlendirmek için bir karma yöntem yaklaşımı izlendi. 2405 kişiden (2365 anket ve 40 görüşme) analiz edilecek ve değerlendirilecek veriler toplandı. Sonuçlar, altın ve beyaz yakalı çalışanlar için yeni normalin hibrit yol (ofislerde çalışmak ve evlerden veya diğer uygun yerlerden uzaktan çalışmanın bir karışımı) olduğu sonucunu desteklemektedir. Dikkate alınması gereken elementler (politika, araçlar ve yönlendirme ile ilgili öğeler) ayrıca makalede tartışılmaktadır. Bu makale, altın ve beyaz yakalı çalışanlar için hibrit çalışma biçimine ilişkin ek kanıtlar ve destek sağlayarak yönetim bilgi birikimine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Çalışanların deneyimleri ve görüşleri ilgili başarıyı ve iyileştirmeleri önemli ölçüde şekillendirdiğinden, bu makale altın ve beyaz yakalı çalışanların yer aldığı kuruluşların yöneticileri, ilgili politika yapıcılar ve yeni normali araştıran diğer araştırmacılar için yararlı olabilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Normal, Hibrit Çalışma, Uzaktan Çalışma, İşyeri, İş Gücü Yönetimi, COVİD-19 Salgını

JEL Kodları: J53, L50, M54

Introduction

People worldwide have been experiencing significantly different things for the last couple of years due to the latest COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, organizations must simultaneously do contingency and strategic management to survive the relevant pandemic (Bhattacharyya & Thakre, 2021). Owing to the pertinent pandemic, the status quo about the work and workplace has been questioned. Therefore, the new normal for the workplace, working settings, relevant technologies, health, and safety must be defined, established, and improved to address the changing status quo (de Lucas Ancillo, del Val Núñez, & Gavrila, 2021). Organizations must take a serious role and responsibility to define and establish the new normal for work settings to ensure relevant success (M, Mehrolia, Alagarsamy, & Balachandran, 2021). If organizations overlook or don't perform well in this context, they will encounter larger problems and costs to regulate or manage the relevant settings. In this context, teleworking is an important element of the new normal.

There are varying terms to point toward remote working. These are telecommuting, virtual work, working from home, distance work, working from anywhere, etc. Virtual work research commonly incorporates three main groups (Raghuram, Hill, Gibbs, & Maruping, 2019). These are computer-mediated work, telecommuting, and virtual teams. Telecommuting practices are not quite a new concept. They have been utilized since the late 1960s (Oliveira, 2020). Relevant practices have changed and evolved to a certain extent, but their benefits or drawbacks have been experimented with for decades. In this context, the potential and opportunities introduced by uninterruptedly developing information and communication technologies have played prominent roles. In this context, it is important to highlight that fully remote works and fully remote working practices are categorically different from teleworking circumstances. Teleworking practices are hybrid, which is not true for fully remote situations. Unless otherwise noted, remote working expressions through this paper should be interpreted as part of the hybrid working, and fully remote working settings are not implied.

A study (by Dingel & Neiman, 2020) concluded that about one-third of the jobs in the United States of America can be done fully at home without going to offices. The same study highlights that countries with lower-income economies have a lesser ratio of work that can be performed at home. Besides, in a different work (Holgersen, Jia, & Svenkerud, 2021), it was concluded that about 38 per cent of the work done by Norway people from Amazon Mechanical Turk could be done remotely. This ratio highlights the present and future of working from home. It can be expected that this is to increase concerning changing dynamics of the new normal of the work settings. Residences, professions, areas, and other contextual dynamics differentiate remote working possibilities and physical distancing options (Crowley & Doran, 2020). This means that organizational contexts categorically matter and ought to be understood well.

Thanks to information, communication, and computer technologies, most knowledge workers appreciate that they can continue working remotely during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Such remote working alternatives helped to manage demands and peak avoidance for certain settings (Stiles & Smart, 2020). Accordingly, people's norms and routines have been changed. The pertinent pandemic normalized working from home-circumstances. The established normalisation process theory, which comprises cohesion, cognitive participation, collective action, and reflexive monitoring facets, can be utilized to attain and maintain the new normal regarding the altering nature of work and remote working tries (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). In this context, people with responsibilities to their families, employees living distant from their workplaces, and gold-collar workers are more prone to prefer working from home via telework (Ollo-López, Goñi-Legaz, & Erro-Garcés, 2021). These distinct groups of people might be prioritized while conscripting relevant policies.

Although it inescapably happened, organizations appreciate that teleworking is an instrumental solution, especially in times of crisis (Abulibdeh, 2020). Certain organizations have mastered transforming some processes and works, and this learning is already realized. While different countries and cultures (e.g., Portugal vs Norway) treated the pandemic quite differently, one common thing for these is the new normal for working settings. Living and working at home as required is the current new normal until the end of the pandemic (Oliveira, 2020). One study (Ipsen, van Veldhoven, Kirchner, & Hansen, 2021), with 5748 knowledge workers from 29 European countries, discussed that most people (knowledge workers) experiencing the early stages of lockdown and working from home at those times were happy with remote working. The foremost benefits of working from home were work-life balance, enhanced productivity, and better work management. Yet, the focal drawbacks were noted as home office limitations, work ambiguities, and insufficient kits. As can be seen, there are always trade-offs for working settings.

As a major consequence of the latest COVID-19 pandemic and relevant measures, information and communication technologies and systems have become even the heart of many organizations (Herath & Herath, 2020). Many organizations appreciate the tangible benefits and potentials of information systems and technologies. Moreover, organizational norms and workers' motivations were detected as two main drivers for remote working settings (Tanpipat, Lim, & Deng, 2021), which should never be disregarded. In a work (Sherman, 2020) using a within-subjects analysis from a repeated crossover design with 187 participants, it was concluded that most participants preferred about half of their work weeks to remote working.

Regarding mothers, the benefits of this hybrid way are higher for mothers responsible for their childcare. Old working settings should be reviewed and refined to address current and evolving realities underlined by the latest COVID-19 pandemic. Such review and refinements should conclude a hybrid way for work conditions, including remote working and on-site working (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020) concerning the expectations and needs of people and relevant works.

Observed advantages, a need to safeguard assets, and widespread job losses are reasons people continue working-from-home practices with their current organizations (Wang, Albert, & Sun, 2020). Therefore, providing flexible options to people to continue teleworking can be used to keep good workers with relevant organizations. Furthermore, a study (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020) showed that teleworking leads to less stress and conflict and more engagement and performance.

Compulsory remote working in response to the latest COVID-19 pandemic yielded positive and negative results for the workers. For example, the cons are overtiredness and amplified pressure caused by workload stress, assignment affiliations, work seclusion, and home interference. On the other hand, to illustrate, improved self-ruling and flexibility bringing about enhanced outputs and fulfilments are the pros to note regarding telecommuters (Jamal, Anwar, Khan, & Saleem, 2021). Considering these advantages and disadvantages, organizations and involved people shall develop policies and relevant practices to help them achieve their objectives and goals.

Literature review

Teleworking is a multifaceted subject. There are several pros and cons of teleworking practices. Organizations and involved people (managers and lower-level workers) should be aware of these facets. They ought to formulate and fine-tune their practices concerning their contextual realities, priorities, and business goals. In addition to working from home alternatives, some organizations offer to work from anywhere alternative to their workers. In a work (Choudhury, Foroughi, & Larson, 2021) studying the effects of work from anywhere on productivity at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), it was shown that such kind of transition brought about a 4.4 per cent improvement regarding outputs and geographic flexibility benefited organizations and workers.

Moreover, people with disabilities working in business settings benefited from telecommuting settings to a greater extent when compared to working people without disabilities (Schur, Ameri, & Kruse, 2020). This reality for disabled people shall also be well-thought-out while developing and implementing procedures and performances.

It is quite possible that teleworking can also add to the healthy eating of workers as they generally have time and opportunity to prepare healthy foods for themselves (Restrepo & Zeballos, 2020). In the office or site environments, there is a potential that people frequently consume unhealthy foods due to time constraints and conveniences. Besides, one work (O'Brien & Yazdani Aliabadi, 2020) identified that more data and analyses are required to legitimately decide how effective teleworking practices are regarding energy use and emissions. However, home-based telework has shown its benefits in decreasing traffic congestion and environmental pollution (Nguyen, 2021). It is generally observed and accepted that teleworking practices decrease travel demands and congestion to a considerable extent (Elldér, 2020). The emergence of working-from-home practices also led to some improvements regarding sustainability (Kylili, Afxentiou, Georgiou, Panteli, Morsink-Georgalli, Panayidou, Papouis, & Fokaides, 2020). For example, regarding fuels and carbon dioxide, notable improvements were experienced. This sort of outcome creates good results for the community.

There are also some criticisms regarding working-from-home practices. In this context, a study (Chattopadhyay, 2021) discussed a constant need for a better understanding of the scope of the work and the home. This discrimination is essential to ensure that work and life balance is not significantly jeopardized. For example, notable increases caused by COVID-19 measured in people's sedentary times must be appreciated and managed to ensure that people's health and well-being are not badly affected (McDowell, Herring, Lansing, Brower, & Meyer, 2020).

Likewise, one of the salient things to be considered regarding working from home settings is people's physical experiences (Javad Koohsari, Nakaya, Shibata, Ishii, & Oka, 2021). That is inactive conduct and decreased work-related physical activities must be considered. Appropriate methods and means should be defined and implemented to manage this possible problem.

Compared to working men, working women experienced greater difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic (Clark, McGrane, Boyle, Joksimovic, Burke, Rock, & O'Sullivan, 2021). Additionally, a study (Duran & Erkin, 2021) with 405 participants thru convenience sampling concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic led to mental suffering and bad-quality sleep for adults. Moreover, decreased social interaction and a fairly increased workload for some workers are two important results of the current teleworking practices, and these need to be understood and discussed better (Matli, 2020). These realities can radically harm people and organizations.

During the latest COVID-19 pandemic, people working from home noted that their chances to socialize with others decreased, and their conflicts regarding work and family increased with working-from-home practices (Hoffman, 2021). One interesting result was that people with pets reported increased health-giving physical activity and increased quality regarding their relations with their pets, family, and other people.

Likewise, a study (McDowell, Herring, Lansing, Brower, & Meyer, 2021) including more than one thousand participants from the United States of America noted that personalized and delicate mediation might be vital to managing the depreciation of people's mental well-being in cases like the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, one research (Palumbo, 2020) concluded that home-based remote working adversely influenced people's perceived work-life balance views. Therefore, fine-tuned policies and practices shall be developed and sustained to help relevant people.

There need to be well-studied measures to arrange and improve telework practices (Chong, Huang, & Chang, 2020). Otherwise, people may experience emotional exhaustion and work withdrawal. It should not be ignored that any extended exposure to digital devices and screens must be monitored. Organizations need to take care mental health of their stakeholders to ensure that no significant problems occur (Mheidly, Fares, & Fares, 2020). Workers' health and well-being are imperative for continuous contributions and expected productivity.

Maintaining work-life balance is one of the foremost challenges those people face during working-from-home occurrences. For example, a study (Arora & Chauhan, 2021) noted that people have difficulties establishing work-life balance during online teaching practices due to mixed natures and maintaining personal connections due to decreased body language and voice tone effects. Therefore, relevant people shall not ignore these possible outcomes of working from home or teleworking.

In a study, it was shown that the impact of teleworking on work-life balance is damaging (Bellmann & Hübler, 2021). This damage shall be identified, managed, and lessened with the active contributions of relevant stakeholders. As working-from-home practices become more ubiquitous, people's expectations from home and gender perspectives become two important topics to be investigated and discussed more comprehensively(Doling & Arundel, 2020). Different gender perspectives could generate specific concerns to be concentrated on and discussed.

Relevant stakeholders in the domain saw the continuous requirement for cybersecurity practices, exceptionally during the latest pandemic (Pranggono & Arabo, 2021). These times, more risks and threats occur due to technology and people's vulnerabilities. Teleworking practices became the inescapable outcome of the latest COVID-19 pandemic. Relatedly, a security-intensive culture and a vulnerability-aware approach are needed for responsible teleworking practices (Georgiadou, Mouzakitis, & Askounis, 2022). Using relevant technologies provides numerous opportunities while introducing remarkably ignored threats and risks.

Besides, while drafting policies and arranging settings for remote working, it is a wise idea to ensure the participation of occupational therapists (Field, Read, Jones, Fegan, & Lanfranchi, 2021). They are to help to erect the right policy right the first time. Organizations must draft and craft their well-established policies, processes, and procedures for working in home settings (Oakman, Kinsman, Stuckey, Graham, & Weale, 2020). They must define tools, processes, resources, performance indicators, inputs, and outputs for teleworking practices. Organizations work on some measures for their employees to support them while they are remotely working. A study proved that certain interventions like positive psychology coaching yield progressive results for workers. To be clear, positive psychology coaching practices mediate between performance improvement and improved well-being of remote workers (van Nieuwerburgh, Barr, Fouracres, Moin, Brown, Holden, Lucey, & Thomas, 2022).

Age, generation, education level, seniority and experience rank regarding work, and experience with teleworking practices can be reasonably influential regarding the potential outputs of remote working settings (Raišienė, Rapuano, Varkulevičiūtė, & Stachová, 2020). Contracting organizations and coworkers' support is imperative for stakeholders' health in working from home settings (Oakman et al., 2020). Otherwise, the potential benefits are to be surpassed by troubles arising.

Gold and white-collar workers are increasing in the information and technology-intensive sectors and related sectors positions. Principally, these employees can carry out some of their jobs that can work outside the office. Owing to the possible benefits and advantages, fairly elaborated in the clauses as mentioned above, of hybrid working, these workers may tend to prefer the hybrid way. Since the way gold and white-collar workers work has been altered due to the practices applied in response to the latest pandemic, it is a good idea to try to answer the question of what should be the new normal regarding working places for these workers. Accordingly, this research tried to define and discuss the hybrid way, which might be the new normal for gold and white-collar workers.

Method, data, and results

Deliberately, a mixed method investigation was done to conclude and extract involvements and opinions of gold and white-collar employees concerning the new current normal at work. The researcher published a call (with research details) for participation in the research on LinkedIn (a business and employment-focused social media platform). The data were collected at the end of 2022. Two thousand three hundred sixty-five questionnaire participants were from around the world, and 40 participants of the interviews were from Turkey. Questionnaires were filled out via online forms, and interviews were done face-to-face and via teleconference platforms. Relevant data to be examined and assessed were collected from 2405 people (2365 questionnaires and 40 interviews).

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, quasi-statistics, and exploratory factor analysis. Some rate of recurrence specifics of the data collected is given in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4. Relevant specifics demonstrate that the collected data is discreetly wide-ranging and illustrative in making reasonably generalizable inferences.

Table 1: Distribution of the Participants Interviewed

Gender	N	%
Women	20	50.00
Men	20	50.00
Age	N	%
16-25	10	25.00
26-35	10	25.00
36-55	12	30.00
56-99	8	20.00
Education	N	%
High School	4	10.00
Bachelor	16	40.00
Master	16	40.00
Doctorate	4	10.00
Industry	N	%
Aviation, Space, & Defense	15	37.50
Software	10	25.00
Education	5	12.50
IT	10	25.00

Table 2: Preferences and Experiences of the Participants Interviewed

Preference	N	%
Office	3	7.50
Remote	9	22.50
Hybrid	28	70.00

Experience	N	%
Worked Fully Remotely for 6 Months or More	13	32.50
Worked Fully Remotely for 5 Months or Less	4	10.00
Worked in Hybrid Mode for 6 Months or More	10	25.00
Worked in Hybrid Mode for 5 Months or Less	2	5.00
Did Not Worked Remotely	11	27.50

Table 3: Distribution of the Participants Completing the Questionnaire

Gender	N	%
Women	1139	48.16
Men	1226	51.84

Age	N	%
18-25	501	21.18
26-35	865	36.58
36-55	657	27.78
56-99	342	14.46

Education	N	%
High School	77	3.26
Bachelor	1263	53.40
Master	947	40.04
Doctorate	78	3.30

Industry	N	%
Aviation, Space, & Defense	909	36.88
Fintech	201	8.15
Banking	39	1.58
Software	640	25.96
Construction	25	1.01
Public Service	180	7.30
Education	66	2.68
IT	136	5.52
Services	169	6.86

Table 4: Preferences and Experiences of the Participants Completing the Questionnaire

Preference	N	%
Office	193	8.16
Remote	547	23.13
Hybrid	1625	68.71

Experience	N	%
Worked Fully Remotely for 6 Months or More	420	17.76
Worked Fully Remotely for 5 Months or Less	335	14.16
Worked in Hybrid Mode for 6 Months or More	255	10.78
Worked in Hybrid Mode for 5 Months or Less	516	21.82
Did Not Worked Remotely	839	35.48

All-embracing questions employed throughout the interviews are given in the Appendix part of the paper. A two-part questionnaire was drafted and applied in the focus research to examine and extract pertinent facets and items. The first part of the survey included demographical queries, and the second part comprised certain declarations to get partakers' opinions about how they rate the declarations thru a 1-5 Likert-type scale. The questionnaire used is given in the Appendix part of the paper. The ethics committee approval was also granted for the instruments used in the research.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed via the value of Cronbach's alpha, and 0.93 was obtained, meeting the relevant threshold recommendation (~0.70). Furthermore, three professionals (one human resources manager, one senior engineering manager, and one psychologist) provided assessments and ideas on how to check and expand the validity of the content. Finally, after safeguarding the reliability and validity of the instrument, pertinent data were collected while ensuring the participants' informed consent.

To explore and approve relevant relations concerning the data collected, the exploratory factor analysis method was followed and applied by using IBM's SPSS package. Since relevant data were collected from 2365 different people, the method's relevant size requirement (N > ~140) was satisfactorily met. Furthermore, the anti-image correlation matrix was created and investigated using appropriate analysis to ensure factorability. Besides, requirements for sample size tests were satisfied, and commonalities extracted were analyzed to confirm complete conformance to the applied process necessities. Consequently, three themes with seven instances (Table 5) were drafted and established. The total variance explained was 70.39%.

Table 5: Facets to Consider Concerning Hybrid Working Implementations

Policy
Organizations must have an organizational policy documented and communicated about hybrid working.
Key actors shall be involved during hybrid working policy formation and implementation.
Dependability and flexibility ought to be two main elements of relevant hybrid working policies.
Tools
Organizations must provide all required tools (systems, hardware, software, etc.) to support hybrid working.
Tools shall ensure confidentiality, accessibility, and integrity of all relevant business assets in hybrid working settings.
Steering
Hybrid working implementations shall be continuously monitored and improved.
Inputs and views of managers and employees shall be captured and utilized to improve hybrid working practices.

In addition to the distilled facets to consider concerning hybrid working implementations, given in Table 5, through analyzing and interpreting the collected data in the scope of this research, the succeeding principal results were drawn:

- 68.71% of the participants (1625 of 2365) completing the questionnaire prefers to work in hybrid mode.

- 23.13% of the participants (547 of 2365) completing the questionnaire prefers to work in fully remote mode.

- 91.84% of the participants (2172 of 2365) completing the questionnaire prefers to work in either hybrid or remote modes.

- 64.52% of the participants (1526 of 2365) completed the questionnaire in hybrid or remote mode.

- 70% of the participants (28 of 40) in interviews prefer to work in a hybrid mode.

- 22.5% of the participants (9 of 40) in interviews prefer to work remotely.

- 92.5% of the participants (37 of 40) taking part in interviews prefers to work in either hybrid or remote mode.

- 72.5% of the participants (29 of 40) taking part in interviews worked in either hybrid or remote mode.

- Regarding these figures mentioned above and their interpretations, it is moderately obvious that the new normal for gold and white-collar workers is a hybrid.

- The most repeatedly narrated ultimate confront considering remote, or hybrid working was failing the equilibrium of professional work and social life.

- The most commonly conveyed imperative advantage regarding remote or hybrid working was enhanced flexibility and reduced employee stress.

- Compared to participants who worked fully remotely or in hybrid mode for five months or less, participants who worked fully remotely or in hybrid mode for at least six months more determinedly preferred to work in hybrid mode.

- As the age and education levels increase, participants' preference levels for a hybrid increase slightly.

- Compared to survey participants in other industries (fintech, banking, software, public service, education, IT, and services), survey participants in aviation, space, & defence, and construction industries are categorically more prone to choose the hybrid mode in preference to fully remote mode.

Discussion

In response to further research calls (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020; Ipsen et al., 2021), the current research investigated what people want from the new working settings. Distilling and discussing people's views and experiences are vital as these people are major drivers of the relevant situations. The potential and benefits of information, communication, and computer technologies differ from before the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations obligatorily tested relevant tools, technologies, and instruments and appreciated the tangible outputs (Hiselius & Arnfalk, 2021). This reality changed the minds and views of many people and organizations regarding remote working. The future of work cannot be designed and established without considering telework practices to a certain extent (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020; Santana & Cobo, 2020). The degree and coverage may diverge from settings to set, yet the new normal will last long.

Organizations should establish and refine their flexible working procedures to ensure that both pros and cons are carefully addressed (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). There is a need for clear guidelines for workers who do working from home (Chadee, Ren, & Tang, 2021). This kind of instruction is to help workers to regulate their technology use and routines for work purposes. A proactive approach and implementation will benefit both workers and organizations. Working from home is multifaceted, and people support and reject it for certain reasons. Therefore, contextual realities must be examined well (Bolisani, Scarso, Ipsen, Kirchner, & Hansen, 2020). Providing flexibility to people to make choices can also be helpful in relevant circumstances.

Some workers prefer hybrid (sometimes in the office and sometimes work remotely) experience (Degerli, 2022; Faulds & Raju, 2021; Sherman, 2020). Organizations must appreciate this reality and institutionalize relevant settings to meet workers' expectations. Above and beyond, the ergonomics of telework have not been studied and discussed satisfactorily (de Macêdo, Cabral, Silva Castro, de Souza Junior, 2020). There is a need to explore better and understand the particulars of ergonomics regarding remote working settings. Organizations introducing working-from-home practices should do more than provide computers to relevant people. All relevant ergonomic concerns and facets must be addressed to ensure healthy and productive working settings (Davis, Kotowski, Daniel, Gerding, Naylor, & Syck, 2020). Relevant departments or units should collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to make good policies and practices.

Any relevant working from-home, in-office, or hybrid working settings shall be designed and implemented while considering the vital issue of cybersecurity. Pertinent contextual elements shall also be considered during relevant strategy determination, policy formation, and implementation. For example, o of the foremost influential elements determining people's choice of teleworking is whether they have a child to care for at home (Zhang, Moeckel, Moreno, Shuai, & Gao, 2020). Therefore, this particular should not be disregarded during policy drafting and making. Linkage of works, work fauna, technology settings, and time dependency are salient elements that shape organizational policies regarding distributions and virtuality regarding works (Henry, le Roux, Parry, 2021). These dynamics must be covered to produce a working scheme for pertinent circumstances. There need to be well-planned and defined particulars for working-from-home practices. A healthy and supporting design must be established and maintained for the workers (Mojtahedzadeh, Rohwer, Lengen, Harth, & Mache, 2021). This should be done by employers and employees and should not be left only to employees. Once all vital stakeholders are involved, the expected benefits will be realized more easily.

The most frequently reported greatest challenge regarding remote or hybrid working was losing the work and social life balance. People interviewed underlined that they sometimes jeopardized their professional and social life balance. This result aligns with other relevant works (Arora & Chauhan, 2021; Bellmann & Hübler, 2021; Chattopadhyay, 2021; Ipsen et al., 2021; Palumbo, 2020). This requires workers and policymakers to be aware of this possible problem and take relevant measures to manage it. Above and beyond, the most frequently reported important benefit concerning remote or hybrid working was improved flexibility and decreased stress for the workers. People noted that they perceived more flexibility with remote or hybrid working practices. They also mentioned that their perceived stress levels were lessened due to improved flexibility. This outcome is consistent with the result of another relevant research (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020). However, this contradicts an alternative work's results (Jamal et al., 2021). Managers and leaders should also appreciate this facet to improve the experiences of their teams and workers towards improving satisfaction and loyalty.

Compared to participants who worked fully remotely or in hybrid mode for five months or less, participants who worked fully remotely or in hybrid mode for at least six months more determinedly preferred to work in hybrid mode. People working remotely or in hybrid mode for six months and more prefer to continue in hybrid mode instead of fully remote mode. This can be interpreted as people's preferences shifting to hybrid working settings after some time (6 months). This can be justified like that people see all pros and cons of remote working and hybrid working, as they have enough chance in 6-month periods. This particular finding should be well understood by managers and lower-level employees.

By the results of this research, as the age and education levels increase, participants' preference levels for a hybrid slightly increase. Lower levels of education status, and younger aged people prefer fully remote mode. However, higher education status and older people favour hybrid working settings. This is another exciting discovery of this study. It will be a good idea to explore this differentiation further. In-depth interviews with people representing different education levels, ages, or generation fragments may help better understand the relevant motivations and justifications.

Furthermore, concerning the foremost results of this research, when compared to participants in other industries (fintech, banking, software, public service, education, IT, and services), participants in aviation, space, & defence, and construction industries are more prone to choose the hybrid mode. Instead of fully remote mode, they choose the hybrid model. The context and content of the work people might cause this. For example, if people do the kind of work that requires physical availability in offices, labs, or factories, it is normal that they will be required to work in hybrid mode instead of fully remote mode.

Conclusions

The conclusions resolved that the new normal for gold and white-collar workers is the hybrid mode (a fusion of working in offices and remotely from homes or other suitable spaces). Compensations, difficulties, challenges, and governing dynamics were reviewed and commented on. Additionally, how white and gold-collar people's views about working modes evolve, how education level and age parameters shape expectations, the possible influences of diverse industries on different working modes, and some other notable points were discussed. Besides, facets to consider were deliberated. These facets are policy (availability of a policy, involvement of key people, and dependability and flexibility), tools (systems, hardware, software, etc., and confidentiality, accessibility, and integrity), and steering (continuous monitoring and improvement, and inputs and views of people). The possible impact of this research is to moderately contribute to the management body of knowledge by supporting the hybrid way of working mode meant for gold and white-collar workers. Leaders and managers of organizations employing gold and white-collar workers, pertinent policymakers, and other scholars studying the new working mode normal for gold and white-collar workers may take advantage of this paper. Regarding relevant future works, it might be a worthy notion to distil and discuss the views and experiences of managers/leaders and lower-level workers regarding hybrid working implementations. Another possible future study may focus on how to distil and discuss possible measures for workers who process sensitive and classified data and information. Besides, conducting pertinent research to understand and discuss legal and regulatory aspects of hybrid working practices could be instrumental. Such efforts will extend the hybrid working body of knowledge and experiences.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire and Interview Questions

<div align="center">

<u>Questionnaire</u>

New Normal for Gold and White-Collar Workers

</div>

Purpose of the Research: The latest COVID-19 pandemic brought about salient alterations concerning several characteristics of people's lives and routines. One of these major aspects is related to some people's working places and customs. Unambiguously, the way gold and white-collar workers work has been altered as a result of the practices applied as a response to the latest pandemic. Organizations and people experiencing remote working had an all-inclusive chance to evaluate trade-offs regarding working in offices and working from home or other convenient places. This research is to distill and discuss the new normal for gold and white-collar workers. Advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and success factors are also to be deliberated.

About the Questionnaire: This questionnaire consists of two sections and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. The data to be obtained in this research will be evaluated and interpreted cumulatively, and the data and results obtained will be used for scientific purposes only. Participation in this questionnaire is completely voluntary and the participants may opt to complete the survey at any time they want.

About the Researcher: For any questions, information, and/or suggestions, you can reach the researcher with the contact information given below. **Thank you very much for your interest and valuable contribution.** Dr. Mustafa Değerli – mustafa.degerli@metu.edu.tr

Section 1: *In this section, please answer the questions with information that is most appropriate for you and best describes you by selecting the option/options (x).*

Educational Status					Gender		
High Sch.	Bachelor	Master's	Doctorate		Women	Men	Other

Age			
18-25	26-35	36-55	56-99

Preference		
Office	Remote	Hybrid

Experience	
	Worked Fully Remotely for 6 Months or More
	Worked Fully Remotely for 5 Months or Less
	Worked in Hybrid Mode for 6 Months or More
	Worked in Hybrid Mode for 5 Months or Less
	Did Not Worked Remotely

Industry								
Aviation, Space, & Defense	Fintech	Banking	Software	Construction	Education	Services	IT	Other

<u>Please make sure you have answered all the questions, then go to Section 2.</u>

Section 2: *In this section, please mark one of the numbers from one to five for each sentence, depending on whether you agree or disagree with the statements, judgments, and/or thoughts.*

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Undecided; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

#	Statement, Judgment and/or Thought	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Organizations must provide all required tools (systems, hardware, software, etc.) to support hybrid working.					
2.	Tools shall ensure confidentiality, accessibility, and integrity of all relevant business assets in hybrid working settings.					
3.	Organizations must have an organizational policy documented and communicated about hybrid working.					
4.	Key actors shall be involved during hybrid working policy formation and implementation.					
5.	Dependability and flexibility ought to be two main elements of relevant hybrid working policies.					
6.	Hybrid working implementations shall be continuously monitored and improved.					
7.	Inputs and views of managers and employees shall be captured and utilized for the improvement of hybrid working practices.					

*Please make sure to select one of the numbers from one to five, depending on whether you agree or not, for **all** statements, judgments, and/or thoughts.*

Thank you very much for your interest and valuable contribution.

Interview Questions

- Categorical Questions (Gender, Age, Education, Industry, and Experience)

- May you please summarize and evaluate your views and experiences regarding remote or hybrid working?

- What is the greatest challenge for you regarding remote or hybrid working?

- What is the most important benefit for you concerning remote or hybrid working?

- What is your preference for the place to work (office, remote, or hybrid)?

- Do you have any additional comments?