



Reconfiguring Work After Pandemic Disruption: Hybrid Work Challenges in a South African Forensic Organization

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ABSTRACT

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The disruption of traditional work environments by the COVID-19 pandemic has attracted scholarly interest in different types of organizations, but we know little about resilience and adaptive challenges faced by forensic organizations in South Africa after disruptive times. The objective of this qualitative study was to examine the challenges of a hybrid working environment in a South African forensic organization following the COVID-19 pandemic. The inductive qualitative study employed a constructivist approach. A total of 14 participants (5 managers and 9 support staff) were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis to generate themes reflecting the nature and variety of challenges of a hybrid working environment in a South African forensic organization. The results revealed that the six significant challenges of hybrid working in the forensic organization after the COVID 19 pandemic include technical infrastructure issues, communication and collaboration barriers, work-life boundary management, performance monitoring and evaluation, cultural integration and team cohesion. The study concludes that strategies for equipping managers include the implementation of regular check-ins, the development of clear communication protocols, and the provision of targeted training and development programs. It is pivotal for managers and policy makers to not only ensure investment in resilient technical infrastructure and treat power and connectivity as critical components of justice delivery and hybrid work but also promote workplace flexibility after disruptive times.



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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the global community, affecting various aspects of life, including healthcare systems, economies, and social interactions in different types of organisations, including those offering forensic services. In May 2023, the World Health Organisation reported approximately 6.8 million COVID -19 related death across the globe (Alrasheedi, 2024).

As a response to work disruption by the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an adaptation to work from home which reshaped employee and organisational practices in South Africa which therefore altered traditional work arrangements (Matli, 2020). The work from home approach was largely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerated digital transformation initiatives. As such, many companies enacted policies to promote work from home to ensure work continuity, hence significant investment in digital infrastructure and cybersecurity measures. Meanwhile, although these changes allowed flexibility and reduction in commuting times, they brought different challenges aligned to digital inclusion, especially in communities and regions with less developed internet infrastructure (Hwang & Kim, 2026). In the South African context, different challenges have been encountered during implementation of the hybrid work arrangement (Ngonini, 2025). As an example, workers had to face different challenges such as intermittent power cuts, poor and inadequate internet connectivity, and other resource limitations (Avordeh et al., 2024; Sucheran & Akanni Olanrewaju, 2021). The bulk of these challenges are mainly pronounced in the rural areas where there is limited technological advancement (Arunprasad et al., 2022). A study by Veldsman and Van Der Merwe (2025) indicates that these challenges affect the possibility of fully remote work arrangements, particularly in specialised sectors that require strong technological support.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption for traditional work environments which has resulted in organisations across the world to increasingly adapt to a hybrid work environment (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020). This change has allowed for a fundamental reassessment of workplace dynamics, challenged traditional work approaches and prompted important questions about what employees expect from employers where and how (Bernuzzi et al., 2023). Remote working arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved to an innovative organisational framework that has harmonised autonomy of work from home with synergistic benefits of traditional work model. Studies shows that work from home arrangements enhances employee productivity through balancing autonomy and collaboration (Bloom et al., 2024). However, the shift to a hybrid work model has been met with challenges that includes maintaining productivity across different work locations, ensuring access to adequate work tools and preserving organisational culture and collaboration (Achtenhagen & Tokbaeva, 2025; Bloom et al., 2024). There is dearth in scholarly literature that has unravelled challenges faced by employees and organisations in the forensic services after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the organisational context, supervisors face the daunting task of innovatively managing remote teams, ensuring that workers feel a sense of belonging and are valued, even when they are physically apart (Babapour Chafi et al., 2021). In this context, emotional intelligence becomes paramount, as leaders must navigate the complexities of remote communication while fostering a supportive work environment. Emotional intelligence is crucial for leaders in hybrid work environments, as it enables them to effectively bridge the gap between in-office and remote team members through enhanced empathy, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Bloom et al., 2024). The objective of this qualitative study is to understand the challenges of embracing a hybrid work environment in a post-pandemic period at the forensic company in South Africa. In pursuit of the above objective, the paper begins by focusing on agency theory before dwelling on the concept of hybrid working and its key elements.

The study is valuable as it brings to the fore the internal perspectives of employees and managers to shed light on the nuanced understanding and variety of challenges of a hybrid working environment in the unique context of a selected South African forensic organisation, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Agency Theory

Agency theory concerns resolving two problems that can arise in agency relationships. The first is the agency problem that arises when the desires or goals of the principal and agent conflict and it is difficult or expensive for the principal to verify what the agent is actually doing (Eisenhardt, 1989). As articulated by Jensen and Meckling (1976), the theory examines the relationship between principals (such as employers) and agents (such as employees), particularly the challenges that arise when their interests are not perfectly

aligned. In a hybrid work environment where employees often operate with greater independence and autonomy, there is potential for information asymmetry (Eisenhardt, 1989). In such environments, there is need to develop mechanisms that aligns company and employee goals such as clear performance expectations, clear communication channels and trust building initiatives (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

The main concern for the principal is how to structure the relationship in such a way that the agent performs the work as desired (Bendickson et al., 2016). The application of Agency Theory in hybrid work thus highlights the importance of balancing oversight with autonomy to support both productivity and employee satisfaction.

2.2. The Concept of Hybrid Work

As this study is about hybrid working, it is fundamental to initially grapple with the complexity of defining hybrid working before delving into the notion of hybridity and hybrid work patterns. Clarity of the flexibility paradigm as a key element of hybrid working is pivotal to enhancing conceptual understanding.

2.3. Definitions of Hybrid Working

There is a lack of consensus on the definition of hybrid work. For example, Andreas (2025) defines hybrid work as any work arrangement in which workers work remotely, away from an employer's premises or fixed location, using digital technologies such as networks, laptops, mobile phones, and the internet. In a different vein, which focuses on employee ability, a hybrid work environment is defined as the ability of employees to make changes on where, when and the total time they would spend or engage in work-related tasks (Handke et al., 2025). Naqshbandi et al. (2024) concur that a hybrid work environment is defined as the ability of employees to change where, when, and the total time they spend on work-related tasks. Mindful of the complexity of this concept, Table 1 depicts a variety of definitions of hybrid work and the aspects that are highlighted as core to this concept by different scholars.

Table 1
Selected Definitions of Hybrid Work

Author	Definition of hybrid work	Core element
Definitions from different authors		
Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2024)	In basic terms, a hybrid workforce is one that is dispersed over several places, ranging from conventional office and manufacturing buildings to distant areas, including the employees' homes, whether they be shared apartments or family homes. A hybrid working model is distinguished by the options and flexibility it provides workers, and it can be a creative means of promoting fresh ideas for agility, teamwork, and working methods.	Physical space Social space Multiple locations, home, social relations Flexibility, Autonomy
Krajčík et al. (2023)	Most people are interested in flexibility, not a radical departure from the conventional paradigm that would require everyone to work from home all the time and never visit a physical office.	Physical space Home, main workplace, Flexibility
Gratton (2021)	Executives predict that when the pandemic abates, the hybrid model, where workers work both in-person and remotely, will proliferate.	
Microsoft New Gratton (2021)	Professionals who engage in intermittent work from home and	Multiple locations, Duration, Face-to-face,

	part-time in an office are said to be engaging in hybrid work. A hybrid company may also have a mix of fully off-site and fully on-site employees.	Physical space, Temporal space, Social space
Definitions from business journal publications		
Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2024)	"To design hybrid, work properly, you have to think about it along two axes: place and time ... an anywhere, anytime model of working – the hybrid model."	Physical space Temporal space Multiple locations, Time frequency (anytime)
Neumayr et al. (2021)	"The anticipated gradual return to collocated work in the coming months provides opportunities to experiment with hybrid ways of working ... gives managers the ability to critically consider the ways in which a hybrid workplace might be more effective."	Physical space Main workplace, Effectiveness
Sokolić (2022)	The "sweet spot" for teleworking, according to pre-pandemic research (Eurofound and ILO, 2017), may be a mix of working remotely and on-site at the firm. This strategy, working part-time in the office and part-time from home, has become known as the "hybrid model" throughout the global outbreak.	Physical space Temporal space Main workplace, Multiple locations, duration
Moglia et al. (2021)	Even with hybrid work arrangements, which combine in-person and remote work, employees still consider how close they are to their place of employment. On the other hand, this is no longer a significant consideration for individuals in work-from-anywhere arrangements, which rely significantly on virtual communication and have team members spread across different places and time zones.	Physical space Virtual space Temporal space

Source: Authors' compilation (2026)

2.4. Hybridity as an Aspect of Hybrid Work

Hybridity in terms of work is about something that is formed by combining two or more things to provide stability in a certain context. Zamani et al. (2025) asserts that hybrid work is characterized by its nature of taking place online or in the traditional office, reflecting its adaptability across various work contexts. The basic elements of hybrid work are physical, virtual/digital, social, and temporal. These elements are interconnected, and each has designable and actionable properties. The purpose of work, the working context, and the regulation of work processes and the expected outcomes will determine what features of an organization's practice will be combined for hybrid work. In a nutshell, the hybrid work system is a new type of space that merges physical, virtual, social, and temporal elements, along with their features. In this vein, a hybrid workplace is 'systemic' in that it is composed of 'two or more things' that interact with one another.

2.5. Hybrid Work Patterns

According to Joyce and Ibrahim (2024), hybrid work consists of five main patterns that allow organisations to align individual work preferences with operational needs. These patterns are designed to optimise work-life balance, employee productivity, and overall job fulfilment. Joyce and Ibrahim (2024) identified five critical patterns of hybrid work that include location, tasks, time, personal preferences, productivity, and collaboration, which collectively guide how flexible work is structured. Joyce and Ibrahim (2024) provided the following outline of hybrid work patterns. Firstly, location-based hybrid work prioritises the

selection of the best physical environment for each type of work, acknowledging that certain tasks may be better suited to specific locations such as office, home, or co-working spaces. Geographical flexibility acts as a strategic talent acquisition and employee retention mechanism in which organisations facilitate employee independence in selecting work environments that allows optimal performance and comfort.

Task based hybrid work environment represents an approach in which employees will choose their work based on the tasks they are handling. In a hybrid work set up, employees adjust their work locations depending on the current projects and workload hence enhances focus and efficiency (Joyce & Ibrahim, 2024). Through task flexibility, employees become adaptable as work requirements changes. Additionally, such an approach enables employees' primary workstation to be determined by their job function. As an example, employees who are engaged in face-to-face sales, IT support, and equipment maintenance might work from the office, whereas those with roles such as accounting, human resources, and digital marketing may need to work remotely (Joyce & Ibrahim, 2024). The function-based model allows employees to be placed in environments most suited to their roles. Time flexible hybrid work is another model in which companies with time flexible hybrid policies permits workers to work outside traditional work hours as suited to their personal and professional schedules. Such an approach is usually used in companies that offer 24/7 customer services or where workers are engaged in work late into the evening. Through such flexible work hours, we can give support to employees by balancing work and life commitments. Another equally important approach is productivity-based hybrid work that places emphasis on permitting employees to have the freedom to work where and when they are most productive. Instead of strictly assigning locations and times, companies empower employees to choose settings that maximize their productivity (Krishnan et al., 2024). Such an approach aligns with a people first management style which focuses on results rather than location or hours. It is also important to note that hybrid work raises critical questions about the location of team members for them to collaborate effectively. In some work projects, collaboration is important whilst remote work settings might suffice for individual tasks (Krishnan et al., 2024). Employees are entrusted with the independence to determine their work location based on the required balance pertaining to focus and collaboration hence enhancing both individual worker productivity and collective team performance. Hybrid work provides unique benefits to both the company and the employee by boosting productivity and satisfaction (Battilana et al., 2015). In this manner, hybrid working provides many benefits by offering cost savings, increased flexibility, as well as improved employee well-being. Barrero et al. (2021) and Vidana et al. (2024) provides empirical evidence on the advantages of hybrid working. As organisations adapt to the changes in the work dynamics, the integration of hybrid models allows greater innovation and sustainability, hence giving mutual benefits to employers and employees.

2.6. Flexibility Paradigm as an Aspect of Hybrid Work

An important point to consider when discussing hybrid work is the aspect of flexibility that sets it apart from traditional and conventional and fixed work arrangements like exclusive remote work or permanent office work. At different organizational levels, flexibility is an essential aspect that allows for adaptive responses to shifting external demands (Moglia et al., 2021). Research clarifies this approach by describing hybrid work as flexible contrary to more rigid work structures (Neumayr et al., 2021). From an organizational standing, flexibility allows the reorganization of work procedures to consider different working conditions and resource reallocation for people to do their jobs efficiently (Halford, 2005). Such flexibility is necessary to adjust to the changing character of contemporary workplaces where global connectivity and technology breakthroughs necessitate an increasingly flexible work timetable (Moglia et al., 2021).

The advantages that flexibility holds for individuals, such as better work-life balance and more control over work schedules, are highlighted from the viewpoint of the worker. Job fulfilment and effectiveness are increased when workers are able to select work environments that best meet their personal and professional demands (Sokolić, 2022). At the center of the concepts of hybrid work and of workplace embody the flexibility paradigm, which pronounces the balancing of varying individual needs with organizations' performance goals. Castro-Martínez et al. (2022) argues that the next ideal workplace development is a remote or hybrid

work setup. While some employees find remote or hybrid work models intriguing, help is needed to figure out how to make the arrangement work and increase each employee's productivity. The COVID-19 pandemic also brought to light other important forms of flexibility, particularly those pertaining to social interactions, such as meeting individuals by chance or on purpose and getting support, guidance, and assistance.

3. Data and Methodology

This section describes the methodological details pertaining to the study.

3.1. Research Paradigm

This exploratory study adopted a constructivist paradigm to gain multiple and subjective perspectives of challenges of hybrid working from the experience of employees and managers in a forensic services organization in South Africa. By adopting an interpretivist research approach, the study sought to understand the lived experiences and interpretations of the challenges faced by a forensic company in South Africa in embracing hybrid work in the post-pandemic period.

3.2. Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants from a forensic company in South Africa. Three aspects were used for the selection: (1) experience of COVID-19 disruptions and post-COVID-19 challenges in the forensic organization; (2) active involvement in the provision of forensic services; and (3) willingness to share experiences of COVID-19 disruptions and challenges in the organization. The study population was strategically divided into two distinct strata: managers and support staff within the forensic services company. The managerial stratum included Senior Forensic Managers, Department Heads, and Team Leaders responsible for implementing and overseeing hybrid work policies. The stratum for support staff was made up of Forensic Analysts, Technical Specialists and Laboratory Technicians who are responsible for the day-to-day operations in a hybrid work setup. This stratification was crucial as it enabled the collection of data from both strategic and operational perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of hybrid work implementation across different organizational levels (Singh, 2020). A total of 14 participants (5 managers and 9 support staff) participated in this study.

3.3. Data Collection

A total of 14 audio-recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and support staff to understand the nature and variety of challenges of hybrid working in the forensic organization in the post-pandemic period. An interview guide was used to help managers and employees reflect on the challenges of hybrid working, who were affected by the challenges, and what the consequences were to different stakeholders. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. Data collection ceased when further interviews could not generate any new data.

3.4. Data Analysis

Transcribed data were subjected to member check prior to analysis to ensure credibility. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns categorized into themes of the challenges faced in embracing a hybrid work environment in the post-pandemic period, with a specific focus on a forensic company in South Africa. Details of the research process and direct quotes from participants are given to serve as an audit trail, and to enhance dependability and confirmability. The study enhanced transferability by providing comprehensive descriptions of the process and context of the forensic company's hybrid work environment, details of participants and research findings for the reader to make conclusions and transfer the findings to similar context.

4. Results

This section presents six different themes which reveal the nature and variety of the challenges of hybrid working in the South African forensic organisation in the post-pandemic

period. The participants identified (i) technical infrastructure issues, (ii) communication and collaboration barriers, (iii) work-life boundary management, (iv) performance monitoring and evaluation, (v) cultural integration and (vi) team cohesion as main challenges. Each of the identified themes is presented in detail below.

4.1. Theme One: Technical Infrastructure Issues

The analysis of the interview data revealed significant technical infrastructure challenges in the focal forensic company's hybrid work settings. Multiple participants provided detailed insights into how these technical challenges impact their work efficiency and productivity.

Participant 2 emphasised the critical nature of infrastructure challenges, stating:

"..... Power cuts and network challenges have been a very serious issue affecting the hybrid work model in my case....."

This perspective was reinforced by Participant 5, who elaborated as follows on the impact of technical issues:

".....Unstable internet and power supply challenges have been so challenging and made the work from home model a big challenge for us....."

Participant 6 provided additional insight into the technical challenges:

"..... At times technical network glitches have affected the productivity of employees that are working remotely....."

Furthermore, Participant 10 noted:

"..... Tema members are usually faced with poor internet infrastructure hence affects collaborations for those that work from home....."

Participant 11 added a valuable perspective on data security concerns:

".....There have been challenges of data security when working remotely. This is a serious issue especially where sensitive data that is forensic related is involved....."

These findings collectively demonstrate that technical infrastructure issues represent a significant challenge in the hybrid work setting, particularly for a forensic company, where data security and reliable connectivity are crucial. The consistency in responses across different participants validates the critical nature of these technical challenges and their impact on operational efficiency.

4.2. Theme Two: Communication and Collaboration Barriers

The analysis of the interview data revealed the presence of significant communication and collaboration barriers associated with hybrid work settings in the focal forensic company. The participants provided detailed insights into how these barriers impact their work efficiency and team dynamics.

Participant 2 highlighted the challenges in maintaining effective communication, stating:

"..... There is loss of team cohesion that comes because of limited face to face interaction....."

This perspective was echoed by Participant 4, who noted:

"..... Coordination of tasks is difficult in a hybrid set up. This affects project timelines and deadlines....."

Participant 7 provided additional insight into the collaboration challenges:

"..... less access for physical interactions through offices has made it difficult to foster a well collaborative work environment....."

Furthermore, Participant 8 noted:

".....The alignment of team goals and expectations has several times created conflicts and low morale....."

Participant 7 added valuable perspective on the impact of digital communication tools:

".....remote work and digital tools have enabled remote communication; however this has led to the emergence of a new problem of information overload and fatigue...."

These findings collectively demonstrate that communication and collaboration barriers represent a significant challenge in the hybrid work setting, particularly for a forensic company, where effective teamwork and information exchange are crucial. The consistency in responses across different participants validates the critical nature of these barriers and their impact on operational efficiency.

4.3. Theme Three: Work-life Boundary Management Challenges

The analysis of participant responses reveals significant challenges in managing work-life boundaries within a hybrid work setting. Multiple participants reported various difficulties in maintaining clear distinctions between professional and personal spheres, highlighting the complex nature of boundary management in remote and hybrid work environments.

Participant 1 expressed significant concerns regarding the blurring of work-life boundaries:

"..... At times family members find it difficult to understand that when I am at home physically, I may not be available to talk to them especially during work hours. Such need to negotiate for boundaries has created mental health, stress and burnout....."

According to Participant 2, technical infrastructure challenges significantly impact work-life balance:

".... You see working from home, family members do not understand that I am engaged with work, they always want to talk to me. This on many occasions create tensions as I want to concentrate, especially with the children....."

Participant 3 highlighted the challenges related to social isolation and team dynamics:

"..... I really feel disconnected from my coworkers and the organisational culture as we do not meet so often. I have never been to expose to meaningful work collaboration due to lack of physical engagements....."

Participant 4 described challenges with workspace and family dynamics:

"Coming out with a conducive work environment has been so difficult especially in our very small living room, this brought congestion. I work from a shared family space which creates disturbances and disruptions...."

In discussing time management challenges, Participant 5 stated:

"... To me working from home has meant that balancing the needs of remote work and office-based team members has become so complicated. Such pressure means it has become so difficult to maintain a healthy work life boundary...."

Participant 10 emphasised technological and communication challenges:

"Relying on digital means of communication has become a new source of stress and sometimes disrupts work. This is because of managing several communication platforms hence leading to more daily workload tasks"

4.4. Theme Four: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges

The analysis of the participants responses revealed significant challenges in monitoring and evaluating performance within a hybrid work environment. The participants highlighted various difficulties in maintaining consistent performance standards, ensuring fair evaluation, and addressing technical barriers to effective monitoring.

Participant 13, a team supervisor, expressed significant concerns about performance monitoring:

"The shift to a hybrid work model has created challenges especially in maintaining very consistent performance monitoring for group members....."

According to Participant 14, a department manager:

"..... Performance evaluations coordination has been made very complex and sophisticated by adopting a hybrid work environment. We have on many occasions struggled to make full implementation of consistent monitoring systems....."

Participant 12 highlighted systemic challenges:

"Our currently in use evaluation systems were not specifically designed for hybrid work environments, which creates a significant gap in our ability to assess employee performance fairly. The lack of standardized metrics for measuring hybrid performance has led to inconsistencies in how different managers may evaluate their group members. We have faced several challenges in maintaining consistent documentation of performance issues which have become a significant challenge."

Participant 11, a team leader, described technological challenges as follows:

"There have been limited tools for remote performance monitoring and evaluation, hence at the end of the day we had to rely and depend on personal reporting, which is sometimes found to be biased and not too accurate. At the end of the day, we found it difficult to evaluate group collaborations and teamwork in virtual environment. The problem of poor equipment maintenance has adversely affected remote work. There has also been a challenge of failing to distinguish between technical challenges and performance issues, which has created complexity in the employee performance evaluation processes."

Participant 13 emphasised communication challenges:

"Hybrid work setting has brought challenges in ensuring monitoring and evaluation and feedback delivery. There has been a challenge of limited communication channels to discuss performance related issues. As such, providing feedback has been a challenge thus impacting negatively on our performance improvement initiatives. There is a noticeable disconnect in how performance expectations are communicated and understood in a hybrid environment."

Participant 10, a senior manager, discussed systemic evaluation challenges:

"..... Using traditional performance evaluation methods has been inadequate in a hybrid work setting. Maintaining consistent performance standards has been a challenge....."

4.5. Theme Five: Cultural Integration and Team Cohesion Challenges

The analysis of interview data revealed significant challenges in maintaining cultural integration and team cohesion within a hybrid work environment. The participants highlighted

various difficulties in preserving organisational culture, fostering team relationships, and maintaining social connections in a distributed work setting.

Participant 3 expressed profound concerns about cultural disconnection:

"..... Lack of office interaction has destroyed our once existing bonds as a team. We lost our normal Friday culture of social gatherings that used to promote social cohesion..."

According to Participant 14, a department supervisor:

".... Online trainings are not as effective as physical trainings hence this has actually impacted on our ability to maintain consistent cultural practices across different work members....."

Participant 13, a senior team leader, highlighted the following social cohesion challenges:

"..... We have lost social connection because of limited social gatherings because of remote work or a hybrid work environment. We have suffered social isolation....."

Participant 8 described integration challenges as follows:

".....Remote work has made it extremely difficult to maintain consistent cultural practices across different time zones which has led to fragmented organisational identity....."

Participant 7 emphasised collaboration difficulties by explaining:

"..... cross-cultural collaboration has been lost with the advent of a hybrid work environment....."

Participant 9 discussed systemic challenges:

"..... Morale has been reduced because it is difficult to make meaningful celebrations virtually which has led to low morale....."

4.6. Discussion

The discussion is structured around the themes: technical infrastructure issues, communication and collaboration barriers, work-life boundary management, performance monitoring and evaluation, and cultural integration and team cohesion.

4.6.1. Technical Infrastructure Issues

The implementation of hybrid work arrangements at a forensic services company revealed the existence of technical infrastructure challenges that has impacted on operational efficiency and service delivery (Gillespie et al., 2025). The study emphasised the criticality of these challenges, indicating that power cuts and network connectivity issues have impacted again on productivity. This is substantiated by the findings of Hossain (2024) who asserts that reliable technical infrastructure is important for a successful hybrid work implementation. These technical challenges have affected the organisation's ability to meet deadlines and ensure the security and privacy of very sensitive forensic information. Maintaining data and security confidentiality within forensic investigations has also been made complex (Baig et al., 2017). The effect of technical infrastructure challenges on employee productivity as well as well-being cannot be understated. This observation is supported by Martin et al. (2022) who indicates that technical disruptions can lead to increased work-related stress, low job satisfaction and low productivity. Working regular hours in compensation for technical disruptions has caused poor work-life balance challenges, which therefore highlights the interconnected nature of technical infrastructure challenges with other aspects of hybrid work arrangements (Vyas, 2022).

4.6.2. Communication and Collaboration Barriers

The transition from traditional work models to a hybrid work arrangement resulted in communication and collaboration challenges within the selected forensic organisation

especially in terms of team dynamics and project coordination (Moglia et al., 2021). The research highlighted that hybrid work settings have created challenges of ensuring meaningful professional relationships and team cohesion, emphasizing how limited face-to-face interaction has impacted collaborative work processes. The findings align with the research by Guetter et al. (2022), who found that communication platforms, while they are important, often fail to replicate face-to-face interaction. Complex forensic investigations, which at times require detailed technical discussions and collaborative problem solving has made communication complicated and challenging to the organisation (Kummer et al., 2022).

4.6.3. Work-life Boundary Management

Hybrid work model resulted in the challenge of managing work life balance especially for employees in the forensic services sector where nature of work often demands high levels of focus and extended hours (Levin, 2022). The impact of work-life boundary challenges extends beyond individual employees to affect organisational culture and team dynamics. The presented results indicated that the hybrid work model has made it difficult to separate work and personal life, which leads to the feeling of constant connectivity and reduced personal time. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the 'always on' culture, is supported by the study by Cappelli and Nehmeh (2025).

4.6.4. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

The introduction of hybrid work arrangements brought challenges of monitoring and evaluation for employee performance within the forensic services company (Effiyaldi et al., 2025). The complexity of work in the forensic industry, combined with the distributed nature of hybrid teams has caused the development of new approaches to performance management and quality assurance. The challenges of performance monitoring brought by implementation of hybrid work are particularly pronounced in the forensic services sector where accuracy, attention to detail and adherence to professional standards are important by Neuteboom et al. (2024), emphasises the importance of maintaining strong quality control measures in professional service organisations. The need to balance flexibility with accountability has compelled the company to implement sophisticated monitoring systems while maintaining employee autonomy and privacy.

4.6.5. Cultural Integration and Team Cohesion

The need to maintain cultural integration and cohesion among team members has been a big challenge (Dhekial & Sujay, 2024). Through this study, it was revealed that hybrid work creates a challenge of maintaining professional relationships and team cohesion due to limited face-to-face interaction. This can be substantiated by the findings of Oppong (2024), who postulates that organisational culture and creation of team cohesion are the main challenges in a hybrid work environment.

5. Conclusion

The study indicates that while hybrid work environments offer flexibility, the implementation in the forensic services sector introduces many operational and organisational challenges. The study revealed technical infrastructure challenges, communication and information overload, work-life boundary challenges, performance monitoring challenges, and limited cultural integration as the major challenges brought by hybrid working, especially by forensic organisations.

5.1. Recommendations to Practice

Forensic organisations should move from making temporary fixes and build infrastructure ecosystems that includes different internet pathways and decentralised servers to protect data integrity even in circumstances of power outages. This must also be accompanied by technical upskilling initiatives. The training of staff to must be prioritised to ensure professional preparedness to harness hybrid work.

5.2. Policy recommendations

Priority in terms of government subsidies and infrastructure investment services such as electricity and broadband access must be afforded to organizations within forensic sector. Future research must include a target population that is drawn from different organizations to allow for the generalizability of results.

Author Contributions

Patrick Toni: Conceptualization, data collection and analysis, writing

MacDonald Kanyangale: Conceptualization, supervision, writing

Cecile Gerwel Proches: Conceptualization, supervision, writing

Admire Mthombeni: Conceptualization, writing

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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