



**Drivers of intention to adopt hybrid working model: Evidence from executives and above level employees in the selected apparel manufacturing enterprises in Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract**

*Hybrid working arrangement received significant popularity during the post COVID - 19 era as travel restrictions and social distancing moved remote working from an option to a necessity. Employees generally resist accepting changes as they are willing to stick with the status quo which is more comfortable. Thus, stimulating employees for adopting a hybrid working model becomes a challenging task and scholars' and practitioners' attention is received on the phenomenon of hybrid working model adoption behaviors of the organization and employees. However, the phenomenon is underexplored in the context of an emerging economy. This study aims at identifying the determinants of intention to adopt hybrid working model by the executive and above-level employees of the Sri Lankan apparel industry. The model was developed using the UTAUT model. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire from the sample of 101 executives and above-level employees from the three leading apparel companies in Sri Lanka. A stratified sampling technique was used while the list of employee details provided by the administrative officers of the three apparel firms was taken as the sample frame of the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis and the findings revealed that performance expectancy; effort expectancy, and social influence explained the intention to adopt the hybrid working model. This study contributes to the theory by enhancing the understanding of HWM adoption behavior of employees in developing economies as the study identifies drivers of HWM adoption behavior of the executives and above-level employees in the apparel sector specifically in Sri Lanka. The study found that the UTAUT model explains only 38 percent of the variance of the intention to adopt HWM. This indicates that some variables which have not been specified in the model have an impact on determining the HWM adoption behavior of the employees. Thus, future studies are opened up for further development of the research model.*

**Keywords:** *Effort expectancy, hybrid working model (HWM), performance expectancy, social influence*

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## 1. Introduction

Inevitably the people are now supposed to live and work in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Hänti et al., 2021) and this was well confirmed with the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic (Murugan et al., 2020). COVID-19 has been a turning point; especially in businesses since e-working which was practicing even before the pandemic but at a smaller scale, came to practice along with many other changes impacting traditional practices (Beno, 2021; Mariniello et al., 2021). Hybrid work model (HWM) is found as a mixture of working remotely (From anywhere except the office) and in-person (Beno & Hvorecky, 2021). The HWM consists of direct positive outcomes for both employees and the company. Increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, better employee engagement, wider access to the labor market, saving on utility, infrastructure maintenance, and other facilitating costs have benefitted the organizations (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015; Eurofound, 2020; Mariniello et al., 2021; Brunelle, 2012). Employees experienced less commuting costs, more time to spend with family, work with less distraction, and managing networking at a specific level, through the HWM (Lenka, 2021; Nguyen, 2021).

Poor management of HWM generates negative consequences such as lower productivity due to disturbed coordination while blending between on-site and remote work, digital exhaustion (Cameron, & Garrett, 2017; Wheatley, 2017; Chung, & Van der Lippe, 2020; Spreitzer, Caranto et al., 2020). Moreover, poor management of the work arrangement leads to work-life imbalance due to lengthening work hours and thereby decreasing job satisfaction (Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit, & Lo 2015). Further, the isolation created by the higher proportion of remote working, disturbed team working and brainstorming, and shrinking network (Alexander et al., 2021; Bohan et al., 2021).

The hybrid working model received noteworthy attention among academics and practitioners in the recent past and previous studies mainly aimed at exploring the drivers of hybrid/flexible working model acceptance (Ahmed, & Khalil, 2021; Ko, & Kim, 2018) and outcomes of the implementation of the flexible/hybrid working arrangements (Abeysinghe, Ranasinghe, Mendis, & Gunathilake, 2021; Wheatley, 2017).

Though the phenomenon of hybrid working model has been a topical area, the empirical studies carried out in the literature are not sufficient to explain the adoption behavior of the employees and organization as there are some inconsistencies in the findings (Ateeq, 2022). Though many studies conducted to explain the hybrid working model adoption behavior (Iqbal, Khalid, & Barykin, 2021; Lenka, 2021; Skountridaki, Marks, & Mallett, 2021; Williamson, & Colley, 2022), still determinant's of intention to adopt HWM by executive level employees seems to be a grey area that is open for further studies. Especially when it comes to developing countries like Sri Lanka very little research is carried out and it is rather challenging to generalize the findings of the studies conducted in other contexts due to the economic, social, cultural and technological differences between the developed and Sri Lankan context (Beno, 2021; Gensler Research Institute, 2020).

The studies conducted in the Sri Lankan context mainly explored the perceptions of academics of work from home (Rathnayake, Kumarasinghe & Kumara, 2022), the legal status of work from home (Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020), the impact of Work from Home on Work-Life Balance (Nizath & Karunaratne, 2021), the effect of WFH on employee engagement (Perera & Manjaree, 2021). This reveals that previous studies in the Sri Lankan context did not explore the determinants of hybrid working model adoption. Moreover, previous studies in the context of Sri Lanka aimed to explore the phenomenon in the academic community (Rathnayake et al., 2022), public (Mudalige & Edirisinghe, 2020) and different industries of the private sector employees (Nizath, & Karunaratne, 2021).

However, no studies aimed at exploring the phenomenon in the apparel industry which is the largest export income earner for the country that marks more than 45 percent of the total export revenue over the last years (CBSL, 2019). Hence, there is a importance in studying the drivers of hybrid working model adoption behavior of the executive employees in the apparel sector. This study is focusing on contributing to fill the contextual gap by exploring the compatibility of the UTAUT model to understand the factors that influence the intention towards participating in the Hybrid work model from the perspective of the executive and the above-level employees in the Sri Lankan apparel industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Hybrid Work Model**

Hybrid work model became visible mainly after the COVID -19 as a new term to academia. As shown in Table 1, it could be identified that specially in early 2020, the concept of Hybrid working model only covered the split between the office and home, and gradually remote working was included while taking the split to work from office and work from anywhere out of office. Hessels (2021) compressed this split between office and home to a work week. No other conceptualizations explain a specific time period for the split. Sen (2020), Lenka (2021) and Sini (2021) brought the term physical presence or the in person presence to the definition but only Lenka (2021) specified that this physical presence takes place in the office.

Hessels (2021) highlighted some unique points within both the definition that was given by highlighting that office will be used as a place of improved engagement as well the split of work time between the home and office happens according to employees' choice. Thus, the hybrid working model could be explained as a work arrangement of which the employee works from office on some days and work from home or any other location away from office on the other days.

### **2.2. Behavioral Intention to Adopt Hybrid Working Model**

Behavioral intention is the subjective probability of an individual that he/she will perform that behavior and these intentions act as a predictor of the actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consequently, the intention to perform a certain behavior (intention to adopt a new practice) could be identified as a variable that evolved from individual acceptance of a behaviour which is subjected to each individual's expectations. As well as the intention of behavior forecasts the actual action to a certain extent.

In order to select the most appropriate theory for designing a research model and developing the hypothesis, extant literature on the intention to adopt hybrid/flexible working models was reviewed. Since Hybrid working model is considered as a technically supported innovative practice, the literature on information technology/innovation adoption was investigated.

**Table 1.** Conceptualization of Hybrid Working Model

Definition	References
“A combination and interplay between remote and in-person arrangements”	Sen et al. (2020)
“A work model where workers would ideally split their time between the office and home during the typical workweek”.	Gensler Research Institute (2020)
“Working some time at home and sometime in the office”.	Gensler Research Institute (2020)
“Using mix of home and office as the place to work”	Gratton (2021)
“Split time between the office and a remote or work from home setting”	Schettler & Schettler (2021)
“The combination of remote work and physical presence in the office”.	Lenka (2021)
“A model that enables employees to work from home by choice and use the office as a meeting place to become inspired and to stay engaged”.	Hessels (2021)
“The freedom for employees to schedule their workweek in a way what suits them best; the possibility to choose where to work, either office or home”	Hessels (2021)
“A work model that in which employees work both remotely and in the office”	Alexander et al. (2021)
“Work activities in both physical and virtual environments”.	Sini (2021)
“Some people will work in the office and some will work at home or in a third place”.	Steelcase (2022)

Previous research that study predictors of the intention to adopt flexible/hybrid working arrangements used several technology acceptance theories namely Theory of Planned Behavior (Ahmed & khalil, 2021; Ko & Kim, 2018), Theory of Reasoned Action (Abeyasinghe et al., 2021), Technology Adoption Model (Pérez, Sánchez, de Luis Carnicer, & Jiménez, 2004). These theories have different explanatory power in explaining the flexible working adoption intention. The UTAUT model proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003) has received more attention in predicting human behaviors pertain to the technology adoption.

The UTAUT has received significant attention among the scholars and many studies used the UTAUT to explain adoption behaviors of individuals and organizations pertain to various phenomenon: Internet banking adoption (Foon & Fah, 2011), mobile learning acceptance (Chao, 2019; Bere, 2014), Social media adoption (Salim, 2012), ICT Infrastructure adoption (Garcia, Aunario & Handriyantini, 2019). Extant literature stressed that UTAUT model is an integrated model that can be used to explain the intention and actual adoption behavior of the individuals compared to other technology adoption

theories such as TAM, DOI and TPB (Bommer, Rana & Milevoj, 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2021) However, no studies used the UTAUT model to explain the behavioral intention to adopt hybrid working arrangements by employees. Acknowledging the applicability of the UTAUT model in explaining technology allied applications, the present develop research model (Figure 1) is based on the theory proposed by the UTAUT Model.

### 2.3. Research Model

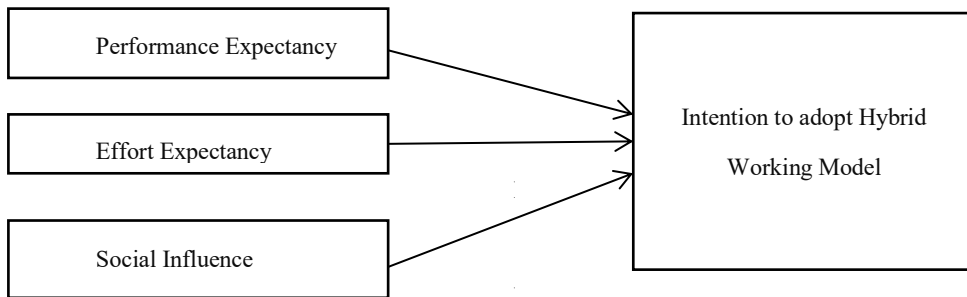


Figure 1. Research Model

### 2.4. Hypotheses

#### 2.4.1. Performance expectancy

Performance expectancy is “the degree to which an individual believes that using system will help him or her to attain better job performance” (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In this study, it is the extent to which an employee believes that adopting hybrid work model aid him/her in attaining better performance in his job. Performance expectancy consist the beliefs on career success, improved performanceproduc tivity and efficiency, getting interesting high-profile assignments, new networking opportunities and career progression (Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Thompson et al., 1991). Whereas if the employees believe that working in hybrid working model will increase their career success then the performance expectancy increases and that will make a positive push to their intention to adopt hybrid working model. Following hypothesis postulated based on the above rationalization.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Performance Expectancy positively influence on the intention to adopt hybrid working model*

### **2.4.2. Effort expectancy**

Effort expectancy is “the extent of which an individual believe that ease incorporated with using new system” (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In the current study it is the degree that the employee believe in the effortless associated with adopting hybrid work model. Venkatesh (2003) further explains that the effort expectancy contains two dimensions as belief on ease of performing the action and the ease of learning how to perform. Ease of performing the action means how easy for someone to work with or practice the new practice (Davis et al., 1989). Ease of learn depicts how effortlessly the new practice can be learnt during the early stage (Moore & Benbasat, 1991). Therefore if the employees believe that hybrid working model is easy to adopt and that process of adoption could be easily learned that will increase their effort expectancy: degree of ease associated with adopting the new model increase and thereby the employee’s intention to adopt hybrid model will increase. Flowing hypothesis postulated based on the above rationalization.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Effort Expectancy positively influence the intention to adopt hybrid working model*

### **2.4.3. Social influence**

Social influence or the subjective norm is “the degree to which a person is conscious of his important others believe he should use the new system” (Ajzen, 1991; Hale et al., 2009). For this study social influence can be expressed as the extent which an employee believes that his important crowd believes that he should adopt hybrid working mode. What the individual think of important others’ preference on his choice create an extinct motivation; which refers to behavior which controlled by external factors (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). That will directly influence the individual’s behavior intention. Consequently if the employees believe that his family members, colleagues, superiors, subordinates or any other person whom is important to him expect he would adopt hybrid working model, that will motivate him to adopt hybrid working model. This rationale leads to the following hypothesis.

*H<sub>3</sub>: Social influence is positively influence on the intention to adopt hybrid working model*

### **3. Methodology**

The current study comes under explanatory research design as the purpose is to identify the predictors of hybrid working model adoption (Zikmund et al., 2010). The study deployed deductive research approach as the study focus on testing existing theory. The study applied cross sectional research designs as the study collect data only one point in time. The current study is focusing on identifying determinants of adopting hybrid working model by executives and above level employees in the three leading firms in the apparel industry. They are the respondents of the survey whereby the unit of analysis for the present study is “individual”. A pre-study was conducted before proceeding to the final survey. Since a pretest does not require a statistical sample (Zikmund et al., 2010), it was conducted by interviewing a conveniently selected sample of 10 executives and above level employees. Respondents were initially contacted and asked to fill in the self-administered questionnaire. Subsequently, to get the feedback on the survey instruments, interviews were conducted with them at their respective offices. The average time spent on each interview was around one hour. Based on the feedback, slight modifications such as use of technical terms (Hybrid working Model, social influence) were made to the questionnaire.

The population of the study was the entire executive and above-level employees of the three leading apparel firms in Sri Lanka. Three leading apparel firms in Sri Lanka were selected based on their annual revenue and number of employees. From this study population, 130 executive and above level employees were selected for the sample using stratified sampling technique. List of employees provided by the administration of three companies were considered as the sampling frame of the study. These sampling frames include all the executives and above-level employees deployed by the companies and they were employed in various branches, factories located in several geographical regions in Sri Lanka. Initially, Human Resource Managers of the three apparel firms were contacted and upon received the approval for contacting respondents, 130 employees were selected for the sample using the list of employees provided by the administration of three companies. Sample composition is shown in Table 2.



A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents and on-line survey was circulated among the respondents with the contact details received from the administration. Within first week after delivering the survey, 53 completed questionnaires were returned. Just after the first reminder another 24 questionnaires were received. Remaining 24 questionnaires were received after sending second reminder to the respondents. Altogether 101 responses received and proceeded for the further analysis. Non response bias was tested using ANOVA test by categorizing early and late respondents to three groups and results revealed that there are no significance differences of the responses among the three groups confirming that there is no any concern with non-response bias. Previously validated instruments were used to measure the constructs and the Five point Likert scale was used as scale anchors. Data collected through questionnaire survey feed into the SPSS. Descriptive statistics and frequency were used to analyze the sample composition while correlation was used to test the linearity. Reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach alpha and the multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis.

**Table 2.** Sample composition

Variable	Operationalization	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	59.4
	Female	41	40.6
Age	20-25	36	35.6
	26-32	37	36.7
	33-40	27	26.7
	41 and above	01	1.0
Marital Status	Single	65	64.4
	Married	36	35.6
Parental Status	Having kids	25	24.8
	Not having kids	76	75.2
Party that decide where to work from	Self	08	7.9
	Supervisor	22	21.8
	Self & Supervisor	45	44.6
	Company	26	25.7

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Demographic profile of the respondents was first analyzed and results are shown in Table 2. The sample consists of 60 percent of male respondents and 41 percent of female respondents. Majority of the respondents (36.7%) belongs to age category of 26-32 years. Almost all the respondents were above

the age of 40. Two third of the respondents (64.4%) were single and with the effect of this around 75 percent of the respondents were not having kids. Majority of the employees were taking a mutual decision with the supervisor on where to work, as a very small number (7.9%) of employees got the full autonomy to decide on where to work. Consequently, internal consistency of the constructs was tested through Cronbrach’s alpha and as illustrated in Table 3 variables met the threshold level of 0.7 confirming the reliability of the variables.

**Table 3.** Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Intention to adopt hybrid working model (IAHWM)	0.813	3
Performance Expectancy (PE)	0.807	4
Effort Expectancy (EE)	0.793	3
Social Influence (SI)	0.923	4

Correlations among variables were tested using person correlation and results along with mean and standard deviations are shown in Table 4. As of the matrix all the variables are presenting positive relationships with each other variables. The correlations among independent variables do not exceed the 0.6 which confirms that there is no issue with multi-coliniarity.

**Table 4.** Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation		
			IAHWM	PE	EE
IAHWM	4.204	0.569			
PE	4.168	0.559	0.493*		
EE	3.874	0.727	0.452*	0.233*	
SI	3.720	1.004	0.245*	0.126	0.119

Note: \* denotes significance at the 0.05 level.

#### 4.1. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses testing are based on regression analysis using SPSS version 20. Table 5 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing with  $R^2$ , standard coefficient, and statistical significance. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value amounts to 0.386 which indicate that the model explains 38 percent of the variance in the intention to adopt hybrid working model (IAHWM) among respondents with the three independent variables specified the research model. ANOVA test

indicates the regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 20.343$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). Supporting  $H_1$ , performance expectancy (PE) had significant effects on IAHW (  $\beta=0.394$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Effort Expectancy (EE) make a significant impact on IAHW, supporting  $H_2$  ( $\beta=.342$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Moreover, Social influence is influencing determining the IAHW supporting  $H_3$  ( $\beta = 0.155$ ,  $p = 0.053$ ).

**Table 5.** Regression Results

Model predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.170	0.396		2.957	0.004
PE	0.401	0.084	0.394	4.787	0.000
EE	0.268	0.064	0.342	4.158	0.000
SI	0.088	0.046	0.155	1.924	0.053
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.367				
ANOVA	F = 20.343, P = 0.000				

## 5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the IAHW is positively influenced by the Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy and Social Influence. As long as employee believes that hybrid working model supports the career success, performance productivity and efficiency, while providing interesting high-profile assignments, new networking opportunities and career progression, employees intend to adopt hybrid working model. This finding is consistent with those of prior studies on adoption of flexible working arrangement (Almer, Cohen, Single, 2003; Maruyama, Hopkinson, & James, 2009).

The findings of this study confirm a positive and statistically significant relationship between effort expectancy and IAHW. As long as employee believe in the effortless associated with adopting hybrid work model, his/her intention to adopt hybrid working model rise. Belief on ease of adopting the hybrid working model and ease of learning how to adopt hybrid working model get the employee attracted towards adopting the hybrid working model. It's same as how Davis (1989) explains the ease of use of IT influence the intention to use it. This could be identified as an intrinsic motivation which means the perception of an individual to perform an activity

for the sake of doing as it's interesting and enjoyable even without any external reinforcement (Fred et al., 2021; Moore & Benbasat, 1991). Thus, the current results support the works of (Almer, Cohen, Single, 2003, Pearce, 2009), who found that effort expectancy is a key driver of explaining flexible work arrangements such as work from home, tele-working.

As hypothesized, social influence was found to be a significant predictor of the IAHW. Subjective norm (social influence) which refers to the degree to which a person believe that his/her important others believe that he/she should adopt the hybrid working model will influence the employee intention to perform the same. Mathieson (1991) and Taylor (1995) explains the same in their studies as any behavioral intention, or an intention to perform a certain action is influenced by the important others to the persons performing this action. The current study's findings support the work of (Almer, Cohen, Single, 2003) that suggests that a social influence is positively influenced on determining adoption of flexible working arrangements.

## **6. Implications**

This study contributes to the theory by enhancing understanding of IAHW of employees in developing economies as the study identifies key drivers of intention to adopt hybrid working model of the executives and above level employees in apparel sector specifically Sri Lanka. This study is conducted based on UTAUT model proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). This model was not previously tested in developing economy setting i.e. Sri Lankan context to predict IAHW of the employees. Thus, the study contributes to the present literature by providing insights into the factors influencing on IAHW among executive level employees in apparel sector in Sri Lanka. Further, this study confirms the applicability of the UTAUT model partially in explaining IAHW in the Sri Lankan context.

This study provides valuable insights for HR managers, particularly for making accurate decisions about designing, implementing and maintaining HWM. Due to hybrid working being a popularized practice in today's working world as well as to a certain future period, employers and the management need to have a better understanding on the concept and its influencers and impact to utilize the HWM for the betterment of the company's success.

This study found that performance expectancy is an important consideration in making the decision to adopt hybrid working model. Thus, HR Managers are required to understand the performance related outcomes associated with hybrid working model and it is necessary to make necessary arrangements to aware the employees on such positive outcomes. The present study also found that effort expectancy has a significant influence on the hybrid working model adoption. In this endeavor, managers are required to gather evidence about the degree to which it is easy to learn to operate, use, and perform tasks using the hybrid working model. Consequently, appropriate strategies need to be pursued to communicate the employees on the less complexity associated with hybrid working model. Moreover this study found that social influence is a significant driver of determining IAHWM. This has important implications for HR managers in designing appropriate strategic intervention for encouraging employees on adopting hybrid working model. The employees who hold positive attitudes on the hybrid working model can be selected and utilize them as role modelers for persuading others to choose hybrid working model.

## **7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are several limitations identified with reference to this study. Only 101 executive and above employees of the three leading companies in Apparel sector in Sri Lanka were studied. Therefore sample size is considered as limitation with the study which reduces the generalizability. The future studies are required to explore this phenomenon choosing several other organizations. Moreover, this study is limited to apparel sector employees. However, there is a potential for implementing hybrid working model for other sectors as well. Thus, future studies concerning other sectors are warranted. Online survey which was used as the data collection method is again a major limiting factor for the study. As the survey is non-interacted data collection method with less open ended questions the ideal attitudes and preferences are getting limited in responding. Though this study is focused on a behavioral phenomenon, not conducting a rigorous study due to different constrains has limited the study outcomes. Thus, future studies are required to employ interviews and focus group discussion to find rigorous understanding on this phenomenon. The study found that UTAUT model explains only 38 percent of the variance of the IAHWM. This indicates that some variables which have not specified in

the model have an impact on determining the hybrid working model adoption behavior of the employees. Thus, the futures studies are opened up for further development of the research model.

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