IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Proximity Bias in Hybrid Work Environment: Implications for Employee Recognition and Career Growth

Prof. Prachi Deshpande and Dr. Joe Lopez
Assistant Professor, Sinhgad Institute of Management, Pune.
Associate Professor, Unique Institute of Management, Pune

Abstract: *The increased acceptance of hybrid work models has changed the contemporary workplace, to offer employees greater flexibility while adding new management challenges to the organization. One of the important challenge is proximity bias, unconscious tendency to unfairly favor employees who are physically closer to you. This bias influences employee recognition, performance evaluations, access to developmental opportunities, and career advancement. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of proximity bias on employee recognition and career growth within hybrid work environments. Through an extensive review of existing literature, the study explores how physical visibility affects managerial perceptions and organizational decisions. The findings indicate that employees working remotely often experience reduced recognition, limited networking opportunities, and slower career progression despite demonstrating comparable performance levels. The paper concludes by proposing organizational strategies to mitigate proximity bias and promote equitable career development practices.*

Keywords: Proximity bias, hybrid work, employee recognition, remote work, performance evaluation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The workplace has experienced a profound transformation since the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work arrangements worldwide.Among these hybrid work place has emerged as preferred model for many organizations, allow employees to divide their time between working remotely and working from a physical office. This workplace culture offers advantages like flexibility, improved work-life balance, and cost efficiencies, it has also introduced several challenges related to employee management and organizational fairness.

One of the most important concern for hybrid workplace is proximity bias, which refers to the tendency of managers and leaders to favor employees who are physically present in the workplace. Employees who frequently interact with supervisors face-to-face are often perceived as more committed, productive, and engaged than their remote counterparts. Such perceptions can influence recognition, performance evaluations, promotions, and professional development opportunities.

As organizations continue to adopt hybrid work structures, addressing proximity bias has become essential for maintaining workplace equity, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness. This paper explores the implications of proximity bias on employee recognition and career growth and identifies strategies organizations can employ to minimize its impact.

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Proximity Bias

Proximity bias is an unconscious cognitive bias that causes individuals to favor those who are physically closer to them. In workplace settings, managers often interact more frequently with employees who are present in the office, leading to stronger relationships and greater familiarity.

Research suggests that employees who work in close physical proximity to supervisors are more likely to receive positive evaluations, recognition, and developmental opportunities. In hybrid work environments, this can create disparities between office-based and remote employees.

Hybrid Work Environment

Hybrid work combines traditional office-based work with remote work arrangements. Organizations have adopted hybrid models to enhance flexibility, improve employee satisfaction, and reduce operational costs.

Despite its benefits, hybrid work introduces challenges related to communication, collaboration, and visibility. Employees working remotely may have fewer opportunities for spontaneous interactions, informal networking, and direct engagement with leadership.

Employee Recognition in Hybrid Workplaces

Employee recognition is a crucial factor influencing motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. Recognition can take various forms, including praise, rewards, promotions, and opportunities for professional growth.

In hybrid environments, recognition often becomes uneven because managers tend to notice and remember the contributions of employees they see regularly. Remote workers may experience reduced visibility, making their accomplishments less likely to be acknowledged.

Several studies have shown that employees who receive recognition are more productive, engaged, and committed to organizational goals. Therefore, any disparity in recognition can negatively affect employee morale and performance.

Career Growth and Advancement

Career growth involves progression through promotions, salary increases, leadership opportunities, and skill development. Traditionally, workplace visibility has played a significant role in career advancement.

Employees who maintain strong relationships with supervisors often gain access to high-profile projects, mentoring opportunities, and strategic assignments. In hybrid workplaces, remote employees may struggle to establish similar levels of visibility, potentially affecting their long-term career prospects.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine the presence of proximity bias in the hybrid work environment.
- To study the impact of proximity bias on employee recognition.
- To examine the influence of proximity bias on career growth and advancement opportunities.
- To suggest strategies for reducing proximity bias in the organization.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent Variable

Proximity bias

Dependent Variables

Employee Recognition
Performance Evaluation
Promotion Opportunities
Career Growth

Moderating Variables

Organizational Culture

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429 Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026 Impact Factor: 8.2

Leadership Style
Digital communication effectiveness
Performance Management System

Hypothesis

H1: Proximity bias has a significant negative impact on employee recognition in hybrid work environment.
H2: Proximity bias has significant negative impact on career growth opportunities of remote employees
H3: Employee recognition significantly influences career growth and promotion opportunities.
H4: There is a significant relationship between physical workplace presence and performance evaluation rating.
H5: Inclusive leadership practices moderate the relationship between proximity bias and employee recognition.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to examine the relationship between proximity bias and employee outcomes in hybrid workplaces.

Data Sources

Primary Data collected through Employee survey
Secondary Data collected through Research Journals, Industry PublIcations and organizational case studies.

Sample Size

The proposed sample consists of: 200 hybrid employees

Data Collection Tools

Structured Questionnaire
Semi-Structured Interviews

VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Work Mode of Respondents

Work Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Hybrid	57	57%
In-office	26	26%
Remote	17	17%

Interpretation: **The majority of respondents (57%) work in a hybrid mode, indicating that hybrid work arrangements have become the preferred workplace model. This makes the sample appropriate for examining the effects of proximity bias.**

Office Attendance Frequency

Attendance Frequency	Percentage
Daily	6%
2 – 3 Days per Week	77%
Occasionally	9%
Rarely	8%

Interpretation: **Most respondents attend the office two to three days per week, highlighting a balanced hybrid work structure where both remote and office interactions coexist.**

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429 Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026 Impact Factor: 8.2

Work Experience

Experience	Percentage
Less than 1 Year	14%
1 – 3 Years	77%
3 – 5 Years	7%
More than 5 Years	2%

Interpretation: **The majority of respondents are early-career professionals with 1–3 years of experience. This group is particularly sensitive to recognition, performance evaluation, and career advancement opportunities.**

"In-office employees receive more recognition than remote employees."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20%
Agree	60%
Neutral	15%
Disagree	4%
Strongly Disagree	1%

Interpretation: **A total of 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that employees working from the office receive greater recognition than remote employees. This indicates a strong perception of unequal recognition based on physical presence.**

"Managers give more attention to employees who are physically present."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23%
Agree	53%
Neutral	15%
Disagree	7%
Strongly Disagree	2%

Interpretation: **Approximately 76% of respondents believe that managers provide more attention to employees who are physically present, supporting the existence of proximity bias in managerial interaction**

"Remote employees have fewer opportunities for visibility."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17%
Agree	68%
Neutral	17%
Disagree	5%
Strongly Disagree	1%

Interpretation: **A significant 85% of respondents agreed that remote employees experience fewer visibility opportunities, which can directly affect recognition and advancement.**

"Working from the office improves promotion opportunities."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7%

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Agree	64%
Neutral	27%
Disagree	2%

Interpretation: **Nearly 71% of respondents believe that office attendance positively influences promotion opportunities, suggesting that visibility plays an important role in career progression.**

"Informal face-to-face interactions influence career growth."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14%
Agree	71%
Neutral	13%
Disagree	2%

Interpretation: **A substantial 85% of respondents acknowledged that informal face-to-face interactions influence career growth, highlighting the importance of workplace networking and relationship building.**

"My performance is evaluated fairly regardless of work location."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7%
Agree	31%
Neutral	41%
Disagree	21%

Interpretation: **Only 38% of respondents felt that performance evaluations were fair regardless of location, while a large proportion remained neutral. This suggests concerns regarding transparency and fairness in evaluation systems.**

"I feel equally included in team discussions and decision-making."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7%
Agree	35%
Neutral	36%
Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	1%

Interpretation: **Only 42% of respondents reported feeling equally included in team discussions, indicating possible communication and engagement challenges in hybrid teams.**

"Proximity bias exists in my organization."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7%
Agree	61%
Neutral	29%
Disagree	3%

Interpretation: **A total of 68% of respondents agreed that proximity bias exists in their organizations, confirming that it is a recognized workplace issue.**

"Have you ever felt overlooked due to working remotely?"

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Response	Percentage
Yes	16%
Maybe	59%
No	25%

Interpretation: **Seventy-five percent of respondents either experienced or suspected being overlooked because of remote work, indicating a strong perception of bias.**

"Which area is most affected by proximity bias?"

Area	Percentage
Recognition	39%
Promotion	27%
Performance Evaluation	18%
Communication	16%

Interpretation: **Recognition emerged as the most affected area, followed by promotion opportunities. This finding supports the argument that physical visibility influences important career outcomes.**

"I am satisfied with the fairness of my organization's recognition and promotion practices."

Response	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5%
Agree	30%
Neutral	47%
Disagree	18%

Interpretation: **Only 35% of respondents expressed satisfaction with organizational fairness, while 47% remained neutral, indicating uncertainty regarding the fairness of recognition and promotion system.**

"Organizations should take active steps to reduce proximity bias."

Response	Percentage
Yes	96%
Maybe	4%
No	0%

Interpretation: **An overwhelming majority of respondents believe organizations should actively address proximity bias through policies, training, and objective evaluation systems.**

Hypothesis Testing

H 1: Impact of Proximity Bias on Employee Recognition

Regression Results

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Proximity Bias	-0.652	-9.78	0.000

$R^2 = 0.425$

Interpretation: Proximity bias explains 42.5% of the variation in employee recognition and has a significant negative impact.

Result: **H1 Accepted**

H 2: Impact of Proximity Bias on Career Growth

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429 Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026 Impact Factor: 8.2

Regression Results

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Proximity Bias	-0.711	-11.43	0.000

$R^2 = 0.506$

Interpretation: **Proximity bias significantly reduces career growth opportunities.**

Result: **H2 Accepted**

H3: Impact of Employee Recognition on Career Growth

Regression Results

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Employee Recognition	0.685	10.12	0.000

$R^2 = 0.469$

Interpretation: **Employee recognition positively influences career advancement opportunities.**

Result: **H3 Accepted**

ANOVA Test

ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in perceived career growth among different work arrangement groups.

ANOVA Results

Source	F-value	Significance
Between Groups	8.765	0.001
Within Groups	-	-

Interpretation: **A significant difference exists in career growth perceptions among employees who work primarily in-office, hybrid, and remotely.**

Result: **H4 Accepted**

Moderation Analysis

Moderation analysis was conducted using Inclusive Leadership as a moderating variable.

Moderation Results

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Proximity Bias	-0.59	0.000
Inclusive Leadership	0.38	0.001
Interaction Effect	0.22	0.018

Interpretation: **Inclusive leadership weakens the negative effect of proximity bias on employee recognition.**

Result: **H5 Accepted**

The findings suggest several consequences of proximity bias:

Impact on Employee Recognition

Reduced visibility of remote employees.

Lower likelihood of receiving public recognition.

Decreased participation in important discussions.

Feelings of exclusion and disengagement.

Impact on Performance Evaluation

Managers may unconsciously rely on observable behaviors rather than measurable outcomes when evaluating employee performance. Consequently, office-based employees may receive more favorable evaluations despite similar productivity levels.

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429 Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026 Impact Factor: 8.2

Impact on Career Growth

Proximity bias can influences, Promotion decisions, Leadership opportunities, Mentoring relationships, Access to strategic projects

Remote employees often experience slower career progression because decision-makers have fewer opportunities to observe their work directly.

Impact on Organizational Performance

Organizations that fail to address proximity bias risk lower employee engagement, Increased turnover, Reduced diversity and inclusion, Talent retention challenges

Recommendations

To minimize proximity bias, organizations should adopt the following practices:

1. Implement Outcome-Based Performance Evaluation

Managers should evaluate employees based on their performance rather than physical presence.

2. Standardize Recognition Programs

Recognition criteria should be transparent and applied consistently across all employees.

3. Train Managers on Unconscious Bias

Organizations should provide regular training to help leaders identify and mitigate proximity bias.

4. Ensure Equal Access to Opportunities

Remote employees should receive equal access to:

Mentoring programs

Leadership development

High-visibility projects

5. Utilize Digital Collaboration Tools

Technology platforms can be used to improve visibility, transmit and cooperation among hybrid teams.

6. Promote Inclusive Leadership

Leaders should actively engage remote employees during meetings, decision-making processes, and team activities.

Separate performance appraisal method for remote, hybrid and traditional workplace

Organization can design different appraisal methods for all types of workplace culture. Parameters should be different for different workplace cultures.

VII. CONCLUSION

Hybrid work environments have designed in modern organizations by offering flexibility and improving work-life balance. However, there are different challenges associated employee visibility and fairness. Proximity bias emerges when managers unconsciously favor employees who are physically present, leading to disparities in recognition, performance evaluation, and career advancement.

The literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that proximity bias can negatively affect employee morale, engagement, and organizational effectiveness. Remote employees often face barriers to recognition and career growth despite contributing significantly to organizational success.

Organizations must proactively address proximity bias through objective performance measures, inclusive leadership practices, standardized recognition systems, and equitable access to developmental opportunities. By doing so, organizations can create fair and inclusive hybrid workplaces where career advancement is determined by performance rather than physical presence.

REFERENCES

1. Alam, R. S., Saifuloh, N. I., Noviarti, & Razak, D. (2026). Employee Perceptions, Proximity Bias, and Performance Evaluation in Hybrid Work Environments.

IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

2. Gibbs, M., Mengel, F., & Siemroth, C. (2024). Employee Innovation During Office Work, Work From Home and Hybrid Work. Scientific Reports.
3. Hirsch, A. S. (2022). Preventing Proximity Bias in a Hybrid Workplace. Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).
4. Lütjens, D., & Felfe, J. (2026). Beyond Where We Work: Daily Informal Communication, Knowledge Sharing, and Commitment in Hybrid Teams. Administrative Sciences.
5. Marifath, I. A., Anggraeni, M. A., & Rostyawan, A. (2025). The Proximity Paradox: Unintended Consequences of Hybrid Work on Performance Equity and Managerial Bias.
6. World Economic Forum. (2024). Future of Jobs Report.
7. Gallup. (2024). State of the Global Workplace Report.
8. Harvard Business Review. (2023). Managing Hybrid Teams Effectively