



The influence of Telework on job satisfaction through autonomy and purpose

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Abstract

The growing prevalence of telework has transformed contemporary work practices, making it essential to understand its effects on employee well-being. This study examines how different telework modalities, hybrid work versus full-time remote work, influence job satisfaction through two key psychological mechanisms: perceived autonomy and perceived organizational purpose. Drawing on the Job Demands Resources theory (JD-R), a model that links psychological resources to job satisfaction, we propose a dual mediation model in which both resources shape the relationship between work modality and employee well-being. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) on survey data from 380 hybrid and fully remote employees in Spain, the results show that full-time remote workers report significantly lower levels of autonomy and purpose, which in turn predict lower job satisfaction. The model explained nearly 60% of job satisfaction, with autonomy ($\beta=0.55$) and purpose ($\beta=0.22$) acting as significant mediators. These findings contribute to a better understanding of how flexible work arrangements affect employee outcomes.

Keywords Telework hybrid work · Job satisfaction · Autonomy · Organizational purpose

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Introduction

Advances in digital communication, evolving expectations about work life balance, and new organizational designs have enabled the widespread adoption of hybrid and remote work models (Allen et al., 2015; Grant et al., 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transformation, and its persistence indicates a structural shift in how work is organized (Bloom et al., 2015; Cong et al., 2024). This shift presents both challenges and opportunities for organizations seeking to sustain performance, innovation, and employee well-being.

Despite extensive research, evidence on the relationship between telework and job satisfaction remains mixed. Some studies highlight benefits such as flexibility and autonomy, while others emphasize risks such as isolation, blurred boundaries, and weakened identification with organizational goals (Becker et al., 2022; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Masuda et al., 2012). One reason for inconsistent findings lies in the tendency to treat telework as uniform. In practice, hybrid and fully remote arrangements differ in structure and access to informal social resources (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Weber et al., 2022), which may lead to different motivational outcomes and management implications.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model offers a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017). From this perspective, telework's effects depend less on location and more on the psychological resources it enables. Effective telework design therefore requires fostering the structural and psychological conditions that sustain employees' motivation and meaning at work.

Among these resources, perceived autonomy has been strongly associated with job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2021; Gagné & Bhave, 2011). While telework may enhance autonomy, full-time remote work can also limit it due to digital monitoring, constant availability, and reduced informal support (Becker et al., 2022; Park & Cho, 2022). Similarly, perceived organizational purpose promotes job satisfaction (Martela & Riekkki, 2018; Luthans et al., 2007) but relies on social and cultural cues often weakened in remote contexts (Abendroth & Reimann, 2021). Hybrid work may mitigate this by allowing occasional face to face interactions. These contrasting dynamics suggest that the effects of telework cannot be fully understood without differentiating between modalities.

Much of the literature has conceptualized telework as a single, undifferentiated arrangement and have primarily focused on autonomy as the central job resource within the JD-R framework. Less attention has been paid to how different telework modalities, specifically hybrid versus fully remote arrangements, differentially shape multiple psychological resources, particularly organizational purpose. As a result, the combined mediating role of autonomy and purpose remains underexplored. In light of this gap, this study addresses the following research question: How do different telework modalities (hybrid versus fully remote) influence job satisfaction through the psychological resources of perceived autonomy and perceived organizational purpose?

Using structural equation modeling (SEM) on data from 380 hybrid and fully remote employees in Spain, the analysis examines whether hybrid work is associated with higher levels of autonomy and purpose and whether these resources mediate the

relationship between modality and satisfaction. The study extends the JD-R framework by modeling autonomy and purpose as dual mediators and offers implications for managing flexible work in contemporary organizations.

The paper is structured as follows. "[Theoretical background and hypotheses](#)" outlines the theoretical framework and hypotheses. "[Method](#)" details the methodology and data collection process. "[Results](#)" presents the results of the SEM analysis. Finally, "[Discussion](#)" discusses the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Telework and perceived autonomy

Numerous studies suggest that telework is associated with increased employee autonomy (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Giacomelli et al., 2024; Grant et al., 2013). Telework often provides individuals with greater discretion over how, when, and where to carry out their tasks, which can be particularly appealing in creative or knowledge-based roles (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). This enhanced control over task scheduling and execution is frequently cited as one of the main advantages of remote and hybrid work models (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

However, not all telework configurations lead to the same experience of autonomy. Structural characteristics such as the degree of supervision, the use of monitoring technologies, and expectations of constant availability can erode the sense of freedom, even in arrangements that are nominally flexible (Kaplan et al., 2018; Miglioretti et al., 2024). Recent studies have highlighted what has been termed a "paradox of autonomy under control" (Becker et al., 2022; Park & Cho, 2022), in which the formal freedom of telework is offset by increased managerial oversight and pressure to remain responsive. This tension between flexibility and control may be particularly salient in fully remote settings, where informal interactions, implicit norms, and social cues are less accessible (Weber et al., 2022).

Hybrid work models, which combine remote and in person work, may offer a more balanced environment for sustaining autonomy. These arrangements allow for individualized scheduling and task management, while preserving access to face-to-face feedback, spontaneous communication, and shared cultural practices. By maintaining a certain degree of physical presence, hybrid modalities can foster perceptions of trust and support that reinforce the experience of autonomy (Allen et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2013). This balance may be particularly beneficial in mitigating the negative effects of digital monitoring or isolation, which are frequently associated with full-time remote work.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that the effects of hybrid work are not uniformly positive. While flexibility can enhance autonomy and satisfaction, it may also weaken collaboration and social cohesion (Choudhury et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Meta-analytic and review studies report that telecommuting can increase job control but simultaneously heighten isolation or limit career advancement opportunities (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). More recent evidence sug-

gests that autonomy can function as a double-edged resource: it promotes motivation when accompanied by trust and support but may increase strain when employees lack structure or social connection (Becker et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). These mixed findings highlight that the outcomes of hybrid work depend strongly on contextual and design factors, thereby reinforcing the need to examine the underlying psychological mechanisms, such as autonomy and purpose, that shape employee experience.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) offers a psychological framework for understanding autonomy as a basic psychological need that fosters intrinsic motivation, engagement, and well-being. In the context of telework, autonomy is not only about when or where one works; it also reflects a subjective sense of self-direction and choice in how tasks are carried out. When employees perceive that they can structure their work according to their preferences and competencies, they are more likely to feel motivated and satisfied (Gagné & Bhawe, 2011; Parker & Broeck, 2017). However, when autonomy is constrained by technological surveillance, unclear expectations, or a lack of trust, its motivational benefits may be reduced or even reversed.

It is important to note that perceptions of autonomy are shaped by both contextual and individual factors. Organizational characteristics such as size, sector, and leadership culture can influence how autonomy is granted and interpreted (Ferreira et al., 2021; Kaplan et al., 2018). Individual factors, including age, gender, family responsibilities, and hierarchical level, also affect how employees value and use autonomy in flexible work settings (Camp et al., 2022). For example, managers may interpret autonomy differently from employees without supervisory roles, while workers with children may seek flexibility for family-related reasons, unlike younger or single colleagues.

Moreover, autonomy has been linked to improved work–life balance and greater adaptability in managing personal and professional responsibilities outcomes that are particularly relevant in flexible work environments (Hill et al., 2008; Masuda et al., 2012). These associations are especially pertinent in hybrid work modalities, which can preserve autonomy without sacrificing social and professional connectedness (Grant et al., 2013; Krajčák et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Perceived autonomy is positively associated with job satisfaction.

This hypothesis will be tested within the dual mediation model described in the following sections, in which autonomy functions not only as a direct predictor of job satisfaction but also as a mediator in the relationship between telework modality and employee well-being.

Telework and perceived organizational purpose

While autonomy refers to the degree of individual control over tasks and time, another key psychological dimension in remote work is the sense of organizational purpose. Perceived organizational purpose is defined as the extent to which employees believe their organization is guided by meaningful and value-driven goals (Martela & Riecki,

2018). Research has shown that employees who perceive a strong alignment between their work and the organization's mission tend to report higher levels of motivation, commitment, and satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007; Rosso et al., 2010). However, in the context of remote or hybrid work, the transmission of this shared purpose may be uneven and highly dependent on the work modality.

Telework, especially in its fully remote form, can weaken the mechanisms through which organizational purpose is communicated. In traditional in-person settings, purpose is typically reinforced through a combination of formal channels (e.g., vision statements, strategic updates) and informal cues (e.g., spontaneous conversations, symbolic events, shared rituals) that help employees feel connected to a broader organizational narrative (Flórez-Jiménez et al., 2024). When work shifts to fully remote formats, these informal forms of communication tend to disappear or become diluted, and employees may experience a disconnect between their day-to-day tasks and the broader mission of the organization (Abendroth & Reimann, 2021). In virtual contexts, communication is often limited to immediate operational needs, reducing opportunities for symbolic reinforcement that sustains organizational identity.

Hybrid work models can help preserve this sense of purpose by combining the logistical flexibility of remote work with periodic in-person interaction. Employees in hybrid arrangements can still attend face-to-face meetings, participate in collective activities, and benefit from unstructured social moments. These experiences provide critical touchpoints that sustain alignment with organizational values and help contextualize individual roles within a shared mission. As noted in Flórez-Jiménez et al. (2024), purpose requires not only articulation but also active reinforcement; something that hybrid models may facilitate more effectively than fully remote setups.

Given this distinction, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Telework modality (fully remote vs. hybrid) predicts differences in perceived organizational purpose.

Beyond the modality itself, purpose constitutes a powerful psychological driver of job satisfaction. Within the JD-R framework, purpose functions as a job resource, a factor that motivates employees, buffers the impact of job demands, and fosters well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees who understand how their work contributes to a broader mission tend to display greater emotional commitment and satisfaction, even in demanding or ambiguous work environments (Ferreira et al., 2021; Martela & Riekkilä, 2018). Purpose offers an interpretive framework that enables employees to view their roles as socially meaningful; something especially valuable in virtual or decentralized settings where role clarity may be reduced.

Therefore, we propose the third hypothesis of our model:

Hypothesis 3. Perceived organizational purpose is positively associated with job satisfaction.

In summary, purpose and autonomy both act as motivational outcomes of organizational structure and as predictors of employee well-being. In the following section,

both constructs are integrated into a dual mediation framework that explains how these resources jointly shape the effects of telework on job satisfaction.

Dual mediation: autonomy and purpose

Autonomy and purpose have been addressed separately in the literature; however, both may jointly shape how work modality influences job satisfaction. In the context of telework, these two resources represent key psychological mechanisms that support well-being and engagement, particularly when work structures are less defined by physical environments and more reliant on individual perception.

From a theoretical standpoint, the JD-R model provides a solid foundation for integrating these constructs. In this framework, job resources are defined as physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that help reduce job demands, promote personal growth, and facilitate goal achievement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Both autonomy and purpose meet these criteria: autonomy supports self-regulation and flexibility, while purpose provides direction, meaning, and identity within the organization.

Moreover, these two resources may operate in a complementary manner. Autonomy enables employees to exercise choice and judgment, but the value of that freedom can be amplified when it is directed toward meaningful goals. Likewise, a strong sense of purpose can enhance the motivational impact of autonomy by connecting individual efforts to a shared mission. Recent research suggests that this combination: freedom and meaning, is particularly salient in remote and hybrid work environments, where employees must self-manage and interpret their work in more individualized ways (Martela & Rieck, 2018; Broeck et al., 2021).

Depending on the telework modality, access to these resources may vary significantly. As argued in previous sections, hybrid work may more effectively foster both autonomy and purpose by balancing flexibility with organizational connectedness. Therefore, the relationship between work modality and job satisfaction should be at least partially explained by differences in the perception of these two psychological resources.

This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4. Perceived autonomy mediates the relationship between telework modality and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5. Perceived organizational purpose mediates the relationship between telework modality and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, if autonomy and purpose are conceptually distinct yet complementary job resources, as suggested by both theory and empirical evidence, their combined mediating effect should be greater than their independent effects. This dual mediation model allows for a more comprehensive assessment of how flexible work shapes employee outcomes, moving beyond linear or reductionist explanations.

Accordingly, we propose the following final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6. The dual mediation pathway, via perceived autonomy and perceived purpose, explains a greater proportion of job satisfaction than models including only one mediator.

By testing these hypotheses through a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the psychological mechanisms that link telework configurations to job satisfaction (Fig. 1).

Method

Sample

Data were collected through a survey administered to 500 employees working in Spain, across various sectors and organizational sizes (see Table 1). All participants performed tasks that were compatible with remote work, regardless of whether they were currently working remotely or on-site. To be eligible, respondents had to be currently employed and working under one of the following three modalities: fully remote, hybrid, or fully on-site. For the purposes of this study, the analysis focused exclusively on respondents working either fully remotely ($n=68$) or in hybrid arrangements ($n=312$), resulting in a final analytical sample of 380 participants. The smaller size of the fully remote group reflects current labor market trends, where hybrid arrangements have become far more common in the post-pandemic context.

Data collection took place during the second half of 2024. Participants were recruited through professional networks, organizational mailing lists, and online platforms. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The final sample was diverse in terms of age, gender, hierarchical position, and industry. The average age of respondents was 45.9 years; 54.6% were women, 26% held supervisory or managerial positions, and 61% had children. The sample included employees from sectors such as education, finance, and technology.

The total sample size analyzed ($n=380$) is considered adequate for structural equation modeling (SEM), following common recommendations in the literature (Kline, 2016). Given the moderate number of latent variables and model parameters, the case to parameter ratio remains within acceptable limits. Although the fully remote group ($n=68$) is smaller, it meets the minimum thresholds for comparative analyses and multigroup SEM, provided that results are interpreted with caution and the limitations regarding statistical power are acknowledged.

Measures

The independent variable in this study is telework modality, distinguishing between full-time remote work and hybrid arrangements. Participants were asked to indicate their current work modality. Those working exclusively from home (full-time remote) were coded as 1, while those combining remote and in-person work (hybrid) were coded as 0. Respondents in fully on-site roles were excluded from the analysis, as the study focused specifically on remote work experiences.

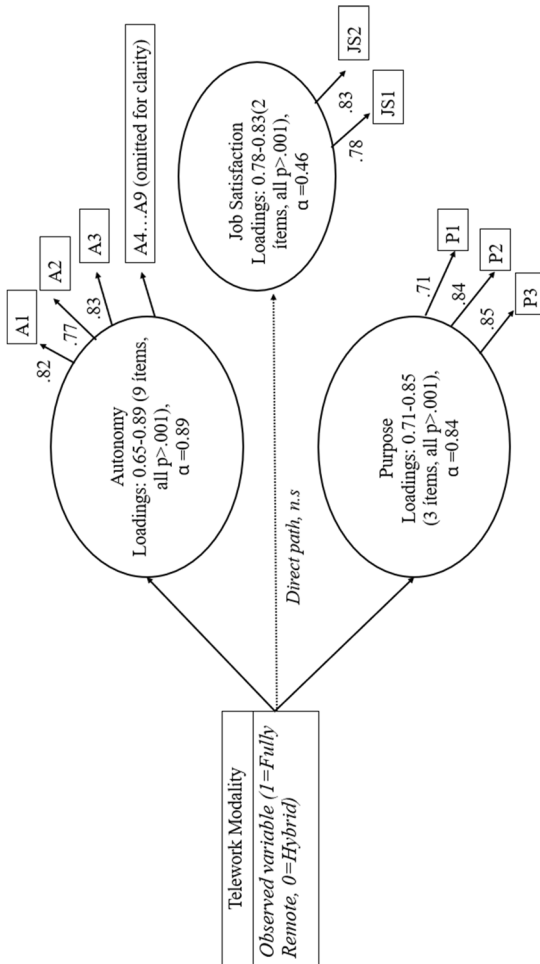


Fig. 1 Conceptual and measurement model showing the hypothesized mediating effects of perceived autonomy and perceived organizational purpose in the relationship between telework modality and job satisfaction. Rectangles represent observed variables and ellipses represent latent constructs. Values indicate standardized factor loadings, all $p < .001$. Arrows from latent constructs to indicators denote reflective measurement specification

Table 1 Sociodemographic Characteristics by Work Modality

Variable	Full-time Remote (<i>n</i> =68)	Hybrid (<i>n</i> =312)	On-site (<i>n</i> =120)
Gender			
– Male (%)	70,6 (48)	61,2 (191)	51,7 (62)
– Female (%)	29,4 (20)	38,1 (119)	48,3 (58)
– Other/N.A. (%)	0 (0)	0,6 (2)	0 (0)
Age (M, SD)	45,4 (8,8)	46,1 (9,1)	45,5 (8,4)
Educational Level			
– Medium (%)	11,8 (8)	23,4 (73)	29,2 (35)
– Higher (%)	64,7 (44)	45,2 (141)	41,7 (50)
– Postgraduate (%)	23,5 (16)	31,4 (98)	29,2 (35)
Managerial Role			
– Non-manager (%)	41,2 (28)	42,1 (131)	36,7 (44)
– Manager (%)	58,8 (40)	57,9 (181)	63,3 (76)
Children			
– Yes (%)	47,1 (32)	59,5 (186)	63,3 (76)
– No (%)	52,9 (36)	40,5 (126)	36,7 (44)

Note. Percentages are shown along with absolute frequencies (in parentheses). The sample includes three work modalities: full-time remote (*n*=68), hybrid (*n*=312), and on-site (*n*=120). Only the subsample of remote and hybrid workers (*n*=380) was used for the SEM analyses presented in this paper
Source: Compiled by the authors

Job satisfaction, the primary dependent variable, was measured using two items from the Brayfield and Rothe (1951) index. These items assessed overall job satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The two items demonstrated good internal consistency ($r=0.72$) and were modeled as a latent construct in the SEM analysis.

Perceived autonomy was assessed through nine Likert-type items designed to capture the subjective experience of control over various aspects of work, including task execution, time management, and decision-making. These items were adapted from validated scales used in previous research on flexible work (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Grant et al., 2013). The scale showed high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.89$) and was modeled as a latent factor in the SEM analysis.

Perceived organizational purpose was measured using three items assessing the extent to which employees believed their organization was guided by a clear and meaningful mission. These items were based on the conceptualization of purpose by Martela and Riekkii (2018), and the scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.81$). Like the other key constructs, purpose was modeled as a latent variable in the analysis.

In addition to these main variables, the following control variables were included: age, gender, managerial role (coded as manager or non-manager), perceived performance (measured through self-assessment on a 5-point scale), number of employees in the organization, industry sector, educational level, and average salary range. These controls were selected based on previous studies linking such characteristics to autonomy, job satisfaction, and employee experiences in telework contexts (Allen et al., 2015; Becker et al., 2022) (Table 2).

Table 3 summarizes the items used to measure each variable and the sources on which they were based.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables ($N=380$ Hybrid/Remote Workers)

Variable	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Job Satisfaction (latent scale)	5.26	1.15	0.76
Perceived Autonomy (latent scale)	4.51	0.76	0.89
Perceived Organizational Purpose	4.45	1.23	0.84
Perceived Performance (control)	3.36	0.73	0.76
Age (years)	46.1	9.1	—
Female (%)	38.1	—	—
Managers (%)	57.9	—	—

Note: Job satisfaction, autonomy, purpose and performance were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Gender and managerial role are dummy-coded (1 = female; 1 = manager). Variables such as firm size and sectoral activity were included as categorical controls in the SEM but are not shown in this table

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 3 Measurement items and sources

Construct	Item	Sample Items	Source
Job Satisfaction	2	“In general, I am satisfied with my job.”/“I find real enjoyment in my work.”	Brayfield and Rothe (1951)
Perceived Autonomy	9	“Managers allow employees to make their own decisions.”/“Supervisors often delegate decision-making about one's work.”	Adapted from Gajendran and Harrison (2007); Grant et al. (2013)
Perceived Organizational Purpose	3	“Employees have a clear understanding of the company's vision.”/“There is a long-term vision that motivates and inspires us.”	Martela and Riekkari (2018)

Note. All items were administered in Spanish maintaining conceptual equivalence with the original scales

Analytical strategy

The proposed model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Stata 17. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted to validate the measurement models for the latent constructs of autonomy, organizational purpose, and job satisfaction (see Table 4). The analysis employed the Maximum Likelihood with Missing Values (MLMV) estimator, which is appropriate for handling data missing at random.

Model fit was assessed using a combination of indices, including the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI). RMSEA values below 0.08 and CFI and TLI values above 0.90 were considered indicative of acceptable fit.

To examine the mechanisms linking telework modality to job satisfaction, a dual mediation model was estimated, including autonomy and purpose as mediators. Indirect effects were calculated using the `estat teffects`, indirect command. In addition,

Table 4 Measurement Model Fit Indices and Factor Loadings

Latent Variable	Item	Standardized Factor Loading	Cronbach's α
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.78–0.83	0.76
Autonomy	A1–A9	0.65–0.89	0.89
Purpose	P1–P3	0.71–0.85	0.84

Note. Standardized loadings from CFA. All loadings are significant at $p < .001$. *JS* Job Satisfaction items, *A* Autonomy items, *P* Purpose items

Source: Compiled by the authors

multigroup analyses were conducted to explore potential differences by managerial role. Robustness checks included simplified models with a reduced number of control variables, as well as models using single-item indicators for each latent construct.

Results

This section presents the results obtained through structural equation modeling (SEM), organized into four subsections. First, the measurement model is evaluated to confirm the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Second, the structural model is analyzed to estimate the direct effects of telework modality on perceived autonomy, organizational purpose, and job satisfaction. Third, the mediation hypotheses are tested by estimating indirect effects. Finally, robustness checks are conducted to assess the stability of the dual mediation model across different specifications.

Measurement model

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was initially conducted to assess the adequacy of the latent constructs used in the SEM, specifically, perceived autonomy, perceived organizational purpose, and job satisfaction.

The factor loadings and internal consistency indices for all constructs are summarized in Table 4 (see previous section). All items loaded significantly ($p < .001$) on their respective latent variables, with standardized loadings ranging from 0.65 to 0.89 for autonomy, 0.71 to 0.85 for purpose, and 0.78 to 0.83 for job satisfaction. These values exceed the commonly recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, supporting convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010).

Internal reliability for each construct was also satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.89 for autonomy, 0.84 for purpose, and 0.76 for job satisfaction, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The overall fit of the measurement model was acceptable, with RMSEA=0.049, CFI=0.930, and TLI=0.904. These indices suggest that the measurement structure fits the observed data well and that the latent constructs are empirically distinguishable.

Taken together, these results confirm that the latent variables used in the structural model possess adequate psychometric properties. The CFA thus provides a solid foundation for analyzing the structural relationships between telework modality, psychological resources, and job satisfaction. Additionally, discriminant validity

was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio, with all values within acceptable thresholds.

Structural model

The structural model tested the dual mediation of autonomy and purpose in the relationship between telework modality (coded as 1 = fully remote, 0 = hybrid) and job satisfaction. The model demonstrated acceptable overall fit: RMSEA = 0.052 (90% CI: 0.047–0.100), p -close = 0.045, CFI = 0.921, TLI = 0.871, and χ^2 (9) = 32.50, p = 0.041. The proportion of variance explained in job satisfaction was substantial (R^2 = 0.597), indicating strong predictive power.

Regarding structural paths, working fully remotely was associated with significantly lower levels of perceived autonomy (β = -0.22, p = 0.009) and perceived purpose (β = -0.32, p = 0.002). The magnitude of the negative association between telework and organizational purpose (β = -0.32) indicates a moderately strong effect, suggesting that the fully remote modality linked to a substantial reduction in employees' sense of shared vision and meaning. This highlights that limited physical and social connection with the organization may hinder employees' perception of collective purpose and long-term direction. Both mediators were significant predictors of job satisfaction: autonomy showed a large and highly significant effect (β = 0.55, p < 0.001), while purpose showed a moderate but meaningful effect (β = 0.22, p = 0.013). Notably, the direct effect of telework modality on job satisfaction was non-significant (β = -0.07, p = 0.118), suggesting full mediation (Table 5).

These results provide empirical support for Hypotheses H1 through H4. The negative association between full-time remote work and the psychological resources suggests that hybrid work preserves more favorable conditions. Furthermore, differences in the magnitude of the effects of autonomy and purpose indicate that, while both resources are important, autonomy may be the more decisive factor in explaining job satisfaction in telework contexts.

Mediation analysis

To test the dual mediation hypotheses, indirect effects were estimated using bootstrap procedures (5,000 replications). The results revealed two significant indirect

Table 5 Path Coefficients of the Structural Model (N = 380)

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	p-value
Telework → Autonomy	-0.22	0.009
Telework → Purpose	-0.32	0.002
Autonomy → Job Satisfaction	0.55	<0.001
Purpose → Job Satisfaction	0.22	0.013
Telework → Job Satisfaction (direct)	-0.07	0.118
		(n.s.)

Note. Telework modality coded as 1 = fully remote, 0 = hybrid. All psychological variables were modeled as latent constructs

Source: Compiled by the authors

paths between telework modality and job satisfaction: through perceived autonomy ($\beta=0.12$, $p=0.004$) and through perceived purpose ($\beta=0.07$, $p=0.010$). The total indirect effect was $\beta=0.32$ ($p<0.001$), and the overall effect (direct+indirect) was also significant at $\beta=0.25$ ($p=0.012$), supporting a full mediation model (Table 6).

These results confirm Hypotheses H5 and H6. Moreover, the stronger indirect effect through autonomy suggests that perceptions of control are more sensitive to work modality than deeper motivational constructs such as purpose. Nonetheless, both mediators contribute significantly and jointly, reinforcing the theoretical value of a dual-pathway explanation.

The finding that the direct relationship between telework modality and satisfaction becomes non-significant once the mediators are included supports the idea that the effects of flexible work on well-being are largely indirectly channelled through psychological perceptions rather than structural conditions. Model B employed a simplified structure with a single indicator per latent construct (autonomia5, vision_empleado_proposito2, and job_sat2).

Robustness checks

Two robustness checks were conducted to ensure the stability of the results. Model A excluded outliers identified using Cook's D statistic ($>4/n$), resulting in a slightly smaller sample but comparable model fit indices (RMSEA=0.049, CFI=0.923). Key coefficients remained stable: autonomy ($\beta=0.58$, $p<0.001$) and purpose ($\beta=0.19$, $p=0.047$) continued to be significant predictors of job satisfaction.

Model B employed a simplified structure with a single indicator per latent construct (autonomia5, vision_empleado_proposito2, and job_sat2). Although this reduced the overall complexity of the model, the core findings remained consistent: autonomy retained its significance ($\beta=0.49$, $p<0.001$), and purpose was marginally significant ($\beta=0.17$, $p=0.052$). This attenuation is expected given the reduced measurement precision of single-item indicators; however, the direction and magnitude of the effect remain conceptually aligned with the main model, supporting the robust-

Table 6 Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Pathway	Direct Effect (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	Total Effect (β)	Mediation
Telework \rightarrow Job Satisfaction	-0.07	0.32***	0.25**	Full
Telework \rightarrow Autonomy \rightarrow Satisfaction	—	0.12**	—	—
Telework \rightarrow Purpose \rightarrow Satisfaction	—	0.07**	—	—

Note. Indirect effects estimated using bootstrapping (5,000 samples). *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Source: Compiled by the authors

Note. Indirect effects estimated using bootstrapping (5,000 samples). *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 7 Robustness Checks – Key Coefficients Across Model Variants

Model Variant	Autonomy → Satisfaction	Purpose → Satisfaction	Total Indirect Effect	RMSEA/CFI
Full Model (SEM)	0.55***	0.22**	0.32***	0.052/0.921
Model A (without outliers)	0.58***	0.19*	0.30**	0.049/0.923
Model B (1 item per construct)	0.49***	0.17†	0.27*	0.056/0.900

Note: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Compiled by the authors

ness of the theoretical relationship between purpose and job satisfaction under telework conditions. Model fit remained within acceptable thresholds (Table 7).

The analyses conducted strengthen confidence in the validity and robustness of the main model. The stability of the indirect effects across different model specifications supports the conclusion that autonomy and purpose are reliable mediators in the relationship between work modality and job satisfaction, regardless of modeling strategy or sample variation.

To summarize the hypothesis testing results, Table 8 presents the standardized path coefficients, significance levels, and decisions regarding hypothesis support.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

This study contributes to JD-R based telework research by refining how psychological resources are conceptualized and modeled in flexible work contexts. While prior research grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework (Bakker &

Table 8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path/Relationship Tested	β	p-value	Supported
H1	Telework → Perceived Autonomy	-0.22	0.009	Yes
H2	Telework → Perceived Purpose	-0.32	0.002	Yes
H3	Perceived Autonomy → Job Satisfaction	0.55	<0.001	Yes
H4	Perceived Purpose → Job Satisfaction	0.22	0.013	Yes
H5	Telework → Autonomy → Job Satisfaction (Indirect)	0.12	0.004	Yes
H6	Telework → Purpose → Job Satisfaction (Indirect)	0.07	0.010	Yes

Note. Standardized coefficients (β) are reported. Significance levels based on bootstrap estimation (5,000 resamples). yes=Supported at $p < .05$

Demerouti, 2007, 2017) has largely emphasized autonomy or job control as the primary mechanism linking telework to employee outcomes, our findings suggest that autonomy alone does not fully capture the motivational dynamics associated with different telework modalities. By analyzing fully remote versus hybrid arrangements, we demonstrate that employees' access to both perceived autonomy and perceived organizational purpose varies systematically across modalities. Modeling these two resources as simultaneous mediators offers a more integrative explanation of how digital work environments shape motivation and affective outcomes, thereby extending autonomy centered accounts of telework within the JD-R framework.

First, our findings add important nuance to ongoing debates about the benefits and risks of telework. While prior research has emphasized that remote work tends to increase autonomy (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), our results suggest that this relationship depends on the specific telework modality. Specifically, hybrid employees reported significantly higher levels of perceived autonomy than those working fully remotely. This indicates that the autonomy enhancing effects commonly attributed to telework are not universal but contingent on work modality. The benefits of autonomy are therefore not guaranteed in remote settings and may be undermined by digital surveillance, lack of informal feedback, or blurred temporal boundaries (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2022). These results empirically support the notion of a "paradox of autonomy under control" (Becker et al., 2022), where formal flexibility coexists with experienced constraints.

Second, this study expands the theoretical lens of telework research by incorporating perceived organizational purpose, a construct that remains relatively underexplored in the flexible work literature. In contrast to autonomy centered JD-R explanations, we conceptualize purpose as an additional job resource that captures employees' sense of meaning and alignment with organizational values. We conceptualize purpose not as a fixed organizational trait but as a perceptual and motivational resource that varies according to work modality. Building on prior research (Martela & Riekkki, 2018; Rosso et al., 2010), we show that hybrid work fosters a stronger connection to an organization's mission. This likely results from the periodic face to face interactions and spontaneous communications afforded by hybrid models, which reinforce shared values and organizational culture. In contrast, full-time remote work tends to dilute these symbolic and cultural dimensions. Our results confirm that perceived purpose not only varies by modality but also has a direct and significant effect on job satisfaction, thereby reinforcing its relevance as a core job resource within the JD-R framework.

Third, by empirically modeling autonomy and purpose as dual mediators, this study advances theory on the interdependence of job resources within the JD-R framework. Whereas prior JD-R research has often examined job resources independently, our model suggests that autonomy and purpose are not merely additive but complementary: autonomy enables self-direction, while purpose channels that freedom toward meaningful goals. Their joint mediation offers a more holistic understanding of how work structure and motivation combine to shape job satisfaction, demonstrating that the configuration and interaction of job resources matter as much as their individual presence. This responds to recent calls for integrative models that bridge structural and existential aspects of work (Broeck et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2013).

Fourth, the methodological design of the study enhances the credibility of our theoretical claims. The use of structural equation modeling (SEM) with latent variables provides a robust test of complex mediation paths while avoiding pitfalls related to measurement error or model oversimplification. The results show good model fit and consistency across robustness checks, reinforcing confidence in the theoretical relationships identified. As recent methodological reviews suggest (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2016), SEM is particularly well-suited for testing latent psychological processes in organizational settings.

Fifth, this study contributes to a more differentiated understanding of hybrid work. Rather than viewing hybrid models as a compromise or transitional format between remote and in-person work, we provide evidence that they may offer superior psychological benefits through a more favorable configuration of job resources. This has implications for future of work and suggests a move beyond simple binary classifications (e.g., remote vs. on-site) toward a more nuanced typology of flexible arrangements characterized by distinct resource profiles within the JD-R framework.

Taken together, these contributions refine JD-R based explanations of telework by integrating structural flexibility with meaning based psychological resources, encouraging future research to consider not only the presence of job resources, but their interaction and configuration across different work modalities.

Practical implications

The findings of this study offer several relevant practical implications for organizations designing jobs in the post-pandemic era. As hybrid and remote work arrangements become more common, the results underscore the importance of accounting for the psychological experience of work. Specifically, job satisfaction in telework contexts does not depend solely on location or schedule, but on access to key psychological resources; namely, perceived autonomy and perceived organizational purpose.

First, the findings show that promoting autonomy requires more than just offering remote access or flexible schedules. Organizations must cultivate a culture of trust and psychological safety where employees can self-manage without fear of constant surveillance or micromanagement. This is especially critical in full-time remote settings, where workers may be vulnerable to an “erosion of autonomy” due to digital monitoring tools, limited feedback, or rigid performance expectations (Becker et al., 2022; Park & Cho, 2022). Therefore, HR managers should design policies that enable flexibility without falling into excessive control or ambiguity (Allen et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2013).

Second, the importance of organizational purpose in shaping job satisfaction highlights a frequently underutilized area in flexible work arrangements. While many companies define a mission, few succeed in integrating it into everyday communication, rituals, or management practices. Leaders must actively champion purpose by ensuring that hybrid or remote teams receive consistent reinforcement of how their work contributes to collective goals (Martela & Riekkki, 2018; Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2021). Practically, this could involve values-based recognition systems or redesigned onboarding and internal communication processes.

Third, the results suggest that well-designed hybrid models can offer an optimal balance between flexibility and organizational connection. They allow for individ-

ualized autonomy without sacrificing face-to-face interactions that reinforce cultural alignment and informal support. Organizations should avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and instead tailor hybrid systems to the specific characteristics of roles, team interdependencies, and employee preferences. This may include differentiated hybrid schedules, role-based expectations, or participatory organizational design methods (Krajčik et al., 2023).

Fourth, the study's findings have implications for leadership development and management practices. Supervisors directly influence employees' perceptions of autonomy and purpose through their communication style, delegation practices, and ability to connect daily tasks with broader strategic goals (Ferreira et al., 2021; Rosso et al., 2010). Training programs should emphasize soft skills and prepare managers to lead distributed teams in ways that sustain intrinsic motivation. Particular attention should be paid to middle managers, who often serve as the bridge between strategic direction and operational execution in hybrid environments.

Moreover, from an entrepreneurial perspective, the findings suggest that hybrid work structures can offer young ventures a scalable way to attract and retain talent while preserving a sense of shared purpose. Balancing autonomy with organizational connection may be particularly important for start-ups seeking to maintain agility without fragmenting their emerging culture.

Finally, this study provides evidence to support HR strategies oriented toward well-being in the digital age. Autonomy and purpose not only predict job satisfaction, they are also linked to lower turnover, greater engagement, and better mental health outcomes (Broeck et al., 2021; Martela & Riekkki, 2018). By prioritizing these resources in job design, organizations can enhance employee retention and foster resilient, motivated teams in increasingly fluid work environments.

Limitations and future research

While this study offers relevant insights into the psychological mechanisms linking telework modality and job satisfaction, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the cross-sectional design prevents firm causal conclusions. Although the model is theoretically grounded in the JD-R framework, longitudinal or panel studies would better capture the dynamic relationship between work modality, autonomy, purpose, and satisfaction over time.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data. Future research could incorporate multi-source measures, behavioral indicators, or experimental designs to strengthen causal inference and reduce potential common method bias.

Third, although the overall sample size was adequate for SEM, the fully remote subgroup was comparatively smaller. Replication with more balanced samples and in different cultural contexts would enhance generalizability.

Finally, this study focused specifically on autonomy and purpose as mediators. Future research could extend the model by incorporating additional psychosocial variables or examining whether effects differ across job types, hierarchical levels, or career stages. Identifying organizational practices that effectively foster autonomy and purpose in hybrid and remote settings represents a promising avenue for further investigation.

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