

Hybrid Work as an Entrepreneurial Capability in Nigerian Service SMEs: A Critical Integrative Review and Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT: This paper evaluates when hybrid work becomes an entrepreneurial capability: a service SME's repeatable capacity to configure location, infrastructure, coordination and discretion to mobilise expertise and reconfigure delivery under uncertainty. Methodologically, this is a topic-specific secondary rescreen of an inherited 2021-2026 open-access evidence pack; it is not a new systematic database search. The review applied PRISMA 2020 transparency to the retained audit trail and rescreened 150 retrievable full texts (Page et al., 2021). Twenty studies qualified: six African empirical studies, 13 international empirical studies and one sectoral narrative review. Study-level appraisal and claim-level confidence were calibrated to design quality, construct fit and contextual proximity. Findings indicate that value depends on six routines: task-location matching, digital coordination, outcome-based management, autonomy and boundary design, learning and reconfiguration, and security and continuity. The routines are candidate building blocks of capability; evidence that one practice is effective does not by itself establish entrepreneurial capability. Stronger international designs associate coordinated schedules with retention without performance loss, while dispersed work can weaken collaboration and innovation. Direct Nigerian evidence remains cross-sectional or qualitative and therefore associative. Power unreliability, data cost, unequal home conditions and cybersecurity make capability quality more consequential than remote-day frequency. The paper distinguishes resources, practices and capability; explains how the six routines were derived through theory-guided and inductive synthesis; and offers six propositions and a design-specific Nigerian research agenda.

KEYWORDS: Hybrid Work; Entrepreneurial Capability; Dynamic Capabilities; Service SMEs; Resilience; Productivity

I. INTRODUCTION

Hybrid work outlived the emergency that brought it into widespread use, yet firms still mean quite different things by the term. For some, it is little more than permission to spend part of the week away from the office. For others, it alters how knowledge is gathered, how services are produced and how customers are served. This difference is especially important in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A two-day home-working rule is easy to copy. The judgement required to place tasks, coordinate dispersed employees, protect learning and redesign delivery is not. The stronger studies give little support to sweeping claims in either direction. A six-month randomized trial of 1,612 employees found that two

home-working days reduced quitting by one-third and improved satisfaction, without lowering performance grades, promotions or lines of code (Bloom et al., 2024). Geographic freedom has likewise raised output where concentrated knowledge work can be performed at a suitable location (Choudhury et al., 2021). The costs are equally real. Dispersed work may leave collaboration networks static and inward-looking (Yang et al., 2022), and poorly coordinated home-office schedules can impede innovation (Gibbs et al., 2024). The apparent inconsistency disappears once task, coordination, employee circumstances and setting are taken seriously.

These contingencies become more pronounced in Nigerian service SMEs. Consulting, accounting, software, education support, media, tax, design and digital marketing can move much of their work online. Doing so may reduce exposure to difficult journeys, widen recruitment and keep a business operating during fuel, transport or security disruptions. Yet the same firms contend with unreliable electricity, costly data, weak cybersecurity, informal controls and little managerial slack. Employees may end up paying for the power, workspace and connectivity that the firm no longer provides. What appears to be an efficiency gain on the firm's accounts may therefore be a transfer of cost and risk. The literature offers only a partial account. Telework studies usually examine wellbeing and individual productivity; digital-transformation research privileges technology; resilience scholarship concentrates on continuity; entrepreneurship research is concerned with opportunity and renewal. Nigerian studies are commonly cross-sectional and seldom isolate hybrid work as an organizational capability. Managers are consequently offered catalogues of benefits and drawbacks, but not a convincing account of how location flexibility becomes repeatable entrepreneurial action.

This review asks:

- (a). Through which organizational routines can hybrid work operate as an entrepreneurial capability in service SMEs?
- (b). What evidence connects those routines to productivity, innovation, retention and resilience?
- (c). Which conditions are likely to strengthen or weaken the relationships in Nigeria?
- (d). Which research designs can produce credible Nigerian evidence?

This paper makes three contributions. First, it specifies the additional conditions that make hybrid work entrepreneurial rather than merely flexible, organisational or dynamic: the routines must be repeatable, learned, reconfigurable and directed towards opportunity capture, customer adaptation or service renewal. Second, it brings favourable and adverse findings into one mechanism-based account while separating evidence about practices from evidence about capability. Third, it turns the unresolved issues into propositions and a practical programme of research for Nigerian service SMEs, while clearly distinguishing direct Nigerian evidence from contextual transfer of international mechanisms.

II. RELATED WORKS

A. Hybrid Work, Remote Work and Flexible Work

Remote work is performed away from the usual employer site through digital technologies; hybrid work combines remote and co-located work recurrently; flexible work also includes variation in hours, timing or employment form. They are not synonyms. Nor does remote-day frequency establish capability: identical schedules can produce different results when one firm coordinates team presence, documents decisions and manages outputs while another does not.

B. Entrepreneurial and Dynamic Capability

Entrepreneurial capability directs opportunity recognition, mobilisation and exploitation; dynamic capability explains the patterned sensing, seizing and reconfiguration through which resources are renewed (Teece, 2007). The concepts overlap but are not identical. A dynamic capability may improve

internal adaptation without changing the firm's opportunity set. Hybrid work is entrepreneurial only when its repeatable routines help the firm recognise or pursue market opportunities, reconfigure service delivery, reach customers or talent in new ways, and learn sufficiently to repeat that adjustment under changed conditions. If a hybrid arrangement merely administers existing work more efficiently, it remains a work-design or organisational capability rather than an entrepreneurial one. This paper therefore defines hybrid-work entrepreneurial capability as the repeatable organisational capacity to configure location, time, digital infrastructure, coordination, control and employee discretion to fit tasks and customer requirements, preserve learning, and reconfigure service delivery in opportunity-directed ways. The unit is organisational, capability is evidenced through integrated routines and learning rather than technology possession or remote-day frequency, and value is assessed across employee, service and firm outcomes (Wang et al., 2021).

C. Service SMEs as a Distinctive Setting

Service outputs are intangible and depend on responsiveness, trust and knowledge exchange. Analysis, drafting and coding may suit remote concentration; diagnosis, mentoring, negotiation and ideation may require coordinated presence. SMEs have thin structures and founder dependence, so spatial flexibility can widen specialist access yet magnify key-person risk when knowledge is undocumented. Nigerian evidence supports the relevance of digital communication and cloud access, but does not identify a causal hybrid-work effect (Ashiru et al., 2023; Ojobi et al., 2026).

D. Productivity, Resilience and Entrepreneurial Outcomes

The outcome portfolio comprises efficiency, service quality, responsiveness, innovation, learning, retention and resilience. These dimensions can diverge: coordinated hybrid work may improve retention without measurable performance loss, while dispersed schedules can weaken cross-boundary collaboration and innovation (Bloom et al., 2024; Gibbs et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022). Capability quality is therefore judged across outcomes and time, not by remote-day productivity alone.

Table 1: Construct Boundaries and Operational Implications

Construct	Meaning in this review	What it is not	Illustrative indicators
Hybrid-work arrangement	Recurring remote and co-located work	Full-time remote work or flexibility in hours alone	Location pattern; coordinated presence; anchor-day design
Hybrid-work practice	A policy or routine used to organise hybrid work	Proof of reconfiguration capability	Documentation rules, meeting norms, output targets
Hybrid-work capability	Repeatable capacity to configure work around tasks, customers and disruptions, and to learn from results	Technology possession, managerial optimism or remote-day intensity	Task-location fit, coordination clarity, learning cadence, continuity controls
Entrepreneurial outcomes	Opportunity sensing, experimentation and service reconfiguration	Employee productivity alone	New-service trials, customer-channel adaptation, resource recombination
Resilience	Continuity, recovery and adaptation during disruption	Short-run cost reduction only	Downtime, recovery time, customer loss, revenue volatility

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Secondary Topic-Rescreen Design and Reporting Boundary

This study is a critical integrative secondary rescreen, not a de novo systematic review. It reused a documented evidence pack assembled for a broader remote-work management project and applied a narrower hybrid-capability question to the retrievable full texts. The integrative design accommodated experimental, observational, qualitative, review and theoretically explicit evidence. PRISMA 2020 is used to disclose the inherited record flow and the present topic-specific selection process; it does not imply that a fresh exhaustive database search was undertaken for this manuscript (Page et al., 2021). The inherited evidence pack had been assembled for research on remote-work management and employee efficiency. It covered January 2021 to June 2026 and was last updated on 21 June 2026 using OpenAlex, Crossref, arXiv and Semantic Scholar. The retained audit recorded 3,291 raw records: OpenAlex (1,875), Crossref (1,069), arXiv (218) and Semantic Scholar (129). After the source project combined deduplication with initial relevance filtering, 1,925 records entered title-and-abstract screening. From these, 304 open-access reports were sought, 154 were unavailable or could not be retrieved, and 150 full texts remained. The present review rescreened those 150 full texts against the narrower hybrid-capability question.

B. Topic-rescreen Logic and Eligibility

Titles, abstracts, keywords and full texts were examined for hybrid/remote/flexible work combined with SME/service/entrepreneurship and capability, resilience, productivity, performance, innovation, collaboration or retention terms. Nigeria and Africa terms identified contextually proximate evidence. Eligible items were empirical studies, transparent evidence reviews or theoretically explicit articles that (a) examined hybrid, remote or location-flexible work; (b) reported a capability mechanism or a relevant employee, team, service or firm outcome; and (c) offered SME, service, knowledge-work or Nigerian/African relevance. English-language full text and enough methodological information to judge inference were required. Commentary without an analyzable evidence base, duplicate reports, studies without an organizationally relevant outcome and papers whose context could not inform service work were excluded. Older foundational theory was used for interpretation but was not counted among the 20 synthesis studies.

C. Selection, Extraction and Appraisal

Of the 150 full texts rescreened, 130 were excluded: 46 lacked SME or service relevance; 39 did not contain a hybrid-work capability mechanism; 28 lacked a relevant organizational outcome; and 17 had inadequate methodological information or overlapped a retained report. Twenty studies were included. All screening, extraction and appraisal were completed by one reviewer; consequently, no inter-rater agreement statistic is claimed. The worksheet recorded identity, setting, sector, unit, design, sample, work arrangement, practices, outcomes, findings and limitations. Empirical studies were assessed against applicable MMAT domains; reviews were judged on question clarity, coverage, selection transparency and synthesis coherence (Hong et al., 2018). We did not convert MMAT domains into a single numerical score because such totals can create false precision across heterogeneous designs. Instead, each included study received an inference-weight judgement: Strong, Moderate or Contextual/Limited. Strong weight required a design capable of credible temporal or causal leverage and clear measurement of the relevant work arrangement and outcome. Moderate weight denoted transparent empirical or review evidence with useful mechanism information but material design, measurement or transfer limitations. Contextual/Limited weight denoted evidence valuable mainly for setting, feasibility or mechanism

because causal leverage, construct alignment or reporting depth was weak. The complete study-level appraisal is reported in Appendix A.

D. Synthesis and Transferability

The six routines were derived through a combined deductive-inductive procedure. Dynamic-capability and entrepreneurial-capability theory supplied sensitizing concepts: sensing, mobilization, reconfiguration, learning, repeatability and opportunity direction while the first-order coding remained open to recurrent practices and constraints reported in the 20 studies. Similar codes were compared across studies and consolidated when they represented a distinct managerial function that recurred in the evidence. This produced six routines: task-location matching; digital coordination; outcome-based management; autonomy and boundary design; learning and reconfiguration; and security and continuity. The labels are therefore neither purely deductive nor purely inductive: theory disciplined their capability interpretation, while the empirical literature determined the recurring operational content. Contrary findings were retained. Evidence was then separated by inferential role: direct Nigerian evidence, wider African contextual evidence, international mechanism/effect evidence and sectoral narrative evidence. Transfer to Nigeria was judged by task similarity, firm scale, institutional conditions and design quality. No meta-analysis was attempted because exposures, outcomes, units and designs were not commensurable.

E. Reproducibility Limitation

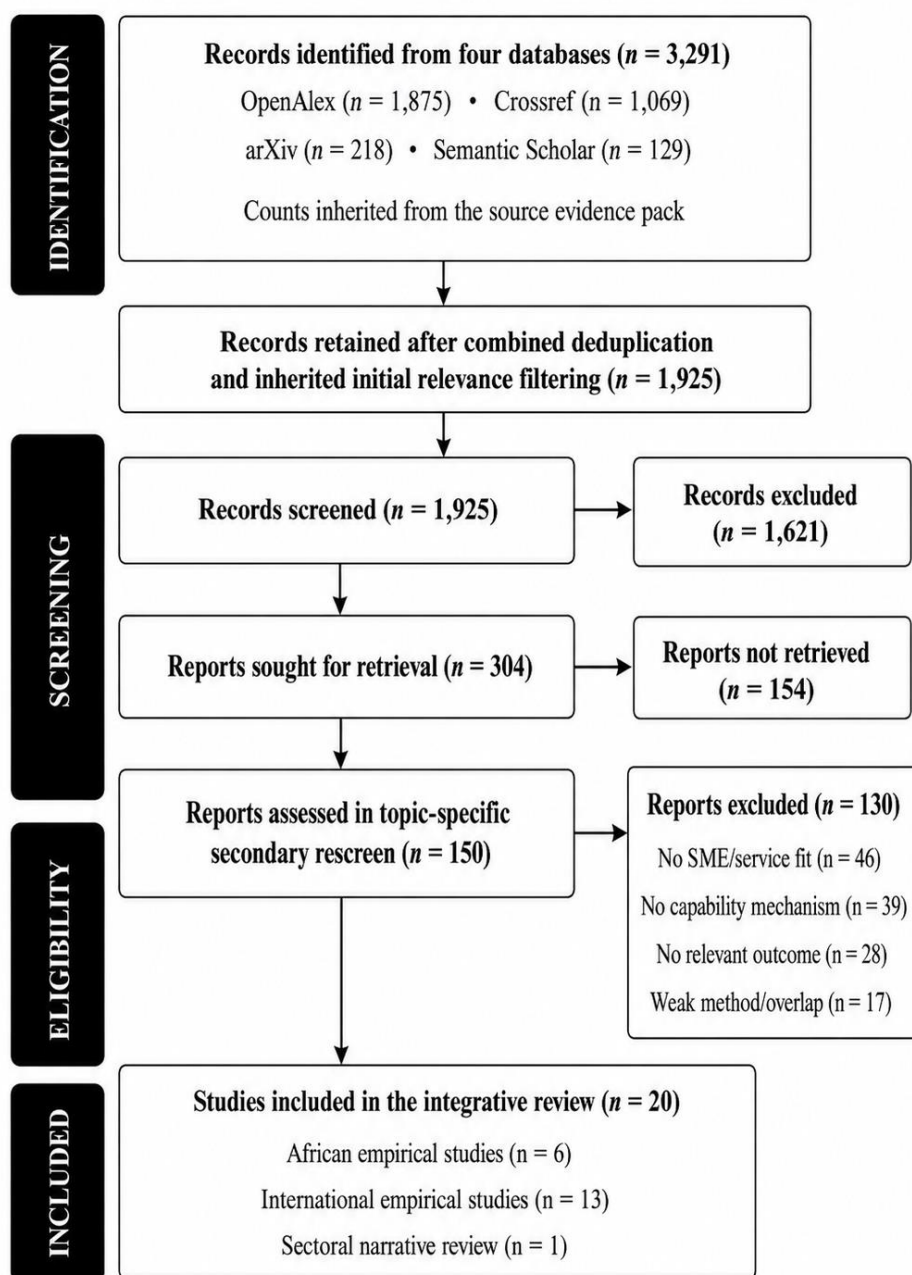
The source pack preserved database provenance and aggregate counts, but it did not retain a platform-ready search-history export for every query iteration or a separable count for duplicates versus records removed during inherited initial relevance filtering. The top line of Figure 1 therefore reports that combined stage exactly as retained; it does not relabel the difference between 3,291 and 1,925 as duplicates. The review is reproducible at the topic-rescreen and included-study levels, but not as a de novo database search. This limitation narrows the methodological claim and is reported under PRISMA 2020's transparency logic (Page et al., 2021).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Evidence Profile and Classification

Twenty studies met the topic-specific criteria. Six supplied direct African evidence: three Nigerian studies (Ashiru et al., 2023; Ojobi et al., 2026; Onyekwelu et al., 2022) and three South African studies (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024; Oluka & Kader, 2023; Saurombe et al., 2022). Thirteen studies supplied international mechanisms or effects. Ogbu et al. (2024) was retained as a sectoral narrative review, not classified as Nigerian empirical evidence. Throughout the synthesis, the phrase direct Nigerian evidence refers only to the three Nigerian empirical studies; claims transferred from international or South African work are identified as contextual or mechanism-based inference. This distinction matters because geographical relevance cannot substitute for setting, sample or design. The strongest causal leverage came from one randomized trial, one natural experiment and two large event or quasi-experimental studies (Bloom et al., 2024; Choudhury et al., 2021; Gibbs et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022). Direct Nigerian evidence was cross-sectional or qualitative; it identifies constraints, feasible practices and plausible mechanisms but not the causal effect of a hybrid schedule. Appendix A reports the study-level appraisal for all 20 synthesis studies, including design, principal limitation, inference weight and Nigerian proximity.

PRISMA 2020-informed flow: inherited evidence pack and topic-specific rescreen



Note. The 3,291-to-1,925 reduction cannot be separated into duplicate and relevance counts.

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020-informed Flow for the Inherited Evidence Pack and Topic-specific Secondary Rescreen (Page et al., 2021)

B. Appraisal Pattern and Confidence

Four weaknesses recur. First, several studies examine full-time remote work, geographic flexibility or work-life balance rather than hybrid work itself. Second, productivity is often self-reported. Third, pandemic timing combines location change with health, market and household shocks. Fourth, Nigerian evidence does not jointly measure hybrid intensity, capability routines and firm outcomes over time. For that reason, effectiveness of a hybrid practice is not treated as proof of entrepreneurial capability. Practice-level evidence contributes to the capability argument only when it also supports repeatability, integration with other routines, learning or reconfiguration. Bloom et al. (2024) provides the clearest causal evidence for a particular coordinated schedule, but its population is one large Chinese technology firm. Choudhury et al. (2021), Yang et al. (2022) and Gibbs et al. (2024) offer stronger leverage on productivity, collaboration and innovation mechanisms, yet their settings are large and digitally intensive. African studies improve contextual proximity but generally weaken causal inference. Claim-level confidence in Table 2 was assigned after the study-level appraisal using explicit rules. Moderate confidence requires at least one Strong study plus convergent supporting evidence, with remaining transfer or construct limitations. Low-moderate confidence reflects convergent Moderate or contextual studies but no direct high-leverage test of the claimed mechanism. Low confidence is used where direct Nigerian evidence exists but is cross-sectional, qualitative or construct-indirect. Provisional confidence is reserved for the theory-led entrepreneurial-capability claim because no included study directly validates the full six-routine capability construct.

Table 2: Claim-level Confidence and Nigerian Transferability

Claim	Evidence basis	Confidence	Nigerian interpretation
A coordinated hybrid schedule can improve retention without harming measured performance	One strong randomised trial plus compatible mechanism studies	Moderate	Contextual transfer: credible mechanism, but schedule and effect size require direct Nigerian SME testing
Task-location fit matters more than remote-day frequency	Convergent experimental, survey and review evidence	Moderate	Contextual transfer: strong design principle; Nigerian task taxonomies are not yet available
Dispersed work can weaken collaboration and innovation	Large natural/event studies and reviews	Moderate	Contextual transfer: risk is credible where anchor days and weak-tie mechanisms are absent
Digital coordination and outcome clarity support service continuity	International mechanisms plus Nigerian SME digital-resilience evidence	Low-moderate	Mixed evidence: international mechanisms plus direct Nigerian SME digital-resilience evidence; mediation remains untested in Nigerian service SMEs
Hybrid work improves Nigerian service-SME productivity or resilience	Cross-sectional and qualitative contextual evidence only	Low	Direct Nigerian evidence only: cross-sectional and qualitative evidence does not warrant a national causal claim
Hybrid work constitutes an entrepreneurial capability	Theory-led integration of routines, learning and reconfiguration	Provisional	Theory-led synthesis: testable entrepreneurial-capability proposition, not a directly validated Nigerian empirical fact

C. Task-Location Matching

The six sections that follow describe candidate capability routines, not six independent proofs of capability. A routine contributes to entrepreneurial capability only when it forms part of a repeatable configuration that is learned, recombined and directed towards service or market adaptation. The first routine is an exercise in matching, not scheduling. Drafting, coding and analysis may benefit from quiet work away from the office; ambiguous, interdependent and tacit-knowledge tasks often benefit from deliberate co-presence. Observed differences across workers and tasks, together with the gains recorded for digitally deliverable work, support this contingent view (Choudhury et al., 2021; Kitagawa et al., 2021). Before assigning a location, a Nigerian service SME should consider interdependence, ambiguity, confidentiality, customer presence and whether the output can be judged reliably.

D. Digital Coordination and Outcome Clarity

Once employees are dispersed, ordinary coordination can no longer be left to chance. Hand-offs must be visible; records must be shared; versions, response times and escalation routes must be settled. Otherwise, flexibility scatters information and multiplies meetings. Research showing that remote work alters communication channels and can create silos suggests that coordination quality, rather than software ownership, is the decisive mechanism (Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore, 2024; Yang et al., 2022). Nigerian studies also connect digital communication and remote collaboration with resilience and operational efficiency, although the evidence remains associative (Ashiru et al., 2023; Ojobi et al., 2026). Management must then move from physical visibility towards agreed outputs, standards and milestones. The choice is not between unrestricted autonomy and continuous surveillance. Remote and hybrid arrangements repeatedly call for clear goals, useful feedback, trust and redesigned measures (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Activity monitoring may secure quick replies at the expense of concentrated work, while unstructured discretion can hide overload and delay.

E. Autonomy, Boundaries and Distributional Effects

Location flexibility can restore commuting time, increase perceived control and reduce unwanted turnover. Bloom et al. (2024), for example, found better satisfaction and retention without a measurable loss of performance. Home conditions, however, are unequal. Space, care duties, electricity, data and personal safety differ sharply. Review evidence and African qualitative work link poorly supported remote work with isolation, overwork, family conflict, privacy concerns and psychosocial strain (Antunes et al., 2023; Oluka & Kader, 2023). The relationship is unlikely to be linear: too little discretion creates friction, whereas uncoordinated discretion damages interdependence. Cost allocation belongs in the analysis because a saving to the firm may simply reappear as an employee's electricity, data or workspace expense.

F. Learning, Innovation and Reconfiguration

Hybrid work may protect concentrated implementation while weakening tacit learning and informal ties. Large studies report more siloed collaboration under full-time remote work and lower innovation during remote or hybrid periods, particularly where team schedules were not coordinated (Gibbs et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022). Co-presence should therefore be reserved for work that genuinely benefits from it: onboarding, complex diagnosis, cross-functional design and relationship repair. Capability develops when a firm studies delays, customer feedback, employee burdens and outages, tries a different arrangement and revises its routines. In that cycle, everyday work design becomes an instrument of sensing, seizing and reconfiguration (Teece, 2007).

G. Security, Continuity and Integrated Interpretation

Hybrid work expands the operational perimeter across devices, networks, documents and customer conversations. Proportionate controls include approved applications, multifactor authentication, role-based access, backup, incident reporting and rules for confidential work. These practices are operational as well as legal requirements under the Nigeria Data Protection Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023). Cloud accessibility may support continuity, but without backup power, alternative connectivity and degraded-operation procedures it can create another single point of failure (Ojobi et al., 2026). Taken together, the evidence points to hybrid work as a configuration problem. Remote-day frequency says little about capability. Costs and benefits also arise at different levels and at different times: individual concentration may improve while team learning deteriorates; premises costs may fall while employee

expenses rise. Entrepreneurial value appears only when coordination and learning turn location flexibility into opportunity sensing, service experimentation and resource recombination. Support for these mechanisms is considerably stronger than support for a general Nigerian performance effect (Bloom et al., 2024; Gibbs et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2021).

H. An Integrated Capability Framework

The framework distinguishes enabling resources, the six capability routines and value outcomes. The routine labels are identical to those used throughout the manuscript: task-location matching, digital coordination, outcome-based management, autonomy and boundary design, learning and reconfiguration, and security and continuity. Spatial flexibility, technology, skills and managerial support are inputs; they do not guarantee performance. Practices become evidence of entrepreneurial capability only when the routines are integrated, repeatable, learned and reconfigured in response to tasks, customers and opportunities.

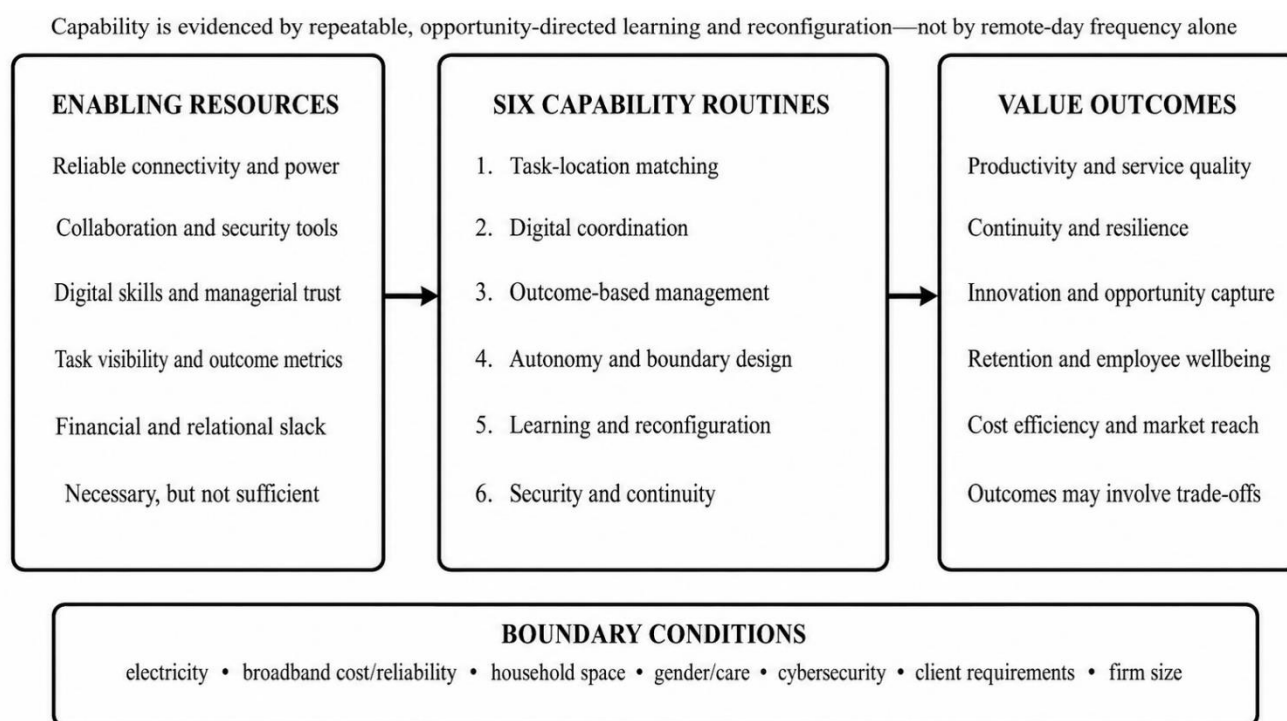


Figure 2: Hybrid Work as an Entrepreneurial Capability (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Teece, 2007).

Boundary conditions determine whether this conversion succeeds.

Proposition 1. Task-location fit is positively related to employee productivity and service quality; this relationship weakens as task interdependence and ambiguity increase without coordinated co-presence.

Proposition 2. Digital coordination routines mediate the relationship between hybrid-work flexibility and service continuity.

Proposition 3. Outcome-based management strengthens the relationship between hybrid-work capability and proactive service adaptation, whereas presence-based monitoring weakens it.

Proposition 4. Employee autonomy improves wellbeing and focused performance up to the point at which schedule dispersion undermines team interdependence; coordinated team norms shift this turning point outward.

Proposition 5. Learning and reconfiguration routines convert hybrid work from a flexible practice into an entrepreneurial capability and strengthen its effect on innovation and business-model resilience.

Proposition 6. Infrastructure unreliability, employee cost transfer, weak cybersecurity and unequal home-work conditions reduce and can reverse the net performance effect of hybrid work in Nigerian service SMEs.

I. Theoretical Contribution

The main theoretical point rests on a distinction among three levels. Software, connectivity, spatial freedom and skills are hybrid-work resources. Anchor days, documentation rules and output targets are practices. Neither category, by itself, establishes capability. A dynamic or organisational capability is present when the firm can repeatedly coordinate and reconfigure these elements as conditions change. The additional entrepreneurial criterion is external and opportunity-directed: reconfiguration must help the firm pursue customers, talent, service innovation, market access or business-model renewal rather than merely administer existing work. Hybrid work therefore becomes an entrepreneurial capability only when integrated routines generate repeatable learning and opportunity-oriented reconfiguration. Adoption is separated from competence, and competence is separated from entrepreneurial use (Teece, 2007; Wang et al., 2021). Outcomes must also be read as a portfolio. Employees may gain autonomy at the same time that teams lose informal ties. A firm may save on premises while workers take on power and data costs. Retention can improve long before the loss of mentoring becomes visible. Any serious assessment must therefore span employee, team, service and firm outcomes rather than rely on one convenient performance score (Bloom et al., 2024; Gibbs et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022).

J. Rival Explanations and Nigerian Boundary Conditions

Several rival explanations could produce what looks like a capability effect. Digitally mature firms may be both more willing to adopt hybrid work and more productive for unrelated reasons. Remote-eligible employees often begin with greater autonomy. Improved retention may reflect the value placed on a benefit rather than a better service system. Pandemic studies fold location change into health and market disruption, while employee cost transfer can flatter the firm's accounts without improving total efficiency. Randomization, longitudinal evidence, task controls and full cost ledgers are needed to separate these explanations (Bloom et al., 2024; Choudhury et al., 2021). The framework travels most readily to digitally deliverable services where hand-offs can be observed. Even there, results will depend on task interdependence, managerial trust, electricity and broadband reliability, household working conditions, care responsibilities, customer acceptance and firm size. Direct Nigerian evidence is limited to Ashiru et al. (2023), Ojobi et al. (2026) and Onyekwelu et al. (2022), and these studies provide associative evidence on digital resilience, cloud-supported operations and flexible work rather than a causal test of the proposed six-routine capability. Evidence from South Africa and international studies is therefore used only as contextual or mechanism-based transfer. It supports plausibility, not a Nigerian effect-size claim.

K. Managerial Decision Rule

A manager can reduce the decision to four questions. What outcome is the arrangement meant to improve? Which tasks belong at home, in the office or in both places? What coordination and safeguards are necessary? Who carries the full cost and risk? Until these questions have credible answers, the firm has an attendance policy rather than a capability. This emphasis on task fit, support and clear outcomes accords with work-design and African performance-management evidence (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024; Wang et al., 2021).

L. Future Research Directions for Nigeria

The next Nigerian studies should move beyond the yes-or-no question of adoption. What matters is the quality of the capability, measured through tasks, schedules, infrastructure, costs and outcomes at several levels (Ashiru et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2024; Ojobi et al., 2026).

Six designs deserve priority:

- (a). **Net performance:** a preregistered cluster-randomized or stepped-wedge trial across service SMEs, measuring blind-rated quality, turnaround, rework, customer satisfaction, absence, retention and full employer/employee costs.
- (b). **Task-location fit:** within-person task diaries linked to digital traces and supervisor or customer ratings of interdependence, ambiguity, interruptions and output quality.
- (c). **Infrastructure economics:** a 12-month panel of outages, fuel, data, commuting cost, downtime and output to identify the reliability thresholds at which hybrid work ceases to be economical.
- (d). **Coordination and innovation:** a quasi-experiment comparing coordinated and uncoordinated anchor days, with measures of weak ties, idea novelty, implementation and cross-unit contact.
- (e). **Distributional effects:** comparative cases combining time-use and cost diaries across gender, care, disability, housing and commute conditions.
- (f). **Capability and resilience:** longitudinal process studies and shock-based difference-in-differences examining how routines change around fuel, transport, flood or security disruptions.

Sampling should extend beyond Lagos and Abuja to secondary cities and stratify accounting, consulting, software, education and creative services. Firm size, ownership, age, digital maturity and customer channel should be reported. A capability scale should be developed through interviews, cognitive testing, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on independent samples, and discriminant-validity tests against digital maturity, flexible-work intensity and general managerial capability. Scale validation cannot replace causal identification. Negative cases and abandoned hybrid arrangements should be retained because they reveal where task fit, coordination or cost allocation fails (Antunes et al., 2023; Oluka & Kader, 2023).

M. Implications

Owners, Managers and Employees

Managers should begin with the service process, not the calendar. Team agreements ought to specify why people must be together, how quickly they should respond, where decisions are recorded, how work is handed over and which tasks are confidential. Performance systems should judge completed work, quality and customer value. Cost records should include the data, power and workspace supplied by employees. A limited pilot with baseline and follow-up measures will teach the firm more than an open-ended argument about policy (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Employees, in turn, need genuine discretion alongside clear obligations. Working away from the office should not mean permanent availability. Decisions must be recorded, constraints reported early and customer information protected. Employees should also have a voice when task-location arrangements are redesigned. African evidence on privacy, family conflict and support suggests that these safeguards are conditions of performance, not optional welfare benefits (Oluka & Kader, 2023; Saurombe et al., 2022).

Universities, Associations and Policy

Universities and professional associations are well placed to offer SME diagnostics, longitudinal evaluation and practical training in work design, digital coordination and cybersecurity. Public support should be judged by continuity, service quality and decent-work outcomes, not by licences purchased or remote workers counted. Reliable electricity, affordable broadband and proportionate guidance under the

Nigeria Data Protection Act remain part of the business infrastructure on which any hybrid arrangement depends (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023; Ojobi et al., 2026).

N. Limitations

The review has clear limits. It is a secondary topic-specific rescreen of an inherited open-access evidence pack and did not undertake a fresh exhaustive search of subscription databases or specialist African sources. The inherited audit joined deduplication to initial relevance filtering, and unavailable full texts could not be considered. One reviewer handled screening, extraction and synthesis. Some retained papers address full-time remote work, work-from-anywhere, flexible work or work-life balance rather than hybrid capability; their use was confined to mechanisms that could reasonably transfer. The stronger causal studies also come from large organisations outside Africa, while direct Nigerian evidence remains associative. Finally, no included study directly validates the complete six-routine entrepreneurial-capability construct; it remains a theory-led, evidence-informed proposition requiring dedicated Nigerian measurement and causal testing.

V. CONCLUSION

For a service SME, hybrid work is not a capability simply because employees divide their week between two locations. It becomes one when the firm can repeatedly place tasks well, coordinate digitally, manage by outcomes, respect boundaries, preserve learning and maintain secure continuity. Coordinated arrangements can improve retention without a measurable performance loss; badly designed dispersion can isolate networks and weaken innovation (Bloom et al., 2024; Gibbs et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2022). The Nigerian promise is conditional. Hybrid work may reduce difficult travel, enlarge the talent pool and open digital service channels. It may also move costs to employees and deepen dependence on power, connectivity and secure systems. The useful question is not how many remote days are permitted. It is which arrangement produces dependable value for this task, this team and this customer. Direct causal tests in Nigerian service SMEs are still required (Ashiru et al., 2023; Ojobi et al., 2026).

DECLARATIONS

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics Approval: Not applicable; no human participants were recruited.

Data Availability: The retained source-pack audit, topic-rescreen extraction matrix, appraisal notes, PRISMA counts and included-study inventory will be deposited in the Zenodo repository upon submission. Repository DOI: <https://zenodo.org/records/21760314>. The absence of platform-ready search-history exports for every inherited query is disclosed in Section 4.5.

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Appendix A. Study-Level Quality Appraisal of the 20 Included Studies

Appraisal uses the design-sensitive rules described in Section 4.3. 'Strong' denotes credible temporal/causal leverage and clear construct-outcome alignment; 'Moderate' denotes transparent evidence with useful mechanisms but material design or transfer limitations; 'Contextual/Limited' denotes evidence used mainly for setting, feasibility or mechanism. Nigerian proximity is reported separately so contextual relevance is not confused with inferential strength.

Study	Design / setting	Principal appraisal consideration	Inference weight	Nigerian proximity
Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore (2024)	International organisational communication study	Mechanism evidence; hybrid specificity limited	Moderate	International mechanism
Antunes et al. (2023)	Systematic review of telework psychosocial risks	Useful synthesis; heterogeneous and mainly remote-work evidence	Moderate	International mechanism
Ashiru et al. (2023)	Nigerian SME empirical study	Direct context; digital-resilience focus; associative design	Moderate	Direct Nigeria
Bloom et al. (2024)	Randomised hybrid-work trial	High causal leverage; one large Chinese technology firm	Strong	International effect
Choudhury et al. (2021)	Natural experiment on geographic flexibility	Strong identification; work-from-anywhere rather than recurring hybrid schedule	Strong	International effect/mechanism
Costin et al. (2023)	Employee burnout/stress study	Relevant boundary outcome; self-report and pandemic-context limitations	Moderate	International mechanism
Gibbs et al. (2024)	Large event/quasi-experimental innovation study	Strong temporal leverage; digitally intensive setting	Strong	International effect/mechanism
Hackney et al. (2022)	Systematic review of work-from-home performance	Transparent synthesis; heterogeneous designs and remote-work emphasis	Moderate	International mechanism
Ipsen et al. (2021)	European employee survey	Broad advantages/disadvantages; self-report and pandemic timing	Moderate	International context
Kitagawa et al. (2021)	Survey of four manufacturing firms	Task/productivity evidence; limited sector and firm coverage	Moderate	International mechanism
Mabaso & Manuel (2024)	South African exploratory study	African proximity and management-practice relevance; non-causal	Contextual/Limited	Direct Africa
Ogbu et al. (2024)	Sectoral narrative review	Sectoral context; limited selection transparency	Contextual/Limited	Sectoral context
Ojobi et al. (2026)	Abuja SME empirical study	Direct Nigeria; cloud-access/efficiency rather than hybrid capability; associative	Contextual/Limited	Direct Nigeria
Oluka & Kader (2023)	South African tax-practitioner study	Service-sector proximity; limited causal leverage; remote-work emphasis	Contextual/Limited	Direct Africa
Onyekwelu et al. (2022)	Nigerian flexible-work/productivity study	Direct Nigeria; flexible-work construct broader than hybrid capability; cross-sectional	Contextual/Limited	Direct Nigeria
Rañeses et al. (2022)	Dubai business-consultancy study	Service-sector fit; observational/self-report limitations	Moderate	International service context
Saurombe et al. (2022)	South African HRM remote-work study	African proximity; perceived outcomes and pandemic setting	Moderate	Direct Africa
Susanto et al. (2022)	SME employee work-life/performance study	SME outcome relevance; not a direct hybrid-work test	Moderate	International SME context
Wang et al. (2021)	Work-design study of effective remote working	Strong mechanism fit; pandemic and remote-work emphasis	Moderate	International mechanism
Yang et al. (2022)	Large collaboration event/natural experiment	Strong behavioural-trace evidence; large technology-firm setting	Strong	International effect/mechanism