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# Mitigating the Impact of Remote Work Challenges on Employee Productivity

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# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Michael Gamble

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Mitigating the Impact of Remote Work Challenges on Employee Productivity

by

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MS, Sullivan University 2015

BS, Sullivan University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2024

## Abstract

Challenges encountered in remote working during and after the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affect the performance and productivity of employees as they are not familiar with remote working strategies. The rapid shift brought about difficulties for business leaders to manage a remote workforce and need for solutions or effective strategies.

Grounded in the self-determination theory, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and identify strategies business leaders use to mitigate the negative effects of remote working environments. Participants were 11 business leaders from software companies who adopted remote working models in their business strategies. Data were collected through semistructured interviews. Through thematic data analysis, four major themes emerged: remote working environment and challenges; effects of remote working on employee performance and productivity; effective strategies business leaders use to manage remote working; and programs, policies, and initiatives that promote remote working. A key recommendation is for business leaders to train employees regarding best remote working strategies, set clear organizational goals, and ensure alignment of personal employee goals with those of organizations. Implications for social change include the potential for promoting trust, accountability, and mutual support for remote teams and enhancing cohesion and productivity through collaboration.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures .....	v
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	1
Problem and Purpose.....	2
Population and Sampling .....	3
Nature of the Study .....	4
Research Question.....	4
Interview Questions.....	5
Theoretical or Conceptual Framework.....	6
Operational Definitions .....	7
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations .....	8
Assumptions.....	8
Limitations .....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Significance of the Study .....	9
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature .....	10
Search Strategy .....	10
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Themes .....	12
Summary.....	41
Transition .....	42

Section 2: The Project .....	44
Purpose Statement.....	44
Role of the Researcher .....	44
Participants.....	46
Demographic Characteristics .....	46
Accessing Participants .....	47
Establishing Working Relationships.....	48
Research Method and Design.....	49
Research Method .....	49
Research Design.....	51
Population and Sampling .....	53
Ethical Research.....	54
Data Collection Instruments.....	56
Data Collection Technique.....	58
Data Organization Technique.....	60
Data Analysis .....	61
Transition and Summary .....	64
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	66
Presentation of the Findings.....	67
Theme 1: Remote Working Environment and Challenges .....	69
Theme 2: Effects of Remote Working on Employees’ Performance and Productivity.....	72
Theme 3: Effective Strategies Business Leaders Use to Manage Remote	

Working .....	77
Theme 4: Programs, Policies, and Initiatives That Promote Remote Working ....	87
Applications to Professional Practice.....	88
Implications for Social Change.....	90
Recommendations for Action.....	91
Recommendations for Further Research .....	93
Reflections .....	94
Conclusion .....	95
References.....	97



List of Tables

Table 1. Response Rate ..... 67

Table 2. Demographic Information ..... 68

List of Figures

Figure 1. Demographics of Remote Working Employees in the UK..... 76

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Promoting trust among remote employees and their leaders or managers is critical in maintaining productivity and morale within businesses (Battisti et al., 2022). Business leaders can increase or mitigate negative effects related to the productivity of remote workers by promoting trust. As remote working is increasingly becoming more common in many organizations, business leaders have experienced significant challenges involving the productivity of remote workers.

Remote working has significant benefits, including increased employee satisfaction and lower overhead costs. However, the creativity and innovation of employees are negatively affected when they do not trust their leaders, leading to low productivity in organizations. Hence, I investigated strategies business leaders used to mitigate potential negative effects of remote work on employee productivity. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, including the background of the problem and justification for the study.

### **Background of the Problem**

Remote working has been the subject of significant concerns in terms of employee engagement, motivation, and isolation since employees may lose motivation and productivity without traditional social interactions and physical presence (Adisa et al., 2021a). Many challenges have been associated with remote working involving family obligations and a lack of dedicated workspaces at home, which distracts employees.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic forced many companies worldwide to quickly shift to online working and maintain social distancing and employee health safety, many

challenges have been reported with remote working. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote work across industries. In April 2020, 88.0% of globally listed organizations adopted remote working (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). This rapid shift brought about difficulties involving managing remote workforces which brought about the need for solutions and effective strategies.

Despite an increase in problems related to remote working in many organizations globally, advancements in technology promote implementation of remote work environments. Due to its significant benefits remote working is expected to grow due to improvements in information sharing as well as in-person collaboration and communication (Byrnes et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021).

Since business leaders want to maintain or increase productivity of remote-working employees, there is a need to critically investigate challenges related to remote working and address them for the betterment of organizations. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding concerning best approaches to improve performance and employee morale while working online. Therefore, research was needed to critically assess challenges involved with remote working and identify best strategies business leaders can use to mitigate negative effects on employee productivity.

### **Problem and Purpose**

The general business problem is that surges in remote working, fueled by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, posed significant challenges to business leaders related to productivity and performance of employees. The specific business problem is that remote working negatively affects performance and productivity of employees as

they are not familiar with new remote working strategies that can enhance productivity and overall performance. Efforts have been undertaken by different institutions, governments, and organizations, including promoting advanced technology, artificial intelligence, and networking systems for remote workers (Adisa et al., 2021b; Bartsch et al., 2020; Edelman et al., 2021; Sellers, 2021). However, issues related to work-life balance, motivation, employee satisfaction, and collaboration are challenging in terms of ensuring high productivity and performance of businesses.

This qualitative study was to explore strategies business leaders use for managing potential negative effects of remote working on employee productivity among software organizations in the UK. The qualitative methodology was selected rather than quantitative and mixed methods because I specifically focused on examining challenges faced by business leaders in terms of handling remote work based on their experiences and identifying effective strategies, they can use for mitigating these challenges. A case study research design was used for this study. Findings from this study will lead to positive social change by enhancing effective communication through technological improvement as well as good governance.

### **Population and Sampling**

The target population was business leaders in UK software-based companies who implemented remote working policies and strategies. I targeted this population because they are responsible for managing employee performance and overall productivity of organizations. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 business leaders who acted as representatives of the population. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling

method where participants are recruited in studies based on characteristics or knowledge (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021; Battisti et al., 2022; Byrnes et al., 2021; Fan & Moen, 2023).

The study was conducted using Zoom and Google Meet; thus, site authorization and location were not required. I selected participants who had experience in leadership positions for at least 5 years and implemented remote frameworks. Both males and females from all races and backgrounds were eligible for the study.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative research method. This involves collecting and assessing nonnumerical data to address social reality of individuals in society in terms of their motivations, beliefs, and attitudes (Byrnes et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2022). I collected firsthand information using primary data collection methods based on participant's experiences, rather than secondary data sources.

The case study research design was used in this study. This type of research design is used to develop a contextual and in-depth understanding of a particular complex real-world situation or subject (Sengupta & Al-Khalifa, 2022). This design was suitable for this study. Furthermore, I explored performance of organizations that implemented remote working frameworks and strategies used by managers of these organizations to ensure high productivity and performance.

### **Research Question**

RQ1: What effective strategies do business leaders use to address potential remote working effects on employee productivity?

### **Interview Questions**

1. Have you implemented some strategies to manage remote working in your organization? If yes, explain the actions or tactics your company has put in place to mitigate any possible harm that remote working could have to employee productivity.
2. What is your understanding concerning the effect of remote work on worker productivity inside your company?
3. What are some of the typical difficulties that workers have keeping up their productivity when working remotely, in your experience?
4. What are the examples of programs or initiatives that have been effective in reducing the possible adverse impacts of remote working on employee productivity?
5. How do you ensure that distant teams collaborate and communicate effectively to sustain productivity levels?
6. Have you seen any variations in productivity between full-time remote workers and those who use a mixed model? If yes, state at least three differences
7. What tools or tactics have been made available to help staff members manage their personal and professional lives while working remotely and avoid burnout?
8. How do you keep remote workers motivated and accountable to ensure productivity is maintained?

9. What steps or procedures have been taken to address possible infrastructural, connection, and technological issues that might affect worker productivity in a remote work environment?
10. Do you have any observations or lessons learned that you can offer on how the implementation of remote working arrangements has increased employee productivity?

### **Theoretical or Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual frameworks for this study were the knowledge economy model and self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT, developed by Deci and Ryan in 1985, emphasizes that individuals have psychological needs involving autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These fundamental needs are crucial for psychological health and play a significant role in terms of motivating and engaging individuals. When these needs are met, individuals are more likely to feel inspired, engaged, and happy in their work, leading to improved productivity and well-being. In the context of remote work, the SDT was used to address workers' psychological requirements and how factors like autonomy, competence, and relatedness impacted motivation, behavior, and productivity.

The knowledge economy model emphasizes the significance of knowledge, information, and innovation as key drivers of societal advancement and economic prosperity. Investments in technology, education, research, and development are key drivers of productivity and growth. In terms of the study of remote work, the knowledge economy model was used to emphasize the importance of fostering cultures of continuous learning and knowledge sharing to succeed in knowledge-driven economies.



The SDT and knowledge economy model were valuable frameworks for understanding remote employee motivation, behavior, and productivity. Integrating these two theoretical foundations enabled me to explore ways to enhance employee engagement, well-being, and productivity in remote work environments.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Accountability:* When individuals are expected to take ownership of their choices, activities, and results as well as performance and outcomes (Dubnick, 2000).

*Competence:* Having the capacity, effectiveness, and expertise to carry out activities and produce desired results (Epstein & Hundert, 2002).

*Employee engagement:* Level of emotional investment, commitment, and motivation that workers have for organizational success (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022).

*Intrinsic motivation:* Motivation resulting from enjoyment, personal interest, and satisfaction due to engaging in an activity or working toward a goal (Herlambang et al., 2021).

*Performance tracking:* Process of routinely observing and rating employee performance, often using metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to gauge development and achievement (Rosten & Drummond, 2005).

*Productivity:* The ability of a person or organization to produce desired results or accomplish objectives in a certain amount of time (Dutta et al., 2021).

*Remote work:* Work that is done away from an office setting. This is generally made possible by technology that enables workers to do tasks and interact with coworkers from locations other than their workplace (Aczel et al., 2021).

*Work-life blurring*: A phenomenon where lines between work and personal life are blurred, which often makes it impossible to distinguish between work-related obligations and duties and personal obligations (Pluut & Wonders, 2020).

*Workforce turnover*: Phenomenon in which people depart businesses and must be replaced (Brabson et al., 2020).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions refer to accepted truths or assertions that are taken as accurate but not empirically proven (Baghranian & Carter, 2022). I assumed participants provided reliable and trustworthy information regarding the study topic. I also assumed participants were honest and transparent and had skills and experiences to provide crucial insights regarding the problem. Finally, I assumed participants' contributions were critical to understanding remote work strategies.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations refer to flaws or restrictions that may affect results or generalizability of the study (Johnson et al., 2020). A limitation of this study was that multiple case studies may involve selection bias due to my judgment and personal preconceptions. Second, study generalizability may be restricted in terms of my ability to draw broad conclusions and reduce harmful effects of remote work on employee productivity. Third, participant responses may be biased when they fail to provide accurate or reliable information.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to boundaries set by the researcher, which helps determine what to exclude and include (Campbell et al., 2020). In this study, only business leaders in UK software organizations who adopted remote working frameworks were included.

## **Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study will contribute to both business practice and social change. In terms of business practice, this study will improve remote work management business decision-making. Corporate leaders will be able to develop policies, methods, and support systems for remote work productivity and employee well-being.

Furthermore, companies may improve productivity and performance by encouraging employee engagement, motivation, and work-life balance. Through this study, business managers will be able to effectively manage remote employees and encourage collaboration and communication as well as promote effective remote work environments by addressing problems such as home distractions, communication challenges, and work-life conflicts.

Findings of this study will lead to positive social change by promoting trust, accountability, and mutual support for remote teams and enhancing cohesion and productivity. Through an adequate understanding of the significance of remote working and effective strategies to manage challenges, leaders can promote training programs that focus on enhancing teamwork and collaboration. Furthermore, understanding best strategies for addressing remote work challenges will help remote workers build more connections by using networking systems, thus enhancing mutual and social

understanding globally. This will eventually help in terms of promoting unity and effective communication through technological improvements as well as good governance as leaders are aware of new working environment frameworks.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Remote working has become increasingly popular in many industries since 2014 (Galanti et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2022). Despite having many benefits, including increased employee satisfaction and lower overhead costs, there are significant challenges faced by business leaders in terms of managing and maintaining employee productivity (Edelmann et al., 2021). In this section, I reviewed available and relevant literature related to strategies business leaders use for addressing potential negative effects of remote working on productivity of employees. Publications, organizational reports, scholarly books, articles, and journals were retrieved from relevant databases and analyzed. All sources were published between 2020 and 2024. Additionally, 85% of total sources were peer-reviewed.

#### **Search Strategy**

I used the following databases for this study: JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. I mainly focused on searching for data related to remote work productivity, employee engagement, and well-being. I used the following search terms: *remote work, telecommuting, virtual work, employee productivity, engagement, motivation, work-life balance, leadership, and management approaches*. Boolean operators were used to combine keywords and phrases to ensure only relevant articles were retrieved. These combinations were used to narrow search results to only focus on

remote work topics. I used sources that were published between 2020 and 2024 because of the fast-changing nature of remote work and necessity to integrate new findings.

In total, 500 peer-reviewed articles, organizational reports, books, and journals were found. I selected 412 sources, of which 88 were included in the review. Selected articles were used to explain remote work productivity, employee engagement, and well-being based on the SDT and knowledge economy model.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### ***SDT***

People require autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) defined autonomy as the urge to make choices based on one's principles and interests as well as desire to be competent and successful. Satisfying these fundamental psychological requirements is essential for psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These fundamental psychological demands must be met for good functioning and psychological well-being. Deci and Ryan argued people are likely to feel inspired, engaged, and happy with their work when they sense autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The SDT strongly emphasizes the value of relatedness, competence, and autonomy in terms of analyzing human motivation and action.

The SDT also emphasizes how intrinsic motivation is crucial in terms of directing behaviors and encouraging optimal performance (Zeshan et al., 2022). This theory enabled a comprehensive exploration of internal factors that increase intrinsic motivation for employees.

### ***Knowledge Economy Model***

The knowledge economy model was used to determine the importance of knowledge, information, and innovation as significant factors leading to societal advancement and economic prosperity. Investments in technology, effective management, education, research and development, and use of intellectual resources help increase production (Zeshan et al., 2022). Information and knowledge play a transformative role in terms of boosting productivity and economic progress. This model emphasizes the significance of using information resources, technical breakthroughs, and innovation to sustain and improve remote work productivity.

According to Battisti et al. (2022), organizations should concentrate on developing cultures of continual learning and adaptation and environments that are favorable to information acquisition, sharing, and use to succeed in the knowledge economy.

Investments in technology, effective management, education, research and development, and intellectual resource use help in terms of increasing productivity (Drucker, 1969).

### **Themes**

#### ***Theme 1: Concept of Remote Work***

The term remote work describes working situations where employees carry out their duties from their homes or other distant places, using computers and other technological devices (Popovici & Popovici, 2020; Yang et al., 2022). Telecommuting, freelancing, and scattered teams are examples of remote work (Ng et al., 2022).

Telecommuting involves working from home part-time or full-time throughout the week (Wang et al., 2021). Freelancers work on projects for various clients (Wang et al., 2021). Distributed teams operate from a distance (Ng et al., 2022). Remote work necessitates geographical independence, flexible schedules, and technological advancement (Battisti et al., 2022; Urbaniec, 2022). Employees may work from any location with an internet connection, allowing them more flexibility in terms of where they live and work (Battisti et al., 2022).

Urbaniec et al. (2022) found remote working has been enabled through virtual communication platforms, project management software, and cloud-based solutions. Remote employees personalize their work environments, which increases productivity and job satisfaction (Urbaniec et al., 2022). Flexible work settings benefit employee well-being and work-life integration (Battisti et al., 2022). Geographic freedom, flexible hours, technology, and opportunities to personalize the workplace are all benefits of remote employment.

### ***Theme 2: Remote Work and Productivity in the Software Industry***

Telecommuting was coined by NASA engineer Jack Nilles in 1973. Remote working did not become popular until the late 1990s and early 2000s when garage firms were launched with small budgets by struggling college students or former corporate professionals (Fürstenau et al., 2022). The DOT Appropriations Act of 2000 led to telecommuting laws and legitimized remote work. This law helped legalize remote work. In 2019, private businesses in the United States employed 59% of remote workers (Berg,

2022). Following the COVID-19 outbreak, 74% of business leaders relocated employees to work remotely (Berg, 2022).

Remote work has evolved dramatically. Home-working increased by 56% to 3.4 million people in the 1980s (Silver, 2023). In 2000, remote workers totaled 4.2 million people, or 3.2% of the American workforce (Silver, 2023). By 2020, 11 million individuals worked from home, accounting for 7.3% of the U.S. workforce (Silver, 2023). Globalization of talent has altered the job market. Remote work is revolutionizing sectors because of continuous development of remote employees, talent consolidation, and compensation. According to Yang et al. (2022), consolidation has changed labor dynamics, impacted median wages, and led to regained work-life balance.

Remote teamwork and information sharing require effective communication and collaboration. Using effective tools for virtual team collaboration and clear communication improves collaboration and productivity. Effective work-life balance and boundary management keep work and personal time separate. Remote workers can improve their work-life balance by managing time and prioritizing tasks. Data privacy and cyber security can promote strong security strategies to protect sensitive data and secure remote work. Effective leadership and management styles can empower and support remote working environments. Teamwork, accountability, and performance improve overall performance of remote workers.

### ***Theme 3: Collaboration and Communication in Remote Settings***

Yang et al. (2022) found factors which influence remote work productivity were communication and cooperation, work-life balance and boundaries, technology and



infrastructure, (connections and systems), and remote working tools as well as data privacy and cyber security. These factors demonstrate leadership and management strategies are critical in terms of enabling and empowering remote working personnel. I critically reviewed these factors since they are vital in terms of assisting organizations and individuals with increasing remote work productivity and creating positive work environments.

Communication may be challenging due to remote reliance on technology and lack of face-to-face interactions. Remote workers require effective communication to be productive, collaborate, and feel connected (Fuchs & Reichel, 2023). Clear and precise phrasing helps avoid message misunderstandings. Remote communication standards and training assist team members. Remote team communication and cooperation can be improved via virtual team collaboration tools and platforms (Byrnes et al., 2021; Kim & Hwang, 2018). It is critical to invest in dependable and user- friendly collaboration technologies that meet needs of remote teams (Abarca et al., 2020; Eslahchi, 2023). Leaders and managers can foster trust by establishing clear expectations, promoting open communication, and cultivating positive workplace cultures.

Communication tools may have the potential to boost team cooperation and productivity. According to Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020), remote communication is problematic due to lack of nonverbal cues and in-person context.

Precise and straightforward language, active listening, and clarification lead to reduced miscommunication (Buarqoub, 2019; Smith et al., 2019). Virtual team collaboration tools and platforms are used to interact and collaborate. Collaboration is

improved via video conferencing, instant messaging, project management, and document-sharing technologies (Hardwig & Boos, 2023; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). These findings highlight the importance of technology in terms of overcoming remote work issues and addressing successful teamwork, hence supporting communication and collaboration.

Effective remote work productivity is influenced by well-defined job roles and clear expectations, which provide remote employees with structure and purpose. Ali et al. (2023) emphasized the significance of clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for remote work productivity. Miglioretti et al. (2022) underlined how explicit job role outlines reduce ambiguity and confusion for remote workers. Abelsen et al. (2023) noted that a well-designed job with specific goals aligns remote employees' efforts with organizational priorities and promotes positive direction. Ali et al. (2023) and Miglioretti et al. (2022) emphasized that clarifying job roles and responsibilities can help productivity in remote work. They found that remote workers needed to be more particular about their tasks and deliverables, which can lead to inefficiencies and frustration. On the other hand, explicitly outlining job roles and expectations helps

remote employees understand their responsibilities, resulting in smoother collaboration and improved task execution. These factors provide a foundation for remote employees to navigate their tasks efficiently, communicate effectively, and stay motivated while working independently.

Previous research highlights that effective job design significantly influences remote workers' motivation, engagement, and productivity. Parker and Grote (2022)

emphasized effective job design's role in enhancing remote workers' motivation and focus. Oehlhorn et al. (2020) found that aligning tasks with individual skills and providing a clear understanding of their contribution improved remote employees' sense of accomplishment and engagement. Unger and Sann (2023) suggested that a well-structured job featuring clear task identity and significance fostered ownership and autonomy, crucial for driving remote work productivity. This literature underscored the importance of strategic job design in shaping the remote work landscape (Oehlhorn et al., 2020; Parker and Grote, 2022; Unger and Sann, 2023). When job roles were carefully crafted, remote employees were more likely to be motivated and focused on their responsibilities. These studies show that tailoring functions to strengths, promoting contribution clarity, and nurturing autonomy create a productive and fulfilling remote work environment.

Effective remote work productivity is influenced by clear job roles and expectations, which provide structure and purpose. Different studies emphasized the importance of role clarity in reducing ambiguity and aligning efforts with organizational goals. Job design also plays a vital role in enhancing motivation, engagement, and productivity among remote workers, as found by different authors (Oehlhorn et al., 2020; Parker and Grote, 2022; Unger and Sann, 2023). Tailoring roles to strengths, promoting contribution clarity, and fostering autonomy create a fulfilling remote work environment. Role clarity extends to measurable performance metrics and KPIs, as highlighted by different studies (Papathomas and Konteos, 2023; Van Zoonen et al., 2021), concerning the enhancement of focused and productive work. This integration ensures transparent

evaluation criteria and maintains a goal-oriented work methodology, contributing to a comprehensive framework for practical remote work.

***Theme 4: Impact of Supportive Organizational Culture on Remote Work Environment***

A supportive organizational culture played a pivotal role in shaping remote work productivity. The organizational culture significantly influences remote employees' perception of their work environment, motivation, and commitment levels (Gigauri, 2020). The legitimacy and importance of remote contributions were powerfully conveyed to employees through an organizational culture that valued and supported remote work, thereby fostering alignment with company values and goals, ultimately enhancing motivation for optimal performance (Bagga et al., 2023). This underscores the critical importance of cultivating a culture that endorses and encourages remote work, as evidenced by the literature in this area.

In exploring this topic, it became evident that an organizational culture encouraging social interaction among remote workers was crucial in mitigating feelings of isolation and loneliness (Ofosu-Ampong and Acheampong, 2022). Regular virtual team meetings, collaborative platforms, and informal communication channels were observed to facilitate remote employees' maintenance of a sense of connection with their peers and the broader organizational framework. The analysis of these practices underscores their significance in cultivating a positive work environment and fostering a sense of belonging, thereby contributing substantially to the endurance of motivation and commitment among remote workers (Pandya and Lodha, 2021). This interplay between

organizational culture and social connectedness emerges as a prominent theme in the literature, emphasizing its relevance in enhancing the remote work experience.

Fostering a culture that supports work-life balance complements the advantages inherent in remote work arrangements. Pianese et al. (2023) argued that a culture promoting work-life balance aligns well with the unique benefits of remote work.

Organizations that prioritized a healthy equilibrium between work and personal life for their remote workforce, as Bagga et al. (2023) noted, offered flexible schedules, encouraged breaks, and discouraged excessive overtime. Yarberry and Sims (2021) also emphasized the importance of such practices, highlighting their positive impact on remote employees' job satisfaction and productivity. Acknowledging and accommodating the diverse needs of remote employees through strategies like flexible scheduling and discouraging overworking not only reflects the organization's commitment to their well-being but also contributes to heightened job satisfaction and productivity (Bagga et al., 2023; Pianese et al., 2023). These studies show that alignment between remote work and a culture of work-life balance acknowledges the unique advantages of remote work and emphasizes the organizational dedication to creating a supportive and holistic environment for remote employees.

A supportive organizational culture played a pivotal role in shaping remote work productivity. Remote employees' perceptions, motivations, and commitments were influenced by this culture (Gigauri, 2020). Organizational emphasis on remote work legitimacy and value enhanced alignment with company goals, driving optimal performance (Bagga et al., 2023). Strategies like virtual meetings addressed isolation

concerns, fostering a positive environment and sustaining motivation (Ofosu-Ampong and Acheampong, 2022; Pandya and Lodha, 2021). Recognition of remote achievements bolstered dedication and self-esteem (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Yarberry and Sims, 2021). Moreover, endorsing work-life balance amplified job satisfaction, reflecting a commitment to employee well-being (Bagga et al., 2023; Pianese et al., 2023; Yarberry and Sims, 2021). This synthesis highlights the vital role of organizational culture, social interaction, recognition, and work-life balance in enhancing the remote work experience.

**Access to Information for Remote Workers.** Efficiently accessing information has been playing a pivotal role in influencing remote work productivity, continually aiding remote employees in accomplishing tasks with proficiency. Chatterjee et al. (2022) emphasized the critical nature of seamless access to pertinent data, information, and resources for remote employees, enabling them to make well-informed decisions and execute tasks accurately continually. Similarly, van Zoonen et al. (2021) highlighted the ongoing importance of timely and unrestricted access to databases, shared documents, and communication platforms, significantly reducing errors and inefficiencies. Throughout these studies, the ongoing provision of timely and unrestricted access to information formed a foundational element for the effective execution of tasks (Chatterjee et al., 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2021). This body of literature indicates the unwavering significance of unfettered information access as a central driver of past remote work efficiency and highlights the relevance of a robust information access infrastructure in a perpetual seamless remote work operation.

According to Yang et al. (2022) accessing data is particularly important for remote workers engaged in collaborative projects entailing intricate data analysis or necessitating real-time updates. Notably, Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) underscore the critical nature of adequate data access for remote employees involved in projects with complex data analysis and real-time updates. Similarly, Chatterjee et al. (2022) found that encountering barriers to data access led to frustration and hindered contributions to team endeavors among remote workers. Moreover, Yang et al. (2022) discussed how delays stemming from insufficient access could compromise project timelines and impede overall task progress.

The consistent evidence from several studies (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020; Yang et al, 2022) emphasized that accessible data is an essential ingredient for ensuring remote workers participate and contribute effectively to collaborative projects. This collection of research underscores the ongoing significance of unimpeded data access, particularly for remote employees engaged in complex collaborative projects, reinforcing the importance of establishing robust data accessibility mechanisms for optimizing remote work outcomes.

Raišienė et al. (2020) found that remote workers relied on access to resources that facilitated their work processes, encompassing specialized software, tools, and applications. Conversely, as noted by Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020), insufficient access to these resources hindered remote employees' efficiency, leading to a potential decrease in task completion rates and suboptimal outcomes. Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) further underscored the connection between information accessibility and remote

workers' sense of autonomy and empowerment, with unrestricted access fostering independent decision-making and a sense of ownership over work. In contrast, restricted access promoted innovation, ultimately impacting productivity (Raišienė et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022). Findings from different studies (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz 2020; Raišienė et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022) substantiated the pivotal role of resource access in shaping remote workers' overall efficiency, autonomy, and innovation capacity, thereby influencing their productivity and work outcomes. This contributed to the broader understanding of how accessible resources intertwine with remote work success, promoting autonomy, innovation, and productivity within distinct roles.

Remote employment may necessitate the use of appropriate technology and infrastructure. A qualitative Delphi-based study was carried out by Kauffeld et al. (2022) to explore the future of mobile and virtual work. In this case, 460 specialists presented or processed 35 future scenarios, and their desirability and likelihood of occurring were assessed. The study found that technology and tools for remote work provided effective communication, collaboration, and task management. The study also discovered that Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Trello, and Asana increased virtual team communication and coordination. These technologies enabled remote workers to collaborate, share documents, and communicate in real-time, resulting in increased productivity and teamwork (Kauffeld et al., 2022). Inadequate internet access can cause delays, disruptions, and decreases in remote work productivity (Rudnicka et al., 2020).

**Flexibility and Autonomy in Remote Working.** Flexibility and autonomy are integral components of remote work, substantially impacting productivity outcomes. This



impact was evident as remote work arrangements inherently offered increased flexibility concerning work hours, location, and task management (Kauffeld et al., 2022).

Furthermore, remote employees could synchronize tasks with their natural rhythms, enabling them to concentrate on intricate assignments during periods of heightened focus and tend to routine activities during less optimal times (Miglioretti et al., 2022). This personalized approach to work hours was linked to enhanced task performance and efficiency (Gelles et al., 2020). Findings from different studies (Gelles et al., 2020; Kauffeld et al., 2022; Miglioretti et al., 2022) underscored the pivotal role of flexibility and autonomy in fostering remote work productivity. These findings collectively emphasized the intricate connection between flexibility, autonomy, and remote work productivity, underscoring the importance of accommodating individual preferences and work patterns to optimize task outcomes and overall efficiency within past remote work contexts.

Managing personal commitments alongside work responsibilities is an additional benefit of flexibility within remote work. This advantage was exemplified by remote employees' capability to address family duties, personal appointments, and other non-work engagements without undermining their professional commitments (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012). Work and personal life integration contributed to diminished stress levels and enhanced well-being; qualities interconnected with elevated job satisfaction and heightened productivity (Gribben and Semple, 2021).

The flexibility of remote work enabled a harmonious coexistence of personal and professional responsibilities (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012; Gribben and Semple, 2021).

This harmony, in turn, fostered improved well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity among remote employees (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012; Schüßler et al., 2021). These insights collectively underscore the multifaceted advantages of work-life balance facilitated by remote work flexibility, reinforcing the interplay between personal commitments, well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the positive impacts of remote work.

Giving employees the autonomy to tailor their workdays based on their requirements enhances job satisfaction and overall productivity. This positive impact on job satisfaction and productivity was supported by Gribben and Semple (2021), who highlighted that autonomy within remote work correlates with heightened levels of task performance and innovation. Allowing employees to structure their workdays in alignment with their preferences enhanced job satisfaction and overall output and promoted a good environment for improved task performance and innovative endeavors (Gribben and Semple, 2021; Wang and Liu, 2020). These findings establish a clear link between autonomy, job satisfaction, productivity, and innovation within remote work settings, highlighting the importance of allowing employees the independence to shape their work routines and approaches to optimize individual and organizational outcomes.

It is clear from the available literature that the multifaceted nature of remote work's impact on productivity becomes apparent when examining the interplay of flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance. Flexibility allows remote employees to optimize work patterns and accommodate personal commitments (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012; Schüßler et al., 2021). Additionally, autonomy emerged as a cornerstone of remote

work, enabling employees to take ownership of tasks and decisions, and fostering commitment and performance (Galanti et al., 2021; Lange and Kayser, 2022). The link between autonomy, job satisfaction, productivity, and innovation further underscored its significance (Gribben and Semple, 2021; Wang and Liu, 2020). Collectively, these studies illuminate the intricate connections between these factors and remote work outcomes, emphasizing the need for organizations to embrace and facilitate flexibility and autonomy to create an environment that maximizes productivity and overall well-being in remote work contexts.

#### ***Theme 5: Impact of Performance Evaluation and Feedback on Remote Working***

Performance evaluation and feedback are crucial components of remote work that significantly impact productivity. Remote employees benefited from structured self-assessment and goal-setting frameworks provided by regular performance evaluations (Pianese et al., 2023), allowing them to track progress, identify strengths, and pinpoint improvement areas (Pianese et al., 2023). Furthermore, establishing clear performance expectations and measurement criteria by organizations enhanced role clarity for remote employees (Larson et al., 2020).

Findings from different studies (Larson et al., 2020; Pianese et al., 2023) collectively underscore the past role of performance evaluation and feedback in shaping remote work dynamics. By providing structured self-assessment, goal-setting frameworks, and role clarity, these mechanisms enhanced past performance and productivity among remote employees. These insights collectively emphasize the interplay between past performance evaluation, feedback, and remote work productivity,

highlighting the importance of structured assessments and role clarity in optimizing task outcomes and overall efficiency within remote work contexts.

Constructive feedback may be a valuable tool that enhances remote work productivity. This value was demonstrated through feedback mechanisms, including ongoing communication and coaching sessions, which provided remote workers with insights into their performance and guidance for refining work processes (Pianese et al., 2023). The provision of timely and specific feedback enabled remote employees to make necessary adjustments and align their efforts with organizational goals (Galanti et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). By offering insights, guidance, and alignment with organizational objectives, feedback mechanisms contribute to remote workers' continuous improvement and goal attainment (Galanti et al., 2021; Pianese et al., 2023; Raj et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022). These insights highlight the importance of effective feedback mechanisms in remote work, emphasizing their role in promoting productivity and enhancing task outcomes, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the positive impact of constructive feedback within remote work settings.

Considering the typical lack of visibility experienced by remote workers, performance evaluations and feedback assumed heightened importance in their context. This significance was exemplified by Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi (2020), who emphasized that regular feedback sessions not only contributed to performance improvement but also fostered a sense of connection between remote workers and the organization, aiding in overcoming potential feelings of isolation. Additionally, Unger and Sann (2023) acknowledged that acknowledging remote workers' contributions

enhanced engagement, motivation, and commitment. By fostering connection, addressing isolation, and recognizing contributions, these mechanisms played a crucial role in sustaining engagement, motivation, and commitment among remote employees (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020; Unger and Sann, 2023). These insights emphasize the link between feedback, performance evaluations, and the remote work context. They highlight their significance in addressing visibility challenges and promoting remote workers' well-being, engagement, and commitment to past organizational objectives.

Moreover, feedback played a role in facilitating skill development and growth among remote employees. This role was exemplified by Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi (2020), who highlighted that feedback, catalyzes skill enhancement and growth. As Raj et al. (2023) noted, constructive feedback guided remote workers in identifying areas for skill improvement and motivated them to pursue professional development opportunities actively. By guiding skill enhancement and encouraging professional development, feedback contributes to continuously improving remote employees' capabilities (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020; Raj et al., 2023). These insights emphasized the intertwined relationship between feedback, skill development, and growth for remote workers, underscoring the importance of constructive feedback as a tool to support ongoing learning and professional advancement, thereby enhancing the skill sets of remote employees within their past work environments.

Recognition and appreciation of the achievements of remote employees play a crucial role in cultivating a supportive organizational culture. According to Sandoval-

Reyes et al. (2021), acknowledging the contributions of remote workers led to a sense of being valued, ultimately strengthening their commitment to the organization.

Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) also highlighted the significance of recognition initiatives, such as virtual awards ceremonies and public acknowledgments, in boosting remote workers' self-esteem and motivation to excel.

Yarberry and Sims (2021) echoed this sentiment by emphasizing the positive impact of such initiatives on enhancing remote workers' performance. When remote employees' achievements are acknowledged and celebrated, they experience feelings of worth and validation, contributing to their increased dedication to the organization (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Yarberry and Sims, 2021). Recognition initiatives, including virtual awards ceremonies and public acknowledgments, are pivotal in enhancing remote workers' self-esteem and motivation, fostering an environment conducive to improved performance.

Role clarity within the remote work context encompassed the establishment of measurable performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs), facilitating focused and productive work. Papathomas and Konteos (2023) highlighted the significance of role clarity in remote work, which included defining measurable performance metrics and KPIs. Van Zoonen et al. (2021) observed that transparent performance evaluation criteria empowered remote workers to assess their progress, make necessary adjustments, and enhance their work approach. They incorporated measurable performance metrics and KPIs as part of role clarity, providing remote workers with clear benchmarks to assess their work (Papathomas and Konteos, 2023;

Van Zoonen et al., 2021). This aided in monitoring performance, identifying areas for refinement, and maintaining a goal-oriented work methodology. Integrating measurable performance metrics and KPIs contributed to a comprehensive structure for practical remote work within the overarching role clarity context. Organizations fostered a remote work culture that prioritized outcomes by aligning individual efforts with quantifiable objectives, fostering accountability and continual advancement.

Autonomy, a central element of remote work, empowers employees to assume ownership of tasks and decision-making processes. This empowerment was highlighted as remote workers were afforded the independence to design their work environment and workflow in alignment with their preferences, enabling the creation of conditions conducive to heightened productivity, as exemplified by Lange and Kayser (2022).

Furthermore, Galanti et al. (2021) emphasized that this autonomy nurtured a sense of responsibility and self-motivation, positively impacting remote employees' commitment and performance.

The evidence from different authors (Galanti et al., 2021; Lange and Kayser, 2022) collectively underscored how autonomy served as a cornerstone of remote work, fostering a sense of ownership and self-driven motivation. This, in turn, contributed to enhanced commitment and performance levels among remote employees. These findings collectively illuminated the pivotal role of autonomy in shaping remote work dynamics, emphasizing its influence on ownership, self-motivation, commitment, and performance and ultimately enriching the understanding of its importance in optimizing remote work experiences.

In summary, performance evaluation and feedback are crucial pillars within remote work, significantly impacting productivity and various aspects of remote employees' experiences. Establishing structured self-assessment, goal-setting frameworks, and precise performance expectations (Pianese et al., 2023; Larson et al., 2020) underscore the foundational role of performance evaluations in enhancing role clarity and driving performance. Constructive feedback mechanisms, including ongoing communication and coaching sessions (Pianese et al., 2023), contribute to continuous improvement, alignment with organizational goals, and skill development.

Moreover, feedback addresses the unique challenges of visibility and the isolation remote workers face (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020; Unger and Sann, 2023) while fostering a sense of connection, engagement, and commitment. Ultimately, these intertwined components of performance evaluation and feedback play a pivotal role in shaping remote work dynamics, optimizing productivity, supporting growth, and enriching the overall remote work experience.

**Leadership and Remote Team Management.** Leadership and management are essential for remote team productivity, and managing remote teams may necessitate changing leadership styles. The literature study by Contreras et al. (2020) examined the information about telework and e-leadership as well as the alleged difficulties. The results indicated that conventional or poor leadership might have some dangers. Contreras et al. (2020) stated that leaders must adapt to remote work challenges.

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates team members and is particularly useful in remote places (Bartsch et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2020). This is



because transformational leaders empower remote workers, foster trust, and provide assistance to improve team performance. The findings of these studies indicated that remote team management and monitoring are required for the productivity and collaboration of employees. A leader with clear expectations and goals may enhance collaboration among remote teams. Goal formulation, task definition, and performance measurements helped remote teams operate better (Galanti et al., 2021). When expectations were clear, remote workers were more accountable and productive (Galanti et al., 2021).

Autonomy, flexibility, and skill development are essential for remote workers (Daraba et al., 2021). Providing remote workers with autonomy increased their intrinsic drive, productivity, and well-being. Previous studies placed a premium on remote work leadership and management emphasizing that transformational leaders empower remote employees, provide clear objectives and goals, and communicate effectively.

**Adaptive Leadership.** Exploring dynamic remote work environments reveals the paramount importance of adaptive leadership, necessitated by unique challenges amid uncertainty and change. This significance was evident through the work of Nissim and Simon (2021), who posited the role of adaptive leaders in skillfully navigating uncharted territories, embracing evolving circumstances, and fostering a culture of continuous learning. This leadership approach aligned with the demands of remote work settings, characterized by constant external flux (Mukaram et al., 2021), and was recognized as a pivotal determinant of achieving team success. This leadership approach, emphasizing agility and continuous learning, aligns with the demands of remote work, contributing to

effective team performance and success (Mukaram et al., 2021; Nissim and Simon, 2021). These findings emphasize the connection between adaptive leadership and dynamic remote work environments, highlighting how leadership strategies, particularly those embracing flexibility and learning, influence team outcomes and success within past remote work scenarios.

Within the intricate landscape of remote work, adaptive leaders play a pivotal role in guiding teams to respond to unforeseen issues adeptly. Bilal (2021) highlighted the function of adaptive leaders in enabling remote teams to navigate unexpected challenges. These leaders cultivated a culture of flexibility and innovation, championing an environment that valued novel ideas and celebrated experimentation.

Mukaram et al. (2021) also illustrated how adaptive leaders inspired remote teams to view challenges as opportunities for ingenious problem-solving, seamlessly aligning with the dynamic nature of remote work. Adaptive leaders empower remote teams to harness their collective creativity, yielding innovative solutions within the dynamic remote work landscape by fostering flexibility, innovation, and a problem-solving mindset (Bilal, 2021; Mukaram et al., 2021). These insights highlight the symbiotic relationship between adaptive leadership and the intricate nature of remote work, showcasing how leadership strategies that encourage flexibility and innovation enable remote teams to navigate challenges and creatively address emerging issues within the ever-evolving remote work context.

Promoting continuous learning within remote teams may be central to the adaptive leadership ethos. Ling and Wei (2023) observed how adaptive leaders

established a culture of perpetual education in recognition of the evolving demands of remote work environments. As highlighted by Nissim and Simon (2021), adaptive leaders regarded learning as an ongoing process, equipping remote teams with the knowledge required to navigate technological advancements and industry trends. In remote work, where physical proximity was often limited, adaptive leaders utilized digital platforms to facilitate access to resources, webinars, and skill enhancement opportunities (Bilal, 2021; Ling & Wei, 2023). Findings from different studies (Bilal, 2021; Ling and Wei, 2023; Nissim and Simon, 2021) noted that adaptive leaders ensure that remote teams remain agile and equipped to tackle evolving challenges by fostering a commitment to perpetual education and leveraging digital resources. These insights highlight the interplay between continuous learning and adaptive leadership, underscoring the importance of ongoing education in remote work contexts.

#### ***Theme 6: Impact of Open and Transparent Communication***

Open and transparent communication assumed a critical role within remote teams, necessitating intensified efforts to uphold connectivity and coherence due to the lack of physical proximity. Zeuge et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of effective communication in bridging geographical divides and fostering unity among remote team members. As stewards of communication, leaders shouldered the responsibility of establishing and nurturing clear communication channels within remote teams (Turesky et al., 2020). This framework facilitated seamless information exchange, forming the basis for a collaborative and informed team environment (Turesky et al., 2020; Zeuge et al., 2020).

Lee and Cummings (2008) further accentuated the importance of transparent communication in creating a sense of belonging and connectivity among remote employees. These insights emphasize the pivotal relationship between open and transparent communication, leadership, and the coherence of remote teams. By establishing and nurturing clear communication channels, leaders foster unity, collaboration, and a sense of belonging among remote team members, highlighting the central role of effective communication within remote work.

This approach's core was cultivating an environment that fostered open dialogue. Garro-Abarca et al. (2021) noted that leaders championing a culture of open discourse empowered team members to freely express opinions, share insights, and contribute effectively to discussions. This dialogue-driven ecosystem held pivotal importance in remote teams, where asynchronous communication could lead to misinterpretations or suppressed input (Newman et al., 2020). Leaders harnessed the team's diverse perspectives, fostering enriched decision-making processes by creating an environment conducive to free expression (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2020). These insights highlight the connection between open dialogue, leadership, and effective remote team dynamics. Leaders who promote open discourse contribute to mitigating challenges posed by asynchronous communication, enabling diverse perspectives to converge and enhancing the quality of decision-making within the remote work context.

The significance of regular updates was influential in the field of remote employment. This significance was clear when leaders, serving as informers kept team members up to date on progress and organizational changes (Reyes et al., 2021). The

proactive communication fostered a shared awareness of the team's direction and a sense of group purpose (Zeuge et al., 2020). Such updates ensured that remote staff remained connected with the overall goals, preventing feelings of isolation caused by physical separation. Leaders demonstrated their commitment to inclusivity and honesty by openly sharing facts and establishing mutual respect among team members. Through proactive communication, leaders fostered a cohesive team atmosphere in which remote employees felt appreciated, connected, and secure inside the organizational structure (Reyes et al., 2021; Zeuge et al., 2020). According to these studies, leaders who prioritized open communication developed a sense of belonging and mutual respect, resulting in a cohesive and interconnected distant workforce that is well-informed, engaged, and aligned with the organization's vision and goals.

In the intricate fabric of remote teams, the foundational pillars of support and empowerment may play a crucial role in effective leadership. This role was exemplified as leaders undertook the dual responsibilities of nurturing and enabling, ensuring that remote team members excelled in their roles and thrived as empowered contributors within the organizational landscape (Al-Madadha et al., 2019). Ongoing support provision emerged as a cornerstone of the leader-remote employee dynamic, extending beyond task-related inquiries to encompass emotional and psychological well-being.

Leaders, recognizing the unique challenges of remote work, provided unwavering guidance and assistance (Kunte et al., 2020), serving as beacons of support and creating a secure haven where remote employees sought advice, shared concerns, and built the confidence to navigate the uncharted waters of remote work. These studies emphasize

how influential leaders in the past nurtured an environment that facilitated thriving, contribution, and navigation of the evolving remote work landscape.

Aligned with support, empowerment played a central role as a critical element of leadership within remote teams. This centrality was exemplified through leaders who cultivated an environment where remote team members transitioned from passive participants to active decision-makers and stakeholders (Sénquiz-Díaz et al., 2019). This empowerment, enabling individuals to make decisions and take ownership of their work, resonated with the insights of Mysirlaki and Paraskeva (2019), emphasizing that leaders who delegated authority to remote employees granted them the capacity to shape their work trajectories.

Effective business leaders promote an environment where individuals are empowered to shape their work journeys by enabling remote employees to proactively make decisions and take ownership of their tasks (Mysirlaki and Paraskeva, 2019; Sénquiz-Díaz et al., 2019). These studies showcased how leaders played a pivotal role in creating an environment where remote employees were not only supported but also enhanced their engagement and sense of responsibility within the remote work landscape.

At the heart of this approach was the skill of providing resources and guidance. This skill was demonstrated by leaders who, recognizing the unique challenges of remote work, ensured that remote team members were equipped with tools and knowledge for success (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). This involved granting access to training, clarifying expectations, and offering insights aligned with team objectives. In essence, leaders facilitated growth, enhancing remote employees' skill sets and propelling them toward

more excellent proficiency. Research by Garro-Abarca et al. (2021) emphasized the pivotal role of leaders in providing resources and removing obstacles within remote teams. These studies show that by facilitating growth and actively dismantling barriers, leaders showcased their commitment to enhancing well-being, productivity, and overall satisfaction among remote employees.

***Theme 7: Impact of Employee Engagement and Well-Being in Remote Work***

Remote work engagement and well-being affect individual and organizational results. As remote work grows, it is essential to understand how it affects employee engagement and well-being. Employee engagement is how committed, motivated, and enthusiastic workers are about their jobs, whereas employee well-being includes physical and mental health. This section discusses remote worker engagement, motivation, and well-being. Organizations must understand these elements to build employee engagement and well-being initiatives that boost productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational success in remote work.

Remote employment increases employee motivation and engagement Adisa et al. (2021) conducted qualitative philosophical research to investigate how remote working hampered employee engagement. These authors draw their information from 32 workers who conducted semi-structured interviews while working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study found that the ability to choose when and where to work boosted ownership and motivation.

Further, the study found that remote workers were more motivated and satisfied than office workers because the liberty of remote work increased employee engagement

and motivation. According to Singh et al. (2022), the quick shift from in-person to online working during the pandemic resulted in work intensification, online presence, job instability, and a lack of adaptability to new remote work arrangements. Adisa et al. (2021) also found that work-life integration and flexible hours boosted employee engagement and well-being. These findings also indicate that remote work flexibility increases employee engagement and motivation.

Additionally, remote work may decrease commute time and increase job satisfaction. Ali et al. (2023) conducted a correlational quantitative study to determine the critical factors of personal happiness and work satisfaction. The research included a sample of 143 remote employees. According to the findings, employee work satisfaction was influenced by intrinsic motivation, affective commitment, opportunity, and motivation, while personal wellness was impacted by self-efficacy, inspiration, and job satisfaction. A structural equation model (SEM) revealed that remote employees were more likely to have better personal well-being than other workers if they had higher levels of self-efficacy, lower levels of apathy, and higher levels of job satisfaction.

On the other hand, a systematic review by Oakman et al. (2020) found that in more than 50% of studies, remote workers reported decreased commuting stress and higher job satisfaction. Oakman et al. (2020) also found that commuting harms employee well-being and productivity. If commute time is employed for work, personal, or recreational purposes, worker engagement and motivation increase (Bartsch et al., 2020). The findings from these studies show that remote work increases employee engagement



and motivation. Because of its autonomy, flexibility, and time savings, remote work enhances empowerment, work-life balance, and engagement.

Remote work provides flexibility, autonomy, and challenges that impact employee well-being. Social isolation and loneliness have an impact on remote workers' well-being. Burkart (2021) conducted a quantitative online study to determine if video-based social media might lessen feelings of isolation. The study's findings indicated that while video-based social software is becoming more popular, loneliness remains unaffected by its usage. However, thanks to their employer, office employees are becoming more interested in online events. The study also found remote employees are lonelier and more isolated than office workers. Similarly, Wilkialis et al. (2021) found that isolation can harm job satisfaction and engagement. Work-life integration impacts remote workers' well-being, as working from home can make it challenging to separate work and personal life, resulting in role conflict and stress (Burkart, 2021; Wilkialis et al., 2021). Remote workers reported more significant work-family conflict than office workers (Tayal and Mehta, 2023). The findings of these studies show that employee well-being and work-life balance can suffer due to conflict; hence, remote workers and employers must establish clear limits and put effective work-life integration strategies in place.

Remote workers may experience technological overload and digital exhaustion. Bunjak et al. (2021) found that employees who are always "on" and connected are more characterized by increased digital fatigue. A comparative study by Mishra et al. (2022) discovered that remote workers were more susceptible to digital fatigue than on-site

workers. Healthy technological practices like setting boundaries and managing digital overload can improve employee well-being as exhaustion increases stress, productivity, and well-being (Bunjak et al., 2021). Remote work can lead to digital exhaustion, loneliness, and a blurring of work and life, harming employee well-being (Bartsch et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2020). The results from these studies back up the initial claim that these factors influence employee well-being in remote work, emphasizing the importance of overcoming social isolation, preserving work-life boundaries, and reducing technology overload.

Work-life balance and boundary management are essential for remote work productivity and well-being. Due to the lack of physical separation, remote workers struggled to balance their work and personal lives (Tayal and Mehta, 2023). According to Enaifoghe and Zenzile (2023), realistic expectations, assigned workplaces, and routines that allow personal time are all advised. Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal played a role in avoiding invading personal time and vice versa (Enaifoghe and Zenzile, 2023; Tayal and Mehta, 2023).

Setting and communicating limited effectively was associated with higher job satisfaction and lower work-family conflict (Galanti et al., 2021). According to these findings, establishing clear boundaries between work and home may aid in achieving a work-life balance. These findings highlight the need to separate work and personal lives in remote work situations for well-being and productivity. Remote workers can improve work-life balance and performance by setting limitations, controlling time, and resolving work-life blurring. Remote leaders may employ a variety of time management and work

prioritization techniques to improve remote work productivity. George et al. (2022) examined the responses from 278 people who shifted from working in an office to working from home (WFH) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that remote workers managed better their time using schedules, priorities, and productivity tools. The study also found that effective time management ensured concentration at work, providing breaks, and time for personal activities.

However, Pluut and Wonders (2020) stated that the blurring of work-life boundaries made time management challenging. The study also found that remote employment blurs the distinction between work and personal life, increasing work obligations during non-work hours while lowering personal leisure. This finding indicates that remote working can raise job expectations during non-work hours and limit personal time.

### **Summary**

In summary, the review of the literature indicates that first, employee engagement and well-being affect remote workers and companies. Second, remote employment provides autonomy, flexibility, and work-life balance, which boosts employee engagement and motivation (Adisa et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2023). Third, remote employees are more motivated and satisfied when choosing when and where to work.

Fourth, remote employment reduces commuting time, which boosts job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2023; Oakman, 2020). Lastly, remote employment can cause social isolation and loneliness (Burkart, 2021; Wilkialis et al., 2021).

Addressing social connection requirements is crucial for remote workers, who may feel more alienated. Remote work blends work and home life, which might cause role conflict and stress (Burkart, 2021; Tayal and Mehta, 2023). Remote employment may cause technological overload and digital tiredness (Bunjak et al., 2021; Mishra, 2022). To overcome these issues, research indicates that employers and remote employees must set limits, control digital overload, and promote employee well-being. Moreover, understanding and resolving remote worker engagement and well-being may help create a happy and productive work environment.

### **Transition**

Section 1 included information regarding the problem, purpose of the study, research question, nature of the study, conceptual framework, significance, and a comprehensive review of pertinent literature. I introduced the critical issue of organizational leaders lacking necessary knowledge to mitigate and minimize unethical business problems within workplaces effectively.

Throughout the literature review, I addressed balanced and conducive work environments. I emphasized the pivotal role of transformational leadership in terms of addressing workplace challenges, including negative employee behaviors. I addressed communication and cooperation, work-life balance and boundaries, technological infrastructure, data security and privacy, leadership and management in remote settings, and remote work productivity.

In Section 2, I present a detailed explanation of the purpose of this study. My role as the researcher, participant demographics, and research methodology and design are

addressed. I provide information about population sampling and tools and techniques for data collection. Rigorous data analysis techniques are addressed, as well as reliability and validity of findings. I then highlight findings and recommendations.

## Section 2: The Project

This qualitative multiple case study involved exploring strategies business leaders use to address negative effects of remote employee productivity. Previous studies assessed negative effects involved with remote working on employee performance. However, effective strategies business leaders use for managing these challenges were not explored. In Section 2, I address methods for collecting and analyzing data, including ethical considerations.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore strategies business leaders use for managing potential negative remote working effects on employee productivity among software organizations in the UK. The qualitative methodology was selected for the study rather than quantitative and mixed methods because I specifically focused on experiences and identifying effective strategies, they can use for mitigating these challenges. The case study research design was used in. Findings from this study will lead to positive social change by enhancing effective communication through technological improvement as well as good governance.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this qualitative case study, the I was the primary data collection instrument. In qualitative research studies, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). This included selecting participants, informing them about the research process, and collecting and analyzing data.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research published the Belmont Report to provide ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of well-being. I protected participants' autonomy, followed the informed consent process, and treated all participants equally. According to Decker et al. (2015), ensuring a study is ethical and responsible includes safeguarding participants' identities, using an informed consent process, and proper data storage. I will safeguard participants' identities for 5 years. Additionally, to protect participants' confidentiality, I avoided using personal identifiers.

To lessen the possibility of bias, researchers must set aside emotions, attentively listen to participants, and ask focused questions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). To mitigate bias for this study, I used an interview protocol, approached participants with respect, listened intently, and controlled their reactions and emotions throughout interviews.

Adderley and Mellor (2014) posited qualitative researchers should approach individuals with genuine personal interest and respect.

Interview protocols in qualitative research are used for consistency and reliability of data (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Treloar et al., 2015). The semi-structured interview protocol includes prepared questions, themes, and flexibility to encourage participants to address new ideas. Similarly, Adderley and Mellor (2014) found semi structured interviews were useful for learning how to improve processes and strategies. Based on these findings, I interviewed participants using a semi structured interview protocol to explore strategies to enhance communication between project teams. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the best way to address open-ended questions is by using semi

structured interview protocols. provided time for participants to ask questions and clarify their responses.

### **Participants**

The target population for this qualitative multiple case study was business leaders, specifically individuals holding managerial positions who were employed by software companies based in the UK. The primary objective of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of strategies employed by these business leaders to enhance remote employee productivity. To ensure the selected sample was adequate, a purposive sampling method was employed. Purposive sampling is a methodical and deliberate approach to selecting participants based on specific judgmental criteria (Berndt, 2020).

### **Demographic Characteristics**

The sample consisted of a carefully chosen group of 10 to 15 business leaders who were exclusively drawn from the software industry in the UK. This ensures insights were pertinent to the specific context of UK-based software companies, which had distinct practices and challenges related to remote work.

All participants held managerial positions within their respective organizations.

These leaders possessed firsthand experience with managing remote teams or implementing remote work policies, which was crucial for understanding strategies they employed.



Participants had documented track records as well as demonstrated expertise and success in terms of remote work and employee productivity. Their prior achievements in these areas contributed valuable insights to the study.

To comprehensively address study objectives, participants were diverse in terms of organizational size, structures, and remote work methods. These elements can significantly influence strategies to address remote employee productivity and how different contexts impact these strategies

Participants were chosen from both large and small software companies. This differentiation allowed for exploration of whether organization size played a role in strategies employed by business leaders to enhance remote employee productivity.

I included participants from software companies with different organizational structures (hierarchical, flat, or matrix-based). These structural variations may influence communication channels and decision-making processes, which can in turn impact remote work strategies.

Selected participants represented a range of remote work methods, including fully remote, hybrid, and occasional remote work.

### **Accessing Participants**

Accessing the targeted participants for this research will involve a systematic and multistep approach to ensure a robust and diverse sample. The initial step will involve the identification of UK-based software companies that are relevant to the study. Industry directories, professional networks, and online platforms will be valuable resources for this purpose. These sources will allow the research team to compile a list of potential

organizations to contact. Following the identification of suitable companies, the researcher will reach out to them via email or telephone. In this initial contact, the study's objectives and the importance of their participation will be clearly outlined. This will serve as an introduction and a request for their involvement in the study. Once the initial contact is made, companies that express interest in participating will be further engaged. Their willingness to participate signifies their alignment with the research goals, and they will be asked to provide more detailed information about their organization and potential participants.

To identify individual participants within the interested companies, multiple strategies will be employed. One approach will involve seeking recommendations from company executives and leaders who can refer individuals within their organizations who meet the specified criteria. Additionally, the snowball sampling method will be used, where initial participants who have already committed to the study can refer potential participants who possess the relevant knowledge and experience. This approach ensures that participants are not only qualified but also come with the endorsement of their peers, enhancing the credibility and richness of the sample.

### **Establishing Working Relationships**

Establishing a productive and ethical working relationship with the selected participants is vital to the success of the study. To establish a productive working relationship with the selected participants, it is crucial to prioritize transparent communication, maintain ethical standards, and assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (Bucăța and Rizescu, 2017). Informed consent will be obtained from

each participant, explaining the research process, potential risks, and benefits. Regular communication and rapport building will be maintained throughout the study to ensure the participants' comfort and cooperation. The research team will prioritize transparent and clear communication with participants from the very beginning.

Moreover, regular communication and rapport building will ensure engagement and respectful communication with participants. This ongoing contact will enable the researcher to address any emerging issues, clarify doubts, and build rapport. It will also ensure that participants remain comfortable and cooperative throughout the study, fostering a collaborative and productive research environment.

### **Research Method and Design**

In the context of this study, the research methodology that the researcher uses will have a significant impact on the inquiry of the tactics used by company executives to lessen the possible negative impacts of remote work on worker productivity. An extensive examination of the research methodology is given in this part, emphasizing the use of a multiple case study design and qualitative research. These decisions are taken to guarantee that the study is appropriate for its goals and conforms to accepted scholarly norms.

#### **Research Method**

Qualitative methodology was the most suitable research method to be used in this study. This methodology is well-regarded for its ability to delve into the complexities of business phenomena, particularly when examining intricate issues such as remote working and its impact on employee productivity (Collingridge and Gantt, 2019; Gelo et

al., 2008). The importance of using qualitative methodology is to capture a nuanced understanding of the subject matter by exploring the subjective experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

As the study explores the strategies adopted by business leaders to address remote employee productivity, qualitative research enables the collection of rich and detailed data. This data encompasses the intricacies and subtleties of the strategies, offering insights that quantitative approaches would struggle to capture. By engaging with participants in interviews and collecting data from various sources, including performance evaluations, productivity metrics, and communication logs, the researcher can develop a comprehensive view of the multifaceted strategies and their real-world implications (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

The rationale behind the selection of the qualitative research approach is underpinned by the nature of the investigation process and purpose. The study will explore the strategies employed by business leaders to address the issue of remote employee productivity. In this context, qualitative research emerges as the most judicious approach according to the researcher with the means to collect rich and intricate data.

Qualitative data captures the subtleties and intricacies of the strategies, presenting insights that quantitative approaches would not (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Through qualitative means, involving interviews and the comprehensive collection of data from various sources, including performance evaluations, productivity metrics, and communication logs, the researcher can construct a comprehensive and holistic view of these multifaceted strategies and their real-world implications.

The rejection of quantitative and mixed methods in favor of qualitative research is grounded in the inherent characteristics of my research objectives. Quantitative methods primarily rely on numerical data and statistical analysis, which may not be well-suited for capturing the nuanced and multifaceted nature of strategies employed in addressing remote employee productivity. These methods are often constrained by their inability to explore the subjective experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of participants in-depth, which are critical aspects of our investigation (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Additionally, mixed methods, while offering a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches, may introduce unnecessary complexity without commensurate benefits for the research questions (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Therefore, qualitative research stands as the most apt and justifiable method for this study.

### **Research Design**

A case study research design will be used in this study. This is a type of research design used to develop a contextual and in-depth understanding of a particular complex real-world situation or subject (Sengupta and Al-Khalifa, 2022). The case study research design is suitable for this study other than other research designs such as descriptive since the study will be seeking to understand the characteristics involved with remote working employees and the implications of remote working on the overall performance of the employees and the organization. Furthermore, a case study research design was selected, unlike other designs, to explore the performance of different organizations that have implemented remote working frameworks, and the strategies used by managers of these organizations to ensure high productivity and performance. Descriptive research design

seeks to explore the characteristics of a population but does not provide in-depth data related to a specific phenomenon such as the remote working challenges, unlike a case study.

Nevertheless, an exploratory or pilot case study research design will be used in this study. This type of research design is vital in developing a contextual and in-depth understanding of a particular complex real-world situation or subject (Gustafsson, 2017). Unlike other types of case studies like cumulative and case studies, exploratory will enable the researcher to explore the performance of different organizations that have implemented remote working frameworks, and the strategies used by managers of these organizations to ensure high productivity and performance.

Stake (2013) examined exploratory case study design and reported that it is a powerful framework for collecting comprehensive data from diverse organizational settings and managers' opinions. Similarly, Gustafsson (2017) acknowledged the significance of the pilot study in exploring complex business phenomena. Therefore, this design is particularly well-suited to this study's goal, which involves examining the strategies employed by business leaders across a range of contexts to address the potentially adverse effects of remote working on employee productivity. By incorporating a pilot study, the researcher in this study will facilitate the comparison of strategies and outcomes across different organizations, thereby enriching the understanding of the multifaceted topic. Each case will represent a unique set of circumstances, organizational structures, and remote work practices, enabling the researcher to draw insights from a broader spectrum of experiences. The application of

this design will offer several benefits, including the generation of valuable insights and the enhancement of the external validity of the study's findings.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population in this study includes all business leaders, managers, and remote-working employees in different organizations globally. However, the target population will include business leaders in UK software-based companies who have implemented remote working policies and strategies. This population is targeted because they are responsible for managing employee performance and the overall productivity of the organization (Campbell et al., 2020) and will help in identifying answers to the overarching research question. Purposive sampling will be used to select about 15 business leaders who will act as a representation of the entire population targeted.

Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling method where participants are recruited in a study based on the characteristics or knowledge needed in a study (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021; Battisti et al., 2022; Byrnes et al., 2021; Fan and Moen, 2023).

Since this study will be investigating challenges related to remote working, business leaders who have remote working frameworks in their organizations will provide adequate data related to the purpose of the study.

The criteria for selecting participants and interview settings have been meticulously designed to align with the study's objectives. The emphasis is placed on richness and relevance to the research topic. The participant selection criteria are informed by the expertise of business leaders who have managed remote teams or

implemented remote work policies (Watts et al., 2017). These criteria will be aligned with the research focus and contribute to the richness of the data sought to be collected.

By engaging with individuals who possess hands-on experience in remote work strategies, the researcher will ensure that the insights garnered are authentic and pertinent to the study. Additionally, rich descriptions in the interview settings are encouraged (Bearman, 2019). Open-ended questions will be fostered to allow participants to share their experiences comprehensively. These strategies will provide a deeper understanding of the strategies used in various organizational contexts.

### **Ethical Research**

An essential component of ethical research is the informed consent procedure, which this study complies with to the greatest possible standards. The researcher is dedicated to making sure that throughout the study, participants' rights are acknowledged and upheld. By providing participants with a clear and comprehensive understanding of their roles and rights in the research, the informed consent process exemplifies the ethical commitment to obtaining voluntary and informed consent.

Respecting the autonomy and choices of study participants is a fundamental principle of ethical research (Hodgins et al., 2006). In this study, participants will retain the complete autonomy to withdraw from the research at any stage without facing any adverse consequences or repercussions. The researcher will take care to clarify this important aspect during the informed consent process. To further facilitate participant autonomy and ensure ease of withdrawal, the researcher will provide a contact point specifically designated for those who choose to discontinue their participation. The



researcher is committed to respecting the decisions of participants who opt to withdraw, without question or judgment. This approach not only aligns with ethical standards but also promotes a research environment founded on respect for the individual rights and choices of the participants (Hodgins et al., 2006).

The ethical safeguarding of study participants occupies a foundational position in this research, guiding the conduct of all interactions and procedures throughout the study. The study's ethical framework diligently adheres to established ethical guidelines, prominently including those delineated in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 2010). These guidelines are instrumental in underpinning the principles of respect for individual autonomy, beneficence, and justice that constitute the ethical underpinning of this study. Confidentiality and anonymity loom large as critical considerations in the protection of participants. The researcher will meticulously implement measures to ensure the preservation of participants' identities and the safeguarding of sensitive information. This unwavering commitment extends to the secure storage and meticulous handling of research data, ensuring the imperviousness of confidential information.

The meticulous handling of data storage and confidentiality constitutes an essential ethical facet of this research. The researcher is dedicated to ensuring the utmost protection and privacy of participants' information, employing a rigorous and structured approach to data management. In alignment with the established research practices, the researcher will securely store all collected data for 5 years. This timeframe serves a dual purpose: it not only supports the ongoing validation of research findings and potential

future analyses but also provides a safeguard for participants' data during the foreseeable future (Khan and Hoque, 2015). The data will be securely maintained on electronic devices that are not only password-protected but also encrypted, thereby erecting a robust digital fortress around the information. The utilization of encryption adds a layer of security, rendering the data inaccessible to unauthorized individuals and ensuring its integrity throughout the storage period.

Physical documents, if applicable, will be maintained in a physically locked and secure location, providing a tangible dimension to data protection. Access to these documents will be strictly controlled and limited to the researcher and authorized personnel alone. This stringent control ensures that confidential information remains shielded from inadvertent or unauthorized exposure. Upon the conclusion of the designated 5-year storage period, the researcher commits to securely and responsibly disposing of the data. This destruction process will be executed in a manner that safeguards against any unintentional data breaches or security lapses. The aim is to ensure that participants' information remains confidential and is protected both during and after its period of utility for research purposes.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study is the researcher. The study's design primarily revolves around in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the selected business leaders from UK-based software companies and open-ended structured questionnaires. The semi-structured interview format allows for flexibility and responsiveness, affording participants the space to expound upon their experiences and

insights conversationally and organically. This approach fosters a rich and multi-dimensional exploration of the strategies employed by business leaders in addressing remote employee productivity (Nayal et al., 2022).

The utilization of semi-structured interviews entails a meticulously crafted process and protocol (Birt et al., 2016). The researcher will commence by establishing rapport and trust with participants, emphasizing the confidential and voluntary nature of their participation. The interviews will be guided by an interview protocol that includes open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed and context-rich responses. Through active listening and probing, the researcher will encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in managing remote teams and addressing employee productivity. The interview process will be iterative and adaptive, allowing for the emergence of unforeseen themes and insights. This flexibility ensures that the research captures the nuances of each participant's unique experience while remaining aligned with the research objectives. The interviews will be audio-recorded, with the participants' consent, to facilitate accurate transcription and subsequent analysis.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, open-ended structured questionnaires will be used to collect data for this qualitative study. Open-ended questionnaires will allow the company executives in UK software companies to discuss their remote workforce efficiency practices. The open-ended structured questions will be carefully designed to suit research objectives while encouraging extensive and thoughtful responses. Because the standardized format covers major areas of interest uniformly

across all participants, a systematic examination of replies is feasible (Jefford and Moore, 2008).

The open-ended questions, on the other hand, allow participants to express themselves in their own words, giving in-depth insight. Questionnaire preparation, like semi-structured interviews, needs meticulous planning (Jefford and Moore, 2008). The questions will be meant to help company executives understand their remote team management approaches, issues, and triumphs. Questions will elicit nuanced and context-rich information, according to the study's objectives.

The researcher will examine questions to provide a logical flow that enables participants to describe a coherent tale to maximize open-ended questionnaire effectiveness. To prevent misunderstanding, clear vocabulary and phrasing shall be emphasized. Open-ended questionnaire administration shall be preceded by clear communication with participants, emphasizing the importance of their opinions and confidentiality. Participants will be led through the questions and will be able to respond at their leisure. In-depth, semi-structured interviews and open-ended structured questionnaires will give a comprehensive and multidimensional look at the remote employee productivity tactics of UK software industry CEOs. Using this mixed method technique to triangulate information from many sources enriches the study and gives a more full and nuanced understanding of the research subject.

### **Data Collection Technique**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews and open-ended structured questionnaires will be used in this study. These techniques complement one another, providing different

views of the research experience. Whatever method is used, the researcher and participant must establish trust and rapport. The purpose of the research and its voluntary nature will be communicated to participants. The interview technique, often known as the recipe card, consists of carefully crafted open-ended questions designed to foster a conversational and spontaneous exploration of participants' remote team management and employee productivity experiences (Jefford and Moore, 2008).

Participants may contribute their thoughts via in-depth, semi-structured interviews, much like the main course. Flexibility and communication allow for a better understanding of their thoughts (Nayal et al., 2022). Audio recording with the respondents will ensure accurate transcription and analysis. The flexibility of the interview technique will enable for analysis of unexpected themes, capturing each participant's unique experiences while satisfying research objectives.

Open-ended questions will help gather data methodically and consistently. While the open-ended method allows participants to express themselves, the structured framework ensures that significant topics are covered consistently. To minimize misinterpretation, a questionnaire will promote logical flow and linguistic clarity. In-depth, semi-structured interviews provide a contextual and in-depth assessment, while open-ended structured questionnaires offer a systematic and standardized perspective on the study (Birt et al., 2016). By combining their capabilities, mixed techniques decrease subjectivity and data collecting time. The combination of these techniques gives a comprehensive and balanced view of UK software firm business leaders' remote team management and employee productivity efforts.

Member checking, a pivotal facet of the data validation procedure, will be diligently implemented within this study. The researcher will summarize the interview and ask the participants to review and approve the summary (Birt et al., 2016). This iterative process will not only bolster the credibility and trustworthiness of the data interpretation but also ensure that participants have an opportunity to corroborate the accuracy of their contributions. This process enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the data interpretation by involving participants in the validation of their contributions (Birt et al., 2016). These methodical approaches are integral to upholding the integrity, reliability, and validity of both the data collection and interpretation processes.

### **Data Organization Technique**

In qualitative research, the effective organization and management of data are essential components of the research process. To ensure that the collected data is meticulously managed, the researcher will implement several key systems. For instance, throughout the research process, detailed research logs will be maintained. According to Akinyode and Khan (2018), research logs serve as a chronological record of research activities, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Second, the research logs will contain information on the date and time of data collection, participant interactions, and any immediate reflections or insights. This meticulous record-keeping will ensure the maintenance of transparency and traceability in the research process.

Third, reflective journals will be employed to capture the researcher's reflections and insights during the research process. According to Chirema (2007), reflective journals serve as a valuable repository for the researcher's thoughts, methodological

decisions, and emerging conceptualizations. They provide an opportunity to document the evolution of the researcher's perspective and are instrumental in the process of reflexivity and self-awareness (Birt et al., 2016). Fourth, all data, including audio recordings, transcriptions, and any associated documents, will be systematically cataloged and labeled. Each data item will be assigned a unique identifier to ensure accurate organization and easy retrieval. This meticulous cataloging and labeling system is crucial in maintaining the integrity and accessibility of research materials.

All raw data, including audio recordings, transcriptions, research logs, reflective journals, and any associated documents, will be securely stored for 5 years. This timeframe is consistent with best practices in research data management and supports the validation of research findings over time. Lastly, the data will be stored on password-protected, encrypted electronic devices, and physical documents will be maintained in a physically locked and secure location, ensuring the data's security and integrity. These approaches will ensure safeguarding and the preservation of the research materials and their accessibility for potential future analysis, audit, or validation.

### **Data Analysis**

The research design for this study aligns with the thematic data analysis method as delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a highly regarded and adaptable method that will be employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns, commonly referred to as themes, within the qualitative data. This method is widely used due to its ability to promote the analysis of rich and nuanced insights from qualitative

data, rendering it a fitting choice for the comprehensive exploration of complex phenomena (Akinyode and Khan, 2018).

The forthcoming thematic analysis process, in alignment with Braun and Clarke's framework, will involve the following 6 systematic steps:

The initial phase will entail a thorough immersion in the collected data. This will involve reading and revisiting the transcripts and pertinent materials to gain an in-depth familiarity with the data. This preliminary step will serve as the foundation for understanding the depth and breadth of the data.

Subsequently, the research will commence the coding process using Nvivo conceptual planner software. Codes will be developed, serving as descriptive labels assigned to segments of the data. These codes will encapsulate pivotal concepts, ideas, or patterns within the data. This initial coding is an inductive process, allowing for the organic emergence of patterns and themes.

The researcher will initiate the process of theme identification within the data.

This stage involves grouping related codes into potential themes and recognizing recurring patterns or concepts. Themes will be characterized by internal coherence and contextual relevance.

The fourth step will involve reviewing and defining the identified themes. Each theme will be critically assessed to ensure that it accurately represents the underlying data. The researcher will articulate each theme, providing a comprehensive and precise definition.



A thematic map, like a mind map or diagram, will be constructed to visually represent the interrelationships between themes and subthemes. This visual aid will facilitate the structural organization of the analysis and the visualization of connections between various elements.

The final stage of the analysis process will entail the synthesis of the findings into a coherent narrative. The researcher will craft a detailed and compelling account of the identified themes, substantiated by verbatim quotes or data excerpts that exemplify each theme. This narrative will provide a comprehensive understanding of the data and yield valuable insights into the research questions and objectives.

Data saturation is usually vital in qualitative research since it shows the point at which the collected data ceases to yield additional insights or themes (Fusch and Ness, 2015). This is a crucial element in maintaining the rigor of qualitative research. To ensure data saturation, the researcher will continually assess the information gleaned from interviews and other sources for thematic redundancy. Once the data collection reaches a point where no new themes or insights are emerging, data saturation will be achieved (Fusch and Ness, 2015). This ensures that the findings are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed by business leaders to address remote employee productivity.

To ensure data saturation in the study, the researcher will adopt a multifaceted approach. Continuous data analysis throughout the research process will enable the identification of recurring themes and patterns, alerting the researcher to the point at which no new insights are forthcoming. Prolonged data collection will be undertaken

until redundancy in information becomes apparent, signifying that a comprehensive range of perspectives has been explored. The researcher will also engage in reflexivity to acknowledge and mitigate potential biases and assumptions that might limit the scope of the study.

Triangulation, involving multiple data sources and methods, will be employed to enrich the dataset. Regular peer debriefing and discussions with colleagues and experts will provide fresh perspectives, and thematic analysis will help systematically categorize core themes and assess the attainment of thematic saturation. Member checking, where preliminary findings are shared with participants, will further ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data collected. These strategies will collectively contribute to the robustness of the study's findings by guaranteeing a thorough exploration of the experiences and strategies of the purposive-sampled business leaders, thereby capturing a comprehensive array of insights relevant to the research topic.

Furthermore, the researcher will continually assess data saturation by reviewing and comparing emerging themes with the existing data. Data collection will be finalized when saturation is achieved, ensuring that the research captures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I evaluated and justified investigating complex business phenomena. The multiple case study design was explained, which involved a comprehensive exploration of strategies used by business leaders to address remote employee productivity. Benefits and rigor associated with this design were addressed, emphasizing

its suitability for addressing the topic. Furthermore, population and sampling methods were detailed, ensuring participants who represented various aspects of the software industry. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, withdrawal procedures, and data security were addressed, highlighting commitment to safeguarding participant rights and well-being.

I also addressed data collection instruments and techniques, which involved in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary approach. Additionally, strategies for enhancing reliability and validity of data collection were explained, including member checking and transcript reviews. Data analysis methods and NVivo were evaluated as well as strategies for addressing trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

In Section 3, I address the multiple case study design and qualitative data collection methods. I explain findings and narratives of business leaders in UK-based software companies and their strategies to address remote employee productivity. Insights and knowledge that contribute to understanding the critical business problem are presented.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore strategies business leaders use for managing potential negative remote working effects on employee productivity among software organizations in the UK. The primary objective of the study was to understand these strategies to enhance remote employee productivity. The target population was employees working remotely and managers or business leaders who implemented remote working techniques. Purposive sampling was used to collect a sample of 11 business leaders who participated in interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct interviews, and data were audio recorded and transcribed.

NVivo was used to code data and analyzed based on the research question and purpose of the study, which led to the development of key themes. Data indicated remote working had different challenges in terms of ensuring high performance and productivity of employees, particularly provision and use of working tools and technology for all employees. However, in terms of employee responsibility, autonomy, and task completion, I found employees can be responsible for their tasks. Effective strategies to enhance remote working include trust from subordinates as well as ensuring effective supervision. This section includes results of the study and findings as well as a conclusion, implications for future studies, and recommendations.

I targeted 10 to 15 potential participants who were business leaders who implemented remote working strategies in UK-based software organizations. To ensure data efficacy, interviews were conducted, and questionnaires were distributed for participants to provide additional information they could have missed. Although 13

participants were targeted, only 11 managed to complete both interviews and submit filled questionnaires. This was a response rate of 73% (see Table 1). According to Sull et al. (2020), a response rate of 60 to 80% is regarded as good, and 80 to 100% is regarded as excellent. Although the response rate from this study was not excellent, it was adequate for reporting. Chatterjee et al. (2022) claimed a response rate of above 51% is exceptional for reporting findings of a study. Furthermore, participants were representative of the targeted population.

**Table 1**

*Response Rate*

Response rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Participated in the interview and submitted a filled questionnaire	11	73%
Did not return the questionnaire	4	27%
Total	15	100%

**Presentation of the Findings**

The research question in this study was: What effective strategies do business leaders use to address potential remote working effects on employee productivity?

Introduction of remote working in many organizations presented different challenges to business leaders in terms of ensuring high performance and productivity of employees. I focused on conducting a study with business leaders to identify challenges they faced when managing remote working as well as strategies and negative impacts of remote working on productivity (see Table 2).

**Table 2***Demographic Information*

Respondent (R)	Age (Years)	Gender	Marital status	Income status	Occupation	Family size (No. of children)
R1	33	Male	Married	High	Software engineer	3
R2	34	Male	Married	High	Software engineer	4
R3	29	Female	In relationship	Upper-middle	Software engineer	0
R4	36	Male	Married	High	Software engineer	2
R5	39	Female	Married	High	Software engineer	1
R6	34	Female	In relationship	Lower-Middle	Software engineer	0
R7	36	Female	Single	Low	Marketer	0
R8	44	Male	Married	Low	Marketer	1
R9	42	Male	Not specified	Low	Marketer	0
R10	39	Female	Married	Low	Clerk	2
R11	40	Male	Married	Lower-middle	Clerk	3

Audio-recorded and handwritten data were transcribed and coded using NVivo and Questionpro software. Information related to marital status and number of children was collected since these factors were significant in terms of impacting remote working environments. Upon critical analysis of collected data and development of codes, four major themes were found, which were remote working environment and challenges, effects of remote working on employee performance and productivity, effective strategies business leaders use to manage remote working, and programs, policies, and initiatives that promote remote working.

## **Theme 1: Remote Working Environment and Challenges**

Remote working refers to workers performing tasks without physically visiting offices (Wiradendi Wolor et al., 2020). Working remotely enables employees to conduct daily operations and implement projects without commuting every day to work. I sought to identify what effective remote work means as well as the extent to which remote work has been implemented in UK-based software organizations. Participants acknowledged healthy cultures in remote working environments are where workers feel valued and be safe, which can promote engagement and collaboration of employees in terms of accomplishing specific organizational.

Farooq and Sultana (2022) found before the emergence of COVID-19, 5% of employees in the UK worked remotely; however, by May 2020, 47% of employees in UK-based software organizations worked remotely, while an additional 25% performed both remote and office work. Although many organizations returned to normal working environments after the pandemic, post-pandemic impacts led to the recognition of remote working as an effective working model for employees (Farooq & Sultana, 2022). From this study, 75% of participants expressed positive feelings about remote working in UK-based software organizations. P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, and P11 responded they were very positive regarding remote working environment strategies.

Participants reported several advantages of remote working. For instance, P3 stated that "working from home involves better work-life balance and more flexibility. I become more flexible when I work during my own planned hours and completing tasks is based on my flexibility in balancing work and life." Another advantage of remote work is

that it saves costs and time of commuting to the physical office daily (Galanti et al., 2021). This was based on the response from the 5th and the 9th participants who affirmed that remote working saves time and commuting costs compared to the traditional office working model. These findings were like the findings by Newman & Ford (2021), who stated that remote work is cost-effective and saves time since the worker can perform different tasks from home only by connecting to the network and having access to the internet.

Remote working increases productivity by improving competitiveness and decreasing staff turnover (Galanti et al., 2021). All the study participants acknowledged that autonomy during remote working increases employees' satisfaction, thus enhancing their productivity, competitiveness, and well-being since they perform obligations based on their inconveniences. Although the participants in this study had positive perceptions and attitudes towards remote working, they reported several challenges related to remote working environments.

For instance, remote work involves longer working hours, particularly among employees who do not have a working schedule (Newman and Ford, 2021). This study sought to identify the key factors involved with longer working hours and found that the flexible schedule of remote workers causes some of them to have longer working hours due to a lack of log-off timeframe after task completion. The 9<sup>th</sup> respondent stated that “some employees utilize the flexibility of remote working by performing office work and house chores simultaneously. This negatively impacts their performance and leads to longer hours in completing a specific task.” The study found that remote working is



involved with increased workload. All the participants ascertained that remote work is involved with high productivity, which can allow the remote workers to perform many tasks at a time compared to the physical office workers. Even though the participants in this study reported having a rearrangement to prioritize manageable workload based on the employee's obligations, Wang et al. (2021) articulated that some tasks in many organizations that physical office workers fail to accomplish are completed with remote workers without scheduled log off time after task completion.

This study found that remote working is involved with communication mishaps. The 6th respondent stated that "since remote workers communicate with other workers virtually, communication mishaps can emerge particularly on the understanding of the non-verbal communication and tasks completion." This finding was similar to the finding by Wang et al. (2021) who stated that communication with the manager while performing tasks remotely is important in ensuring the tasks completed align with the obligations.

Nevertheless, Stoker et al. (2022) affirmed that network connectivity technology is essential in ensuring high performance and productivity while working remotely. The UK work transformations did not regard technological issues related to working from home which presents significant challenges related to remote working (Stoker et al., 2022).

Based on these findings, autonomy as a key psychological factor in self-determination theory increases the productivity of an employee. Lack of autonomy among employees increases the challenges involved with employee's performance and productivity.

**Theme 2: Effects of Remote Working on Employees' Performance and Productivity**

Various factors affect the employee's productivity and performance including commitment, satisfaction, intentions, leadership, personal traits, attitudes, corporate culture, and management support (Choudhury, et al., 2021). In an effective competitive environment, improving the productivity of employees is a vital factor in an organization since it is involved with significant advantages (Stoker et al., 2022). High productivity in an organization leads to healthy social growth, immense profitability, and economic growth (Choudhury et al., 2021). Remote workers are more effective and acquire better remuneration, wages, salaries, promising opportunities for employment, and better conditions of working. This study sought to investigate the impacts of remote working on the productivity and performance of employees and the participants reported significant positive and negative impacts.

For instance, the 6th respondent stated that "remote working leads to a diverse and intercultural environment." Ferreira et al. (2021) stated that more individuals currently are willing to work remotely which has made many organizations shift their recruitment techniques towards the use of telecommuters. Since employees are recruited from different regions with different cultural backgrounds, their interactions towards achieving specific corporate goals lead to a diverse and intercultural environment.

Although remote working has seen a wide use of task-oriented leadership, the interaction of the employees towards achieving specific tasks promotes diversity and intercultural interaction (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Mustajab et al. (2020) found that remote working environments promote the engagement of employees in remote team-building activities. All the participants in this study acknowledged that brainstorming sessions and virtual meetings are crucial in promoting innovation and remote working team cohesion. Using interactive whiteboards and other video conferencing tools makes these meetings more productive and engaging (Mustajab et al., 2020). The 3rd respondent stated that "remote team building activities are established to strengthen the relationships and enhance the cohesion of the remote working team." Establishing a remote cohesive team needs creativity (Mustajab et al., 2020). Therefore, using video conferencing tools such as team-building games, remote learning, and lunch establishes commitment, and promotes engagement among many other factors of productivity and performance.

The 7th respondent stated that "remote working promotes flexibility for various work styles and preferences." Different corporates in the UK introduced more flexible transformations at the time when the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced different strategies to help mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021). As a result, workers in many organizations were supposed to complete different obligations based on their working schedule which limited daily commuting to work (Kniffin et al., 2021).

There are different regulations in remote working environments involved with the timings on the log-in and out, however, most organizations are adjusting to the transformations adopted by their staff regarding the most productive hours of a specific employee. Previous perceptions held by the physical office staff regarding productivity

hours and working routine were underscored by the finding from this study that remote working employees with high performance are the ones who perform tasks based on their inconvenient time. Factors of productivity and performance such as life-work balance, satisfaction, culture, and intentions were associated with employee flexibility and high productivity.

All the participants in this study reported that remote working has led to a change from determining the working hours of an employee to the tasks completed. The 9th respondent added "People no longer complain about working overtime despite completing their projects" (unless there's something super urgent in the loop). Managers focus more on individual productivity graphs and actual productivity hours rather than screen time." This finding was like the finding by Bartsch et al. (2021) who stated that employees are more productive when they focus on task completion based on the specified time schedules at their convenience rather than focusing on the working hours without task completion.

The fourth impact of remote working is that there is less need for unpaid and paid leave which increases the productivity of the employees. The 1st respondent stated that "since remote employees perform their obligations based on their time schedules and convenience, there are limited chances that an employee will require leave." Among the organizations that have adopted remote working strategies, task-oriented frameworks have been adopted to ensure that the employees only focus on the completion of specific tasks within a specific timeframe (Bartsch et al., 2021). Hence, it is clear that the remote

working model sidelines both paid and unpaid employee leaves which consequently increases the productivity of the employees.

Remote working leads to better retention of employees by enhancing loyalty and satisfaction as well as promoting inclusion and equality thus decreasing the barriers faced by ethnic minorities and women. For example, the 2nd respondent stated "Many women give up their dream jobs and resort to being a homemaker. And while there's nothing wrong with letting people decide for themselves, it has long been a debate for people to choose between their careers and family. But the work-from-home revolution changed this by bringing the workplace inside everyone's home." Furthermore, the 8th respondent stated that "colleagues stay more formal and deal less with their emotional side of the brain when working digitally. As a result, people won't unconsciously favor men over women or vice versa. Plus, there's a reduced wage gap." Similarly, a study by Kirchner et al. (2021) found that remote work has systematically led to a reduction in the cognitive biases which existed beforehand thus mitigating obstacles faced by employees in their professional and personal growth.

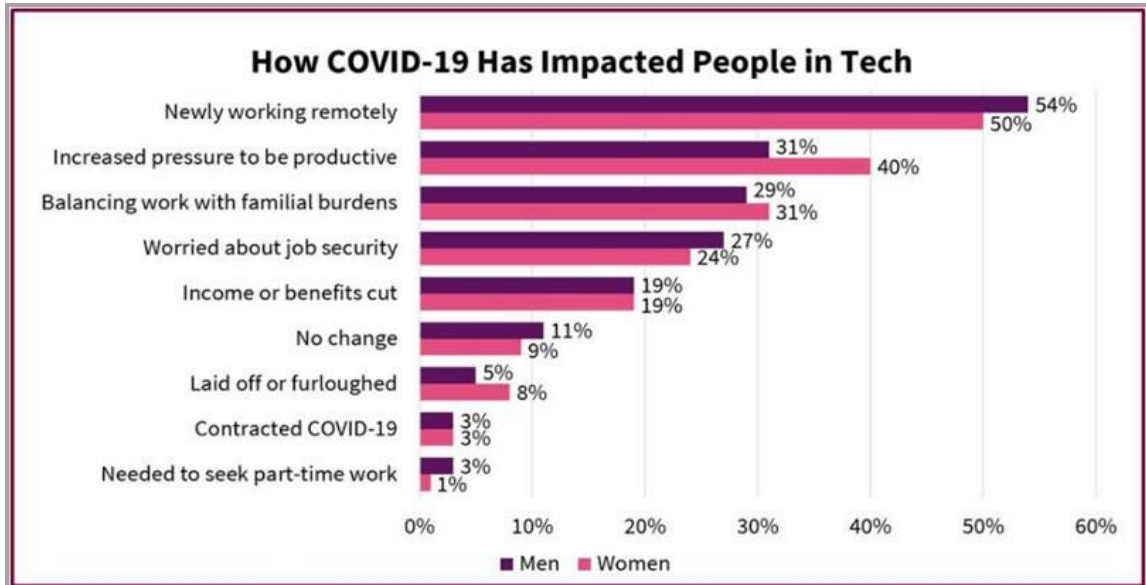
The 10th respondent stated "With little to no expenses on the commute, wardrobe, and meals, employees are already happy with their remote work routine. And while a handsome salary and savings are crucial, they are not enough to retain a frustrated employee. The solution is to end the frustration – something which companies already did during this lockdown." A survey was conducted by Becker et al. (2022) to investigate how COVID-19 impacted individuals in technology leading to the shift in the workplace

and the results indicated that 54% (men) and 50% (women) in the UK have adopted remote working strategies and either work remotely or mixed model (Figure 1).

The 5th participant in this study stated that “Employers no longer treat their staff like company statistics anymore. And with flexible, evolving, and open-door policies, employees feel happier and more connected to their workplaces.” Since policies related to work-life balance have been transformed owing to the introduction of the remote working model, corporates are currently focusing on the collaboration of employees, transparency, and communication and the satisfaction of employees as a key factor to productivity and performance has been prioritized (Kirchner et al., 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Demographics of Remote Working Employees in the UK*



All the participants in this study acknowledged that remote working contributes positively to the sustainability of the environment. By decreasing the need for daily

workplace commuting, working from home can decrease the consumption of energy as well as the emission of greenhouse gases involved with employees' everyday commuting (Kirchner et al., 2021). The decrease in the number of commuters has a positive effect on the environment leading to the attainment of air quality enhancement and a decrease in carbon footprint. According to the 5th respondent, remote working leads to a decrease in the requirements for office space which translates into resource conservation and energy savers.

### **Theme 3: Effective Strategies Business Leaders Use to Manage Remote Working**

According to Becker et al. (2022), business leaders are persons who make decisions and provide directions through the goals set professionally. Leaders in organizations have the role of setting goals, encouraging the members of the team as well as propelling the culture and spirit of the organization by utilizing different qualities and skills (Becker et al., 2022). This study sought to identify the strategies used by business leaders to effectively manage remote work and various strategies were identified including strategies related to; collaboration and communication of distant teams; motivation and accountability of remote workers; and remote working infrastructure and technology.

#### ***Collaboration and Communication of Distant Teams***

Communication among members of an organization remotely involves significant challenges since individuals have unique experiences, backgrounds, and personalities (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Understanding everyone's nuances is vital in ensuring effective communication and collaboration in accomplishing specific tasks and corporate goals.

The analysis of the collected data found various strategies used by business leaders to enhance communication and collaboration of distant workers in remote working environments. For instance, enhancing team communication both remotely and in person is effective in enhancing both communication and collaboration. In most UK-based software organizations, there are frameworks for both remote and onsite employees (Obrenovic et al., 2020). The 9th respondent stated that "it may be worth ensuring that all of your communication processes address both onsite and remote members. For example, some businesses adopt a meeting policy where every onsite attendee logs in from their desks if a single person is attending remotely. Doing so prevents different remote-related communication challenges."

Business leaders hold weekly meetings to ensure that each employee is aware of the objectives and performs activities that align with the goals set (Afrianty et al., 2022). The weekly meetings also update the employees on the new initiatives on different functions of the business as well as provide the staff with an opportunity to present possible challenges, and issues and share different ideas related to the remote work environment. The 7th respondent stated that "Weekly meetings don't need to be long, maybe 15 to 30 minutes at most. If you have remote team members, consider making it a general practice to hold video calls. Seeing faces encourages people to connect and engage, which may ease the isolation that remote members tend to feel." Similarly, Obrenovic et al. (2020) stated that having a camera policy in a remote working framework promotes interpersonal relationships and understanding when performing obligations.



Understanding the communication styles of each remote worker is an effective strategy that is used by the interviewed business leaders. For example, the 6th respondent stated that “Good communication is as much about how you express yourself outwardly as how you perceive information as its being shared with you. If you don’t provide a way for members to understand their different communication styles, they may become a catalyst for misunderstanding and conflict.” According to Afrianty et al. (2022), action-oriented individuals tend to focus more on challenges and problems. They are usually direct and fast-paced and are determined to clarify questions that require immediate answers based on the performance of tasks. A more analytical individual can move methodically and slowly but finds stability in the procedures.

The fourth strategy involves the use of project management software. Different projects involve the use of different machines and details which can make it difficult to perform different tasks of different projects (George et al., 2022). Hence, implementing effective software to conduct different projects ensures everything is conducted in order. The 4th respondent stated that "using project management software in the remote working environment helps understand specific tasks each employee is performing as well as monitoring and evaluating how the progress impacts the pending tasks." Project management software such as Asana, Hive, and Trello provides user features that help in communication streamlining as well as promoting collaboration (George et al., 2022).

Features such as file sharing, slack, zoom, built-in chat role permission, and customizable teams promote collaboration among remote employees toward achieving specific organizational goals (George et al., 2022).

Although the project management tools can optimize the time used for information searching and updating different spreadsheets, a communication plan for the project management needs to be set including the overall control of the tools to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness. The 7th participant stated, "I usually utilize the search feature in Hive software to find information related to the management of specific tasks which remote employees can use to complete projects on time." Similarly, Kaushik and Guleria (2020) reported that utilizing synchronous communication channels in real-time, such as video calling, and asynchronous communication, such as emails, which do not require an immediate response, are effective communication strategies that business leaders can use.

The next strategy used by business leaders in managing remote working environments is developing integrated documentation hygiene. Project management software can assist in keeping documents accessible and organized for only a specific project. The 5th participant suggested that "for all the other documents that get shared between the team members and across the business functions, establishing a specific source of documentation is vital." According to Delfino and Van Der Kolk (2021), most organizations are utilizing cloud-related hubs where files are shared and stored which promotes effective communication and collaboration among remote employees. When the documents are stored in a specific domain such as the corporate website, the staff members can access them at any time which promotes their productivity. To promote the security of the documents, the 3rd participant stated that "my organization has established visibility permission which is very effective in ensuring only those authorized individuals

gets access to a specific document." Depending on the requirements of the document security, compatibility with the types of shared files, and key tools, the user can benefit from various tools such as Bitbucket in Google Drive, Dropbox Business, and Microsoft OneDrive (Delfino and Van Der Kolk, 2021).

Business leaders conduct training to equip remote workers with effective communication skills and collaboration strategies which eventually help boost their performance and productivity. Remote collaboration in an organization involves the staff working on a specific project by performing tasks and duties from different geographical locations but linked in the network (Kaushik and Guleria, 2020). Training is essential in ensuring that the staff understands the factors involved in remote working and how they can utilize their skills to enhance their productivity.

For example, the 7th participant stated that "on a macro level, communication training helps establish a communication style consistent with the brand and business culture. This includes how you talk to customers and vendors, and the words used in your marketing." The 9th participant also stated "On a micro level, communication training helps individuals achieve their goals. They may learn skills like how to gain manager support for a new project or how to productively handle difficult conversations with a colleague." This finding was similar to the finding by (Delfino and Van Der Kolk (2021) who stated that training on effective remote working communication and collaboration skills builds the autonomy of the employees in performing their obligations thus boosting their productivity.

### ***Motivation and Accountability of Remote Workers***

In the current transforming workplace, remote working has emerged as a necessary and prevalent model of work. As different corporations have promoted working from home, organizational leaders face significant challenges in ensuring motivation and leading virtual employees (Kaushik and Guleria, 2020). Ensuring an effective remote working environment leadership needs the incorporation of traditional practices of leadership to the online environment, fostering collaboration and connection by leveraging technology, motivating the staff members as well as promoting accountability and trust (Kaushik and Guleria, 2020). Findings from this study revealed various strategies used by business leaders to ensure motivation and accountability among remote workers.

For instance, business leaders embrace a remote working leadership mindset. The 3rd participant stated that “leaders should adopt a remote leadership mindset, recognizing the distinct challenges and characteristics of leading virtual teams.” This involves comprehending the significance of effective communication, developing online trust as well as affirming the dynamic situations and needs of the staff. According to Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021), embracing a remote leadership mindset equips leaders to manage effectively the remote working environment as well as establish a productive environment that promotes collaboration, engagement, and productivity.

Business leaders ensure that all the technological tools needed in remote work environments are leveraged. From project management software tools to video conferencing tools, selecting the appropriate tools and ensuring the remote team utilizes

the tools effectively facilitates efficiency in workflows as well as improving diversity in virtual teams (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). The 9th participant stated that "technology serves as a bridge that connects team members across the world enabling effective communication and collaboration despite physical distance." A study by (Delfino and Van Der Kolk (2021) affirmed that effective leveraging of technological tools helps business leaders monitor the performance and productivity of each employee which promotes accountability and engagement in the completion of different projects.

Business leaders foster collaboration and connection of the remote workers which increases the accountability and motivation of each employee. The 4th participant stated "Creating a sense of connection and fostering collaboration is crucial for virtual teams.

Leaders can organize virtual team-building activities, encourage open dialogue, and provide opportunities for social interaction to build rapport and strengthen relationships among team members. Additionally, establishing clear channels for collaboration, such as virtual collaboration spaces or project management platforms, promotes a sense of unity and shared purpose." Similarly, Mustajab et al. (2020) found that communicating the objectives and goals of the organization, setting clear expectations of each employee, as well as ensuring recognition of each employee and providing feedback regarding the performance promotes a sense of motivation and accountability.

The 7th participant stated, "I often reward employees in my organization with the highest performance and productivity as a strategy to motivate my team." According to Collings et al. (2021), trust is created through transparent and consistent communication

based on the organizational structure, and motivation of workers as well as demonstrating empathy and support. By ensuring trust among the remote workers, leaders can establish an environment where members of the team feel engaged, motivated, and valued which increases their performance and productivity (Collings et al., 2021).

Business leaders encourage autonomy as well as prioritizing work-life balance and the well-being of employees. Remote working teams become successful when autonomy in accomplishing specific tasks is encouraged (Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt, 2021). The 11th participant stated that “in my organization, I usually provide clear guidelines and expectations while also allowing the flexibility of my team to work in a way that suits their needs and preferences.” According to Mustajab et al. (2020), motivating remote employees involves providing them with autonomy to make choices, providing support and resources as well as appreciating and recognizing their contributions. This consequently promotes innovation, motivation, and accountability among the members of the organization.

Working from home can aggravate the barriers that exist between professional and personal life causing increased burnout and stress (Mustajab et al., 2020). The 10th participant stated that "promoting a healthy work-life balance by encouraging time management, setting boundaries and providing support for physical and mental well-being is critical in ensuring motivation and accountability of employees." Open conversations and regular check-ins concerning well-being were also found effective in recognizing and addressing the possible concerns and challenges among remote workers

thus promoting a supportive and positive remote working team culture (Collings et al., 2021).

### ***Remote Working Infrastructure and Technology***

Remote working has currently become an effective model for changing how businesses operate and the engagement of workers in performing their roles (Green et al., 2020). Most of the organizations that have adopted remote working models are regarding "return to work" programs while most employees prefer working remotely. At the center of this transformation lies the need for technological infrastructure integration with the commitment of the organization which provides collaboration, communication, and seamless connectivity for remote working organizations (Green et al., 2020). From the real foundation that underpins operations in remote environments to the training programs and strategic tools focused on the physical divide bridging, infrastructure related to technology has become a pillar of remote work success (Green et al., 2020). In situations when an organization is regarding the implementation of a working-from-home model or a change towards a hybrid framework, assessing the existing technological infrastructure becomes imperative. This study sought to identify the strategies business leaders use to ensure an effective and supportive technology and infrastructure in remote working environments and various strategies were found.

For instance, business leaders ensure the provision of hardware and software facilities as well as conducting regular evaluations to ensure the efficiency and performance of the facilities. The hardware facilities include mobile devices, desktop computers, laptops, peripherals such as headsets and webcams and much other equipment

necessary for employees working remotely to perform tasks effectively (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). The 3rd participant stated that "in my organization, remote workers have access to suitable hardware such as the desktop computer which the company provided them owing to the adoption of a remote working model.

Even though the organization only provides basic hardware devices, it ensures that all employees have access to all the needed facilities before shifting to remote working." In regard to software accessibility, this study found that business leaders ensure that all remote workers access effective software applications to support different activities related to task performance. A survey by Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2021) found that the most effective software applications that enhance and support remote working environments include project management software, video conferencing software, cloud-related applications, communication platforms, and team collaboration tools and software like Zoom.

This study found that business leaders ensure high speed and reliable internet connectivity which is vital for remote working. For example, the 5th participant stated that "my organization ensures that all employees have access to robust internet connection either through wired or wireless connection which enables efficient and effective communication, collaboration and access to the company's systems." Among the organizations that have adopted remote working, the use of Wi-Fi and fiber internet has gained critical attention (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). The analysis of the collected data also indicated that business leaders have implemented the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN).



The use of a VPN provides an encrypted and secure internet connection which ensures that the workers get access to a secured system (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). According to Salas-Vallina et al. (2021), VPNs are utilized to protect sensitive information on the network as well as preventing malware. All the interviewed business leaders reported having implemented VPN protocols related to sensitive data protection in remote work environments.

This study found that business leaders leverage cloud computing approaches to store and access information, resources, and applications. All the participants acknowledged that cloud computing platforms provide collaboration capabilities, computing power as well and scalable storage allowing remote working teams to collaborate seamlessly, access the resources of the company as well, and work on shared tasks. Other strategies adopted by business leaders in ensuring an effective and efficient remote working technology and infrastructure include the provision of disaster recovery and backup devices such as flash drives, ensuring compliance to ethical and legal obligations and privacy related to the remote working environment as well as providing training and support for continuous employee improvement.

#### **Theme 4: Programs, Policies, and Initiatives That Promote Remote Working**

Currently, there is no specific legislation in the UK that directly addresses remote work (Narayanamurthy and Tortorella, 2021). However, the general safety and health needs involve all employees both remote workers and physical office workers. Under the 1974 Safety and Health Act, leaders in businesses must do everything that is "reasonably practicable" to protect the welfare, safety, and health of their employees which

incorporates those working from home (Narayanamurthy and Tortorella, 2021). Business leaders should adhere to regulations such as the regulation on safety and health management established in 1999 (requiring evaluation of risk) and the 1992 safety and health regulation (screen equipment display) which mandates assessment of the remote workstations. Failure to adhere to the safety and health regulations of employees can lead to a criminal offense, legal personal injury claims, and unlimited fines (Narayanamurthy and Tortorella, 2021). Some guidelines from the safety and health executive help business leaders know their key roles regarding remote workers covering aspects such as remote working environment, the use of computers, mental health, and stress.

While working from home is not regarded as a legal right in the UK, every employee has the freedom to request a flexible working environment that promotes autonomy (Daraba et al., 2021). This study found that individuals working from home enjoy similar fundamental rights as those working in physical offices including annual leave, unfair dismissal protection, break hours for rest, fair remuneration as well as a safe working environment. A survey conducted by Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) found that some initiatives have been implemented in the UK focusing on determining the type of employee and positions eligible for remote working, effective remote working environment communication strategies, equipment, and tools, as well as issues related to internet connection and cybersecurity in the remote working environment.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The application of this study on remote working environments to professional practice involves comprehending the results of the study and implementing them to

improve productivity, collaboration, and well-being among remote working organizations. For instance, understanding the funding from this study can lead to flexible work arrangements in many organizations. According to Gabriel and Aguinis (2022), adopting flexible work arrangements enables workers to decide where and when they can work which has a positive impact on the work-life balance as well as decreasing stress caused by daily workplace commuting. When an individual has flexibility in performing tasks and obligations, productivity is increased since they are motivated, and work based on their convenience.

Findings from this study can help improve remote working technological infrastructure. This study has identified that investing in a robust technological tool can enhance collaboration, project management as well as communication in remote working environments. A previous study by Daraba et al. (2021) also acknowledged that investing in technological infrastructure related to remote working environments is essential for high productivity and performance of the employees. Hence, these findings can be applied in businesses to ensure that remote working employees have access to effective technological infrastructure in remote working environments which can positively enhance performance and productivity in an organization.

Understanding the findings from this study is crucial for establishing clear guidelines in remote working communication as well as initiating wellness programs.

Establishing virtual meeting guidelines, response time, and email communication strategies promotes frequent check-ins and maintains the cohesion of a remote working team (Gabriel and Aguinis, 2022). Furthermore, findings from this study can be applied

to promote the well-being of employees through establishing wellness programs virtually, provision of tips related to ergonomics for remote workspaces as well as support on mental health.

Findings from this study can be applied by businesses in determining performance metrics, training and development of skills as well as focusing on team building activities. For example, risk assessment in the remote working environment can help understand the specific metrics for employee performance which helps business managers understand the need to focus on the outcome rather than the worked hours (Daraba et al., 2021). This can also help in frequent evaluation of productivity and making the necessary changes. The need to provide remote workers with training on the best practices, digital skills, and time management is an essential factor that emerges from this study's finding which can help promote a continuous learning culture.

According to Daraba et al. (2021), online team-building programs can promote social connections among employees. Hence, findings from this study can help business managers regard online coffee chats, games, and workshops as essential for establishing a collaborative and effective remote working team for better performance and productivity of an organization.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The finding of this study can lead to positive social change by promoting trust, accountability, and mutual support for remote teams and enhancing cohesion and productivity. Through an adequate understanding of the significance of remote working and effective strategies to manage the challenges involved, leaders in society can promote

training programs that focus on enhancing teamwork and collaboration. Furthermore, understanding the best strategies for addressing remote work challenges will help remote workers build more connections by using networking systems, thus enhancing mutual and social understanding globally. This will eventually help in promoting unity and effective communication through technological improvement in the society as well as good governance in the society as leaders are aware of the new frameworks in working environments.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Working from home has long been battered as the future of the workforce in many organizations (Azizi et al., 2021). However, remote working has gained substantial attention considering global events such as the need to decrease fuel consumption for commuting and the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors have led to the change in many organizations and many organizational leaders have identified the need to learn how to manage effectively remote working teams. This study focused on investigating remote working environments and identifying strategies business leaders use to manage remote working environments. Different strategies were found implemented in remote working environments which facilitate an effective remote working team. Although the most effective strategies for implementing the identified strategies were not explored, the identified strategies were found effective in managing an effective remote working environment.

This study has found that training employees on the most effective remote working strategies is essential for high productivity and performance. However, a concise

step has not been determined to ensure the training of employees on best remote working strategies. Since business leaders and corporate managers have a key role in ensuring the high productivity of employees and the overall performance of an organization, they should follow three major steps in ensuring the training of remote-working employees on the best working strategies. The first step involves training employees on both hard and soft skills including technical skills related to remote work environments. This may involve the development of skills in computer hardware and software management, utilizing virtual platforms and tools as well as collaboration and communication strategies (Azizi et al., 2021).

The second step involves setting a clear organizational goal and helping the remote team align their personal goals with the corporate goal. Through the flexibility and autonomy that remote workers enjoy, some remote workers may fail to align their personal goals with the objectives and goals of an organization (Azizi et al., 2021).

Therefore, helping them in setting goals based on the assigned tasks can enhance their ability to achieve the goals of the business.

The last step involves providing ongoing education, cross-training as well as using different platforms to ensure that all employees get access to the right information and the company's system. According to Chamakiotis et al. (2021), providing education and cross-training of remote workers through different platforms can help maintain a focus on the corporate strategy. Amid problems and conflicts, effective strategies for knowledge acquisition can guide a business (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). The rudder is the one that propels a business into success and strategy without implementation is

ineffective. This study found that collecting feedback and implementing updates including automated progress reporting is effective for increasing the performance and productivity of remote workers and the organization in general.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The general business problem is that the surge in remote working, fueled by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has posed significant challenges to business leaders related to the productivity and performance of employees. The specific business problem is that remote working negatively affects the performance and productivity of employees as they are not familiar with the new remote working strategies that can enhance productivity and overall performance. This qualitative study focused on exploring the strategies business leaders use in managing the potential negative remote working effects on employee productivity among software organizations. Eleven business leaders were interviewed through a semi-structured interview guide.

Although the participants provided relevant data related to the phenomenon, the sample size was small and focused only on software organizations which might have limited the transferability of the findings. The generalizability of the study may have restricted the ability to draw broad findings on remote working and employee productivity. Hence, future studies should use a large sample size focusing on different organizations globally which can help collect dynamic and relevant data related to the topic. Additionally, future studies should focus on the relationship between sustainable career development and the remote working model and identify gaps in how a remote working environment promotes sustainable career development. Further study is also

required to identify the best strategies to ensure inclusion and an effective remote workforce.

### **Reflections**

The lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global fuel crisis which led to the reduction of fuel usage in commuting have been a crucial lesson in the agility of organizations. This led to many organizations transforming their working model and adopting remote working. My DBA doctoral study focused on exploring the strategies used by business leaders in managing remote working environments.

The qualitative case study method was selected to be used involving semi-structured interviews with the study's participants. At first, I thought that most employees do not prefer working remotely and that the many challenges involved with remote working underscore the benefits. I also thought that a remote working environment negatively impacts the performance and productivity of employees. However, upon the completion of my study, I discovered that remote working positively impacts the performance and productivity of remote workers. The benefits of remote working involving autonomy underscore the challenges that make most organizations embrace the remote working model. While conducting my Doctoral study, I learned that self-management, discipline, and motivation are critical for success. I also learned several skills involving research and implementation through self-study which is vital in my career. Throughout the research process, I gained experience and learned how to achieve goals by adding insights weekly including an understanding of complex issues affecting society.



## Conclusion

I focused on exploring strategies business leaders used in managing potential negative remote working effects on employee productivity among software organizations. A qualitative case study methodology was selected for this study other than quantitative and mixed methods because the study specifically focuses on examining the challenges faced by business leaders in handling remote work based on their experiences and identifying the effective strategies, they can use in mitigating these challenges. The key research question included: what effective strategies do business leaders use to address the potential remote working effects on employee productivity? The semi- structured interview guide was used to conduct interviews with 11 business leaders.

Purposive sampling was utilized in selecting the study's participants.

The key ethical concern in this study was that there was no video recording and that the interviews were conducted online based on the participant's convenience.

Participation was voluntary and confidential information such as names of the participants was not collected. The collected data was coded using NVivo and Questionpro and the results were analyzed based on the emerging themes. Different strategies including the provision of remote working tools, technological infrastructure in remote environments, flexibility, and autonomy promotion among others were found to be effective strategies used by business leaders in addressing potential negative challenges of remote working. These strategies were found to be effective in promoting communication and collaboration among the remote working employees which positively impacts their productivity and performance in general.

Findings from this study contribute to the organizational practices related to policy formulation and decision-making while also empowering organizations and remote workers with a profound comprehension of dynamics in remote working and successful strategies for navigating remote working environments. Although the findings from this study provided more insights regarding the remote working environment and strategies used by business leaders in addressing negative risks on employee productivity, there were some limitations involved with the transferability and validity in different aspects of business. For instance, a small sample size of 11 participants was used and the study was also limited to UK software organizations which hindered the collection of dynamic data.

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