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Effective Human Resource Strategies and Processes for Improving Remote Workers' Engagement, Productivity, and Retention

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2023

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Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The inability to sustain employee retention amid expanded remote work practices highlights the urgent responsibility of leaders to confront the growing disparity between high job demands and insufficient resources that jeopardize employee engagement and organizational stability. Human resource (HR) leaders have a critical responsibility to address the effects of ineffective remote work strategies, which can lower morale, reduce performance, and increase turnover, weakening workforce cohesion and stability. Grounded in the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study was to explore and identify effective HR strategies and processes for supporting remote workers. Data sources included semistructured interviews with six HR professionals from diverse industries in a southern, southwestern state, and public documents and scholarly literature. Thematic analysis revealed five key themes: (a) communication and accessibility, (b) trust and autonomy, (c) performance management, (d) inclusive HR practices, and (e) evaluation of remote work effectiveness. A key recommendation is for HR leaders to integrate JD-R-informed strategies into existing remote work models to enhance employee well-being and organizational outcomes. The implications for positive social change include the potential for HR leaders and organizational decision makers to implement evidence-based practices that enhance employee well-being, reduce turnover, and support local economic stability by making remote work a more sustainable and inclusive employment option.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to God, the source of my strength, wisdom, and direction. Throughout this journey, He provided clarity when I was uncertain, peace when I was overwhelmed, and endurance when I felt like giving up. Every step forward was because of His grace and favor. This accomplishment reflects His faithfulness in my life, and I give Him all the glory.

To my late grandfather, John Chevis Sr., and my late grandmother, Rose Chevis, I miss you both more than words can express. Your love, your discipline, and your unwavering work ethic shaped so much of who I am. Grandpa, your quiet strength and steady commitment to providing for your family taught me the value of hard work and humility. Grandma, you were the heart of our home. Your resilience, warmth, and tireless efforts held everything together. Together, you showed me what it means to lead with love and to never give up no matter the circumstances. I carry your legacy with honor and gratitude, and I pray this moment brings joy to your memory. I hope I've made y'all proud.

I also dedicate this work to anyone who has ever questioned their worth or battled self-doubt. Let this be proof that your beginning does not define your ending.

Lastly, I dedicate this to every version of me that did not quit. To the child who dared to dream, the adult who kept showing up, and the scholar who never gave up. We made it.

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To my husband Malik, thank you for being my safe place, my calm in the storm, and my constant source of support. Your unwavering love, patience, and belief in me carried me through the toughest seasons of this journey. I am beyond grateful that God chose you for me. Thank you for standing by my side, for lifting me when I was low, and for reminding me that I was never alone. I am blessed to do life with you.

To my bonus daughter Jillani, your light, your laughter, and your beautiful spirit have brought so much joy into my life. Being a part of your world made the hard days a little softer and the long nights a little brighter. You may not have come from me, but you are deeply a part of me. I hope this work shows you that no dream is too big and that you can accomplish anything you set your heart and mind to.

To my mother Brenda, thank you. You carried the weight of the world as a single parent and never let it break you. Your strength and resilience shaped the foundation I stand on today. Thank you for doing it all, even when you had little. I watched you bend over backwards for others, even when you had nothing left for yourself, and that taught me what true selflessness looks like.

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To my entire family, thank you for the encouragement, the grace, and the constant reminders of who I am. I am also deeply grateful to the village that helped raise and support me. Your presence, sacrifices, and quiet acts of love carried me further than you may ever know. For that, I am forever thankful. This is not just my achievement. It is all of ours. Together we are breaking generational barriers and building something greater for those who come after us. We did not just make it. We changed the narrative.

To my best friend, Naigelina, thank you for being a constant source of love and encouragement. From the moment we met eleven years ago in South Korea, your friendship has been a true blessing. You have always inspired me, and I am so grateful for your unwavering support in everything I do.

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To my chair, Dr. Jill Murray, and my second committee member, Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley, thank you for your guidance, patience, and thoughtful feedback. Your support helped shape this study into its final form, and I am truly grateful for your investment in my success.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Introduction

The rise of remote work has fundamentally altered the way organizations operate and manage human capital. As businesses navigate this shift, human resource (HR) leaders face increasing pressure to adapt traditional practices and develop innovative strategies that align with the evolving nature of work (Soegiarto et al., 2024). This qualitative pragmatic inquiry explores how HR leaders are responding to the unique demands of a distributed workforce, focusing on effective strategies and processes that support remote employees. The following section outlines the foundational elements of the project, including the background of the problem, the business focus and purpose, the research question, assumptions, limitations, and a roadmap for what follows.

Background of the Problem

The transition to remote work, significantly accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, has transformed the traditional work environment, forcing organizations worldwide to rethink their operations (Savić & Dobrijević, 2022). Remote work offers advantages such as increased flexibility for employees, reduced overhead costs for businesses, and the ability to tap into a broader and more diverse talent pool. However, these benefits are counterbalanced by challenges, particularly for leaders unprepared for the abrupt shift to remote work. Many lacked the necessary infrastructure and policies to support this new way of working effectively (Waizenegger et al., 2020). As a result, companies have faced operational inefficiencies, struggling to maintain continuity while adapting to a fundamentally different work environment.

The challenges of remote work are especially evident in human resource management. Traditional HR practices, which have long been tailored to the dynamics of a physical office, often fail to meet the evolving needs of a distributed workforce (Raghuram et al., 2019). Communication, collaboration, and employee well-being, crucial for maintaining productivity and engagement, have become more challenging to manage in a virtual setting (Yang et al., 2022). Remote employees frequently report feeling isolated, struggling with work-life balance, and lacking the in-person interactions that foster professional growth and team cohesion.

Leaders face challenges in maintaining employee engagement, productivity, and retention, which can impair overall performance (Wang et al., 2021). Baumann and Marcum (2023) emphasized that offering hybrid work models and flexibility in both schedule and location plays a vital role in enhancing employee well-being and productivity. They also stress the importance of ensuring fair evaluation and approval processes for remote workers, particularly those aligned with diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. According to Baumann and Marcum, leaders that implement these strategies can foster a more inclusive, productive, and supportive work environment. By embracing hybrid work models and fair remote work policies, companies will be better positioned for long-term success as remote work continues to shape the future of business operations.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem was that some human resource leaders lack effective strategies and processes to support remote workers. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore and identify effective strategies that human

resource leaders can implement to support remote workers. The targeted population consisted of human resource leaders from organizations who implemented or were developing strategies to support a distributed workforce, aiming to provide awareness of effective approaches to address the unique challenges of remote work environments.

I conducted semistructured interviews to collect primary data from HR leaders, focusing on their strategies and processes for managing remote workers. I also conducted a document analysis of publicly available policies and best practices, which provided further insight into the existing frameworks leaders use to address remote work challenges. Secondary data, including case studies and industry reports, were analyzed to complement the interview findings. The participants were directly aligned with the specific business problem and project purpose, as they had firsthand experience managing distributed workforces. The conceptual framework grounding this qualitative inquiry is the job demands-resources (JD-R) model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which highlighted the balance between job demands and available resources as key factors influencing employee engagement, productivity, and retention in remote work environments.

Research Question

The overarching research question is as follows: What strategies and processes do human resource leaders use to support remote workers?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

An assumption is accepting something as accurate or likely to occur without concrete evidence or verification. It is a belief or premise that is taken for granted and

often serves as the foundation for reasoning, decision-making, or action. In research, assumptions can influence study design and outcomes if not carefully acknowledged and addressed (Theofandis & Fountouki, 2018). One assumption was that the HR leaders participating in the project would provide honest and comprehensive answers during the interviews about their strategies, processes, and experiences managing remote workers. Another assumption was that enough relevant data would be accessible through document analysis and secondary sources to support the findings and answer the research questions. A final assumption was that the leaders involved would have publicly available policies and documents that accurately reflect their remote work strategies.

Limitations

A limitation is a factor in a study that restricts or affects the research in some way, often beyond the researcher's control. It can impact the scope, results, or interpretation of the study. According to Zhou and Jiang (2023), limitations are often attributed to situational constraints or the complexity of the research, with expert writers using rhetorical strategies like hedges to present them cautiously. One limitation of this study was the potential difficulty in accessing HR leaders with sufficient experience managing remote workers, which could have limited the diversity of perspectives. Scheduling interviews with busy professionals also posed a challenge, potentially restricting the depth of the data collected. Another limitation was maintaining objectivity and avoiding conflicts of interest, particularly if participants are from my professional network. Finally, there was the possibility that relevant documents or policies may not be publicly accessible, limiting the scope of document analysis.

Transition

In Section 1, I outlined the background of the problem, the specific business problem focus, the purpose of the project, and the key research question, along with the assumptions and limitations of the study. In Section 2, I will comprehensively review the relevant academic and professional literature, highlighting its connection to the applied business problem. Section 3 will detail the project's ethical considerations, research design, population, sampling methods, data collection processes, and strategies for ensuring reliability and validity. Finally, Section 4 will present the study's findings, contributions to business practice, implications for social change, recommendations for future research, and the overall conclusion.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I examined existing scholarly research regarding human resource management in remote work settings, focusing on the challenges HR leaders faced and the strategies they employed to support employee engagement, productivity, and retention. The review was organized into sections that include an analysis and synthesis of literature relevant to the phenomenon of remote work. I explored the conceptual framework, potential themes, and relevant theories, focusing on remote work challenges, HR strategies, and the JD-R model (2007), while connecting these with previous research and findings in the field.

Search Method Strategy

I searched the following academic databases: the Walden University Library, Scientific Research, World Journal, Journal of HR, and ProQuest, focusing on peer-reviewed articles from 2021 to 2025. The search was conducted utilizing the following key terms: Remote work, human resource practices, employee engagement, employee retention, flexible work arrangements, HR challenges, organizational culture, digital transformation in human resource management, self-determination theory, job demands, and job resources. The literature included approximately 136 peer-reviewed articles with at least 85% or more published between 2021 and 2025.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore effective strategies and processes that HR leaders implement to support remote workers. The JD-R model, developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), served as the conceptual framework for my study. This model emphasizes the importance of balancing job demands (e.g.,

workload and cognitive requirements) with job resources (e.g., support, autonomy, and feedback) to improve employee engagement and well-being. By applying the JD-R model as a lens, I sought to understand how HR leaders managed the unique challenges posed by remote work environments.

The JD-R Model

The JD-R model, developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), was developed due to the inadequacies of previous stress models, such as the Effort-Reward Imbalance model (Siegrist, 1996) and the job demand-control model (Karasek, 1979). Although these previous models established the foundation for understanding workplace stress, they were somewhat restrictive and negative. Previous models were deemed restrictive because they were irrelevant to all job positions, and they were deemed negative because they focused on negative job characteristics such as demands. Similarly, the ERI model lacked the flexibility to describe how additional job resources could lessen job strain, instead focusing on balancing employee effort and rewards (Siegrist, 1996). The JDC model emphasized job demands and control, but it neglected to consider a broader variety of employment resources, such as feedback or social support (Karasek, 1979). In contrast, Bakker and Demerouti (2007), aimed to develop a more comprehensive framework that could be used in various work environments and consider both positive and negative outcomes. The JD-R model indicated that every job has distinctive demands and resources that affect employee outcomes, such as well-being, engagement, and performance.

The JD-R model defines job demands as those organizational, social, psychological, or physical characteristics of a job that require sustained effort and are,

therefore, associated with specific physiological and psychological costs (Bakker et al., 2023). Job demands can include a variety of factors, such as high workload, emotional demands, or time pressures. Failure to meet these expectations can cause adverse effects like disengagement, job pressure, and burnout if they are not met (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R model suggests that when sufficient resources do not meet job demands, it could result in exhaustion, burnout, and job strain. Employee engagement, productivity, and retention may suffer as a result of these outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Sufficient job resources safeguard against the detrimental effects of job demands, increasing performance overall and encouraging employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2023). This model highlights the importance of balancing demands and resources in the workplace, as an imbalance can lead to decreased employee well-being and organizational success. The JD-R model offers a framework for understanding how businesses can maximize employee outcomes by ensuring sufficient resources are available to meet job needs.

The JD-R Model in the Remote Work Context

The JD-R model provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of remote work by focusing on the balance between job demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Recent studies have identified unique demands in remote settings, such as isolation, digital fatigue, and blurred boundaries between work and home life (Yusuf, 2024). Pressure not only leads to psychological strain but also negatively impacts engagement and productivity if not mitigated effectively. Leaders must intentionally implement job resources, such as autonomy, social support, and feedback mechanisms, to combat these issues. Researchers stress that companies who use these components into

their HR strategy see increases in employee satisfaction and retention rates (Rotter Šešok et al., 2024). These insights underscore the importance of strategically managing job demands and resources to foster healthier, more productive remote work environments.

Leadership plays a crucial role in applying the JD-R model to remote work settings. According to Al-Shameri et al. (2024), clear communication and strong leadership greatly reduce the negative consequences of increased job expectations. Employees feel supported in an atmosphere created by leaders who give psychological safety, which promotes engagement and resilience (Ajayi & Udeh, 2024). The results highlight the relevance of the JD-R model in guiding strategy to improve employee outcomes in virtual workplaces.

Digital tools have emerged as essential job resources by facilitating collaboration and reducing cognitive load in remote environments (Deschênes, 2024). Being able to expedite repetitive duties while also resolving issues related to creative cooperation highlights their function in dispersed work environments. Teams can collaborate and finish projects asynchronously with the use of platforms like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Basecamp, which provide capabilities like file sharing, task management, and persistent messaging. This eliminates the requirement for continuous real-time engagement (Lane et al., 2023). These tools have become indispensable in helping teams remain productive and connected despite geographical separation.

However, as technology becomes more integrated into daily workflows, it is important to consider its potential drawbacks. There is a risk of over-reliance on technology without adequate training, which can increase stress rather than alleviate it (Adanyin, 2024). Although digital tools give HR departments a competitive edge and

modernize HR operations, their incorrect application can result in higher cognitive demands and resistance to change (Ridoini et al., 2024). The study highlights how crucial HR is to supporting digital transitions through stakeholder engagement and targeted training. Recent studies advocate for hybrid approaches that blend digital and interpersonal interactions to create a balanced and resource-rich environment (Yusuf, 2024; Karel Kreijns et al., 2024). Leaders that adopt these strategies effectively utilize the JD-R model to maintain employee engagement.

The JD-R model also emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational culture with resource provision (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Encouraging an inclusive and transparent culture offers social resources that improve participation and lessen the detrimental consequences of work expectations. This is especially crucial remote work environments where employees frequently miss out on impromptu team meetings (Radu, 2023). By fostering intentional connection and shared values, organizations can reinforce a sense of belonging and cohesion across distributed teams.

Working remotely can significantly increase job demands, such as emotional labor, cognitive load, and the effort needed for virtual communication and collaboration. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chowhan and Pike (2022) found that these increased demands, if not properly managed, negatively impacted job satisfaction and performance, highlighting the importance of organizational support and flexible policies. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), these results support the idea that supplying sufficient task resources is essential to reducing the difficulties brought on by high job expectations in distant work environments.

The overlapping boundaries between work and home life, a common issue for remote workers, increase the demands placed on them and make it more challenging to manage stress and maintain work-life balance (Adisa et al., 2022). The absence of in-person interaction while working remotely can exacerbate feelings of isolation and limit access to informal social support from coworkers and superiors, adding to the already high job demands (Tavares, 2017). Remote workers risk burnout, disengagement, or lower productivity without adequate resources, such as autonomy, social connectivity, and technical support (Bakker et al., 2023). To mitigate these challenges, organizations must prioritize the implementation of supportive job resources that align with employee needs in virtual settings.

Among these resources, autonomy has consistently emerged as one of the most significant factors contributing to employee well-being and resilience in remote work settings. The study by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) aligns with the JD-R model in that job resources are essential in counteracting the higher demands of working remotely. Gajendran and Harrison highlight perceived autonomy as one of the most significant and valued resources offered by telecommuting, as it provides employees with greater control over when and where they work. Similarly, Golden and Veiga's (2005) findings support the idea that autonomy is essential to improving remote workers' well-being and show that enhanced autonomy in telecommuting is linked to higher job satisfaction and lower stress.

Perceived autonomy supports the JD-R model, highlighting autonomy as a critical job resource that helps mitigate remote work's cognitive and emotional demands (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). When employees feel in control, they are more equipped

to handle the challenges of working from home, such as the hazy boundaries between personal and professional obligations.

Supporting Theories

The JD-R model is not a stand-alone theory, even though it offers a thorough framework for comprehending the relationship between job needs and resources. Four influential models have helped shape the understanding of work stress and understanding. The four models are as follows: Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959), the job characteristics model (1976), the demand-control model (1979), and the effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model (1996). Each model supports the JD-R model by addressing employee motivation, work environments, and stress.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory, developed by Herzberg (1959), is also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory. It is among the most influential models in understanding employee satisfaction and motivation. According to the theory, two different elements influence job satisfaction: inner factors, or motivators, and external factors, or hygienic factors. Motivators, such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility, lead to higher satisfaction when present. At the same time, hygiene factors, like salary, company policies, and working conditions, prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily improve satisfaction.

Herzberg's theory closely relates to the JD-R model (2007) by emphasizing that motivators (such as achievement and recognition) can be seen as job resources critical to employee engagement and well-being. According to Bakker et al. (2003), who argue that adverse working conditions may result in discontent and burnout if enough workplace

resources do not offset them, Herzberg's emphasis on hygienic elements is consistent with the idea of job expectations. This is further supported by research by Hackman and Oldham (1976), which shows that intrinsic motivators—a notion essential to Herzberg's theory and the JD-R model are necessary for employees to feel content and engaged at work.

The Job Characteristics Model

The job characteristics model, developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), emphasizes how specific employment characteristics might improve employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance. It identifies five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Bakker et al., 2023).

The model closely relates to the JD-R model (2007) by emphasizing two key characteristics: autonomy and feedback. According to Bakker et al. (2005), these qualities are crucial because they serve as job resources that protect against excessive expectations. Autonomy enables workers to handle their work duties individually, lessening the stress from high expectations. On the other hand, feedback ensures that workers receive timely, relevant information about their performance, raising engagement (Bakker et al., 2023).

The Demand-Control Model

The demand-control model, developed by Karasek (1979), is one of the most widely recognized models in occupational health. It describes how a combination of job control (decision-making autonomy), and workplace demands (such as workload and role conflict) affects employee stress. It also describes how a combination of job control (decision-making autonomy), and workplace demands (such as workload and role

conflict) affects employee stress. According to the demands-control model, high-strain occupations, which are defined by high demands and little control, increase stress levels, and negatively impact one's health, including psychological strain and cardiovascular issues (Karasek, 1979). Long-term cognitive strain from these jobs raises physiological stress levels (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

The demands control model (1979) closely relates to the JD-R model (2007) by emphasizing balancing job demands with adequate job resources to prevent employee strain. It highlights how workers in demanding occupations are more prone to feel stressed when they have little control over their work. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the JD-R model also emphasizes how job resources like autonomy and decision-making flexibility can mitigate the negative consequences of high demands. Both models acknowledge that high workloads and a lack of resources result in burnout and poor health effects. To further mitigate the adverse effects of job demands, the JD-R model builds upon the JDC model by integrating a more comprehensive range of resources, such as feedback and social support (Kain & Jex, 2010). The goal of these models is to improve employee performance and well-being by striking a balance between demands and resources.

The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model

The ERI model, developed by Siegrist (1996), focuses on the disparity between the rewards employees receive and the amount of effort they put into their employment. According to the model, stress arises when a mismatch between high effort and low reward leads to frustration, stress, and burnout. Recent research has supported these findings; for instance, Braun et al. (2024) identified a significant correlation between

effort-reward imbalance and the risk of burnout among nursing staff working in emergency departments, emphasizing the importance of addressing perceived inequities in rewards. This imbalance becomes particularly problematic when employees perceive that their efforts are not adequately compensated through benefits such as salary, recognition, or career advancement (Siegrist, 1996).

The model closely relates to the JD-R model (2007) by focusing on how a disparity between effort and rewards leads to adverse outcomes, much like how the JD-R model emphasizes balancing job demands and resources. In the ERI model, stress and burnout arise when employees feel their efforts are not matched by appropriate rewards, such as salary, recognition, or career advancement (Siegrist, 1996). Similarly, the JD-R model shows that workers become frustrated and disengaged when job demands are high, and resources are insufficient. Both models emphasize that extreme stress and burnout can result from an imbalance, whether it is in the effort-reward or demand-resource relationship.

The requirement for balance in the workplace is further supported by research by Van Vegchel et al. (2005), which shows that this imbalance is strongly associated with adverse health consequences. The JD-R model builds on this concept by including a greater variety of resources, such as autonomy and feedback, which are essential for mitigating the adverse consequences of high demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Ultimately, both models highlight the importance of ensuring employees have sufficient resources to counterbalance their demands.

Impact of COVID-19 on Remote Work Practices

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote work, forcing many leaders to adopt flexible work methods to ensure operational continuity in the face of significant disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic also sped up the integration of digital tools and rethinking workforce management strategies to improve productivity in a remote environment (Zapata et al., 2023). Many businesses found themselves relying on technology to maintain operations as a result of the sudden change to remote work. Employees who were previously restricted to office settings started working from home. This allowed employees to prove that productivity did not always require their physical presence. In return, this became a turning point, opening the door to more permanent changes in work arrangements (Fauziyah et al., 2024). The modifications shifted more focus on outcomes and results, rather than the traditional office hours and environment. Addressing immediate health and safety concerns urged leaders to reevaluate traditional employment practices (Manroop et al., 2024). Long-term structural changes were the result of flexibility, resilience, and wellbeing being placed first.

Kazak and Obelets (2022) examined how remote work initially served as a short-term adaptation strategy but has evolved into a sustainable human resource management approach driven by technological advancements and organizational resilience. Remote work was once considered temporary but has now become integral to workforce management strategies. Remote work is now possible and effective thanks to technological advancements like cloud storage, collaboration software, and virtual communication tools (Javaid et al., 2024). Thanks to these advancements, businesses now have the tools necessary to operate efficiently even when employees are geographically

separated. As a result, HR departments had to change their strategies to fit this new paradigm, shifting from traditional management approaches to more flexible, goal-oriented ones (Al-Alawi et al., 2023).

Similarly, Mutongerwa and Matebese (2024) highlighted that the pandemic forced HR departments to address remote work's unique demands, including the digital divide, and the pressure on HR to develop supportive policies. The rapid switch to remote work exposed significant equity issues since some workers lacked the tools and resources necessary to do productive work from home (Morris et al., 2022). As businesses were compelled to guarantee that every employee had access to the required resources, including computers, internet connectivity, and dependable software, the digital divide emerged as a critical issue. As the pandemic progressed, HR was under increasing pressure to create new procedures and policies that addressed these issues. HR has to come up with creative ways to help staff members, such as providing virtual team-building exercises, flexible scheduling, and mental health services (Engen, 2023).

Remote Work Challenges

Remote work presents several unique challenges, especially in managing employee engagement, productivity, and retention (Hani Al-Dmour et al., 2023b). One of HR leaders' most significant challenges is fostering a sense of connection and belonging among remote workers. Lack of social interaction and feelings of loneliness are common problems for remote workers, which might lower engagement and productivity. Managing remote teams also require adapting communication strategies to ensure transparency and clear expectations (Becker et al., 2021).

Research showed decreased collaboration and creativity due to the need for face-to-face communication and spontaneous daily interactions in traditional office spaces (Lal et al., 2023; Rücker et al., 2024). Considering this issue, HR leaders should prioritize providing platforms and communication tools that improve teamwork. According to Idowu et al. (2024), this entails supplying these tools, training employees on how to utilize them, and encouraging a culture of communication.

In addition to setting boundaries, HR departments must focus on improving communication through technology and engagement strategies to support remote employees. Flexible work hours and allowing employees to manage their own schedules enhance autonomy and reduce stress, further contributing to work-life balance (Khalid et al., 2023). Creating a supportive environment that prioritizes mental well-being through programs like wellness seminars, counseling resources, or continuous support can also help employees cope with the unique challenges of remote work (Leuhery et al., 2024; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

Communication and Collaboration in Remote Teams

One of the most significant barriers to remote work is the absence of impromptu encounters and in-person communication frequently observed in typical office settings (Rotter Šešok et al., 2024). Remote workers may experience a sense of alienation from their coworkers, which could impede their ability to collaborate and be creative. According to Smith and Lee (2023), communication technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Slack are crucial since they allow for smooth project collaboration and real-time communication. However, more than merely offering these tools is required; HR

departments must guarantee that staff members receive sufficient training on these platforms to maximize their usefulness (Muktamar & Nurnaningsih, 2024).

According to Swaroop and Sharma (2022), frequent virtual check-ins and collaborative sessions can also help to restore the informal connections that inevitably occur at a physical workstation. To ensure that employees feel connected even when working remotely, HR directors must balance official meetings with informal engagement opportunities (George & Thomas, 2023). Activities that promote camaraderie and lessen feelings of isolation include team-building exercises and informal talk sessions (Joseph, 2024). Such efforts foster a more encouraging and stimulating remote work environment in addition to improving team cohesion.

HR leaders must prioritize creating a sense of shared purpose within remote teams to facilitate stronger collaboration (Afzal, 2024). Establishing clear, unified goals for projects, along with regular updates and feedback, ensures that everyone remains aligned despite the physical distance. In addition to structured meetings, incorporating opportunities for discussions through chat groups, virtual brainstorming, or casual hangouts can maintain a creative flow within the team. Allowing employees to contribute freely in less formal settings encourages innovation and builds a collaborative culture (Arif et al., 2023). Furthermore, HR departments can foster collaboration by promoting cross-functional teamwork. Encouraging employees from different departments to collaborate on projects strengthens team relationships and enhances problem-solving by integrating diverse perspectives (Ewim et al., 2024).

Work-Life Balance and Burnout Prevention

Another issue associated with remote work is managing work-life balance. Managing work-life balance is a critical challenge for remote employees, as the blurring of boundaries between home and work life can lead to burnout if not carefully managed (Perry et al., 2023). HR professionals play a vital role in addressing this issue by creating policies that promote clear boundaries. HR professionals must create work-life balance-promoting rules, such as enforcing flexible work schedules or urging staff members to log out after work. Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) highlight that flexibility and continuous support are vital in addressing the misalignment between remote work expectations and realities, which often contribute to burnout. Similarly, Chan et al. (2022) highlighted that organizational policies that provide boundaries, such as the right to disconnect, can lead to healthier work-life boundaries.

Remote employees can experience burnout as they struggle to separate their home and work lives. HR professionals must implement policies that create work-life balance within organizations. Smith and Lee (2023) argued that companies with flexible working hours are more likely to experience lower staff turnover rates and have happier employees. In addition to lowering burnout, these policies increase staff retention and engagement. If leaders handle remote work effectively, it can significantly impact overall employee satisfaction and productivity (Odunayo & Fagbemide, 2024). By prioritizing clear boundaries, flexibility, and supportive policies, HR professionals can address work-life balance challenges, ensuring remote employees remain engaged, motivated, and productive.

Mandated restrictions on contact outside of working hours can help employees 'log off' and resist the pervasive force of burnout; policies that allow and even encourage employees to participate in wellness activities and take frequent breaks can foster a healthier work-life balance (Ingstad & Haugan, 2024). Providing employees with opportunities to disconnect from work can significantly enhance job satisfaction, reduce stress, and contribute to a more sustainable and fulfilling work environment. As Plaskoff and Frey (2024) argued, placing people at the heart of the enterprise and prioritizing employees' well-being by providing programs such as 'stress-management seminars' and 'mental health resources' could boost retention.

Employee Engagement in Remote Work Settings

Employee engagement in remote work settings has become critical for organizational success, particularly as traditional in-person dynamics give way to virtual interactions (Qin, 2024). Positive interactions between leaders and remote workers can greatly increase engagement levels, according to Lartey (2022), who highlighted the significance of leader-member exchange (LMX) partnerships. In remote settings, where casual interactions are limited, LMX provides a structure for trust, encouraging employees to feel committed and motivated.

Anand and Acharya (2021) added further context to these engagement strategies by examining employee engagement practices used both in regular and crisis scenarios, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote work is defined as a flexible arrangement outside the traditional office environment and highlighted the surge in its adoption due to safety concerns during the pandemic (Roberto et al., 2023). Through a survey of HR managers and a review of secondary literature, Anand and Acharya (2021) identified

practical engagement mechanisms such as regular communication, emotional support, and structured engagement programs crucial for sustaining productivity and morale in remote employees. By supporting employee motivation, loyalty, and productivity, they contended that these approaches demonstrate the importance of emotional and psychological support in cultivating long-term commitment (Kwarteng et al., 2023).

Al-Shameri et al. (2024) agreed that remote work policies go beyond meeting public health demands, presenting a strategic opportunity to improve employee satisfaction and performance. Flexible HR frameworks that prioritize technological integration and well-being are essential for sustaining business operations and addressing the challenges faced by remote workers (Buick et al., 2024).

In remote environments, where physical distance can strain cohesiveness, leaders can better manage team dynamics and maintain corporate culture by implementing adaptable rules and well-being methods. The importance of consistent engagement through organized communication is also emphasized. Clear and consistent channels of communication help employees, promote alignment with company objectives and lessen the sense of isolation that comes with working remotely (Musheke & Phiri, 2021)

To maintain engagement, especially in virtual environments, Anjum et al. (2022) further highlighted the importance of frequent check-ins, professional growth, and skill-building activities. According to their study, consistent communication helps managers stay informed about their employees needs and allows employees to feel connected and engaged with their teams. When professional development opportunities are available, employees feel more prepared to navigate the demands of remote work. In return their job satisfaction and organizational commitment are enhanced because they feel valued

and supported. According to Zamiri and Esmaeili (2024), leaders prioritizing skill-building activities address immediate gaps in remote skills and foster a culture of growth and flexibility, which can be valuable as remote work evolves.

Luthia and Sathiamoorthy (2021) supported this view by describing consistent communication and recognition programs as necessary for making employees feel valued and heard. Transparent and frequent communications affect employee motivation and participation. Human Resource leaders are encouraged to keep remote employees engaged and motivated by prioritizing recognition programs. There is a correlation between employee engagement and communication while showing how incentives and recognition can further enhance these relationships (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2021). Customized HR strategies are essential for accommodating the diverse needs of remote workforces, particularly as different demographic groups respond uniquely to communication and recognition efforts. Insights from the study equip HR leaders with actionable strategies for addressing challenges such as engagement, productivity, and retention. Emphasizing the value of aligning recognition initiatives with organizational objectives ensures a more supportive and inclusive remote work environment (Javed, 2024).

Trust-building is essential in virtual environments, where physical separation can easily lead to feelings of isolation and disengagement among team members (Badrinarayanan, 2024). Virtual team-building activities have emerged as a critical component of HR strategies for businesses that operate in remote work environments. It helps bridge the physical gaps that can lead to isolation and disengagement among team members (Hyvämäki, 2023).

According to Leonardelli (2022), having an effective organizational identity is essential for managing remote teams, as it provides them with a sense of belonging. He also discussed the challenges associated with remote work, such as the potential for employee isolation and disengagement. Leonardelli recommended consistent virtual meetings and offered strategies for creating a feeling of community among remote workers to mitigate these risks. Examples of remote team-building activities that can improve the relationships and morale of remote workers include remote social gatherings, team-building games, team exercises, and open lines of communication. Desiatco (2023) suggested that creating platforms for social engagement outside of daily work tasks and the promotion of a work-life balance helps remote employees feel more connected to the organization.

Donnelly and Johns (2021) implied that virtual team-building exercises are crucial instruments for reaffirming company culture and identity in addition to being morale enhancers. Employees can establish personal connections with their coworkers through these informal engagements, which are essential for maintaining long-term trust and motivation in a remote team. The study by Phongsak Phakamach et al. (2023) emphasizes that the effectiveness and humanization of remote work depend on continuous skill development, effective use of digital tools, and maintaining relational proximity between remote workers and employers.

Devi (2023) highlighted that amid the massive move to remote work, HR managers have encountered substantial hurdles in preserving company productivity and employee satisfaction. Communication breakdowns, low motivation, and work-life balance issues have all affected the engagement and well-being of remote workers. Devi

supported that regular virtual team-building exercises can improve team cohesion and fortify bonds; especially as remote work becomes more common. By actively planning meetings, HR managers help employees stay motivated and connected to the company's objectives while addressing feelings of alienation and isolation (Febrian, 2023).

Continuous Learning and Development for Remote Employees

Continuous learning and growth are essential aspects of today's dynamic workplace to keep employees as up-to-date and flexible as possible, especially in remote environments where employees need to stay ahead of the game and agile in response to organizational changes. As businesses transition to the digital space, they increasingly rely on digital products to provide learning materials and ensure that employees are updated on current practices and future ones (Vuchkovski, 2024).

Nyathani (2023) highlighted the importance of Learning Management Systems (LMS) in providing remote employees with access, flexibility, and on-demand professional development. LMS promotes continual learning and adaptation, two essential components for preserving an agile workforce in remote environments, by allowing staff members to access learning resources from any place. On-demand access promotes both individual development and organizational adaptation in the digital age by enabling remote employees to acquire new skills and stay current on practices without requiring traditional in-person training.

Kess-Momoh et al. (2024) supported this perspective by emphasizing that virtual learning programs help professionals progress and close skill gaps, which in turn improves engagement and job satisfaction. Despite geographical barriers, leaders may ensure employees are continuously improving their skills by using technology for virtual

training. According to Susano et al. (2023), such initiatives are crucial to a modern HR strategy because they foster a culture of continuous improvement that supports both personal and professional objectives and develops employee capacities. Virtual learning programs foster a sense of empowerment and accomplishment among workers, leading to immediate increases in engagement and promoting long-term retention (Cho et al., 2024). Modern HR strategies that prioritize capacity building and ongoing improvement to support both professional and personal development are in line with this approach.

Al-Shameri et al. (2024) also suggested that learning programs tailored to the unique needs of remote employees such as training on digital collaboration tools and effective time management can increase productivity and alignment with organizational goals. In summary, these studies collectively demonstrate that continuous learning is essential to remote work strategies. Leaders can foster motivation, satisfaction, and professional development in virtual settings by implementing tailored learning programs, including training on digital collaboration tools and effective time management (Kess-Momoh et al., 2024; Nyathani, 2023; Vuchkovski, 2024).

Retention Strategies for Remote Workers: Flexibility, Autonomy, and Support

The shift to remote work has driven leaders to reconsider their retention strategies to better cater to the unique needs of a distributed workforce (Olabode et al., 2024). Effective retention strategies in remote work environments often involve a combination of engagement, recognition, and targeted support. Flexible hours, effective communication channels, and regular virtual team-building activities enhance job satisfaction by facilitating the balance of personal and professional responsibilities (Smith & Lee, 2023). Continuous education and training programs help remote workers maintain

industry-specific expertise, hence improving job satisfaction and professional growth. Regular weekly and monthly performance reviews can greatly improve remote workers' perceived value and support, promoting their comfort in the workplace (Anand & Acharya, 2021).

Faruque et al. (2024), who supported flexible work hours, well-being initiatives, and recognition programs, provided additional support for these ideas. Employee engagement and productivity are increased when remote workers feel valued and appreciated, which is achieved through regular feedback and recognition for their achievements. Fostering engagement and retention, which are critical for remote workers, helps establish a healthy work-life balance (Yee et al., 2024).

Flexibility and Autonomy as Retention Tools

In remote work environments, where employees value the ability to successfully manage personal and professional obligations, flexibility and autonomy are essential for retention. According to Faruque et al. (2024), flexible scheduling is a key component of job satisfaction because it gave workers the freedom to arrange their workload however best meets their demands. Autonomy is significant in remote work settings because employees can determine their work schedules, which can help them stay engaged and prevent burnout (Höcker et al., 2024).

To foster a positive work environment where employees can easily manage their personal and professional lives, flexible work practices are crucial. According to Becker et al. (2022), employees who felt more in control of their work environment and tasks were more productive and experienced less stress. Loyalty and work satisfaction are a direct result of this autonomy, which means workers are more likely to stay with

employers that meet their needs for flexibility. Furthermore, Faruque et al. (2024) illustrated how flexibly scheduled hours contributed to firm performance, and the fact that employee self-management benefited the firm. Investing in flexibility ultimately creates a win-win scenario, where both employees and employers thrive.

Jiang et al. (2023) supported the perspective of employee self-management by proposing that flexible work arrangements foster innovative behaviors among remote workers by granting them autonomy, which stimulates self-motivation and creativity. Autonomy enhances individual performance while contributing to a more dynamic and innovative organizational culture (Soegiarto et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies highlight how autonomy and flexibility are essential to a long-lasting remote work culture that promotes employee happiness and company success.

Mental Health Support for Remote Workers

Remote work environments have influenced the mental health of employees (Backholm & Idås, 2022). Some of the effects are increased isolation, blurred boundaries between work and life, and higher cognitive demands leading to stress and burnout. Witteveen et al. (2022) highlights the importance of synchronous telemental health (sTMH) tools in maintaining mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, while emphasizing the barriers to effective implementation, including low technological literacy and insufficient organizational support. HR leaders must address these challenges by ensuring robust training and adequate digital infrastructure (Ahluwalia & Balhara, 2024). By doing so, leaders can foster a supportive environment that prioritizes employee well-being and resilience.

The psychological toll of remote work is further emphasized by Costin et al. (2023), who identify social isolation and workload intensification as primary contributors to burnout. To mitigate these effects, their research suggests interventions such as psychological safety, workload management, and clear communication. Similarly, Jeske (2022) warns against the potential mental health repercussions of electronic monitoring, which can erode trust and increase stress among remote employees.

Birimoglu and Begen (2021) discussed the shift to WFH as a significant adaptation that enabled productivity and flexibility while also introducing challenges such as maintaining work-life balance, managing ergonomics, and avoiding physical health risks like obesity due to reduced movement. Recommendations include setting up ergonomic workspaces, establishing routines to balance work and personal life, and promoting regular exercise and breaks to mitigate physical strain and mental fatigue.

Chowhan and Pike (2022) emphasized that excessive job demands contribute to heightened stress and lower job satisfaction, while job resources such as clear expectations, workload management, and organizational support help mitigate these negative effects and enhance overall well-being. By addressing these challenges proactively, leaders can create a healthier and more sustainable remote work environment that supports both employee well-being and long-term productivity (Galanti & Toscano, 2024).

Transition

In Section 2, I reviewed the academic and professional literature relevant to remote work, focusing on HR strategies, employee engagement, and applying the JD-R model. I also discussed key supporting theories and their connection to the business

problem. Section 3 contains a detailed explanation of the research methodology, including ethical considerations, research design, participant recruitment, sampling procedures, data collection, and analysis methods. I also discuss how I ensured ethical integrity, as well as the reliability and validity of the study. Section 4 presents the research findings, connects them to the conceptual framework and existing literature, and includes a discussion of implications for business practice, social change, and future research.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology for the study, detailing ethical considerations, project nature, participant selection, data collection activities, and techniques for ensuring reliability and validity. The research follows a qualitative pragmatic inquiry approach, utilizing semistructured interviews and document analysis to explore strategies HR leaders implement to support remote workers. This section also describes the measures taken to protect participant confidentiality and ensure data integrity.

Project Ethics

As the researcher, I served as the primary data collection instrument, ensuring that all ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. My role involved conducting semistructured interviews and maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of the data collected. I adhered to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements to ensure compliance with ethical research standards. IRBs were established to protect the human research participants' rights by ensuring ethical and regulatory compliance in research studies (Serpico, 2023). I used a semistructured interview guide to minimize potential biases and maintain a reflective journal to document observations and methodological decisions.

Informed Consent

The informed consent process involved providing each participant with a detailed consent form outlining the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participants were required to review and sign the consent form before the interview was conducted. The consent form also informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study

without penalty. If a participant withdrew, all data collected was immediately deleted from the study records. Clear communication and ethical handling of participant withdrawal were essential to ensuring that participants felt respected and supported throughout the process (Cragg et al., 2024). No incentives were offered for participation to prevent undue influence on participants' decisions to participate in the research.

The consent form was written in clear, accessible language to ensure that participants fully understand their rights and responsibilities before agreeing to take part in the study. Before the interviews, I reviewed the key elements of the form with each participant, allowed time for questions or clarification and reinforced that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were advised that they may withdraw from the study at any point, without penalty or prejudice, simply by notifying me via email. If a participant withdrew, all associated data was permanently deleted. Additionally, participants who were unresponsive to communication or follow-up attempts for more than seven consecutive days after expressing interest or beginning the interview process were considered withdrawn from the study. This approach supported transparency and ethical consistency while respecting participants' autonomy and time.

Confidentiality

To protect participant confidentiality, all personal identifiers were removed from the data, and participants were assigned coded identifiers. Interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored in a password-protected digital folder, accessible only to the researcher. In accordance with the university's guidelines, all collected data will be maintained for a minimum of 5 years in a secure location to protect participant rights before being permanently deleted. The final doctoral manuscript includes the IRB

approval number and does not contain any names or identifiable information of individuals or organizations. As the primary researcher, I was responsible for upholding the ethical standards outlined in the Belmont Report, which guides the protection of human subjects in research. These standards include Respect for Persons, by maintaining autonomy and safeguarding private information; Beneficence, by minimizing risks related to data exposure; and Justice, by ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all participants throughout the research process (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). These ethical principles were consistently applied to preserve the dignity and privacy of all individuals who contributed to this study.

Nature of the Project

A qualitative pragmatic inquiry design was selected for this study to explore and identify the effective strategies HR leaders had implemented to support remote workers. This approach was appropriate because the goal was to understand complex, context-specific behaviors, perceptions, and processes rather than to quantify relationships or measure variables. A quantitative approach, which typically involves hypothesis testing, numerical data, and statistical analysis, would have not capture the depth of insight required to understand the lived experiences and evolving practices of HR leaders managing distributed teams. As Hollstein (2024) explained, quantitative social network analysis is valuable for identifying structural patterns in relationships but often lacks the ability to capture subjective meaning, context, and the dynamic nature of human interaction. In contrast, qualitative research allows for open-ended exploration and contextual richness, which are essential for generating actionable knowledge in real-world organizational settings.

A qualitative approach was well-suited for examining human behaviors and organizational experiences, especially in the context of remote work environments that vary widely across industries and organizations. As Lim (2024) explained, qualitative methods are effective for exploring phenomena within organizational settings where nuance and context are essential. A pragmatic inquiry design was chosen because it emphasizes practical, real-world solutions that are directly applicable to business settings (Bryant & Jones, 2025). This approach allowed researchers to study the problem holistically and draw conclusions grounded in both participant experience and theoretical foundations. By using a structured yet flexible framework, this design supports the development of meaningful insights that HR leaders can use to enhance their strategies for supporting remote workers, ultimately contributing to improved organizational effectiveness.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The population consisted of HR leaders from organizations that had implemented or were developing remote work strategies. These participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they possessed relevant experience and insights into managing remote teams. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to select individuals with firsthand knowledge of the research topic, ensuring that the data collected is rich and meaningful (Akkaş & Meydan, 2024). To enhance the depth of analysis, the sample included HR professionals from various industries, providing diverse perspectives on remote work policies, engagement strategies, and workforce management.

Participants were identified based on specific inclusion criteria, including their role in shaping HR policies for remote work, years of experience in human resources, and the extent of their organization's remote work adoption. Recruitment will occur through professional networks, industry associations, and LinkedIn outreach. I introduced the study to potential participants through direct messaging and email, providing details about the research purpose, participation expectations, and confidentiality measures. To facilitate engagement, I built rapport with participants by emphasizing the significance of their expertise in contributing to the understanding of effective remote work strategies. Establishing rapport is essential in qualitative research as it encourages open dialogue and enhances participant engagement (Ahmed, 2024).

To determine an appropriate sample size, I followed the principle of data saturation, which occurs when no new information or themes emerge from participant responses (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). A sample of approximately five to 10 leaders was expected to provide sufficient data while allowing for in-depth exploration of themes. I interviewed six HR leaders, which was sufficient to achieve saturation. If saturation had not been reached, additional participants would have been recruited to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research topic. Once participants confirmed their willingness to participate, they received a consent form outlining ethical considerations and data confidentiality. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants, with the flexibility of virtual or phone-based sessions to accommodate their preferences and availability.

Data Collection Activities

As the primary data collection instrument, I conducted semistructured interviews with HR leaders to gather insights on effective human resource strategies for remote work. Semistructured interviews allow for a structured yet flexible approach, enabling participants to share in-depth perspectives while ensuring consistency across all interviews (Bethel, 2024). Each interview was conducted via video conferencing or phone, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, depending on participant availability. Before each session, I obtained informed consent, explaining the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation. The interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed using Otter.ai, followed by a manual review to ensure transcription accuracy. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a unique identifier, and personally identifiable information was removed from the transcripts.

To ensure a rigorous and systematic approach, I followed a structured interview protocol designed to maintain consistency while allowing for in-depth exploration of key themes. The interview protocol included a step-by-step process for participant recruitment, informed consent, interview scheduling, and post-interview validation. Open-ended questions were used to encourage detailed responses, with follow-up probing questions to gain further clarification where needed. Additionally, I took observational notes during each interview to capture available verbal tone cues, contextual factors, and potential themes that emerged. For video interviews, these notes also included non-verbal observations. These notes complemented the recorded interviews and provided additional layers of insight into participant responses.

In addition to interviews, I collected and analyzed publicly available HR policies, best practice guidelines, and industry reports to supplement primary data. These documents provided contextual background on existing frameworks supporting remote work and helped triangulate findings from the interviews. The use of multiple data sources enhanced the depth of analysis and provided a well-rounded understanding of HR strategies in remote work settings.

Interview Questions

I used semistructured interviews in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about HR strategies for remote work. The open-ended interview questions that were used are as follows:

1. What strategies has your organization implemented to support remote workers?
2. How do you ensure employee engagement and productivity in a remote work environment?
3. What challenges have you encountered in managing remote teams, and how have you addressed them?
4. What role does HR leadership play in fostering an inclusive and equitable remote work culture?
5. How do you measure the effectiveness of remote work policies and strategies?
6. What additional insights or lessons learned can you share about supporting remote teams?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

To maintain data integrity and accessibility, I systematically organized all collected materials in a secure, password-protected digital folder. Semistructured interviews were conducted via video conferencing or phone, depending on participant preference, with participant consent obtained before recording. I used Otter.ai for the initial transcriptions and manually reviewed them against the recordings to ensure accuracy. Manual verification was essential to mitigate transcription errors and maintain the reliability of participant responses (McManus et al., 2024). Each interview transcript was coded and anonymized using participant identifiers to protect confidentiality. Additionally, I maintained a detailed research log and diary to track progress, important events, interview dates, and decisions made during the data collection and analysis phases. These records not only documented my reflexive thoughts but also provided an audit trail to ensure transparency and consistency throughout the research process. All interview notes, transcripts, and documents were labeled with participant codes and stored in properly labeled digital folders.

For data analysis, I employed NVivo, which provides tools for qualitative coding, theme identification, and visualization of patterns in textual data. According to Naeem et al. (2024), thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method used to identify, analyze, and interpret meaningful patterns or themes within qualitative data. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach, thematic analysis was used to analyze participant responses. This phase involved: (a) familiarizing myself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) identifying broader themes, (d) reviewing and refining themes, (e) defining and naming the final themes, and (f) synthesizing findings with supporting

participant quotes. As emphasized in recent qualitative research, thematic analysis remains a foundational method for identifying patterns in qualitative data (Sandhiya & Bhuvaneswari, 2024).

To implement these six steps, I began by immersing myself in the data through repeated reading of each transcript and taking reflective notes to gain a deep understanding of participant experiences. During coding, I carefully identified significant excerpts in the transcripts and assigned initial codes using NVivo. Once the data were coded, I clustered related codes to begin identifying potential themes that capture shared patterns across responses. In the reviewing phase, I compared the themes against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' insights and revised them as needed. I defined and named each theme by articulating the central idea it represents and ensuring it aligns with my research questions. Finally, I compiled the results into a coherent narrative, selecting powerful participant quotes to support each theme and demonstrate the depth and richness of the findings.

I also employed reflexivity throughout the process to evaluate how my role as a researcher and my interpretations may have influenced the findings. Documenting shifts in perception and analytic decisions in my research log enhanced the trustworthiness of the study. Reflexivity supported the alignment between participant voices, the literature, and the JD-R model that framed this study.

I applied both inductive and deductive coding approaches. Inductive codes emerged organically from the participants' experiences, while deductive codes were informed by the JD-R model and key themes identified in the literature. After identifying key themes, I compared them with existing literature, including newly published studies,

to assess how the findings aligned with or expanded upon current research. This ensured a meaningful connection between the study's results, the conceptual framework, and existing research in the field.

To ensure the integrity and longevity of the research data, all raw materials, including interview transcripts, coding records, and reflective notes, were securely stored in compliance with ethical research guidelines. Proper data management is critical for maintaining confidentiality and ensuring findings remain accessible for future reference. Therefore, all collected data will be retained for at least five years, aligning with best practices in qualitative research and institutional requirements.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Ensuring reliability in qualitative research requires consistency in data collection and analysis (Khoa et al., 2023). To enhance reliability, I implemented member checking, allowing participants to review and validate their interview transcripts to confirm accuracy. Additionally, I maintained a reflective research journal to document observations, coding decisions, and emerging patterns to enhance transparency and reflexivity. Document analysis supplemented interview findings by examining HR policies, industry reports, and best practice guidelines to provide contextual insights into remote work strategies.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the authenticity and accuracy (Haq et al., 2023). To ensure credibility in this study, I used multiple strategies, including member checking, where participants reviewed the interpretations of their responses for accuracy.

I also maintained a reflective research journal throughout the data collection and analysis process to document decisions, personal reactions, and analytic insights. These steps helped ensure that the participants' perspectives were accurately captured and interpreted with integrity.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of research findings over time and across similar conditions, emphasizing the importance of a logical, well-documented, and traceable research process (Saber, 2024). To ensure dependability in this study, I maintained a detailed audit trail documenting each stage of the research, including data collection procedures, coding strategies, and theme development. I also engaged in regular reflexive research journaling to record my evolving thoughts, decisions, and methodological shifts. These practices provided transparency into how findings were developed and helped ensure the research process could be reviewed or replicated with consistency.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the process of applying research findings from specific participants, settings, and timeframes to other contexts that were not directly studied (Drisko, 2024). Unlike generalization, which seeks universal applicability, transferability relies on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study context and their own. I enhanced transferability by providing thick description, rich, contextualized narratives of participant experiences that allow readers to assess the relevance of the findings to their own environments.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which research findings are grounded in the data and not influenced by the researcher's personal biases, preferences, or assumptions (Saber, 2024). To establish confirmability in this study, I maintained an audit trail that includes detailed records of data collection procedures, coding decisions, and theme development to ensure transparency in the research process. I also kept a reflective research journal throughout the study to document my positionality, emerging insights, and analytical choices. This reflexive practice will help manage subjectivity and support a clear connection between the participants' perspectives and the resulting interpretations.

Data Saturation

Data saturation refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from data collection (DiStefano & Yang, 2023). I assessed saturation by reviewing transcripts continuously during the collection phase, identifying when participant narratives began to repeat, and no novel insights arose. Guided by Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework and the PRICE model proposed by Naeem et al. (2024), I monitored for theme recurrence, the depth of participant responses, and the consistency of emerging patterns and keywords.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and integrity of findings in representing participants' lived experiences and perspectives (Morgan, 2024). To strengthen the validity of this study, I employed thick description by providing detailed, contextualized accounts of participant responses. This approach allowed readers to assess how well the findings align with their settings. I also engaged in continuous reflexive

practice, documenting my thoughts, potential biases, and evolving interpretations throughout the research process. These strategies ensured that the conclusions were firmly rooted in the data, enhancing the study's overall credibility and trustworthiness.

Transition and Summary

In Section 3, I outlined the research methodology, including data organization, analysis techniques, and measures for ensuring reliability and validity. The study was conducted using a qualitative pragmatic inquiry framework, utilizing semistructured interviews and document analysis to explore HR strategies for remote work. The next section, Section 4, will present the research findings, discuss their implications for business practice and social change, and offer recommendations for future research.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore and identify effective strategies that human resource leaders implement to support remote workers. The presentation of the findings centers around the following research question: What strategies and processes do human resource leaders use to support remote workers? Data collection involved semistructured interviews with six HR professionals based in a southern, southwestern state. These participants represented various industries, including technology, healthcare, nonprofit, education services, logistics, and government contracting. Upon accepting the invitation to participate, each professional responded to six open-ended interview questions designed to explore the strategies, challenges, and evaluation methods used to support remote teams.

Through a structured process of data coding and thematic analysis, five major themes emerged from the interviews: (a) flexible work structures, (b) communication and engagement practices, (c) challenges of coordination and collaboration, (d) HR leadership's role in equity and inclusion, and (e) evaluation of remote work effectiveness. These themes reflected shared practices and insights across organizational contexts. Table 1 provides a summary of the participant population involved in this project.

Table 1

Participants' Population Summary

Participant	Employment title	Years of service	Remote work experience
P1	HR manager	12	4 years
P2	HR business partner	15	5 years
P3	HR director	14	3 years
P4	Talent & culture	10	4 years
P5	Manager	10	4 years
P6	People operations manager	5	5 years
	HR manager		

P1 is an HR manager with 12 years of service and 4 years of remote work experience. They currently lead HR operations for a mid-sized healthcare organization and support a hybrid workforce across multiple departments.

P2 is an HR business partner with 15 years of service and 5 years of remote work experience. They oversee talent development initiatives and partner with leadership teams in a fully remote technology firm.

P3 is an HR director with 14 years of experience and 3 years of remote work involvement. Their role involves strategic planning and managing distributed HR teams across multiple time zones.

P4 is a talent & culture manager with 10 years of experience and 4 years of remote work background. They focus on organizational development and employee engagement in a nonprofit environment.

P5 is a people operations manager with 10 years of service and 4 years of remote experience. They manage virtual onboarding, HR systems, and performance management for a logistics company.

> P6 is an HR manager with 5 years of service and 5 years of remote work experience. They work in a government contracting environment, leading compliance, and workforce support for a dispersed employee base.

Following the interviews, I utilized methodological triangulation to compare data from the semistructured interviews with insights gathered from analyzing organizational documents and internal HR materials. To ensure the accuracy of the recorded responses, I contacted each participant for member checking by sharing my interpretations of their interview transcripts and requesting their confirmation. I also reviewed publicly available information from organizational websites, including leadership bios, HR strategy documents, and remote work policy statements.

I transcribed the interviews and methodically analyzed the responses in Microsoft Word, organizing the data while highlighting key points relevant to my research focus. The transcripts were then imported into NVivo for deeper thematic coding and analysis. This process revealed four dominant themes: communication and accessibility, trust and autonomy, performance management in virtual environments, and inclusive HR practices. The progression from initial codes to clusters and emergent themes is illustrated in Table 2. These themes emerged as the most consistently discussed strategies for enhancing engagement, productivity, and retention among remote employees. A thematic summary of these findings is presented in Table 3.

Table 2

Coding Pathway From Initial Codes to Clusters to Emergent Themes

Initial codes	Code cluster	Emergent theme
"Weekly check-ins," "open office hours," "accessibility audits," short meetings,"	Structured connection	Communication & Accessibility
"Results over process," "self-set deliverables," "flexible schedules," "train then trust," "psychological safety."	Autonomy & Accountability	Trust & Autonomy
"Goal-based reviews," "performance dashboards," "peer feedback," "clarity of expectations," "growth check-ins."	Transparent Systems	Performance Management
"Equitable meetings," "recognition," "mentor networks," "cultural holidays," "anonymous feedback."	Inclusive Practices	Inclusive HR Practices
"Pulse surveys," "feedback loops," "KPIs beyond output," "cohesion measures," "workload adjustments."	Human-Centered Evaluation	Evaluation of Remote Effectiveness

As shown in Table 2, the process of thematic analysis involved moving systematically from initial codes to broader clusters, which then developed into the emergent themes. This table illustrates how descriptive insights drawn directly from participant interviews were organized and refined through multiple cycles of coding. The coding pathway demonstrates the analytic rigor of this study by showing how raw responses were distilled into meaningful categories that form the foundation of the findings. Importantly, the table reflects the transparency of the analysis by tracing how specific phrases, practices, and observations contributed to the higher-level concepts that inform the themes.

Building on this coding pathway, Table 3 provides concise definitions of the emergent themes and shows how they function within the broader context of remote

workforce management. While Table 2 demonstrates the process of theme development, Table 3 highlights the conceptual clarity of each theme, emphasizing its relevance to engagement, productivity, and retention in remote environments. Together, the two tables offer both methodological transparency and practical insight, linking the raw data to the final thematic outcomes.

Table 3

Themes

Theme	Definition	Participants
Communication & Accessibility	Strategies HR leaders use to enhance remote workers stay informed and connected, including check ins and digital tools	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6
Trust and Autonomy	Granting employee flexibility and independence to manage tasks while maintaining accountability	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6
Performance Management	The systems and processes used to monitor, assess, and guide remote employee performance, including feedback, evaluations, and goal tracking.	P1, P3, P5, P6
Inclusive HR Practices	Practices aimed at fostering a fair and inclusive virtual work environment, ensuing all employees feel seen, valued, and supported.	P2, P3, P4, P6
Evaluation of Remote Effectiveness	The use of metrics, surveys, and performance data to assess the success of remote work strategies and guide organizational decisions.	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6

Theme 1: Communication and Accessibility

Communication and accessibility emerged as a central theme across all interviews, reflecting the importance of maintaining connection, transparency, and alignment in remote work environments. Effective communication strategies were described as essential for ensuring day-to-day productivity, fostering a sense of inclusion,

and reducing employee isolation. The emphasis on reducing employee isolation through consistent communication aligns with Musheke and Phiri (2021), who emphasized that clear and consistent communication channels promote alignment with company objectives and lessen the sense of detachment common in remote work settings. This connection highlights that intentional communication is not simply a practical tool but a mechanism that strengthens trust and stability in the workplace. Petitta and Ghezzi (2025) added that organizational belongingness derived from reliable communication can reduce stressors, prevent disengagement, and promote both performance and well-being in flexible work environments. The participants' emphasis on consistent communication demonstrates that intentional connection is not simply a practical tool but a strategic resource that protects remote employees from disengagement and isolation, thereby reinforcing retention and organizational stability.

P1, an HR Manager supporting a hybrid workforce in a healthcare organization, explained how they prioritize accessibility through regularly scheduled virtual check-ins with staff. "We make sure leaders are available throughout the day and that meetings are short, scheduled, and to the point," they shared. This structured approach was designed to help employees feel supported without overwhelming them with excessive virtual meetings. P1 also mentioned that some employees had shared how much they appreciated that leadership "checked in just to ask how they're doing, not just about deadlines." This emphasis on availability and emotional check-ins suggests that remote communication strategies must go beyond task management and include empathy.

P2, an HR Business Partner working in a fully remote tech company, described how they intentionally created collaborative spaces to improve visibility across teams.

"We host virtual open office hours and asynchronous discussion threads in our platforms to encourage open dialogue," they noted. This approach helps eliminate communication barriers that cause departments or individuals to work in isolation and ensures employees are aligned with organizational goals. According to P2, their goal was to replicate the spontaneity and connection that happen in traditional office spaces. They also emphasized that they regularly audit internal communication tools to prevent overload and increase clarity.

From a strategic standpoint, P3, an HR director managing teams across time zones, discussed how communication also plays a role in retaining top talent. "Remote workers need to feel seen and heard. If they're not engaged or if they feel disconnected, they'll start looking elsewhere," they explained. This directly connects with findings by Wang et al. (2021), who noted that communication challenges can lead to disengagement and turnover if not properly addressed. P3 added that their team uses "accessibility audits" to determine whether employees have sufficient access to leadership, tools, and support. These audits are followed by individualized follow-ups to close any gaps.

P4, a talent & culture manager in a nonprofit environment, shared how they use storytelling and personalized messaging to humanize their remote communication. "We highlight staff achievements in our weekly virtual town halls and send out personalized messages from leaders," they said. This approach aligns with Kazak and Obelets (2022), who emphasized the role of resilient communication practices in strengthening remote work culture. By focusing on positive reinforcement and public recognition, P4 reported an increase in employee participation and morale during monthly engagement surveys.

P5, a people operations manager in logistics, reflected on the need for communication strategies that are adapted to different working styles. “Some of our staff prefer Slack messages, others want one-on-one Zoom calls. You must tailor communication or people start feeling left out,” they explained. This observation supports Golden and Veiga’s (2005) research, which found that autonomy in remote work including how employees choose to communicate enhances job satisfaction and reduces stress.

P6, an HR manager in a government contracting setting, added that communication also helps reduce ambiguity and boost compliance. “When people know what’s expected and where to find support, they make fewer mistakes and feel more secure,” they noted. This connection between clear communication and performance outcomes further supports the link between employee accessibility and productivity, as suggested by the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Connection to Literature

The findings from participants affirm that communication and accessibility are foundational to remote work success. Consistent with the JD-R model (2007), clear communication is a job resource that helps employees stay connected to leadership and engaged with their work. This resource is essential for reducing uncertainty, maintaining alignment with organizational goals, and supporting emotional well-being in virtual settings. Musheke and Phiri (2021) found that effective communication structures reduce isolation and promote cohesion by aligning team efforts with company objectives. The research emphasized that remote communication must be intentional and continuous to prevent feelings of detachment.

Wang et al. (2021) further explained that communication barriers can contribute to disengagement and turnover if leaders do not proactively manage employee connection. The study showed that virtual teams require additional support through timely feedback, clarity of expectations, and emotional check-ins. Kazak and Obelets (2022) highlighted the role of resilient communication strategies, noting that storytelling, recognition, and positive reinforcement strengthen organizational culture and morale. Golden and Veiga (2005) also supported the idea that autonomy in communication improves satisfaction by allowing employees to choose their preferred channels and styles. These studies collectively reinforce the participant insights, confirming that communication and accessibility are not just logistical concerns but core drivers of employee engagement, performance, and retention in remote work environments.

Theme 2: Trust and Autonomy

Trust and autonomy emerged as essential strategies for maintaining motivation and commitment in remote work environments. Participants consistently emphasized that empowering employees to manage their time while providing support and guidance fostered a more engaged and resilient workforce. The belief that autonomy contributes directly to well-being was echoed across multiple interviews and aligns with research indicating that flexibility helps remote employees manage the blurred boundaries between work and life (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The connection between participants' emphasis on autonomy and prior research demonstrates that flexibility is not merely a managerial preference but a foundational job resource that sustains employee well-being in remote contexts. This connection is reinforced by Joy (2025), who found that autonomy significantly increases intrinsic motivation and compliance in flexible

work arrangements, further underscoring its role as a resource that strengthens accountability and resilience. By highlighting autonomy as a protective factor against the stress of blurred boundaries, both the findings and the literature reinforce the importance of HR leaders embedding flexibility into policy and practice to strengthen retention and resilience in remote teams.

P1 described their approach to cultivating trust by encouraging employees to make decisions independently within their roles. “We don’t micromanage,” they explained. “We focus on the results, not how people get there.” This emphasis on results-driven management supports the idea that perceived autonomy contributes to greater control and reduced stress among remote employees (Golden & Veiga, 2005). P1 also noted that when staff feel ownership over their work, they are more likely to remain accountable, which supports organizational stability.

Similarly, P2 explained how their company fosters autonomy through flexible work arrangements and individualized performance goals. “Each team member sets weekly deliverables based on their own priorities,” they said. “We provide coaching, but we don’t dictate every step.” This method encourages innovation and responsiveness, reinforcing findings by Soegiarto et al. (2024), who noted that autonomy enhances both individual and organizational performance in remote settings. P2 added that employees who feel trusted often exceed expectations because they are intrinsically motivated.

P4, working in a nonprofit organization, emphasized the importance of autonomy in sustaining employee morale. They described how their team members design their schedules and workflows to match their energy levels and work styles. “I don’t care if they work 9–5 or split the day in half,” P4 said. “What matters is that they feel supported

and can be productive on their own terms." This flexibility demonstrates the application of job resources like autonomy, which help counteract the emotional and cognitive demands of remote work (Rotter Šešok et al., 2024).

P5 shared that fostering autonomy begins with trust in employees' capabilities. "We train, then trust," they stated. "We give them the tools, and then let them run with it." This strategy not only improves productivity but also reinforces employee confidence. Their approach supports the JD-R model's focus on autonomy as a central resource that enhances resilience and performance under pressure (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). In addition, the participants described how open communication around expectations reinforces this trust and keeps employees aligned with business goals.

Finally, P6 emphasized the role of psychological safety in maintaining autonomy. "Employees need to know they can make decisions without fear of being punished for mistakes," they explained. "That's how you build trust and empower people." This perspective reflects findings by Badrinarayanan (2024), who stressed that trust-building is critical in virtual environments where isolation can diminish engagement. P6's comments affirm that creating a safe, trusting atmosphere promotes accountability and encourages innovation and initiative (Arif et al., 2023).

Connection to Literature

The insights from participants affirm that trust and autonomy are critical job resources that empower remote employees to perform effectively and sustainably. According to the JD-R model (2007), autonomy helps reduce strain by allowing employees to determine how they complete their responsibilities. This freedom creates a sense of psychological control that enhances motivation and reduces the mental load

associated with remote work. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) found that flexibility in remote roles improves employee well-being by helping individuals manage the blurred boundaries between personal and professional life. Building on this perspective, Wang et al. (2021) highlighted that flexible work arrangements reduce role conflict and support employee satisfaction by enabling individuals to balance professional and personal demands more effectively.

Golden and Veiga (2005) emphasized that when employees have the ability to choose how they communicate and structure their work, they experience reduced stress and greater job satisfaction. This is particularly relevant in remote settings where constant oversight can feel intrusive. Soegiarto et al. (2024) added that autonomy contributes to innovation and initiative, especially when employees are empowered to define their own goals and timelines. Beyond autonomy, trust was also identified as a key component in sustaining remote engagement. Badrinarayanan (2024) explained that psychological safety stems from trust, allowing employees to make decisions and contribute ideas without fear of punishment or criticism. Similarly, Arif et al. (2023) found that employees who feel trusted by their leaders are more likely to stay engaged, exceed expectations, and demonstrate long-term commitment. Together, these studies support the conclusion that trust, and autonomy serve as essential job resources that promote resilience, productivity, and retention in virtual work environments.

Theme 3: Performance Management

Performance management emerged as a significant theme as participants discussed how structured systems and ongoing feedback contribute to remote employee success. With physical separation from the traditional workplace, HR leaders emphasized

the importance of implementing frameworks that provide guidance and flexibility. As Barbieri et al. (2025) explained, structuring work tasks and planning working times function as cognitive challenges that act as job resources, positively influencing both job satisfaction and home-based performance in flexible work environments. This perspective reinforces the idea that structured performance practices are not restrictive but instead provide clarity and motivation. Jansson and Kangas (2024) similarly noted that in remote settings, feedback must shift from being occasional and formal to becoming part of daily leader–subordinate exchanges, with both parties actively engaged in maintaining reciprocity and clarity. The connection underscores that performance management in remote contexts functions not as a narrow evaluative exercise but as a vital resource that sustains motivation, strengthens accountability, and fosters long-term commitment.

P1, an HR Manager in healthcare, shared that their organization uses scheduled performance reviews and transparent evaluation metrics to keep remote employees aligned with company goals. “Every month, we check in not just on tasks but on growth,” they explained. This proactive approach allows employees to track their progress and receive timely feedback, reinforcing a culture of accountability and development. The participants’ descriptions of structured yet supportive practices illustrate that performance management in remote settings functions as more than oversight; it acts as a resource that motivates employees, supports continuous growth, and sustains long-term commitment.

P3, an HR Director managing teams across time zones, emphasized the importance of autonomy in performance management. “Micromanagement doesn’t work in remote setups,” they said. Instead, their strategy relies on clearly outlined goals and

regular one-on-one sessions that support self-management while offering consistent guidance. This practice resonates with the job characteristics model developed by Hackman and Oldham, which emphasizes the motivational power of feedback and autonomy in enhancing performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

P5, a people operations manager in logistics, highlighted the need for adaptive performance tracking tools. “We use performance dashboards where staff can see their own metrics. It creates ownership,” they stated. This sentiment aligns with findings from Anand and Acharya (2021), who noted that regular check-ins and transparent communication of expectations improve job satisfaction and contribute to professional growth. P5 also shared that they incorporate peer reviews as part of performance tracking, giving employees a fuller picture of how their contributions are perceived.

P6, who works in government contracting, shared how performance expectations are communicated early during onboarding and continuously revisited through goal-based reviews. “We make sure employees know how their work fits into the larger mission,” they explained. By integrating strategic goals into weekly performance conversations, P6 ensures alignment with organizational objectives. This echoes the importance of performance systems that go beyond administrative oversight and instead foster engagement and purpose, as noted by Al-Shameri et al. (2024).

Participants agreed that rigid structures are counterproductive in remote environments. Instead, flexible yet consistent practices were preferred. P3 explained, “We give our teams the freedom to get the job done their way, but we also measure outcomes regularly.” This reflects research by Faruque et al. (2024), which found that employee self-management and flexibly scheduled hours can enhance firm performance

while supporting individual well-being. Additionally, P1 added that flexibility must be balanced with clarity. “You can’t be flexible if no one knows what’s expected,” they noted.

As workloads fluctuate and expectations evolve, performance systems must be responsive. Chowhan and Pike (2022) found that unstructured or unsupported performance expectations lead to burnout and disengagement. These insights were evident in participant responses, as all stressed the importance of maintaining communication and feedback loops to mitigate these challenges. Altogether, the responses illustrate that thoughtful, supportive, and consistent performance management practices, as emphasized by Maley et al. (2024), are foundational to helping remote employees succeed and stay connected to their organizations.

Connection to Literature

The findings from participants affirm that performance management systems must be structured yet flexible to support remote employee success and accountability. According to the JD-R model (2007), clearly defined expectations and regular feedback are job resources that help reduce strain and increase engagement. These systems enable employees to stay aligned with goals while adapting to dynamic work environments. Hackman and Oldham (1976) explained that core job characteristics such as autonomy and feedback increase motivation by reinforcing an employee’s sense of purpose and control. The job characteristics model demonstrates that performance tracking must be meaningful and personalized to encourage sustained productivity.

Anand and Acharya (2021) found that consistent evaluation processes and open dialogue about performance increase employee satisfaction and motivation. Their

research indicated transparency is key to helping employees understand expectations and self-monitor effectively. Al-Shameri et al. (2024) supported this view by emphasizing that clear performance frameworks reduce uncertainty and drive strategic alignment. Faruque et al. (2024) added that allowing employees to monitor their progress while receiving timely guidance improves organizational performance and individual well-being. Chowhan and Pike (2022) warned that unstructured or unsupported expectations can increase the risk of disengagement and burnout, particularly in remote environments where visibility is reduced. The findings from participants align with this literature, reinforcing that performance management must be designed to support growth, clarity, and responsiveness in virtual workspaces.

Theme 4: Inclusive Human Resources Practices

Inclusive HR practices emerged as a prominent theme as participants emphasized strategies aimed at fostering fairness, visibility, and a sense of belonging within virtual work environments. Participants shared that ensuring all employees feel heard, valued, and supported was crucial to engagement, productivity, and long-term retention. As Rama (2025) highlighted, organizational justice and psychological safety play a vital role in encouraging employees to engage in discretionary behaviors that strengthen organizational performance. Creating fairness and psychological safety is only one part of inclusivity, which also requires leaders to actively confront potential barriers within organizational culture. Building on this perspective, Bilderback (2025) emphasized that ethical blind spots and unconscious biases, if left unaddressed in hybrid work contexts, can erode inclusivity and diminish trust. The emphasis on fairness and belonging expressed by participants shows that inclusivity operates as a strategic resource that

strengthens engagement and reduces the risk of turnover, particularly among employees in underrepresented groups.

P2, an HR business partner in a fully remote tech firm, discussed how inclusive practices were embedded into leadership development programs. “We teach our managers how to lead equitably in remote settings. That includes setting fair expectations, giving everyone a voice in meetings, and checking in on both personal and professional well-being,” they explained. This approach aligns with findings from Luthia and Sathiamoorthy (2021), who argued that consistent recognition and intentional communication help employees feel valued and heard.

P3, an HR director overseeing global teams, shared their efforts to cultivate a sense of psychological safety by ensuring accessibility across cultural and time zone boundaries. “Inclusivity in remote work isn’t just about policies. It’s about who speaks up, who gets recognition, and who feels connected to the organization,” they said. P3 added that their team uses pulse surveys and anonymous feedback tools to uncover inclusion gaps. These actions reflect the perspective of Baumann and Marcum (2023), who noted that leaders who implement structured inclusive strategies foster more productive and supportive virtual environments.

P4, a talent and culture manager in the nonprofit sector, explained how inclusive HR practices must also recognize life outside of work. “We celebrate cultural holidays, highlight staff accomplishments in our newsletters, and ask for input before making decisions that affect the team,” they noted. P4 emphasized that these practices helped build trust and increased retention, especially among underrepresented groups. These insights support the JD-R model's view that organizational culture must align with the

resources provided, especially when addressing remote employees' social and emotional needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

P6, working in government contracting, explained how they created internal peer mentor networks to support employees navigating remote work for the first time. “New hires get a mentor in their department who helps them understand expectations and connect socially. It really helps people feel like they’re not on an island,” they said. According to Javed (2024), aligning recognition and support initiatives with organizational goals reinforces inclusivity and ensures employees feel prepared to succeed.

As remote work continues to evolve, participants affirmed that inclusive HR practices must remain a priority. Their experiences highlight the need for culturally responsive leadership, equitable recognition, and supportive communication channels that allow every employee to feel respected and empowered. Organizations must intentionally embed inclusive practices within performance management, communication, and professional development frameworks to ensure long-term engagement and retention. Faruque et al. (2024), who supported flexible work hours, well-being initiatives, and recognition programs, provided additional support for these ideas. When remote workers feel consistently valued through these inclusive practices, they are more likely to experience heightened morale, sustained productivity, and a stronger sense of organizational commitment. This mirrors Tchamgop’s (2025) findings that inclusive environments foster collaboration, psychological safety, and employee satisfaction.

Connection to Literature

The findings from participants affirm that inclusive human resources practices are vital for building fairness, connection, and psychological safety in remote work settings. According to the JD-R model (2007), emotional and social support are critical job resources that offset the demands of isolation and digital communication fatigue. Participants described strategies such as equitable leadership, cultural recognition, and mentorship that promote employee engagement and retention. Baumann and Marcum (2023) found that when leaders apply inclusive practices intentionally, they foster stronger relationships and communication across distributed teams. Their research emphasized that inclusion is a leadership behavior, not just a policy framework.

Luthia and Sathiamoorthy (2021) highlighted that employees who feel seen, heard, and respected are more likely to remain engaged and committed. Their findings reinforced that consistent recognition and inclusive communication improve morale and foster belonging. Javed (2024) added that mentorship networks and peer support systems are especially important in helping new or remote employees integrate and succeed. These systems create familiarity and reduce the emotional toll of remote transitions. Tchamgop (2025) found that inclusive organizational cultures lead to greater collaboration and satisfaction, especially among employees from underrepresented groups. The findings from participants support these conclusions by showing that when inclusivity is embedded in communication, leadership, and recognition practices, it becomes a strategic tool for long-term engagement and workforce resilience.

Theme 5: Evaluation of Remote Effectiveness

The final theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of remote work strategies. Participants emphasized the need

to track productivity, employee engagement, and organizational outcomes to ensure that remote policies were delivering the intended results. As the shift to virtual work continues to evolve, HR leaders must apply strategic and ongoing assessments to guide remote workforce management. Holt and Lang (2025) explained that active monitoring, often used as an evaluation tool, can weaken engagement and perceptions of trust, which reduces job appeal. This perspective highlights that evaluation practices must be designed to build trust rather than rely on control-oriented mechanisms. Tackett and Lemon (2025) noted that employee well-being operates as a key factor shaping engagement, making it essential that evaluation processes capture both elements rather than focusing exclusively on productivity. The participants' emphasis on evaluation demonstrates that measurement is not simply an administrative activity but a strategic process that sustains performance, strengthens employee engagement, and ensures the long-term viability of remote work practices.

P1 noted that their organization conducts monthly pulse surveys and gathers anonymous feedback to assess whether employees feel supported in their remote roles. These results are reviewed by leadership to identify trends, areas for improvement, and successful strategies worth scaling. P1 shared, "We measure engagement, responsiveness to communication, and even how well team leaders are supporting their people. Without feedback, we'd be guessing." This proactive approach helps the organization make informed decisions about training needs, leadership adjustments, and resource allocation.

P3 emphasized the importance of using key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor remote productivity, citing digital tools that track goal attainment, project completion rates, and collaboration. "We don't use it to micromanage," P3 clarified. "We

use it to ensure we're being realistic and that our teams are supported." Their approach aligns with Zapata et al. (2023), who emphasized that digital tools and flexibility are critical for maintaining performance and employee satisfaction in the post-COVID-19 landscape.

P4 discussed how their organization tracks not only productivity but also team cohesion. "It's not just about output," P4 explained. "It's also about whether people feel connected. We include questions in our surveys about inclusion, recognition, and belonging." This reflects the recommendations of Leonardelli (2022), who underscored the need for virtual community-building and a strong organizational identity to prevent disengagement in remote settings. Their team also analyzes participation in virtual events and training as indicators of engagement.

P5 described their process of using structured weekly check-ins, team dashboards, and qualitative feedback from employees and supervisors. They emphasized that remote performance is not static and should be evaluated regularly. This aligns with the insights of Phongsak Phakamach et al. (2023), who emphasized that effective remote work depends on continuous skill development, human-centered digital tools, and maintaining relational proximity between staff and leadership. P5 stated, "We use the data to decide what to adjust and how to support people better. We're always learning from what the numbers and people tell us."

P6 highlighted how data-driven decision-making has been crucial for refining their remote work model. They noted that when employee satisfaction dipped during a particularly demanding quarter, the organization used survey feedback to restructure workloads and adjust deadlines. According to Odunayo and Fagbemide (2024),

organizations that effectively manage remote work through strategic evaluation practices can significantly enhance employee satisfaction and performance outcomes.

Collectively, participants reinforced the idea that remote work must be continuously monitored, not only to ensure productivity but also to promote inclusion, well-being, and alignment with organizational goals. Activities that promote camaraderie and lessen feelings of isolation, such as team-building exercises and informal talk sessions, contribute to a more engaging and supportive virtual culture (Joseph, 2024). These efforts not only boost morale but also serve as practical indicators for evaluating the success of remote work practices. By implementing feedback loops and assessing the impact of relational strategies, organizations can adapt their approaches to maintain both performance and a sense of connection among distributed teams.

Connection to Literature

The findings from participants affirm that regular evaluation of remote work practices is essential for ensuring that employees remain productive, supported, and aligned with organizational goals. According to the JD-R model (2007), organizations must assess whether job resources such as feedback, communication, and engagement tools are meeting employee needs in changing work conditions. Participants described how pulse surveys, performance indicators, and relational assessments help inform real-time decision-making. Zapata et al. (2023) emphasized that digital platforms and data analytics have become key tools for evaluating productivity in virtual environments, demonstrating that leaders can use feedback to adjust processes without relying on micromanagement.

Leonardelli (2022) explained that employee engagement must be measured through output, inclusion, visibility, and community-building. These social metrics are particularly important in remote work, where informal connections are limited. Phongsak Phakamach et al. (2023) highlighted that successful remote models depend on continual evaluation of skill development and interpersonal connection, noting that assessment systems must capture the quality of relationships, not just tasks completed. Odunayo and Fagbemide (2024) confirmed that organizations adapting their strategies based on feedback and engagement data achieve measurable improvements in employee satisfaction and performance. Collectively, the findings from participants align with this body of research, revealing that structured and human-centered evaluations help sustain a connected and high-performing remote workforce.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings of this pragmatic inquiry are essential for HR leaders who support remote employees across industries. HR professionals can apply the study results when developing strategies to strengthen remote engagement, productivity, and retention. The research findings highlighted how communication and accessibility, trust and autonomy, performance management, inclusive HR practices, and evaluation of remote effectiveness can enhance remote work outcomes. These components extend to (a) communication and accessibility, which involve regular check-ins and accessible tools to keep employees informed, (b) trust and autonomy, which allow employees the flexibility to manage their tasks independently while remaining accountable, (c) performance management, the use of structured evaluations and feedback systems to track progress, (d) inclusive HR practices, which foster fairness, psychological safety, and belonging, and (e) evaluation

of remote effectiveness, which includes using surveys, feedback, and engagement data to assess what is working and where improvements are needed.

Building on these findings, the literature reinforces several practical recommendations for HR leaders. Participants emphasized that regular check-ins, open office hours, and accessibility audits helped employees feel seen, connected, and supported across distributed teams. Musheke and Phiri (2021) explained that consistent communication structures reduce isolation and strengthen alignment in distributed teams. This perspective supports the importance of maintaining regular check-ins and ensuring accessibility across digital platforms. Participants also described how recognition and inclusive dialogue promoted fairness and belonging, especially for underrepresented employees. Mayfield and O'Donnell (2025) added that proactive influence tactics such as collaboration and consultation are especially valuable for enhancing engagement in remote settings. Together, these insights point to the need for HR leaders to approach communication as both a logistical function and a relational strategy that builds trust. Lee et al. (2025) emphasized that motivational language directed by leaders enhances psychological relatedness and well-being for remote employees. This underscores the recommendation that inclusive leadership behaviors such as recognition and fairness should be embedded into communication practices.

The literature also underscores that evaluation practices must be human centered, and trust based to sustain remote work effectiveness. Participants highlighted that pulse surveys, dashboards, and feedback loops allowed organizations to track engagement and productivity without creating a culture of micromanagement. Holt and Lang (2025) explained that active monitoring, when relied on heavily, weakens engagement and

reduces perceptions of trust. This perspective indicates that evaluation systems should prioritize transparency and feedback rather than surveillance. Participants further stressed that evaluation must extend beyond productivity to include well-being, inclusion, and cohesion in order to maintain engagement. Tackett and Lemon (2025) highlighted that employee well-being operates as a critical factor shaping engagement in remote environments. This suggests that HR leaders should integrate well-being metrics into evaluation processes alongside productivity measures. Hüttemann et al. (2025) further noted that instrumental leadership behaviors are particularly effective in uncertain and complex environments. This view supports the recommendation that adaptive leadership models can strengthen evaluation practices and ensure relevance in changing contexts.

By applying these recommendations, which reflect both the strategies participants identified as effective and the practices supported in the literature, HR leaders can strengthen engagement, improve retention, and create healthier virtual work environments. Practical strategies that emphasize communication, inclusivity, trust, and thoughtful evaluation ensure that employees remain supported and connected even when working remotely. These actions contribute not only to individual well-being but also to long-term organizational resilience and success.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this pragmatic study have the potential to positively influence communities by demonstrating how effective human resource strategies can support employees beyond organizational boundaries. As treated in contemporary remote-work models, communication, trust, and knowledge sharing are core constructs that shape day-to-day experience and well-being in distributed teams (Vizcaíno et al., 2025). When HR

leaders implement practices that strengthen communication, inclusivity, and well-being in remote settings, employees are more likely to experience reduced stress, stronger work–life balance, and improved mental health. These benefits extend into the community as healthier employees are better able to care for their families, engage in community activities, and contribute to social stability. The emphasis on belonging as a psychological foundation for motivation and well-being reinforces the social importance of inclusive HR practices, as belonging contributes to fairness, reduces exclusionary dynamics, and strengthens equity across diverse groups (Allen, 2025). By fostering fairness and belonging in remote work, organizations can help diminish disparities that often affect underrepresented groups, thereby promoting equity and inclusion within the larger society.

Stronger remote work practices also have implications for economic and social resilience at the community level. Evidence from social care contexts further underscores that workforce instability, shaped by job satisfaction and burnout, can disrupt essential services and strain local support networks (Győri & Ádám, 2025). Reducing turnover and increasing retention means that individuals can maintain consistent employment, which provides financial stability for households and reduces the strain on social support systems. Communities benefit when employees remain connected and productive because local economies are strengthened through sustained income and spending. Moreover, by normalizing inclusive and flexible remote work strategies, HR leaders contribute to a culture that values accessibility, equity, and belonging across industries (Papademetriou et al., 2025). These actions can help shape a more adaptable and socially responsible

workforce that is prepared to meet the evolving needs of both organizations and the communities they serve.

Recommendations for Further Research

Human resource leaders who lack established strategies to support remote employees should consider applying the JD-R model, which aligns with the findings of this pragmatic inquiry. HR leaders should use the study results to evaluate current HR practices to improve engagement, productivity, and retention among remote teams. The study offers valuable insight into how HR professionals in a southern, southwestern state support virtual workforces; however, there are several limitations that suggest opportunities for further research.

One limitation is the regional focus of the study, which may limit generalizability to other geographic areas. This research was conducted in a southern, southwestern state, which means the cultural, economic, and organizational contexts may differ from those in other cities or rural areas. Future research could benefit from expanding the geographic scope to include a broader range of industries and regions. Doing so may help determine whether the identified strategies remain effective across various workforce compositions and remote work infrastructures.

Another limitation stems from the exclusive use of HR professionals as participants, which may limit insight into the employee experience. Although HR leaders provided critical perspectives, future studies should consider integrating employee feedback through surveys or interviews. This dual approach would offer a more comprehensive understanding of remote work practices from both strategic and experiential standpoints.

Additionally, the current study's cross-sectional design does not account for how remote work strategies may evolve over time. Future research should consider longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of remote HR strategies on employee engagement, turnover, and organizational culture. This approach would help determine whether practices such as communication audits, performance dashboards, and inclusion efforts remain effective or require adaptation over time.

HR leaders may also benefit from future studies that explore how psychological safety, emotional intelligence in leadership, and flexible scheduling contribute to remote employee retention. Investigating how HR strategies intersect with transformational leadership approaches could also provide deeper insight into how remote engagement, innovation, and commitment are fostered over time. These areas of exploration may prove especially valuable for HR professionals, organizational leaders, and policymakers aiming to strengthen remote workforce strategies and ensure long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

In my qualitative pragmatic inquiry study, I aimed to identify and explore effective strategies used by successful human resource leaders in in a southern, southwestern state, for supporting remote workers. The study findings affirmed the relevance of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) in understanding how job resources such as communication, trust, autonomy, and inclusivity contribute to employee engagement, productivity, and retention in remote settings. According to the study's conclusions, the principal antecedents of remote work success included clear communication, accessible leadership, autonomy, inclusive human resource practices, performance-based feedback, and regular evaluation of remote effectiveness.

By implementing these proven strategies such as open and consistent communication, trust and autonomy in daily operations, fair performance management practices, inclusive human resource policies that meet the diverse needs of employees, and methods for evaluating remote work impact, human resource leaders can create a more engaged and committed remote workforce. Strengthening support for remote workers may lead to improved teamwork, morale, and long-term employee satisfaction. Greater retention of remote workers can also reduce turnover rates and improve organizational stability. Human resource leaders may also reinforce employee loyalty by recognizing achievements and offering flexibility that fosters well-being. My study showed that fostering psychological safety, offering meaningful recognition, and cultivating trust and accessibility are essential for managing remote teams. An effective human resource leader understands the powerful role in shaping organizational culture and supporting a workforce that is motivated and equipped to thrive in virtual environments.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What you will do	What you will say—script
Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee	Hello. My name is LaChanta Chevis, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting research on effective human resource strategies and processes used to support remote workers. This interview aims to explore and identify strategies that promote engagement, productivity, and retention in remote work settings. I will ask you six questions and would appreciate your responses. Afterward, I will conclude the interview. Shall we begin?
• Watch for nonverbal cues. • Paraphrase as needed. • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth.	**Interview Questions:** 1. What strategies has your organization implemented to support remote workers? 2. How do you ensure employee engagement and productivity in a remote work environment? 3. What challenges have you encountered in managing remote teams, and how have you addressed them? 4. What role does HR leadership play in fostering an inclusive and equitable remote work culture? 5. How do you measure the effectiveness of remote work policies and strategies? 6. What additional insights or lessons learned can you share about supporting remote teams?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	I greatly appreciate your time and the insights you provided today. Your responses are a valuable contribution to my doctoral research.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	I would like to schedule a follow-up interview with you to review and discuss the transcript and my notes to ensure I have accurately interpreted your responses.
Follow–up Member Checking Interview	

Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Hello, thank you for meeting with me again for a follow-up interview to review and discuss the audiotape transcript and my notes to ensure the accurate interpretation of your responses.
Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each individual question. Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found— note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval. Walk through each question, read the interpretation, and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?	**Interview Question 1: What strategies has your organization implemented to support remote workers?** Participants shared a range of strategies including flexible scheduling, virtual onboarding programs, and technology investments to support remote connectivity. Many HR leaders implemented digital collaboration tools, structured check-ins, and virtual team-building activities. These strategies aimed to enhance accessibility, maintain morale, and foster a strong remote culture. **Interview Question 2: How do you ensure employee engagement and productivity in a remote work environment?** Responses highlighted the use of clear performance expectations, regular feedback loops, and virtual recognition initiatives to maintain engagement. Participants mentioned tools such as project dashboards, weekly one-on-ones, and employee surveys to monitor productivity and ensure alignment with goals. Tailored communication and autonomy were also emphasized as key motivators. **Interview Question 3: What challenges have you encountered in managing remote teams, and how have you addressed them?** Participants noted several challenges including employee isolation, inconsistent visibility into performance, and difficulties maintaining collaboration across time zones. To address these, organizations implemented structured communication routines, wellness initiatives, and adaptive management training. Digital tools and peer mentorship were also used to enhance connection and support. **Interview Question 4: What role does HR leadership play in fostering an inclusive and equitable remote work culture?** Participants described the HR role as central to embedding inclusivity through remote-first policies, inclusive communication practices, and equitable access to resources. HR leaders promoted training on bias

	awareness, created feedback channels for underrepresented voices, and ensured remote employees had fair opportunities for advancement and recognition. **Interview Question 5: How do you measure the effectiveness of remote work policies and strategies?** Responses indicated that effectiveness was measured through engagement surveys, retention metrics, performance reviews, and feedback forms. Several HR leaders mentioned the use of anonymous pulse checks and dashboard analytics to track team cohesion, productivity, and alignment with strategic objectives. **Interview Question 6: What additional insights or lessons learned can you share about supporting remote teams?** Participants emphasized the importance of trust, flexibility, and consistent communication in long-term remote success. They highlighted the need to adapt strategies to individual needs, prioritize psychological safety, and invest in leadership development that aligns with virtual workforce realities. Many expressed that ongoing evaluation and employee input were key to refining remote practices.

Appendix B: Participant Invitation

Interview of Professionals Consent Form for DBA Qualitative Pragmatic Inquiry

Doctoral Study

You are invited to take part in an interview for a study that I am conducting as part of my Doctor of Business Administration Research Project.

Interview Procedures:
If you agree to be part of this study, you will be invited to take part in an audio-recorded interview about your business leadership perspectives. Transcriptions of interviews will be analyzed as part of the study, along with public documents and records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study would not pose any risks beyond those of typical daily life. This study's aim is to provide data and insights that could be valuable to other business leaders. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by publishing the final study on the Scholarworks website.

Proprietary Disclosures:
We are required to comply with non-disclosure agreements and trade secrets laws. So I request that you please share your ***general industry experiences and observations*** without discussing any organization's specific name or operations. If you accidentally mention the organization name or confidential information, I will need to redirect the interview and immediately after the interview, I am required by my university to permanently delete all proprietary information (recording, notes, transcript).

Privacy:
Interview recordings and full transcripts will be shared with each interviewee, upon request. I am required by my university to protect the identities of interviewees and their organizations, within the limits of the law. I am only allowed to share interviewee identity or contact info as needed with Walden University supervisors (who are also required to protect your privacy) or with authorities if court-ordered (very rare). Any reports, presentations, or publications related to this study will share general patterns from the data, without sharing the identities of individual participants or their organizations. If I were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by password protection. The interview

transcripts will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by my university. The collected information will not be used for any purpose outside of this study.

Contacts and Questions:
If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University Research Participant advocate via 612-312-1210. Walden University's ethics approval number for this study is 05-01-25-1202582.

1 am here to answer any questions. If you choose to be interviewed as described above, please say "yes" for the audio-recording when I ask, "Do you consent to be interviewed for this study?"