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COVID 19: THE IMPACT OF REMOTE WORKING IN BLURRING
WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE PANDEMIC

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a
Master's Degree in Psychology in Business and Economics

By

Judith Ohanma

Faculty of Human Science

September 2024



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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a rapid global shift towards remote work, significantly affecting employees' work-life balance. This dissertation investigates the impact of remote working during the pandemic on employees' ability to maintain work-life balance, focusing on factors such as psychological well-being, socio-demographic variables, and remote work demands. Through a quantitative survey of 158 participants working remotely during the pandemic, the study explores the extent to which remote work blurred the boundaries between professional and personal life. Although remote work provided flexibility, it also blurred the boundaries between home and work, exacerbating issues such as stress, anxiety, and workplace loneliness. This imbalance was more pronounced in certain socio-demographic groups, illustrating that factors like age, gender, and living conditions influenced how individuals coped with remote work demands. Despite these challenges, the study provides insights into how organisations can foster a healthier work-life balance in the remote work era by addressing mental health concerns and refining remote work policies for the long term.

Keywords: Remote work, Work-life balance, COVID-19 pandemic, Psychological well-being

Resumo

A pandemia de COVID-19 catalisou uma rápida transição global para o trabalho remoto, afetando significativamente o equilíbrio entre a vida pessoal e profissional dos trabalhadores. Esta dissertação investiga o impacto do trabalho remoto durante a pandemia na capacidade dos funcionários de manterem esse equilíbrio, com foco em fatores como bem-estar psicológico, variáveis sociodemográficas e exigências do trabalho remoto. Através de um inquérito quantitativo realizado com 158 participantes que trabalharam remotamente durante a pandemia, o estudo explora até que ponto o trabalho remoto esbateu as fronteiras entre a vida profissional e pessoal. Embora o trabalho remoto tenha proporcionado flexibilidade, também diluiu os limites entre casa e trabalho, exacerbando problemas como stress, ansiedade e solidão no ambiente de trabalho. Este desequilíbrio foi mais pronunciado em certos grupos sociodemográficos, ilustrando que fatores como idade, género e condições de vida influenciaram a forma como os indivíduos lidaram com as exigências do trabalho remoto. Apesar desses desafios, o estudo oferece insights sobre como as organizações podem promover um equilíbrio mais saudável entre vida pessoal e profissional na era do trabalho remoto, abordando questões de saúde mental e refinando as políticas de trabalho remoto a longo prazo.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho remoto, Equilíbrio entre trabalho e vida pessoal, Pandemia de COVID-19, Bem-estar psicológico.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UK – United Kingdom

USA – United States of America

SD – Standard Deviation

WHR – Work Home Resources Model

TFW – Trouble Focusing on Work

IEWL – Increased Effects of Workplace Loneliness

DWW – Distraction While Working

GADS – General Anxiety Disorder

PSS – Percieved Stress Scale

SCS – Stress Coping Scale

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The COVID-19 epidemic has led to notable shifts in people's work habits, which have expedited the global adoption of remote work. Prior to the pandemic, flexible work arrangements became popular (Nandani, 2022). The reason for this was the advancement of communication technology and the rise in the usage of portable computers, which allowed people to work away from traditional office environments (Onyekwelu, Monyei, and Muogbo, 2022). This change was due to several organisations aiming at lowering costs and enhancing the conditions of the economy, in addition to the increased awareness of the workers' right to more self-organisation (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014). Companies realised that this had certain benefits, such as cutting down on costs and successfully hiring and maintaining good personnel because the employees could be given freedom in the kind of working schedule they preferred (Abid and Barech, 2017). Delle-Vergini (2017) argues that the epidemic pushed the adoption of work-from-home policies because companies had to adopt work-from-home policies in a hurry to observe the social distance rules. Since the transformation was abrupt, the concept of work had little time to prepare to fit into its new environment, which in turn had adverse effects on the work-life balance of the workers (Weideman and Hofmeyr, 2020). Remote work seems to have become more pressured recently, and those are mandated to work from the comforts of their homes. The situation frustrated the employees when they were forced to work from the comforts of their home. Some of them, often with little support from the community, had to balance employment demands with more roles such as childcare and cleaning (Ngozi, Vitalis, & Eguji, 2023).

The impact of working from home on work-life balance during the epidemic has piqued the interest of numerous researchers (Kattenbach, Demerouti and Nachreiner, 2010; Plantenga, 2011; Stella, 2022). Working from home has been shown to blur the boundaries between work and personal life, resulting in more extended workdays and less free time (Stella, 2022). Because they cannot physically divide their lives at work and home, many employees find it difficult to switch off from their employment (Golden and Veiga, 2008). Burnout and increased stress may result from this.

Due to digital communication tools, the ease with which one may now stay connected 24/7 has also contributed to the rise of the "always-on" culture, exacerbating the disparity between work and life (Opeyemi et al., 2019a).

Despite these issues, there are many excellent advantages to working from home. Amirul, Amirul, and Mail (2020) assert that having greater freedom and flexibility at work is beneficial as it enables individuals to manage their schedules better and maybe achieve a better work-life balance. Higher job satisfaction and improved mental health have also been associated with not needing to spend time commuting (Shirmohammadi, Au, and Beigi, 2022). Nevertheless, the benefits of working remotely are frequently offset by emotions of social and professional isolation, which can harm employees' mental health (De Andres-Sanchez, Belzunegui-Eraso, and Souto-Romero, 2023).

The epidemic has demonstrated that different groups experience varied outcomes when working from home. For instance, women have reported higher levels of stress and more incredible difficulty than men in maintaining a work-life balance. This is largely due to the fact that women tend to perform household cleaning tasks more frequently than men. Additionally, it has been discovered that those who live alone and work younger are more likely to experience negative impacts on their mental health and general well-being (Entringer and Gosling, 2021).

This is due to working from home's numerous, complex, and unpredictable implications. Investigating strategies to increase the positive benefits while reducing the negative ones is crucial. Employers should implement policies that support employees in juggling their home and professional lives. For instance, they might assist employees in setting up home offices, support mental health concerns, and urge them to take breaks and refrain from working after hours (Allen et al., 2015). Additionally, to reduce feelings of isolation and increase employee engagement, managers should prioritise maintaining regular communication with remote teams and fostering a sense of community (Yang et al., 2021). The shift to remote work amid the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the equilibrium between work and personal life. Comprehending these elements and creating effective strategies for supporting remote workers to guarantee their long-term happiness and productivity is crucial.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an unprecedented shift toward working from home. This has caused people to worry about how it will affect their work-life balance and general health. The quick and required switch to online work has brought up big problems and highlighted a significant issue: the blurring of the lines between work and personal life. Because there is no natural wall between work and home, this problem has worsened because people have to work longer hours, are more stressed, and could get burned out (Vaziri et al., 2020).

One of the main problems with working from home is that it can be challenging for workers to stop doing work-related things. Digital tools have made the "always-on" culture easier, making workers feel they must always be available. This harms their mental health and work-life balance (Shifrin and Michel, 2021). Because there is no structured office setting, many employees struggle to set clear boundaries between work and personal life. This can lead to interruptions at work and work taking over personal time (Opeyemi *et al.*, 2019b).

The rise in stress and anxiety at work is another critical problem. Many workers lack the resources and support to handle the sudden shift to working from home, so they must learn to use new tools quickly and do their jobs in new ways. Lack of planning and help has made people feel even more alone and stressed, especially those caring for others or having other pressures at home (Fogarty et al., 2021). Researchers have found that these stressors can cause people to be less productive, less satisfied with their jobs, and more likely to burn out. This can affect the individual's health and the performance of the business (Donnelly and Johns, 2020).

Furthermore, working from home has different effects on different groups of people. Women, for example, say they are more stressed and have trouble balancing work and life because they often have to do more housework and care for others (De Vincenzi et al., 2022). Similarly, younger workers and people who live alone are more likely to experience the adverse psychological effects of remote work, such as feeling lonelier and having worse mental health (Entringer and Gosling, 2021).

In light of these problems, dealing with the issue of blurred work-life boundaries and developing ways to help workers balance their work and personal obligations well is essential. This means

giving workers the tools and support they need to work from home and creating a work culture that values their mental health and work-life balance (Allen et al., 2015).

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study investigates the impact of remote working on employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are the specific objectives

1. To explore the concept of remote working and its impact on work-life balance
2. To investigate the factors contributing to work-life imbalance while working remotely
3. To develop recommendations for improving work-life balance in remote working environments

1.4 Research Questions

1. How has the shift to remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced employees' work-life balance?
2. What factors contribute to the blurred boundaries between work and personal life while working remotely?
3. What strategies can be developed to improve work-life balance for employees working remotely?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to give an exhaustive view of how working from home affects employees' work-life balance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers and employers must understand what it means as working from home becomes more common.

First, this study handles the urgent need to comprehend how work-life balance changes when people work from home. Many workers had trouble separating work and personal life when they had to work from home all of a sudden during the pandemic. This caused more stress and possibly burnout (Vaziri et al., 2020). This study can help companies help their workers by researching the things that cause these problems and coming up with specific solutions.

Also, the study's results will help business leaders and human resources workers make rules that encourage a good work-life balance. Effective policies for working from home can improve employee health, lower turnover, and boost productivity (Allen et al., 2015). Learning about the unique problems and needs of groups like women and younger workers can create more welcoming and helpful workplaces for everyone (De Vincenzi et al., 2022; Entringer and Gosling, 2021).

The study's findings will also add to the larger academic conversation about working from home and balancing work and personal life. Previous studies have shown both the pros and cons of working from home. However, the COVID-19 pandemic makes it necessary to look at these issues differently (Shifrin and Michel, 2021). This study aims to fill in the gaps in the current research by collecting real-world data on the long-term effects of working from home on employees' mental health and productivity.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is structured into five chapters. The **Introduction** (Chapter 1) outlines the research aim, objectives, significance, and research questions and provides context for the study, detailing the shift to remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The **Literature Review** (Chapter 2) critically examines existing research on remote work and work-life balance. The **Methodology** (Chapter 3) describes the research design, data collection, and analysis methods. The **Results** (Chapter 4) presents and interprets the findings. The **Discussion** (Chapter 5) discusses the findings from the analysis done in chapter 4. Finally, the **Conclusion** (Chapter 6) summarizes the study, discusses implications, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The current COVID-19 has dramatically impacted the work environment, forcing organisations globally to embrace remote working. The literature review will examine the historical perspective and the development process of remote working and will include how technological factors enable remote working (Ng et al., 2020). It will also look into how the pandemic affected organisations and employees, including looking at their struggles and successes while trying to adapt to remote work and how it affected their work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020). In addition, it is going to identify specific causes of work-life imbalance, such as constant availability due to the use of technology and the loneliness of teleworkers. The present review is valuable for comprehending the multi-faceted processes of teleworking and the effects on employees' well-being and organisational outcomes.

2.2 Concept of Remote Working

When employees are allowed to work from home, they can be referred to as remote employees, tele employees or teleworking employees. This has gained popularity because of advancements in info-comm tech, which has enabled people to share information and collaborate from remote areas. This shift was further propelled by the COVID-19 outbreak, given that organisations across the globe had no option but to embrace remote work suddenly to meet the social distancing measures imposed (Ng et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Modroño and López-Igual, 2021). Although teleworking as a phenomenon has been in the process of development since the late twentieth century, it became an essential answer to the preservation of economic activity during the pandemic. In industries such as information technology, remote work was initially introduced as a trial. Advances in mobile technology, high-speed internet, and collaborative software have since enabled employees to work efficiently from various locations (Shirmohammadi, Au, and Beigi, 2022). Early adopters of remote work cited benefits such as improved work-life balance, reduced commute times, and increased independence. According to Jalagat (2019), these advantages contributed to the growing popularity of remote work among both employers and employees.

COVID-19 has also helped to enhance the process of remote employment in different fields over the past few years. Release measures such as government-imposed lockdowns forced organisations

to come up with policies enabling employees to work remotely (Song and Gao, 2020). As this shift proved that the phenomenon of working from home is possible, it also disclosed several problems, such as the lack of an appropriate remote working infrastructure and communication and support systems (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2020). There is flexibility, which can be one of the significant advantages of remote work when speaking about organisational benefits for employees. The possibility of organising one's own time, which is also tightly connected with having the possibility to create one's schedule, has been proven to influence productivity and job satisfaction levels higher (Delanoeiye and Verbruggen, 2020).

Furthermore, the daily commuting is removed, but it is important to note that this leads to the enhancement of the quality of life since employees are allowed more time to work as well as engage in other activities (Delanoeiye, Verbruggen, and Germeys, 2019). Another advantage of telecommuting is the overall cost savings, including the cost savings for the employees and firms. Companies are susceptible to cost-cutting by minimising costs associated with office rent, energy, and stationery, while employees get to save on transport and uniforms (Sokolic, 2022; Jalagat & Jalagat, 2019). However, this is also a disadvantage of remote work. This includes an apparent conflict of the social and professional boundaries pertaining to work and personal life. Since there are no barriers to separating workspace and home space, the employee might not be able to detach people from the work environment; this will lead to many hours spent at work and higher levels of stress (Wang et al., 2021). The continuous availability and integration in the organisation of online communications tools do have significant adverse effects on employees' psychological well-being (Jalagat et al., 2019). Moreover, working from home can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly for those who live alone. The lack of face-to-face interactions and informal office conversations may reduce job satisfaction and productivity (Chen and Fulmer, 2018). Remote work policies can also exacerbate inequalities in the workplace, as employees with inadequate home office setups or insufficient access to technology may experience decreased performance and productivity (Jalagat, 2019). Another challenge of remote work is the reliance on digital tools for communication and collaboration. While tools like videoconferencing and project management software enable remote work, they cannot fully replicate the richness of in-person interactions, which are often essential for effective collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation (Chatterjee, Chaudhuri and Vrontis, 2022).

2.2.1 The Concept of “always-on” and Digital communication

The “always-on” idea is that the state of being in the workplace is always connected, and this is due to the myriad ways available in terms of digital means to connect with work. This has been exacerbated by working from home, especially in the current world with the COVID-19 pandemic, which erases the distinction between working and personal life (Dettmers, 2016). It mainly arises from global developments in the technology of new-age communication tools like emails, messaging applications, and video conferencing, which enable employees to be available on calls after regular working hours. The ‘new’ work culture of being connected 24/7 is very germane to the discourse on work-life imbalance, especially in today’s well-known fashion of working from home. As there is no physical barrier like an office, home-based employees can be electronically pressured to stay online for work-related communications around the clock. This may result in role invasion whereby the employees cannot easily switch off or disconnect from their work, which may lead to feelings of stress, anxiety and general burnout (Opeyemi et al., 2019). This culture is a crucial feature of the remote working context, which is built around the expectation of persistent connectedness, which erodes the very positive characteristics of flexibility and independence of remote working. One might recognize such programs as Slack, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams because they are crucial to managing work from home and using technology to bridge distances. With these tools, the employees are able to communicate with each other, exchange files and documents, and work as a team in real-time, making these resources crucial for use, especially when working remotely. However, there are some drawbacks to these tools, and it is the fact that they contribute to the ‘always on’ culture as people treat their work as if they are expected to be responding to messages at any time of the day, including evenings or weekends. Such availability means that one can work for many hours: this hampers demarcation between working time and other times, thereby worsening the already lousy story of work-life imbalance (Dettmers, 2016).

2.2.2 COVID-19 and the Impact of Remote Working

The COVID-19 virus has completely changed the idea and practice of working from home, making it much more popular very quickly in many areas worldwide. Before the pandemic, working from home was slowly becoming more common, especially in fields like IT, where it was seen as an open and up-to-date way to work (Chan *et al.*, 2023). However, when COVID-19 hit, people had

to quickly and widely switch to working from home because governments put lockdowns and social isolation in place to stop the virus from spreading (Caringal-Go *et al.*, 2022).

Both the advantages and disadvantages of working from home were brought to light by this unusual change. On the plus side, working from home gave employees more freedom, which helped them better handle their work schedules and keep up with personal obligations. This flexibility often led to better job satisfaction and productivity because employees could work in places that met their specific needs (Bulińska-Stangrecka, Bagieńska and Iddagoda, 2021). Also, not having to travel daily saved much time, stress, and money on transportation and work clothes (Jalagat & Jalagat, 2019).

Working from home was also suitable for businesses. Many businesses saved money on office space and utilities, and they could hire people from around the world more quickly because they were not limited by geography (Bjärntoft *et al.*, 2020). Also, online working helped keep businesses running during the pandemic by letting them keep doing their jobs even though lockdowns made it physically impossible (Iqbal, Khalid and Barykin, 2021).

Isolation from other people became another big problem. Working from home often felt lonely and professionally isolated because they could not converse casually or talk to coworkers like in a traditional office. This inability to interact with others could hurt job satisfaction and total output (Sokolic, 2022). Additionally, differences in the availability of necessary technology and an excellent workplace worsened current imbalances, negatively affecting some remote workers' performance and productivity (Bal and Bulgur, 2023).

2.3 Concept of Work-Life Balance

One crucial part of modern work is work-life balance, which is the balance people try to find between their work tasks and personal lives. The idea has dramatically changed in the last few decades and is now a key focus in organisational behaviour and human resource management (Allen *et al.*, 2013). A good work-life balance is essential for health, job happiness, and productivity.

At its core, work-life balance means balancing work and personal life needs in a way that avoids arguments and encourages unity. This balance is essential for mental health because too much work can cause stress, burnout, and other mental health problems (Allen *et al.*, 2000). Instead, the

right mix can improve job performance, boost motivation, and make people happier (Chatterjee, Chaudhuri and Vrontis, 2022). People need organisational help and personal plans to use their time and resources best to reach this balance.

Keeping work and personal life separate is one of the essential parts of work-life balance. This division was shown physically by the wall between the job and the home. However, new technologies and more people working from home have weakened these lines, making it harder to separate personal and professional roles (Nandani, 2022). As work moves into personal areas, new ways must be found to balance work and personal life. For example, Kossek and Lautsch (2012) suggest setting physical or temporal boundaries between work and personal time.

Many theories try to explain work-life balance. One is the Work-Home Resources model, which says that resources gained in one area can help people deal with pressures in another (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014). This point of view shows how important it is to have helpful workplaces with tools like flexible schedules, the ability to work from home, and programmes to help employees. These tools can help lessen work's harmful effects on one's personal life, improving balance (Onyekwelu, Monyei and Muogbo, 2022).

The idea of work-life balance is not the same for everyone; it changes a lot depending on the person's stage of life, personal obligations, and career roles. For example, parents of young children may value flexibility and parental leave, while younger workers may value the chance to advance in their jobs and enjoy free time (Abid and Barech, 2017). To support work-life balance, companies must take a personalised approach, ensuring policies are tailored to the specific needs of their employees (Delle-Vergini, 2017).

To find the right work-life balance, gender is also significant. Women have historically had a more challenging time balancing job and family duties because of social norms and their role as carers (Kattenbach, Demerouti and Nachreiner, 2010; Weideman and Hofmeyr, 2020). Women and men must find a balance between work and life, but this is becoming clearer as gender roles change. Policies like family leave and flexible hours are significant in promoting gender equality at work (Plantenga, 2011).

Striking a balance between work and life benefits the person and the organisation. Companies that value work-life balance tend to have less employee turnover, more engaged workers, and better

productivity (Stella, 2022). One can do this because workers who feel encouraged in their personal lives are more likely to be dedicated and driven at work.

2.4 Impact of Remote Working on Work-Life Balance

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the shift to remote work, bringing both benefits and challenges to workers' work-life balance. One of the key advantages of working from home is the flexibility it provides, allowing employees to structure their work schedules around personal obligations. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for caregivers or individuals with family responsibilities, as it offers the opportunity to integrate work and personal life better (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Additionally, the elimination of commuting time has proven to lower stress and improve overall well-being as workers gain more time for personal activities (Jalagat & Jalagat, 2019). However, as essential and valuable as the given advantages may be, it is crucial to notice the evident challenges of achieving a proper work-life balance while working remotely. This creates a problem of blurring the boundary between working time and personal time, which adversely affects employees in the management of working time. It can lead to increased working hours and the blend of working time and personal time, which leads to increased chances of stress and burnout (Amirul, Amirul, & Mail, 2020). Opeyemi et al. (2019) further says that the fact that employed women remain pressed to balance work and family responsibilities causes stress levels to rise, thus dampening well-being. The use of other digital communication instruments only worsens this situation due to the so-called "always-on" generation. Employees feel under pressure to be accessible even during their off-working hours, converting them into workaholics (Dettmers, 2016). Such an approach results in having connections and feeling constantly available, which takes a negative toll on the individual's mental health, bringing enhanced anxiety and exhaustion (Anekwe, 2019a). The next major disadvantage of remote work is social isolation. Hybrid workers, who work in conventional business environments at least part of the time, miss the everyday interactions with their peers at the workplace and casual greetings. Homework, on the other hand, reduces the chances of social interaction; hence, people who work from home efficiently become lonely. This absence of social engagement may lower employees' contentment at the workplace and have adverse effects on their well-being, particularly for those who live alone or are newly hired (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). It is, therefore, essential to build a healthy remote work culture that helps prevent such effects (Anekwe, 2019b). Also, the effect of working from home on work and work-life balance differs according to gender, age, or

the number of residents in the household. For instance, women, most of the time, face more problems in concurrence of work with family issues, especially in families where patriarchal attitudes are dominant (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Independent and young employees, as well as those living alone, may suffer from stress and loneliness, which consequently impacts the mental health as well as productivity of the workers (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

2.5 Factors Contributing to Work-Life Imbalance While Working Remotely

Many people are working from home now because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak has brought to light several issues that affect work-life balance. The lack of clear lines between work and personal life is one of the most critical issues. When people work from home, there is not always a clear physical separation between work and personal areas. This can make it hard for them to turn off their work devices. Digital communication tools have worsened this problem by creating an "always-on" culture that forces workers to be open (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020; Shifrin & Michel, 2021). Employees end up working longer hours, which takes away from their time and makes work and life less balanced.

A big part of work-life imbalance is the lack of structured work settings and routines. People working in an office have clear start and end times. However, when they work from home, these times become less clear, making it harder to stick to a plan. This lack of structure can cause workers to have unpredictable work hours, which makes it hard for them to set up a routine that works for both work and personal life (Anekwe, 2019c). Also, because they do not have a formal office, many workers work in places that are not good for productivity, like kitchen tables or bedrooms, which makes it even harder to tell the difference between work and personal life (Klindžić and Marić, 2019).

Isolation at work and in social situations is another big problem that affects work-life balance. Working from home can make you feel lonely and cut off from your coworkers and the company's culture. Isolation can hurt mental health and make people less satisfied with their jobs, which makes it harder for them to handle work and life well. Studies have shown that these harmful effects are more likely to happen to younger workers and people who live alone (Entringer & Gosling, 2021). It is essential to keep in touch with coworkers, even if it is just virtually, to feel like employees belong and are part of a group, which is something that is often missing in remote work situations (Yang et al., 2021).

Also, many workers were not ready or had the right tools to set up a functional home office because they had to switch to working from home so quickly during the pandemic. As workers got used to the new technologies and ways of doing things, this sudden change caused a steep learning curve. Not getting enough help and training has made people more stressed and less productive, which makes the balance between work and personal life even worse (Shirmohammadi, Au, & Beigi, 2022).

Lastly, it is impossible to say enough about how working from home can affect mental health. Being connected all the time and not having any free time can lead to burnout and long-term worry. It is hard for employees to stop thinking about work-related things, which makes them tired and lowers their general health (Vaziri et al., 2020). Employers must know these problems and make rules supporting mental health and work-life balance. For example, they could encourage regular breaks and set limits on work hours (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015).

2.6 Theoretical Review

2.6.1 Work-Home Resources Model

One crucial model that offers insight into the work and family interface is the Work-Home Resources (WHR) model. This holds particularly to the workers who have adopted the practice of working from home. According to Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012), this model meant that resources acquired in a given area enables the handling of pressures in other area thus enhancing the well-being. The use of WHR model is based on the conservation of resources theory. According to this theory, human beings seek investment, maintenance and preservation of their valuable resource which includes time, energy and social support as postulated by Mahmood et al. (2019). Waste hierarchy reduction is one of the models that focus on resource gain and loss patterns. In the work domain, more resources are available when positive experiences and resource gains are reported in one domain such as flexible working hours, or appointed management (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). On the other hand, demands leading to stress and resource loss in one domain such as much work or lack of social support can lead to a loss of resources and ill health of the other domain hence worsening the cycle and leading to burn out and unhealthy working life interface (Masuda et al. , 2012). Another area highlighted by the WHR model is the crossover effects which refer to a situation whereby the resources of one partner will influence or be influenced by the pressures of the other. For instance, a woman works, and she is content with

her job and feels protected at the workplace, the feelings cause positive impacts on the larger family and everyone becomes healthy. If on the other hand there is one partner who is under much pressure at the workplace, it has a bearing on the entire family and leads to more work conflict costs for both the partners (Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

The WHR model is beneficial for people who work from home because it shows how important it is for companies to help employees find a good work-life balance and for people to have their plans to stick to them. Setting up an ergonomic home office, giving workers access to mental health support, and being transparent about work hours are all things that can help create a structured and supportive remote work environment. These tools can help workers better handle their tasks, which can lessen the harmful effects of working from home, like being alone and unable to tell the difference between work and home life (Haar et al., 2014).

2.6.2 Boundary Management Theory

Boundary Management Theory explores how individuals manage the separation or integration of their work and personal lives. This theory, originally proposed by Ashforth et al. (2000), posits that individuals construct and maintain physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries to manage the demands of their work and personal roles. These boundaries help to reduce role conflict and maintain balance between professional responsibilities and personal life. The central tenet of boundary management is that people vary in their preference for maintaining strict boundaries (segmentation) or blending work and personal roles (integration).

In a traditional office setting, the physical separation between work and home offers a natural boundary that facilitates role segmentation. However, remote working environments, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have blurred these boundaries, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to keep work and personal life distinct (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Remote workers often find it challenging to mentally disconnect from work because they are physically present in the same space they associate with personal life. This lack of a clear boundary can lead to work-life conflict, where the demands of one role spill over into the other (Carlson et al., 2000).

The theory identifies two major boundary management strategies: boundary segmentation and boundary integration. Individuals who prefer segmentation seek to keep work and personal domains as distinct as possible, creating clear physical and psychological boundaries to prevent

overlap (Ashforth et al., 2000). In contrast, individuals who prefer integration are more comfortable allowing work and personal roles to overlap. For example, they may blend personal tasks with work activities during the day and be more flexible with their time (Rothbard et al., 2005).

However, the forced transition to remote work during the pandemic disrupted these strategies, particularly for those who prefer segmentation. The lack of a clear boundary between work and home has been found to increase stress and burnout, especially among employees with caregiving responsibilities (Allen et al., 2021). Studies show that employees who struggle to maintain boundaries are more likely to experience exhaustion, decreased productivity, and reduced job satisfaction (Dettmers, 2016). This study will examine how different boundary management strategies are employed by remote workers and the extent to which they influence work-life balance. It will also explore demographic factors, such as gender and caregiving status, that may affect boundary preferences and the success of boundary management in remote work settings.

2.7 Gap in Literature

Even though work-life balance and remote work have been extensively studied, some unanswered questions remain. One significant gap is the lack of long-term research examining the long-term effects of remote work on work-life balance. Most research has only examined the impacts at a single point in time, failing to examine how they vary over time (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). When developing regulations for remote work that promote a positive work-life balance, it is imperative to consider the long-term impacts.

Another gap is the paucity of research on the effects of remote work on various populations. According to several studies, women and younger employees could experience unique issues (De Vincenzi et al., 2022; Entringer & Gosling, 2021). Further comprehensive research is necessary to determine how various groups of people who work from home are impacted by factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic level, and cultural background. Research of this nature may pave the way for more flexible and customised approaches to fulfilling the requirements of various workforce types.

Research on the efficacy of specific interventions designed to enhance work-life balance for remote workers is also lacking. There is a dearth of empirical evidence to support the efficacy of the numerous concepts and instruments that have been proposed (Shirmohammadi, Au, & Beigi, 2022). Research on these strategies may help people learn how to manage their personal and professional lives. The impact of organisational culture on the work-life balance of remote workers has not received adequate attention in the literature. Scholars should investigate how varying cultural perspectives on work-life equilibrium and telecommuting impact employees' job performance. This can assist businesses in establishing a remote worker-friendly atmosphere (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). By completing these gaps, we can improve our policies and procedures and gain greater insight into the work-life balance faced by remote workers.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at previous research on the causes of work-life imbalance in remote jobs and suggested ways to improve things. Some of the most critical problems are fuzzy boundaries, extra housework, lack of structured habits, social isolation, not having enough resources, and mental health effects. The Work-Home Resources model was praised for helping us understand these changes. There were also holes in the research that were pointed out, like the need for longitudinal studies, research that focuses on specific demographics, the usefulness of interventions, and the role of organisational culture. Filling in these gaps will help people better understand and manage work-life balance while working from home.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Cooper (2010) notes that research methodology is an essential part of undertaking research. It includes organised steps and a variety of methods and approaches that researchers use to comprehend social phenomena and answer research questions. After going over some essential ideas in Chapter 2, this chapter discusses the decisions that were made in terms of methodology to investigate how employees' work-life balance changed when they were working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also claims these decisions are correct because of the overall research philosophy. The research onion framework for management and business research made by Saunders et al. (2023) was used for this study, as suggested by Melnikovas (2018). This framework provides an adequate task of showing how to choose study methods, approaches, and strategies. The study onion was chosen because it clearly shows the methodological choices that were made to look at how working from home affected employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, the research onion framework was used to organise and describe the choices made for the study's methods. As shown in Figure 1, this chapter addresses the study's general philosophy, theory development approach, research method, strategy, timeline, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and sampling techniques.

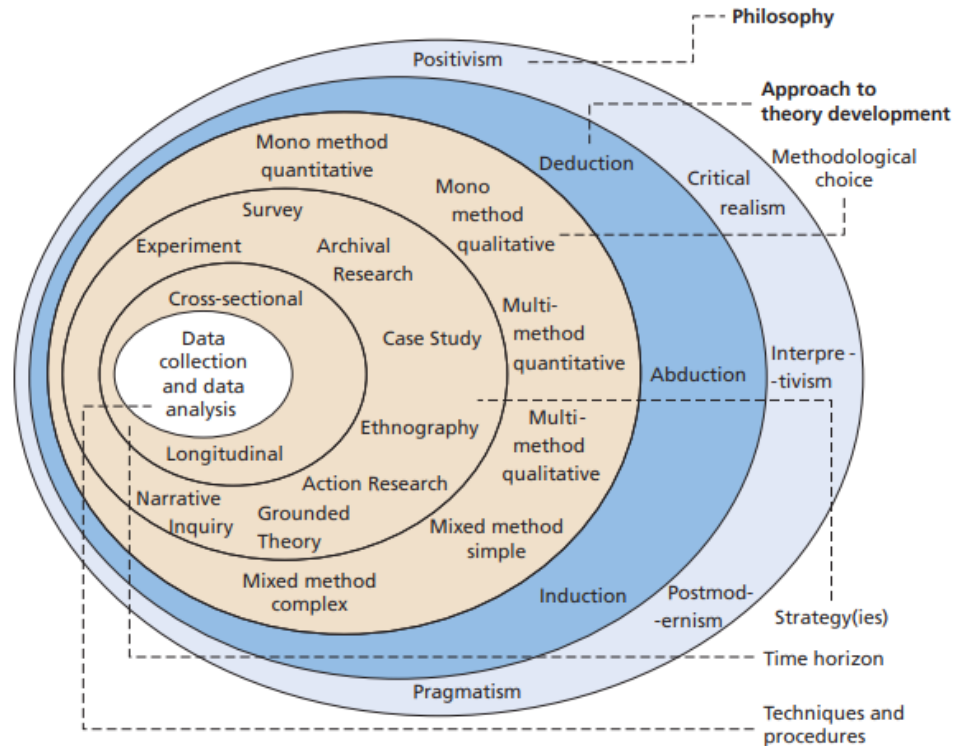


Figure 1: Research Onion Framework (Saunders et al. (2023))

3.1 Research Philosophy

Saunders et al.'s (2023) research onion model starts with the research philosophy, which is the basis for building knowledge from the researcher's point of view. According to Melnikovas (2018), a researcher's philosophical stance reveals their perspective on the subject and the origin of their knowledge. Saunders et al. (2023) propose that research philosophy reflects the researcher's perspective on data, influenced by fundamental beliefs and the techniques employed to gather it. The study method is greatly affected by the choice of research philosophy. Five key research philosophies were named by Saunders et al. (2023). Nevertheless, positivism and interpretivism are seen as the most important by Bahari (2010) and Martelli and Greener (2018). According to Bell et al. (2022), interpretivism is the use of non-numerical data to give a subjective explanation of social phenomena.

According to Saunders et al. (2023), positivist research philosophy is based on drawing conclusions involving concepts like laws by looking at what can be observed as social reality. This is similar to the way nature scientists examine philosophy. To learn more about how working from

home affected employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic, positivism was chosen because it can give clear and accurate information (Berryman, 2019). This philosophy was used as a foundation for obtaining measurable facts and patterns, giving a guideline for making meaningful and credible data (Patel and Patel, 2019). Hence, this study used the positivism theory to focus on finding facts and phenomena that can be measured and seen. This led to conclusions that can be trusted (Saunders et al., 2023). Interpretivism was not used in this study because it focuses on the subjective interpretation of social phenomena through non-numerical data, which may not provide the clear and precise information needed for analysing the impact of remote working on employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bell et al., 2022). The study required measurable facts and observable patterns to produce reliable and validated conclusions, which are better aligned with the positivist approach (Sam, 2012).

3.2 Approach to Theory Development

Following the adoption of the positivism philosophy paradigm as the main idea for this research, the study used the deductive approach to build its theories. According to Saunders et al. (2023), understanding the study's premise is an essential first step in doing independent research and learning more about research. A study's premise is fundamental to the growth of theories because it helps inform the research (Shahid N Khan, 2014). According to Saunders et al.'s (2023) research on the onion model, theories can be developed using deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning. According to Melnikovas (2018), the deductive method works better for studies that want to test claims based on previous studies and confirm ideas that are already in place. Saunders et al. (2023) added that deductive reasoning is the process of concluding study results and well-known theories. It proves that the conclusions are correct when the empirical assumptions are correct.

Inductive research, on the other hand, involves filling in gaps related to a previous study by developing hypotheses based on theoretical frameworks that have already been created. In contrast, abductive reasoning combines deductive and abductive reasoning to fully understand and analyse a study topic (Chu and Ke, 2017). The study did not employ inductive or abductive reasoning due to potential biases and the sufficiency of the study's premises to reach relevant conclusions. Inductive reasoning, which involves generalising from specific observations, and abductive reasoning, which focuses on inferring the most likely explanation, was deemed

unnecessary for achieving the study's objectives (Saunders et al., 2023). The existing premises provided a solid foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions without the need for these additional reasoning methods (Patten and Newhart, 2017).

The deductive reasoning method was chosen for theory building in this study because it fits with positivist philosophy, can be used with quantitative studies, and can help results be applied to a broader range of situations. Also, Saunders et al. (2023) stress that deductive studies can be finished more quickly after correct data has been carefully gathered. According to Saunders et al. (2023), this study used the deductive method to look at the current theoretical framework and come up with hypotheses about how working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic affected workers' work-life balance. After collecting quantitative data about how working from home affected workers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the hypothesis was put to the test by seeing how well it fit with the data (Oun and Bach, 2014).

3.3 Research Method

Given that this study is based on positivism and deduction, the survey method is used in the quantitative research method to get accurate information from first-hand sources. Because it fits best with the positivist philosophical model (Saunders et al., 2023), the quantitative research method was chosen without much thought. Hence, it makes it easier to figure out how working from home affected workers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study by Bryman (2016) notes that the one-quantitative research method makes statistical methods more helpful in finding patterns, checking hypotheses, and measuring variables. It also supports the study's goal and helps it reach its objectives by making sure that strict research methods are used to ensure validity and dependability, with a focus on accuracy and measurement (Melnikovas, 2018).

On the other hand, according to Saunders et al. (2023), the qualitative research method is not suitable for this study because it is better for personally looking into social phenomena and not for an objective, scientific study using statistical data. Through the use of the quantitative study method, an objective look was given to how working from home affected employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a quantitative research method allows the use of statistical methods to find out how working from home affected employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic and what the link was between working from home and

employees' work-life balance during the pandemic. It makes it easier to use surveys to gather information and look through extensive databases (Bell et al., 2022).

3.4 Research Strategy

Melnikovas (2018) asserts that a research strategy is a plan for successfully collecting, evaluating, and interpreting real-world data so that conclusions and findings can be made. Because of this, it is essential to choose a research plan that works well with the study's methods. According to Kothari (2014) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010), research design involves a complex array of decisions that influence the collection of relevant data, and the formulation of study results based on tested and considered assumptions. According to Saunders et al. (2023), research onion lists six ways to do research. A descriptive survey method was used for this work.

The descriptive survey method was chosen for this study because it allows for a more in-depth look at how working from home affected workers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gelo et al. (2008) add that this survey design makes it easier to use questionnaires to gather quantitative data because it shows the relationship between the critical indicators and that the data that this method produces is thought to provide substantial proof for the theories. A descriptive research survey was used in this study because it makes research more accessible and provides good research data (Shahid N. Khan, 2014).

3.5 Time Horizon

For research to be successful, the person doing the study must think about how long it will take to finish. When Saunders et al. (2023) discuss the time horizon, they mean the amount of time that records and data are collected. One of the most common types of periods is longitudinal, and another is cross-sectional. This is why cross-sectional time is used in this study. The cross-sectional time horizon is unique because it allows researchers to get enough data from research subjects at a particular time, which makes the research process run smoothly (Wang and Cheng, 2020). The longitudinal time horizon, on the other hand, involves gathering information from study participants over a long period, while the cross-sectional time horizon only looks at one point in time. Since this would take much time, it is not being considered for this study.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

3.6.1 Sampling Technique

Saunders et al. (2023) adds that the sample methods used in this study are significant for finding reliable research participants and getting data that is useful for the study. For a more in-depth look at how working from home affected workers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, the purposive sampling method is used to find good research subjects for this study. Researchers use this sampling method to pick study participants who are relevant to the study. This also allowed that participants who were included in the survey knew enough about working from home during the pandemic.

The reason for using the purposive sample method is that it makes it easier to include people on purpose in research studies and keeps researchers from calling people who do not know much about the study topic. (Bell et al., 2022). Using the purposive sampling method, social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter were used to reach out to people who were willing to take part in the study. Two hundred and eight (208) people who filled out the survey were in the sample group. The survey questionnaire was then sent to the chosen participants through these social media networks after they filled out the information sheet and gave their permission. The random sampling method was not used in this study because it would have changed the way subjects were chosen, which would have made the results less reliable (Bell et al., 2022). Participants in this study were selected based on their alignment with the study's objectives. To gather valuable data, only respondents currently working remotely at their own industry at the time of the pandemic were considered. People who did not meet the standards for the study were not used.

3.6.2 Data Collection

Within the quantitative research method, it makes sense to use survey questionnaires as the primary way to gather data (Bell et al., 2022). As part of the study's quantitative descriptive survey approach, employees who worked from home were given survey questionnaires that they could fill out on their own. This method was beneficial for gathering numbers that were needed to study how working from home affected workers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because they are good at getting quantitative source data, closed-ended questionnaires were used in the study (Thakur, 2021). An online survey platform called Qualtrics was used to collect the data, and all the answers from participants were kept anonymous. The survey was split into three

parts so that the answers could be easily grouped. The first part was all about demographics, gathering details like age, race, culture, income, job, and marital status (Naderifar, Goli and Ghaljaie, 2017).

Having this information about the individuals' backgrounds helped in learning more about them. In the second part, "sociodemographic," questions were taken from Şentürk et al. (2021) and changed to better show what the subjects were going through during the pandemic. It started with three questions about how the amount of time spent on daily tasks like work, housework, and childcare had changed. The fourth question asked about changes in the participants' workload. The next question asked about their ability to choose their working hours. The sixth question asked about the participants' ability to focus and their level of distraction. The seventh question looked at workplace loneliness and how being physically separated from coworkers or teams affects a person's mood. The last part of the poll was about the mental health of the people who filled it out. The Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) scale was the first tool used. It measured how often workers had anxiety symptoms while they were working during the lockdown. At the end of the poll, there were questions from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), a 10-item scale that is often used to find out how someone feels about stress and how stressful they think their life is.

3.6.3 Data Analysis

After using a descriptive poll method and a quantitative method to help with statistical analysis, the data collected through Qualtrics was put into Microsoft Excel. Excel was chosen because it can store and organise big sets of electronically filled-out questionnaires. Then a descriptive statistical analysis of the data was used because descriptive statistics are clear and easy to understand (Stickley, O'Caithain and Homer, 2022). Additionally, descriptive statistics can be used to show the data in a graph. SPSS Statistics software was then used to test the poll data. Regression analysis was chosen because it can be used to describe, estimate, predict, and keep things under control. It is possible to describe the link between dependent and independent variables using regression (Zdenka, Petr and Radek, 2011). Estimation lets one guess the value of a dependent variable based on the values of other factors that know. Based on the connections between dependent and independent variables, regression analysis can also be used to guess what will happen and how the dependent variables will change (Birnbbaum, 2023). Descriptive statistics are appropriate for this study as they provide a clear overview of the data, allowing for the

summarization of key variables such as demographics, work-life balance, and boundary management strategies. This method helps identify general patterns and trends in how remote working affects employees, which is crucial for addressing the research questions (Creswell, 2018). Additionally, regression analysis is used to explore the relationship between independent variables (e.g., work environment, boundary management) and the dependent variable (work-life balance). This method allows for the testing of hypotheses and provides insights into the strength and direction of these relationships (Saunders et al., 2023). By employing regression analysis, the study can determine which factors significantly impact work-life balance and quantify their influence. This is particularly relevant given the multifaceted nature of work-life balance, where various individual and work-related factors interact (Oun & Bach, 2014). The combination of descriptive statistics and regression analysis ensures a comprehensive understanding of the data and addresses the research questions with measurable and actionable insights.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In every step of the study process, ethical rules were followed. Ethical rules are essential to make sure the reliability of the data used in scholarly research meets the correct standards (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Following the teleological principles of action set up by John Stuart Mills, the researcher focused on human freedom and did not harm. Before the research was started, each participant had to give their consent. They were also made aware that they could quit the study at any time during it. Personal information was not collected for this study, but demographic information was because it helped in learning more about the respondent's past. The people who took part in the study were not hurt in any way because the data was recorded secretly. Purposive sampling, while effective in selecting participants with relevant experience, can introduce selection bias, as it limits participation to individuals who meet specific criteria (Bell et al., 2022). This could affect the diversity of perspectives, as individuals outside the target demographic may face different challenges with remote work, which are not captured in the study. To mitigate this bias, efforts were made to ensure a diverse sample by including participants from various industries, demographics, and geographic regions (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, the survey was distributed through multiple platforms, including social media and professional networks, to reach a broader audience and minimize sampling bias (Saunders et al., 2023). Response bias is another concern, particularly with self-reported data, as participants may provide socially desirable responses. To address this, anonymity was ensured, encouraging honest and accurate responses (Naderifar, Goli,

& Ghaljaie, 2017). Clear and neutral wording in the questionnaire was also employed to reduce the likelihood of leading questions or biased responses. These strategies helped enhance the validity of the study's findings.

3.8 Reliability and Validity of the Study

To understand the quality of a study, one can measure the validity of the data that has been gathered (Shahid and Sheikh, 2021). Validity is the capacity to replicate the study, and reliability is the authenticity of the study (Bell et al., 2022). Perhaps the reason why the quantitative research method was suitable for the study was because it facilitated the collection of data that was biased and meaningless. This made the study more accurate and dependable. Moreover, as the purposive sampling selection technique was applied in order to identify the participants of the study and the data collection process, replication is possible, and therefore, valid data is collected, which can be utilized in many scenarios. The methodological designs of the study onion also minimized the research process logistics and ensured that the examination of how working from home impacted the employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic effectively and had an element of reliability.

3.9 Methodological Limitations

In order to enhance the quality of a particular study, bridging gaps involves the assessment of the limitations of the chosen methods, especially in terms of validity and reliability. It is a fact that numerical data can only be interpreted through quantitative analysis, and this tends to beg essential social and cultural cues. However, Saunders et al. (2023) note that, in purposive sampling, the selection of participants might be arbitrary on certain occasions. This problem can be solved by using inclusion criteria that define the people who are crucial to the study goals. However, the digital survey questionnaires have their limitations in collecting and analysing data as they have a structured format and closed-ended questions that can restrict the ability to get more details that are necessary while trying to understand how remote working affected the work-life balance of the employees during the COVID 19 situation (Bell et al., 2022). In order to counter this, the researcher made sure that every question developed was relevant to the objectives of the study as well as the aim of the study. Also, the study describes the experiences during an essential time within a subject's or a participant's life and does not capture potential changes or the cumulative effect of remote working on work-life balance for instance (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Finally, the technique

of using survey data may lead to response biases, which may cause the lowest level of accuracy in the results attained (Bryman, 2016).

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological framework adopted for examining the impact of remote working on employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing the **positivist** philosophy and deductive approach, the study employs a quantitative research design, with data collected through online surveys distributed via purposive sampling. The use of **descriptive statistics** and regression analysis will enable the identification of patterns and relationships between remote working and work-life balance. The methodology ensures that the findings are both reliable and valid, providing actionable insights into the dynamics of remote working. Ethical considerations and limitations were also addressed, ensuring that the research adheres to proper standards of integrity and objectivity.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULT

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus revolves around the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents. The questionnaire is a product of the research questions set for the study, and the research questions were carved out from the objectives guiding the study as shown below.

To put the study in a systematic manner and to refresh the mind of the reader with the manner in which the current study unveils itself, the research objectives guiding the study are:

1. To explore the concept of remote working and its impact on work-life balance.
2. To investigate the factors contributing to work-life imbalance while working remotely.
3. To develop recommendations for improving work-life balance in remote working environments

In light of the foregoing, the impact of remote working on employees' work life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic remains the focus of this research. Informed by the study gap in the literature, the rationale behind the data collected for the current study is to expose readers to remote work during the pandemic and broaden their understanding on how these phenomenon impacts employees' ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities. Within the confines of research objective two which focused on investigating the factors contributing to work-life imbalance while working remotely, the analyses of the collected data will enable readers and other key stakeholders such as firms and/ or organisations to know these factors and design better policies to prevent or mitigate the effect of these factors while also prioritizing the well-being of employees. Interestingly considering that the collected data was an offshoot of the study research questions, undoubtedly it will help to achieve objective three.

Hence, this chapter is centered on the analysis and the interpretation of the online questionnaire administered by the researcher which recorded a total of 208 responses at the point of data extraction from Qualtrics. After thorough cleaning and preparation, 50 responses were nullified due to a perceived lack of authenticity and a total of 158 responses was used for further analysis.

4.2 Data Preparation

After collecting the raw data from Qualtrics, the data was cleaned and made ready for analysis. The researcher removed participants who made less than 90% progress as the first criterion. Also, the researcher removed participants who completed the survey in less than 50% of the median time (104 seconds) (Greszki et al., 2015). Due to ethical reasoning (British Psychological Society, 2014), the minimum age for a participant to take the survey is 18 years and all the participants meet this criterion. Similarly, participants with the same response ID were removed in other remove duplicates and allow only one response per person. Qualtrics allows participants to complete the survey in parts at their convenience, so those who took longer to complete the survey were not excluded.

4.3 General Procedure

All participants conducted the survey on their own time and on their own devices. Participants were required to read the consent form and give consent to taking part in the study. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences or penalties, emphasizing the voluntary nature of survey participation. The recommended time for participants to complete the survey was 5 minutes.

Table 1: Reliability Test of the Main Survey

Scales	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
General Anxiety Disorder Scale	7	0.875
Stress Coping Scale	10	0.685

The reliability test revealed that the answers provided by the respondents on the state of their General Anxiety Disorder is good, and regarding the Stress Coping Scale, lower, but acceptable.

Results

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Socio-Demographic Variables

Socio-Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Gender				
Male	49	31.0		
Female	107	67.7		
Others	2	1.3		
Total	158	100		
Age				
			29.08	10.47
18 - 24	70	44.30		
25 - 34	59	37.34		
35 - 44	15	9.50		
45 – 54	6	3.80		
55 – 64	7	4.43		
64+	1	0.63		
Total	158	100		
Marital Status				
Single	110	69.6		
Married	33	20.9		
Divorced	4	2.5		
Widowed	1	0.6		
Prefer not to say	2	1.3		
Others	8	5.1		
Total	158	100		
Living condition during Covid-19 pandemic				
Living alone	19	12.0		
Living with family	106	67.1		

Socio-Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Living with family and kids	15	9.5		
Living with flat mates	18	11.4		
Total	158	100		
Employment status at the start of Covid-19 Pandemic				
Employed full-time	53	33.5		
Employed part-time	22	13.9		
Student	78	49.4		
Unemployed	5	3.2		
Total	158	100		
Household size at the time of Covid -19 lockdown			3.56	1.702
1-5 People	141	89.24		
6-10 People	17	10.76		
Total	158	100		

Table 2 presents the socio-demographic data of 158 respondents, detailing their gender, age, marital status, living conditions during the pandemic, employment status at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and household size during the lockdown. The majority of respondents were female while a lesser share of the respondents was male, and a small percentage identified as "Other." This indicates a higher participation rate from females in the survey. The respondents were predominantly young adults, with the highest representation in the 18-24 age group, followed by 25-34 years. Middle-aged individuals between 35-44 years accounted for a low percentage. The smallest fraction of respondents was aged 64+. The data show a clear trend towards younger participants, with an average age of 29 years. A substantial majority of

respondents were single. Smaller proportions were divorced, widowed, or identified as "Others", suggesting that the bulk of respondents were young, unmarried individuals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most respondents lived with their families, while others lived alone, with family and children, or with flat mates. This indicates that the majority experienced the lockdown with family members. A significant proportion of respondents were students at the start of the pandemic. Most respondents lived in households of 1-5 people, while a smaller proportion lived in households with 6-10 people during the lockdown, reflecting smaller living arrangements.

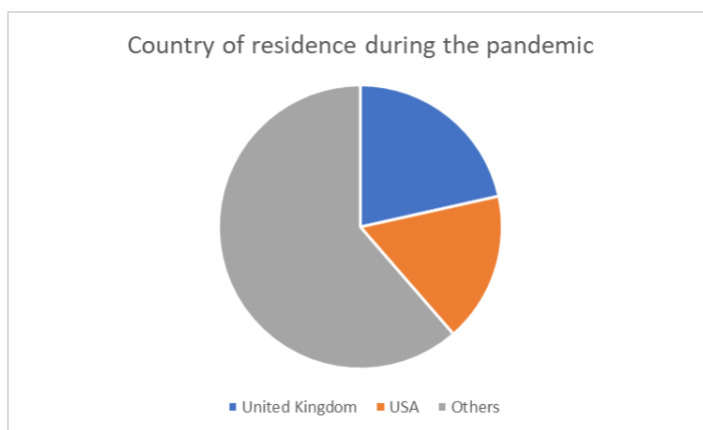


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by country location during the Covid-19 lockdown

The figure above revealed respondent's location when lockdown was initiated were distributed across the world. The highest number of respondents lived in the United Kingdom (UK) than other countries when the lockdown was initiated. The second highest number of the respondents lived in United States of America (USA) completing the list of top 2 countries where the respondents lived when the lockdown was initiated.

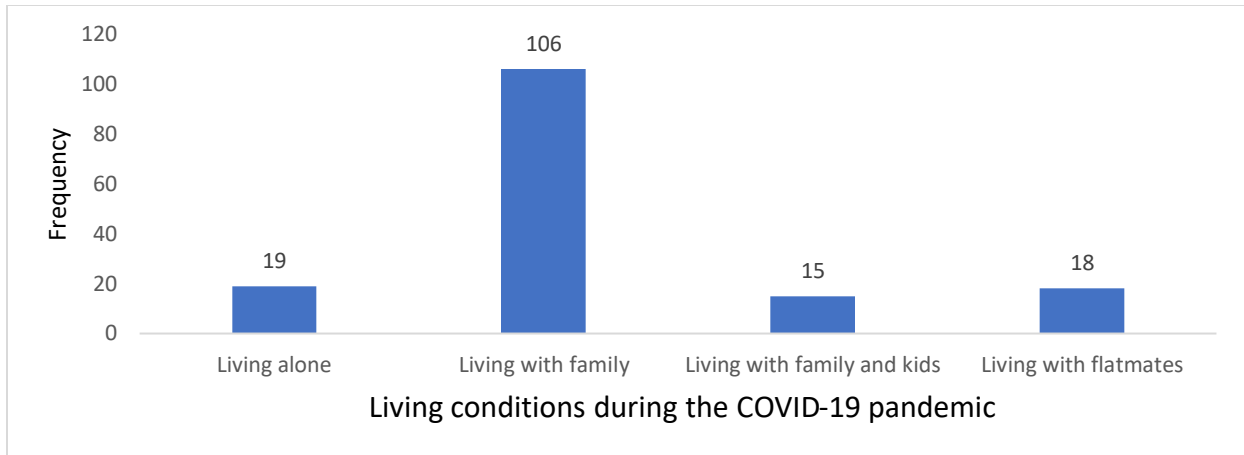


Figure 3: Distribution of Participants based on living conditions during the Covid-19 Pandemic

From the diagram above, it was revealed that a larger proportion of the respondents lived with their families during the covid-19 pandemic. 12% lived alone during the pandemic, 9% of the respondents lived with their family and children, while 11.3% of the respondents lived with flatmates.

Table 3: Remote work and its' effect on work-life balance during Covid-19 lockdown

Variables	Frequency	Valid Percentage
level of lockdown initiated in your country		
Partial lockdown	37	23.4
Total l lockdown /total	70	44.3
Home Confinement	51	32.3
Total	158	100
Changes in time spent on		
Childcare		
More than before	23	14.6
Less than before	3	1.9

Variables	Frequency	Valid Percentage
No changes	7	4.4
Does not apply to me	125	79.1
Total	158	100
Changes in daily working hours		
4 hours or more decreased	47	29.7
4 hours or more increased	40	25.3
Not changed	71	44.9
Total	158	100
Changes in time spent on household chore		
4 hours or more decreased	12	7.6
4 hours or more increased	48	30.4
Not changed	98	62.0
Total	158	100
Changes in workload		
Significantly decreased	13	8.2
Decreased	37	23.4
Not changed	52	32.9
Increased	40	25.3
Significantly increased	16	10.1
Total	158	100
Control over working hours		
Low levels of control over working hours	60	38.0
Moderate level of control over working hours	64	40.5
High levels of control over working hours	33	20.9

Variables	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Total	157	99.4
Distractions while working		
Never	10	6.3
Sometimes	59	37.3
About half the time	31	19.6
Most of the time	41	25.9
Always	17	10.8
Total	158	100
Trouble focusing at work		
Never	17	10.8
Sometimes	62	39.2
About half the time	29	18.4
Most of the time	35	22.2
Always	15	9.5
Total	158	100
Increased effect of workplace loneliness		
Strongly disagree	23	14.6
Somewhat disagree	17	10.8
Neither agree nor disagree	35	22.2
Somewhat agree	55	34.8
Strongly agree	28	17.7
Total	158	100
Do you thing working from home had an effect		
on your job performance		
Yes	72	45.6

Variables	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Somewhat	44	27.8
No	42	26.6
Total	158	100

Most respondents were under strict movement restrictions due to a total lockdown. A small portion reported spending more time on childcare, while only a few spent less time or saw no change. The majority, however, indicated that childcare was irrelevant to them, likely due to their younger demographic.

A noticeable group saw their working hours reduced by several hours each day, while others experienced an increase. Still, many reported no change in their working hours, showing a mixed impact of remote work on daily schedules.

In terms of household chores, most respondents saw no change in the time spent on them, though some reported an increase. A smaller group spent less time on household duties. Workload changes were also diverse, with some experiencing no change, others facing a reduced workload, and a few reporting a significant increase.

When it came to control over working hours, most respondents had moderate or low control, while a smaller portion had high autonomy over their schedules. Distractions were common, with many respondents being distracted at least sometimes. Difficulty focusing was also widespread, with some experiencing it frequently.

Feelings of workplace loneliness varied: some respondents felt it somewhat, while others strongly felt it. However, a portion of the group did not feel isolated. Lastly, many respondents believed that working from home impacted their job performance, while some felt the effect was minor, and others reported no effect at all.

Generally, the data reflect how remote work affected various aspects of respondents' lives, with most reporting no major changes in household chores but experiencing moderate control over working hours, regular distractions, and issues with focus. The mixed feelings about job performance and workplace loneliness suggest that while remote work brought flexibility, it also introduced new challenges to work-life balance, especially in terms of focus and social isolation.

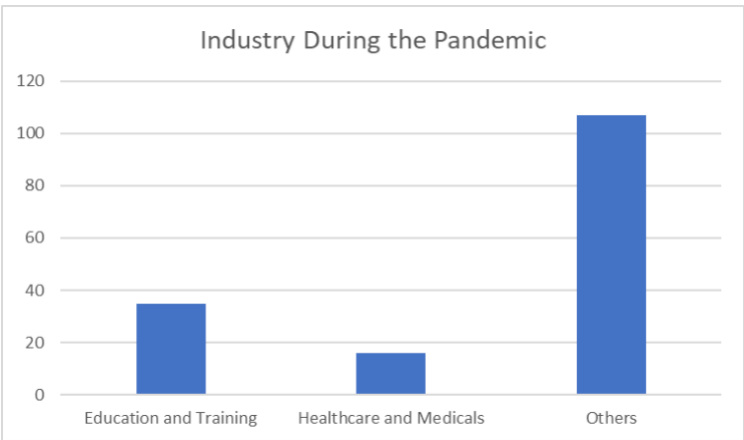


Figure 4: Industry distribution of participants during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Education & Training had the highest representation with 35 respondents. Healthcare & Medical followed with 16 respondents. Other notable industries included Retail & Consumer Products, Hospitality & Tourism, and Information & Communication Technology (ICT). Several industries had only 1 or 2 respondents, such as Construction, Consulting & Strategy, and Design & Architecture.

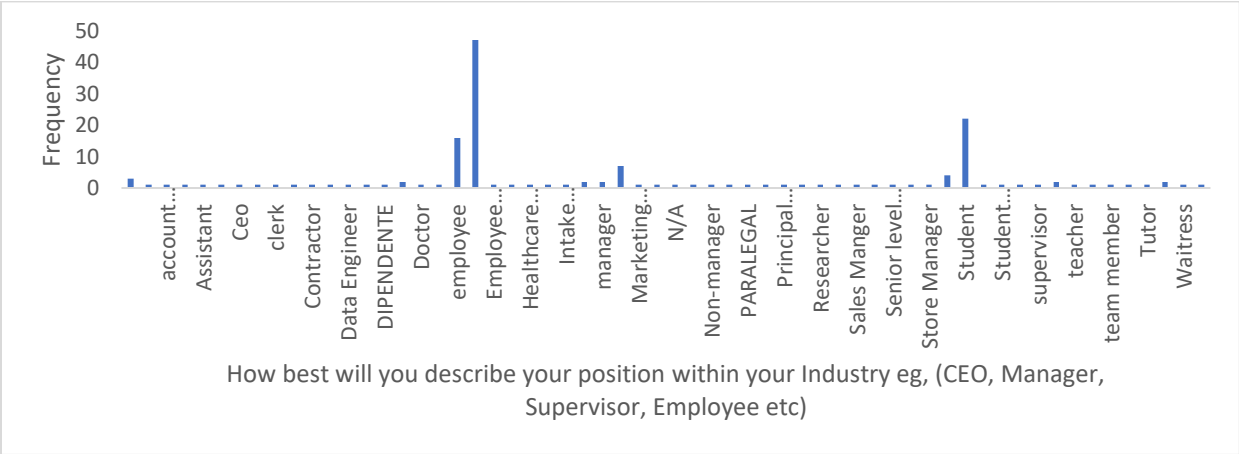


Figure 5: Position of participants in the industry

The figure above illustrates the job positions of participants within their respective industries. The majority were Employees (47 participants). Students were also a significant group (22 participants). Other positions included Managers (2 participants), Supervisors (2 participants), and various specific roles like Administrative Assistant, CEO, Consultant/Freelancer, and

Registered Nurse. Some participants held unique positions such as Captain at German Armed Forces (Medical Staff) and Senior Lecturer in Psychology.

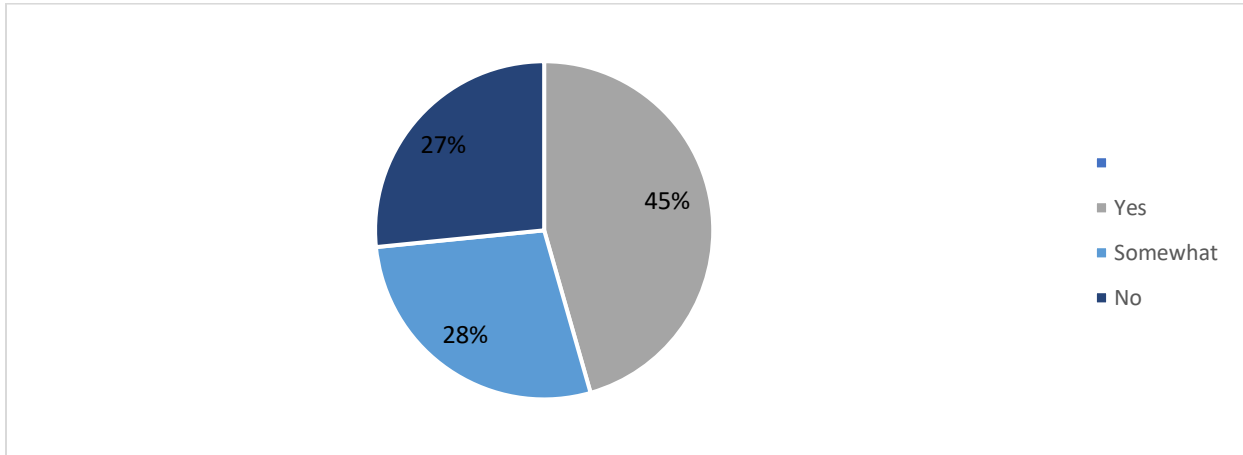


Figure 6: Impact of remote work on job performance

Figure 6 assesses how participants felt about the impact of remote work on their job performance. Majority of participants felt that working from home affected their job performance.

Table 4: General Anxiety Disorder Scale

Statistics	Values
Summed Mean(M)	14.72
Summed SD	6.67

The table above indicates a moderate level of variability in anxiety levels among the respondents. Deeper dive into the data above indicates that respondents frequently worry about various aspects of life and have trouble relaxing, even when they have the opportunity. The study also discovered that while respondents do experience not being able to stop or control worrying and being so restless that it was hard to sit still, they are slightly less frequent compared to other items.

Table 5: Stress Coping Scale

Statistics	Values
Summed Mean(M)	17.97

Summed SD	7.88
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Most respondents experienced stress-related feelings sometimes or fairly often. The highest mean score was for feeling nervous or stressed, indicating this was the most common stress-related feeling. The lowest mean score was for getting upset due to unexpected events, suggesting this was the least common stress-related feeling.

4.4 Guiding Theories and Hypothesis for Analysis

The analysis presented in this chapter is framed by the Work-Home Resources (WHR) model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), which explores how resources gained in one domain, such as work, can impact other domains, such as home life. This theoretical framework helps explain how remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped employees' work-life balance by emphasizing both resource gains and losses, as well as the crossover effects between partners or family members. The hypothesis guiding the study analysis are shown below.

Hypothesis 1: Remote working experience during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly improves employees work-life balance.

Hypothesis 2: Work-life balance is negatively affected by Age, and psychological factors (anxiety and stress).

Hypothesis 3: Remote work demands are positively related to employee mental health well-being.

In simple terms, according to the WHR model, resource gains in one area of life can improve conditions in another. Therefore, hypothesis one explores whether remote working, which offers potential resource gains such as flexibility and reduced commute times, significantly improves employees' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, as the WHR model also accounts for resource depletion, Hypothesis two examines whether the increased use of digital communication tools, which can blur the boundaries between work and home life, leads to higher levels of work-life imbalance. Hypothesis three considers how factors such as socio-demographic and psychological may negatively impact work-life balance, in line with the WHR model's

concept of individual variations in resource management. Hypothesis four focuses on whether these demands positively relate to employee mental health, linking resource depletion with mental well-being under the WHR model. In consonance with the above, the next sections will test these hypotheses using the data collected.

Hypothesis 1: Remote working experience during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly improves employees' work-life balance.

To test Hypothesis 1, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, with Trouble Focusing on Work (TFW), Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness (IEWL), and Distraction While Working (DWW) as predictors and Work-Life Balance (WLB) as the dependent variable.

Table 6: Impact of remote working experience on work-life balance

Model	β .	SE	T	P
Constant	3.000	0.180	16.67	0.000
TFW	0.200	0.060	3.33	0.001
DWW	-0.150	0.080	-1.88	0.062
IEWL	0.100	0.070	1.43	0.155

F (156, 3) = 8.55, P = .001, R² = .20

Dependent Variable: Do you think working from home influenced your Work-Life balance

Independent Variables:

- i. Trouble Focusing at Work
- ii. Distraction while working
- iii. Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness

Table 6 shows the regression analysis of the impact of remote working experience on work-life balance. Trouble Focusing on Work (TFW) has a regression coefficient of 0.200 with a P-value = 0.001. This means that for each unit increase in trouble focusing on work, work-life balance decreases by 0.200 units. The relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that difficulty focusing at work might negatively affect work-life balance, possibly due to stress or spillover of work into personal time. Distraction while working (DWW) has a regression coefficient of -0.150 with a P-value of 0.062. While DWW has a negative impact on work-life balance, the P-value

suggests that this result is only marginally significant ($P > 0.05$). This implies that being distracted during work may slightly affect work-life balance, but the evidence is not strong enough to draw a definitive conclusion. Regarding the Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness, this relationship is not statistically significant, meaning that the IEWL does not have a specific contribution in the prediction of WLB.

The model has a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.20. This explains that 20% of the variance in work-life balance can be explained by these three factors combined, which is a moderate improvement over the previous cases. This shows that combining “Trouble Focusing on Work”, “Distraction while working”, and “Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness” provides more explanatory power, but the model still doesn't capture all the factors that influence work-life balance. The model has a F-value of 8.55 and a significant P-value = 0.001 which implies that the combined model (TFW, DWW, and IEWL) is statistically significant overall, meaning these predictors significantly impact work-life balance together.

Hypothesis 2: Work-life balance is negatively affected by Age, and psychological factors (anxiety and stress).

In order to test Hypothesis 2, a multiple regression analysis was done, with, General Anxiety Disorder Score (GADS), Stress Coping Scale Score (SCSS), and Age as predictors, and Work Life Balance (WLB) as the dependent variable.

Table 7: Impact of Age and psychological factors on Work-Life balance

Model	β .	SE	T	P
Constant	2.700	0.230	11.74	0.000
GADS	0.110	0.040	2.75	0.007
SCS	-0.055	0.032	-1.72	0.089
Age	-0.0250	0.012	-2.08	0.040

$F(152, 3) = 6.25, P = .001, R^2 = .17$

Dependent Variable: Work-Life balance

Independent Variable:

- I. GADS (General Anxiety Disorder Score)
- II. SCS (Stress Coping Score)
- III. Age

Table 7 shows that the constant of 2.700 suggests that if all predictors (GADS, SCSS, and Age) were zero, the predicted Work-Life balance would be 2.700.

Each unit increase in anxiety is associated with an increase of 0.110 units in Work-Life balance. This relationship remains statistically significant, implying that higher anxiety levels may continue to predict higher engagement in Work-Life balance.

The negative coefficient -0.055 indicates that better stress-coping abilities are linked to lesser individuals with Work-Life balance, but the relationship is not statistically significant ($P > 0.05$).

For age, older individuals are predicted to have lesser Work-Life balance, with each additional year decreasing Work-Life balance by 0.025 units. This effect statistically significant.

The model explains 17% of the variance in Work-Life balance is explained by GADS, SCS and Age. F-value of 6.25 and a P-value of 0.001 indicates that the predictors have a statistically significant overall effect on Work-Life balance.

Hypothesis 3: Remote work demands are positively related to employee mental health well-being.

Table 8: Correlation between remote demands and employee mental health well-being

Inter Correlation	DWW	TFW	IEWL
GADS	0.440**	0.484**	0.398**
SCS	0.336**	0.398**	0.334**

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Note: GADS (General Anxiety Disorder Score), SCS (Stress Coping Score), TFW (Trouble Focusing at Work), DWW (Distraction While Working), IEWL (Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness)

Table 8 above shows the relationship between remote work demands and the employee health well-being. The General Anxiety Disorder Score (GADS) and the Stress Coping Score (SCS) are used to measure the employee mental health well-being while the Distraction While Working (DWW), Trouble Focusing at Work (TFW), and Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness (IEWL) are used to measure the employee's work demand.

It can be shown from the table above that the three measures of work demands (DWW, TFL, and IEWL), are positively correlated with the two measures of employees well-being, namely, anxiety and stress, supporting our third hypothesis.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Discussion of findings

This study utilized empirically validated tools, specifically the General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Scale and the Stress Coping Scale, to measure the psychological well-being of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic and their subsequent impact on work-life balance. The GAD Scale exhibited high internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.875, while the Stress Coping Scale also demonstrated low, but acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.685. These reliability scores suggest that the instruments used were appropriate for assessing the mental health status of the respondents, ensuring that the study's findings are both accurate and dependable.

The primary objective of this research was to investigate whether remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive or negative effect on employees' work-life balance. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the results indicated a significant negative impact of remote working on employees' work-life balance. Several key factors contributed to this outcome:

- **Distractions While Working (DWW):** More than 50% of respondents reported frequent distractions while working from home, which negatively impacted their ability to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. A regression analysis revealed that distractions significantly decreased the perceived work-life balance.
- **Control Over Working Hours:** The study found that most respondents had limited control over their working hours. Only 20.9% of the respondents reported having high control, while 38% experienced low levels of control. Limited autonomy over work hours is closely associated with an inability to maintain work-life balance, exacerbating the stress of remote working.

This is consistent with earlier studies by Amirul, Amirul, and Mail (2020) and Opeyemi et al. (2019), who found that employees working from home often face the challenge of balancing professional and personal responsibilities in the absence of a distinct workspace, leading to higher stress levels. These findings confirm that distractions and lack of control over working hours significantly erode work-life balance, contrary to the researcher's initial expectation that remote working would improve work-life balance. In examining the psychological factors, the study

employed the GAD Scale and Stress Coping Scale to understand how mental health influences work-life balance. One of the scales were found to have statistically significant negative effects on work-life balance:

- General Anxiety Disorder Score (GADS): The regression analysis showed a significant negative relationship between anxiety and work-life balance. Respondents with higher anxiety levels, such as those who reported constant nervousness or worry, experienced more difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

These findings corroborate previous research indicating that poor mental health, particularly anxiety and stress, significantly disrupt an individual's ability to focus on tasks and maintain an effective separation between work and personal life. The result aligns with Kattenbach, Demerouti, and Nachreiner (2010), who established that psychological strain is a major predictor of reduced work-life balance. Therefore, psychological well-being is a critical factor that needs to be addressed to improve work-life balance during remote working.

While psychological factors had a strong negative impact, the study also explored the influence of socio-demographic factors such as age on work-life balance. The results showed that older respondents exhibited signs of lesser work-life balance during the pandemic, with age having a negative influence on work-life balance. The data indicated that older individuals, perhaps due to more responsibility both in their personal and professional lives or based on being used to an established routine, were perceived to have a reduction in work-life balance to manage the demands of remote work.

The study also sought to determine the relationship between remote work demands and employee mental health, focusing on three major factors: Trouble Focusing at Work (TFW), Increased Effect of Workplace Loneliness (IEWL), and Distractions While Working (DWW). The analysis found a positive correlation between remote work demands and psychological strain, as indicated by the following. In fact, TFW, IEWL, and DWW, were positively associated with more anxiety and more stress.

These findings align with Anekwe (2019), who argued that a lack of social interaction during remote work can harm both job satisfaction and overall health. This study further supports the notion that mental health and social connectivity are vital for the success of remote work models.

In conclusion, the study confirms that remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic has a complex and multifaceted impact on employees' work-life balance, with psychological factors playing a dominant role. Addressing mental health concerns and improving the working environment for remote employees will be essential for promoting a healthier work-life balance in the future.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the rapid global adoption of remote work, which has had a significant impact on the way in which employees manage their personal and professional lives. The objective of this dissertation was to investigate the influence of remote work on the work-life balance of employees during the pandemic. This was done by examining various kinds of psychological, socio-demographic, and work-related factors and their contributions to work-life imbalance. This research has offered valuable insights into the advantages and obstacles of remote work by conducting a thorough examination of the data collected from employees who worked remotely during the pandemic.

6.1 Key Findings

One of the main things that came up in the study is that even though remote work gives people more flexibility and saves commuting time, it has some serious downsides. The biggest issue is that it blurs the lines between work and home life. Without a physical boundary between the office and home, many people found themselves working longer hours, feeling more stressed, and struggling to fully disconnect from work. This matches what other studies have shown—working from home can sometimes push people into an “always-on” mindset, where work never really stops, thanks to things like constant emails and messages. This leads to more stress and a decline in mental well-being.

The research also pointed out that stress and anxiety were major factors that shaped how people handled working from home. Those who were more stressed or anxious had a harder time keeping work and personal life separate. These feelings often made it tough for them to concentrate on work during the day and fully relax after hours. On top of that, a lot of remote workers felt lonely, which took a toll on both their job performance and mental health.

Although this interpretation is plausible, it is important to notice that the data is correlational, and therefore, we could also consider the relationship in the other direction – the difficulties experienced in maintaining their life balance that resulted in the perception of more anxiety and stress.

Personal factors, like gender, living arrangements, and family situations, also played a big role.

For example, women—especially those who had caregiving responsibilities—had a tougher time balancing work and personal life. This points to the fact that remote work challenges can affect men and women differently. Younger people and those living alone also struggled more with loneliness and stress, showing that remote work can affect everyone in different ways depending on their situation.

6.2 Implications for Organisations and Policy Makers

These findings have some important implications for companies and the people making policies, especially since remote work is likely here to stay, even after the pandemic. While working from home has some clear upsides—like more flexibility and no commute—it also brings new challenges that need to be addressed. The study shows how remote work can mess with work-life balance by making it harder to switch off, causing distractions, and increasing feelings of isolation.

For businesses, this means that they need to rethink their remote work policies. Flexibility is great, but it's just as important to make sure employees' mental health and productivity are protected. One solution could be encouraging clear boundaries between work and personal time, such as discouraging employees from checking emails outside of normal working hours. This could help tackle the “always-on” culture that's become more common with remote work.

Loneliness was another big issue for remote workers, so companies should find ways to foster a sense of community, even when people are working from different locations. Regular virtual meetings, team-building activities, and social hangouts could help employees feel more connected. Also, it's important for managers to check in with their teams regularly, not just about work but about how they're doing personally. Offering mental health support and making sure employees have the right tools to work effectively are also key.

On a personal level, workers need to take charge of their own work-life balance too. That means setting clear boundaries, like working only during specific hours, and creating a dedicated workspace to limit distractions. Learning how to manage time and stress effectively can also help remote workers handle the demands of both home and work life.

For policymakers, this study suggests it's time to revisit labor laws in light of the rise of remote work. Things like mandatory breaks, protections against working too much overtime, and ensuring flexibility could help prevent burnout. Formalizing these protections would ensure remote work doesn't become a source of stress and exhaustion for employees.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Although this research offers some valuable insights into the effects of remote work, it is important to consider a few limitations. To begin with, the study only collected data at a single point in time, which provides a snapshot of the emotions that individuals experienced during the pandemic but does not demonstrate how their experiences may have evolved. Remote work dynamics are constantly shifting, depending on factors like changes in company culture, personal life stages, and technological advancements. A longitudinal study would provide a clearer picture of how remote work and work-life balance evolve.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data presents a potential limitation, according to Latkin et al., (2017). Self-reported measures are inherently subject to biases such as social desirability bias, where respondents may underreport negative experiences or overemphasize positive ones to align with perceived social expectations. Moreover, as the study was conducted post-pandemic, there is the risk of recall bias, as participants may struggle to accurately recall their feelings and experiences during the peak of the pandemic, especially if they have since adapted to new working conditions Latkin et al., 2017. While the survey emphasized the importance of honest responses, it is difficult to entirely eliminate these potential biases.

Another limitation concerns the sample representativeness. The use of purposive sampling was appropriate for targeting participants with relevant remote work experience during the pandemic; however, this sampling method can limit the generalizability of the findings (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample was skewed toward younger employees and those working in specific industries, which may not fully capture the experiences of older workers, those in more traditional industries, or those with different socio-economic backgrounds. Future research could benefit from a more

randomized, representative sample that includes participants from a wider range of industries, countries, and demographic groups to draw broader conclusions about the impact of remote work. Finally, the study primarily focused on the short-term effects of remote work during the pandemic and did not explore potential long-term psychological impacts such as burnout or chronic stress. These could have lasting consequences for employees even as remote work becomes more normalized. Additionally, the focus on remote work during a global crisis may have amplified some challenges (e.g., anxiety about the pandemic itself), meaning that the findings may not fully apply to remote work under normal circumstances. Future studies could differentiate between pandemic-specific stressors and those inherently related to remote work.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between remote work and work-life balance, it has also highlighted several areas where further research is needed. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in understanding how remote work influences work-life balance over time (Mamatha & Thoti, 2023). This would involve tracking participants as they continue to work remotely or shift to hybrid work models, thus offering a more dynamic view of how job performance, mental health, and personal well-being evolve as employees adapt to different working conditions. Longitudinal research would also help assess whether the negative effects of remote work, such as workplace loneliness and difficulty maintaining focus, diminish as workers become more accustomed to these arrangements or if they worsen without intervention.

A second area for future research lies in the diversity of remote work experiences across different socio-demographic groups. This study revealed some preliminary insights into how gender, age, and living arrangements influence work-life balance, but more in-depth research is needed. For instance, women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, have been shown to struggle more with maintaining work-life balance while working from home. Future research could focus specifically on how different subgroups such as single parents, minority groups, or workers from different cultural backgrounds experience remote work. Understanding these diverse experiences will be critical in developing inclusive remote work policies that accommodate the varied needs of the workforce.

Intervention-based studies are also a promising avenue for future research. While many organisations have introduced remote work policies, the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at improving work-life balance is still unclear (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023). Future research could investigate which types of organisational support (e.g., mental health resources, flexible scheduling, or reduced digital connectivity) are most effective in mitigating the negative effects of remote work. Such studies could take the form of controlled trials where different strategies are tested and evaluated based on employee well-being, productivity, and long-term job satisfaction. This type of research would provide practical, evidence-based recommendations for organisations looking to optimize their remote work policies (Paudel & Sherm, 2024).

Furthermore, as technological advancements continue to evolve, future studies could explore the role of emerging technologies in shaping the remote work experience. According to Aleem et al., (2023) With the emergence of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and more sophisticated communication tools, these technologies have the potential to aggravate or ease some of the issues of remote working. For example, how might virtual reality platforms that simulate face-to-face interactions reduce feelings of workplace loneliness? How could AI-driven productivity tools help employees manage distractions or stay focused? Exploring these questions could provide valuable insights into the future of remote work and the technological solutions that can enhance it.

Lastly, cross-cultural research is essential to better understand how different countries and organisational cultures approach remote work and work-life balance (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic affected countries and industries differently, with varying levels of government support, work culture, and technological infrastructure. Comparative studies between countries or regions could shed light on best practices and reveal which policy frameworks are most effective in promoting healthy work-life integration in remote work settings (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2024).

Final Thought

The COVID-19 pandemic has irrevocably changed how we work, with remote work emerging as a viable and often preferred option for many employees. However, the findings of this study

highlight the complexities of remote work and its impact on employees' work-life balance. While remote work offers flexibility and reduced commuting time, it also introduces new challenges, including blurred boundaries between work and personal life, increased stress, and feelings of isolation.

As organisations and policymakers navigate the post-pandemic workplace, addressing these challenges and creating environments where remote work can thrive without compromising employees' well-being is essential. By adopting thoughtful, evidence-based strategies that support work-life balance, employers can ensure that remote work remains a sustainable and productive option for the future.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Questionnaire <https://lnkd.in/dy3XA4Ur>

THESIS- Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Judith Ohanma titled **COVID 19: THE EFFECT REMOTE WORKING HAD ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE PANDEMIC.**

The study aims to explore how the sudden transition to remote working due to the pandemic has affected individual's ability to maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal lives.

Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time, without any negative consequences or penalties.

All your responses are anonymous and data collected will be kept confidential and only those directly involved with this project will have access to the data.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me by email at s-johanma@ucp.pt

P.S.: This survey contains credits to get free survey responses at SurveySwap.io

Q2 By agreeing to participate in this study, you are indicating that: you are at least 18 years age and have read and comprehend the informed consent.

- I consent (5)
- I do not consent (6)

Skip To: End of Survey If By agreeing to participate in this study, you are indicating that: you are at least 18 years age... = I do not consent

Page Break

Q3 Section One: Demographics

INSTRUCTION: Given the extended duration of the lockdown, it is understandable that some information may not be easily recalled. However, I kindly request you take a moment to reflect and provide honest answers to each question. Your participation and honest input are greatly appreciated.

Gender

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Other (4)
-

Q2 How old are you?

Q4 Which of the following best describes your marital status?

- Single (1)
 - Married (2)
 - Divorced (3)
 - Widowed (4)
 - Prefer not to say (5)
 - Other (6) _____
-

Q5 Which of the following best describes your employment status at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Employed Full-time (1)
 - Employed Part-time (2)
 - Student (3)
 - Unemployed (4)
 - Retired (5)
-

Q6 What were your living conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Living alone (1)
 - Living with family (2)
 - Living with family and kids (3)
 - Living with flatmates (4)
-

Q7 Including yourself, how many people lived in your household at the time of the COVID-19 lockdown?

Q8 What country were you in when the COVID-19 lockdown was initiated

Q9 Have you worked remotely before the COVID-19 pandemic?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Changes in work and home life during working from home

Section Two: Remote work and its effect on work-life balance during the lockdown

INSTRUCTION: Given the extended duration since the lockdown, it is understandable that some information may not be readily recalled. However, I kindly request you to take a moment to reflect and provide your honest answers to each question. Your participation and honest input are greatly appreciated.

Q10 Which of the following best describes the industry you worked in during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

▼ Accounting (1) ... Other (28)

Q11 How best will you describe your position within your Industry eg, (CEO, Manager, Supervisor, Employee etc)

Q12 What level of lockdown was initiated in your country at the time?

- Home confinement (1)
 - Partial Lockdown (2)
 - Total Lockdown (3)
-

Q13 Changes in time spent on childcare

- More than before (1)
 - Less than before (2)
 - No changed (4)
 - Does not apply to me (5)
-

Q14 Changes in daily working hours

- 4 hours or more decreased (1)
 - 4 hours or more Increased (2)
 - Not changed (3)
-

Q15 Changes in time spent on household chores daily

- 4 hours or more Decreased (1)
 - 4 hours or more Increased (2)
 - Not changed (3)
-

Q16 Changes in workload

- Significantly Decreased (1)
 - Decreased (2)
 - Not Changed (3)
 - Increased (4)
 - Significantly Increased (5)
-

Q17 Control over working hours

- Low levels of control over working hours (1)
 - Moderate level of control over working hours (2)
 - High levels of control over working hours (3)
-

Q18 Distractions while working

- Never (1)
 - Sometimes (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Most of the time (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q19 Trouble focusing at work

- Never (1)
 - Sometimes (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Most of the time (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q20 Increased effect of workplace loneliness

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Strongly agree (5)
-

Q21 Do you think working from home had an effect on your job performance

- Yes (1)
- Somewhat (2)
- No (3)

End of Block: Changes in work and home life during working from home

Start of Block: Psychological Wellbeing

Section Three: Psychological state of remote employees working during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

INSTRUCTION: Given the extended duration since the lockdown, it is understandable that some information may not be readily recalled. However, I kindly request you to take a moment to reflect and provide your honest answers to each question. Your participation and honest input are greatly appreciated.

Q22 While remote working during the pandemic, how often were you bothered by the following problems?

	Not at All (1)	Several days (2)	More than half of the days (3)	Nearly everyday (4)
Constantly feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not being able to stop or control worrying (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying too much about different things in life (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble relaxing even when you have time to (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being so restless that it was hard to sit still (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q23 Answer these questions, using the scale provided below about working from home during the pandemic.

	Never (1)	Almost never (2)	Sometimes (3)	Fairly often (4)	Very often (5)
During the work-from-home period, how often did you get upset because of something that happened unexpectedly (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often did you feel that you were unable to control the important things in your life (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often did you feel nervous or stressed (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often did you feel confident about your ability to handle your personal problems (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often did you feel things were going your way (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often did you find that you could not cope with all the things you had to do (6)

How often were you able to control irritations in your life (7)

How often did you feel you were on top of things (8)

How often did you feel angered because of the things that happened that were outside of your control (9)

How often did you feel difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them (10)

End of Block: Psychological Wellbeing

