

Gordon Institute of Business Science

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Exploring autonomous motivation: Knowledge workers' perspective of South African hybrid organisations

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ABSTRACT

Hybrid work as prompted and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic is a preferred work approach that is here to stay. The global phenomenon has also gained momentum in South Africa as more corporate organisations are adopting this new way of working. As organisational leaders grapple with the varying factors that are required to create optimal working conditions in hybrid settings, they should also gain a better understanding of what motivates knowledge workers to perform and to stay engaged, regardless of their place of work.

Building upon the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which is a well-recognised human motivation theory, this study was purposed to explore and deepen a conceptual understanding of knowledge workers' perception of autonomous motivation and how it can be achieved in hybrid work settings.

The multi-level explorative study gained insights from 18 knowledge workers who were either managers or individual contributors and they worked for organisations that have adopted hybrid working in the financial services and in the consulting services industries. Through the conducted semi-structured interviews, the researcher sought to explore knowledge workers' lived experiences of working in hybrid environments.

The study findings uncovered expectations of how knowledge workers desire to be managed to increase autonomous motivation. In addition, the findings revealed principal leadership practices and work experiences that contribute to the satisfaction of the psychological need for autonomous motivation among knowledge workers.

The study contributes to literature by confirming and expanding on the desirable leader practices and the work experiences that should be cultivated to maximise autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in the hybrid work settings. The findings also outline the undesirable leader practices and the work experiences that should be avoided as they thwart autonomous motivation. A leadership development framework detailing the approaches that may be utilised to lead knowledge workers in hybrid teams for increased autonomous motivation is recommended.

KEYWORDS

Autonomous motivation, knowledge workers, hybrid way of working, leader practices, work experiences

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Change Leadership at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation to carry out this research.

DEDICATION

To my late Mamamiza, thank you for inspiring me to pursue excellence.

To Penzi, thank you for the late cups of tea and for your enduring support.

To my Melodies, you have been my biggest cheerleaders, thank you.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

HR	Human Resources
KW	Knowledge Workers
SDT	Self-Determination Theory

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1.1 Background and Context

As the world continues to slowly and sensibly transition out of the COVID-19 pandemic to yet another uncharted territory with regards to the future of work, researchers found that there are emerging trends that will ultimately necessitate the need to revisit, redefine and reformulate Human Resources (HR) practices instead of adapting and improving the existing ones to meet today and the future's business objectives (Pemberton, 2021). These emerging trends are essential for business leaders to take note of as it is believed that they will shape the future of work. The trends that are of relevance to this study are that flexible work will continue as well as that leaders are not fully aware of the employees' needs (Microsoft, 2021). An Australian PwC (2022) study also points out that hybrid work is a preferred way of working going forward and that leaders need a better understanding of what employees want in the hybrid work arrangements.

For the purposes of this study, hybrid organisations refer to organisations that structure work in a manner that allows employees to perform work partly remotely and partly in the office. This is done through splitting time between working remotely (from home/anywhere) and working from the office, where the employees are physically present at their place of work on a rotational basis (Przytuła et al., 2020).

According to Franzen-Waschke (2021), the debate on where work should be conducted from is perceived as contentious for employers and for the workforce due to their varying expectations and needs. Reisinger and Fetterer (2021) are of the view that forcing employees to return to the office can result in negative perceptions as it compromises the inherent meaning of flexibility, which is often viewed by employees as the autonomy to decide when and where one should work from. Despite the ongoing debate, it is becoming prevalent that the future of work may be hybrid as is also identified by Alexander et al. (2021) in a McKinsey study which revealed that as many as nine out of 10 organisations are likely to have a combination of remote and on-site work arrangements. Globally, companies such as Twitter, Spotify, SAP, 3M, and Reddit are among those that have announced a permanent adoption of hybrid work (Smith, 2022). In their quantitative study on hybrid leadership, Hopkins and Figaro (2021) have found that the United States of America workforce are starting to freely articulate the desire to either work fully remotely, whilst the others prefer a combination of both the virtual and the face-to-face engagements.

The evidence of employees' preference of their place of work has been notably depicted in the new Jabra Hybrid Ways of Working 2022 Global Report where 2 800 knowledge workers in six countries were surveyed and the results indicate that 63% of the participants consider hybrid work as a preferred work model as compared to 15% who wish to be fully remote and 22% who prefer to be fully on-site (Jabra, 2022). A McKinsey study that was conducted by Scharf et al. (2022) reveals that the ongoing changes in the world of work impacts on the leadership's effectiveness in a manner that compels leaders to shift their thinking to reduce the current ambiguity of managing hybrid teams with restricted visibility. These shared insights necessitate a need for leaders to understand the nuances of managing a hybrid workforce by refining the knowledge, the skills, and the attributes for the effective leadership of hybrid teams (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). This study aimed to explore what should inform the critical leadership practices and the work experiences that are suitable to lead in this new world of work where hybrid work models can be suitably implemented.

1.2 Research Problem

In the South African context, the hybrid era is certainly an uncharted territory for a country that has not significantly applied hybrid ways of working in the past. The sudden and equally significant change in the working trends has gained the attention of South Africa's current (at the time the study was conducted) Labour Minister, Thulas Nxesi, who acknowledges the need for the government to transition into new ways of regulating the labour market (Business Tech, 2022). This reality can be extended to organisational leaders who ought to prepare to rebuild for a hybrid era that works whilst aiming to meet new employee expectations (Microsoft, 2022a). Consequently, both the South African government and the business sectors ought to engage in a dialogue that will be instrumental in shaping the new labour conditions to foster transitioning into the new ways of work where the South African workforce is not only protected but it thrives whilst meeting organisational objectives.

Business Tech (2021) has painted a picture of where most organisations are regarding the choice of a work model that is best suited to reach organisational objectives post the COVID-19 pandemic. The company revealed that some of the South African companies in the banking sector do embrace the change (Business Tech, 2021) with some corporates having openly adopted hybrid models and there are many others that are starting to restructure and reconfigure their offices to incorporate hybrid working (The Workspace, 2021). For example, Nedbank the banking group and the consulting services house, Deloitte, have with confidence respectively announced adopting a hybrid work model on a permanent basis (Business Tech, 2021). This shows that hybrid could be the preferred work model, and the South African workforce, just like their global counterparts, are also adapting to hybrid work with varying

preferences, with a staggering 42% who desire to spend their time working outside the office (Business Tech, 2021). It is fitting to argue, that leaders of South African organisations should equally explore the leadership strategies with a goal of finding effective ways of managing hybrid teams.

1.3 Research Purpose and Aims

The aim of the research was to deepen an understanding of what autonomous motivation is in the modern world of work through exploring knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that are known to drive South African hybrid organisations. Fundamentally, the researcher aimed to uncover the varying expectations of how knowledge workers desire to be managed in organisations that are adopting the new ways of working. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will help managers and leaders to expand their approach in creating optimal working conditions that promote autonomous motivation among their hybrid teams to help them to stay engaged and motivated to perform regardless of their place of work.

The objectives of the research were to achieve the following:

- I. To explore knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Olafsen & Deci, 2020; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
- II. To explore knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that prevent autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Fowler, 2018).
- III. To explore how leaders can support knowledge workers and thereby enable them to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Olafsen & Deci, 2020; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Given the newness of the concept of hybrid working that is gaining momentum in the South African context and in its workforce, this study took an exploratory approach to deepen the understanding of the identified phenomenon.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Academic and Theoretical Significance

The objective of this section was to present the theoretical and the academic relevance of the conducted study. If hybrid work is indeed a modern trend, and there is wide acceptance of its adoption despite the varying preferences of employers and the workforce, organisations

locally should acknowledge the change and they must explore the ways to reinvent themselves for differentiation as they transition with minimal obstruction into the hybrid age (Edmondson et al., 2022). What is required is a hybrid work model that is suitable for employees who want to experience flexibility (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). However, what is becoming more prevalent in terms of flexibility in the context of hybrid work, is no longer about connecting from anywhere to get work done, but rather it is more about employee autonomy; as well as enabling employees to primarily decide where and when they should perform work to the advantage of both the organisation and the individual (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021). Autonomy is believed to be a key contributor to achieving motivation. Arguably, facilitating employee autonomy is important to aid organisations to thrive in hybrid work settings and it is a necessity to remain competitive and relevant amidst the changing nature of work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

These insights reveal an academic gap that necessitates an exploration of what knowledge workers' understanding of autonomous motivation is, and how it can be achieved in the context of South African hybrid organisations. The insights that were generated from the collected data revealed compelling findings of the desirable leader practices and the work practices that cultivate and promote autonomous motivation as perceived by the knowledge workers. These findings will certainly benefit leaders in the organisations that have adopted the hybrid ways of work in the South African context.

Business Context Significance

The objective of this section was to present the business relevance of the conducted study. It is important for organisational leaders and for Human Resource (HR) practitioners to enable flexibility and to succeed in hybrid work settings whilst supporting employee autonomy. Organisations would need to establish what works best for them, while also drawing from the employees' input (Business Tech, 2021). Furthermore, leaders ought to rethink how they are going to lead and support their hybrid teams to flourish by means of exploring the innovative tools to re-energise the teams through fostered motivation (Alexander et al., 2021; Brafford & Ryan, 2020). In cases where employees are ignored and their preferences unheard, it may result in low morale and in the lack of engagement. Increasing employee morale requires a greater understanding of the modern HR practices that are geared to foster autonomous motivation (Altman, 2021; Brafford & Ryan, 2020).

Reflecting on the above, it is apparent that the demand for a more engaged workforce with effective remote model of work has increased exponentially as observed by Przytula et al. (2020). The challenge is that it remains uncertain as to how leaders are going to specifically

manage hybrid teams by cultivating autonomous motivation (Alexander et al., 2021). Furthermore, a vast number of South African managers do not feel well equipped to manage their virtual and hybrid teams and for many, it is the first time that they had to lead in this new way of working (Microsoft, 2020). This indicates that little is known about the requirements that are relevant for employers to enhance employee motivation and engagement in hybrid work settings (Franzen-Waschke, 2021).

Organisational leaders would need to take note of these aspects to enhance their employee value proposition as in the hybrid model employees may hold the power to decide where to work (PwC, 2022). The failure to find this balance may pose envisaged organisational challenges that will ultimately require the attention of organisational leaders (Grzegorzczak et al., 2021).

It is for the above reasons that from a business perspective, the conducted study was aimed at exploring the approaches that leaders can employ that are best suited to cultivate and promote autonomous motivation in knowledge workers in certain industries of the South African hybrid organisations in a manner that will result in engaged employees that perform exceptionally well, despite their place of work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

1.5 Research Scope

This study focused on the experiences of knowledge workers with or without people management responsibilities who are equipped to do their job from anywhere. Their employers have adopted the hybrid ways of work and the employees are supported by the detailed hybrid policies or by the set of guidelines or principles that outline a common understanding of where and when to work. The research setting is the South African consulting services firms and the organisations in the financial services industry. The study did not explore the experiences of knowledge workers that are working for organisations that have not adopted the hybrid ways of work in the outlined industries or outside South Africa. In addition, the researcher did not explore organisations in the specified setting that do not have a clearly defined hybrid work policy or set of guidelines or principles.

2.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore knowledge workers' perspective of autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. In current debates about hybrid work mandates and how many days employees may work from home or from the office, there is literature evidence positing that transitioning to hybrid work will present potential challenges for leaders and for the workforce. The issue is important because very little is known about how leaders ought to manage and support their teams in this new uncharted territory (Przytuła et al., 2020).

The purpose of this chapter is to outline some of the past studies that are fitting to anchor the phenomenon under this study. To start off, an articulation of knowledge workers is presented in the context of modern-day work. This is followed by an articulation of the adopted theoretical framework which is inclusive of its core principles and the key assumptions with particular emphasis on the concept of autonomous motivation as informed by the three basic psychological needs. The empirical research from the reviewed literature portraying the actions for applying the Self Determination Theory (SDT) in work settings is then presented. The reviewed literature was not in the hybrid work settings as hybrid working became more prevalent in the response to the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher has consequently extended the literature review to recent studies about the approaches for managing hybrid teams. The chapter concludes by stating the gaps that were identified in the literature, which were addressed by this study. The identified research gaps informed the research questions that are outlined in Chapter 3.

2.2 Knowledge Workers

Despite varied definitions, a common understanding of knowledge workers in the context of this study is employees who possess valuable knowledge that is used to solve complex business problems through critical thinking (Davenport, 2005; Surawski, 2019) and the value that resides in the knowledge workers' heads as they are highly skilled (Stone et al., 2009). Due to the nature of their work, knowledge workers can arguably work from anywhere, partly, or fully remotely (Surawski, 2019). Knowledge workers are also known to reach their optimal level of performance when they are entrusted and given the space to fully utilise their capabilities and expert knowledge (Serrat, 2017). Hence, the study aimed to explore and gain insights into the leader practices and the work experiences that are fundamental to cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in South African hybrid organisations.

Adding weight to the potential challenges for organisational leaders, the workforce of today's competitive knowledge economy is made up of knowledge workers who are mostly highly talented and difficult to retain, consequently intensifying the war for talent (Serrat, 2017). Moreover, Davenport (2008) noticed the growing number and the relevance of knowledge workers who differ from traditional employees. If knowledge workers do indeed make up the majority of today's workforce (Serrat, 2017), and flexible work is indeed here to stay, and leaders are indeed 'out of touch' with the employees' needs as posited by Microsoft (2021), then there is assuredly a strong business and academic need to understand the effective ways to manage knowledge workers in the future ways of work that is characterised by hybrid organisations.

Davenport (2008) also found that although there is consensus that knowledge workers should be managed and treated differently, some organisational leaders still apply traditional leadership practices that were designed for the industrial age to manage this class of employees. This compromises the ability to create optimal working conditions that are geared to motivate knowledge workers to pursue excellence, based on the principles of autonomous and sustainable motivation (Stone et al., 2009). Crucial for knowledge workers is the need for organisational leaders to first understand their preferred ways of working and establish how they should be managed to enable them to flourish. Key to this is the prerequisite to move beyond the tangible rewards that are usually offered to knowledge workers and focus must be on the foundational building blocks for enhancing employee motivation (Serrat, 2017). The strategies to motivate knowledge workers in hybrid organisations are still widely open for interpretation (Serrat, 2017), thereby accordingly necessitating the need to explore if autonomous motivation is an essential ingredient that is required to keep knowledge workers motivated and engaged despite their place of work.

2.3 Key Assumptions and Principles of the Theoretical Framework

The Self-determination Theory (SDT) was deemed as a foundational theoretical framework that was fitting to anchor and unify this study. This theory is applicable to the context of the study as it offers a base that leaders can use to create optimal autonomy-supportive environments for knowledge workers in hybrid work settings (Koestner & Holding, 2021; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020).

The theory was developed by American Psychologists, Richard Ryan, and Edward Deci around the year 1985. Although the well-established and the macro human motivation theory carries a unique position in the field of psychology, its application has since expanded to

different disciplines. This includes being progressively espoused in organisations as an approach to comprehend and enable motivation and engagement for employees (Ryan & Deci, 2019a). Indeed, the theory has become prevalent as modern leaders acknowledge the worth of an engaged and committed workforce (Ryan & Deci, 2019b). Even though leaders espouse the principles of SDT, there are far fewer leaders that can successfully create autonomous motivation among the teams they lead as practicing these core principles remains a challenge (Stone et al., 2009). Hence the intuitive need of this study to uncover the unconventional principles, if any, that are necessary to lead knowledge workers in a manner that will result in sustained autonomous motivation in an unconventional hybrid way of work within the South African context.

The SDT views human beings as being intrinsically motivated to develop and achieve set goals because of the understood meaning, the value and the importance that is attached to work (Stone et al., 2009). The different types of motivations that are advocated by the SDT exist along a continuum. On the one end of the continuum is autonomous motivation which results in high quality sustainable motivation whilst the other end consists of controlled motivation that results in poor quality motivation that is arguably unsustainable (Jungert et al., 2021). As anticipated, autonomous motivation yields positive results (feeling a sense of choice in doing something) whilst controlled motivation is associated with negative outcomes (feeling pressurised to do something) (Jungert et al., 2021; Olafsen & Deci, 2020). Fundamental to the concept of SDT is that two primary propositions provide a strong framework for building motivational quality across different cultures and work settings (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

The first proposition is that human beings have three fundamental sets of basic psychological needs. *The need for competence* (feeling competent or efficacious due to inherent skills and expertise and the ability to continually grow to widen one's capabilities to meet future work demands); *the need for relatedness* (feeling a sense of belonging, being respected and cared for); and *the need for autonomy* (feeling a sense of ownership, choice, freedom and being the driver and author of one's life) (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Owing to the shared literature categorising the three basic psychological needs that are recognised as essential to build high quality motivation across different cultures and work settings, this study sought to understand the relevance of these needs for knowledge workers in the South African context.

In aiming to further unpack the need for autonomy, the need speaks to the power to choose, using one's discretion to make a choice or making an informed decision based on self-interest and value rather than internal or external pressure (Koestner & Holding, 2021). Autonomy also speaks to finding meaning in doing work that is intrinsically considered to be valuable despite

the mandates and the goals that are set by organisational leaders (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021). The shared basic psychological needs have been deemed fundamental to human beings for a period of over 35 years when the SDT was founded. This study pursued to explore the relevance of these basic psychological needs in the modern-day society that is characterised by knowledge workers who perform modern work in hybrid organisations.

The second proposition is that the fulfilment and satisfaction of the above outlined needs is essential for optimal functioning as well as for the promotion and the maintenance of personal growth, and well-being. Ultimately it aids to promote autonomous motivation that is combined with enhanced performance (Deci et al., 2017; Reeve & Lee, 2019). As a result, it is proposed and assumed that everyone has these innate needs that must be fulfilled (Baard et al., 2004). However, the question that led to this study was, will the leaders who support the satisfaction of the said basic psychological needs in a hybrid context achieve similar gains? Indeed, one can assert that the autonomous motivation among knowledge workers is determined by whether knowledge workers consider their hybrid work settings to be supportive towards the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs as outlined earlier (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). It was therefore useful and fitting to explore the relevance of these needs in the context of hybrid organisations among knowledge workers.

2.4 Satisfied or Thwarted Psychological Needs and Outcomes

There is considerable evidence by various scholars that confirm that the above outlined basic psychological needs are considered to be necessary requirements that enable individuals to flourish and succeed (van den Broeck et al., 2014) and their fulfillment is beneficial for both organisations and individuals (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Specifically, the evidence by Rigby and Ryan (2018) shows the effects of employees who are given higher autonomy, which is a core psychological element that motivates human beings become engaged. In work settings, the pair believe that such individuals tend to have amongst other aspects, increased organisational commitment and engagement, trust and loyalty, feelings of overall job satisfaction, increased performance, and creativity, as well as the zeal for work (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Moreover, the work conducted by these individuals is likely to be perceived as an outcome of their own inherent motivation, which serves as an autonomous motivator to perform better (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

At a psychological level, the fulfilment of the said psychological needs aids employees to stay engaged, confident, and motivated (Brafford & Ryan, 2020). Equally so, when employees' basic psychological needs are not fulfilled, employees are thwarted in fully realising their full potential for optimal functioning, and they experience less satisfaction and engagement. They may also

have negative attitudes towards the organisation (van den Broeck et al., 2014). Ryan and Deci (2019a) also posit that the frustration of the basic psychological needs ultimately thwarts emotional wellbeing and growth. In addition, the unsatisfied psychological needs compromise the intrinsic motivation levels which result in other consequences (Baard et al., 2004). The study purposed to explore what the outcomes of the satisfied or thwarted basic psychological needs among knowledge workers would look like, particularly in the emerging hybrid work settings.

The next section explores the various studies that have been conducted to assess the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in different settings and how leaders have previously created autonomous supportive work environments.

2.5 Analysis of the Application of SDT

Although SDT highlights the importance of fulfilling all the three basic psychological needs to increase autonomous motivation, Koestner and Holding (2021) note that the emphasis has mostly been placed on autonomy over the other psychological needs. Yet, when it comes to the term autonomy, there seems to be confusion as to what the term signifies. Despite the latter, Franzen-Waschke (2021) highlights that autonomy and self-determination are two factors that propel motivation and performance. If the latter is indeed the case, it would explain why Manganelli et al. (2018) posit that giving employees the autonomy to choose how often they would like to work from home/office could be favourably linked to employee motivation. Arguably, what is already known from the literature is that the researchers have placed an emphasis on autonomy as a key contributor to employee motivation. It is for this reason that this study aimed to explore the significance of all the three variables (autonomy, competence; and relatedness) in contributing towards autonomous motivation.

Olafsen and Deci (2020) suggest that there are social-environmental or workplace factors which speak to the way in which co-workers and managers establish environments in the workplace that contribute towards autonomous motivation among employees by either supporting or thwarting the outlined psychological needs. These factors include but are not limited to the interpersonal climate (the way employees relate to their leaders and co-workers), job design and compensation. The pair further postulate that great attention over the years focused on the work conditions that lead to the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, which places focus only on the bright side of the SDT as an enabler to autonomous motivation and not the dark side of the SDT where the psychological needs are frustrated. Olafsen and Deci (2020) recommend that it is important to consider both paths to be able to explain effective versus compromised functioning and wellbeing versus ill-being, consequently,

showing a gap in the studies. Organisations should not only focus on the work conditions that satisfy the psychological needs, but they should also be equally familiar with the work conditions that thwart the psychological needs. This study also explored the work conditions that thwart the autonomous motivation for knowledge workers.

The first reviewed research study that applied the SDT as its framework is the work that was recently conducted by Orsini and Rodrigues (2020) on the educational institutions that transitioned into remote working and how the educators can be supported by their team leaders to make this transition during periods of change uncertainty. The study revealed that the team leaders, through their leadership styles, have a significant role to play in creating optimal working conditions that are supportive of the basic psychological needs to increase the educators' level of autonomous motivation and job fulfilment. To this end, the recommended management practices as per the findings from Orsini and Rodrigues (2020) that are believed to support the psychological needs and thereby enhance autonomous motivation in the remote organisational settings include but are not limited to the following:

Autonomy – Refers to leaders that minimise micro-management, empower teams, increase trust, give options, promote a sense of choice and flexibility, give a voice for input in decision making through open communication, create a sense of ownership, empower teams to choose how they plan to accomplish tasks to increase motivation as well as productivity and those that also consider individual needs and circumstances (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020).

Competence – Refers to leaders that support the team's capability and creativity and those that offer a sense of effectiveness by creating a clear structure with outlined timeframes and goals to work towards. In addition, leaders who offer guidance and support where required, and they also manage the work over/underload to avoid burnout/ increase engagement and provide timely and constructive feedback (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020).

Relatedness – Refers to leaders that establish and maintain close relationships, as well as to support meaningful connections, frequent communication, and check-ins with the team members at an individual and at a team level for team cohesion and for creating a sense of connectedness in a virtual community. This can be done through the use of online platforms that are designed for team collaboration. What is also useful is giving teams an opportunity to disconnect and consider their individual needs (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020).

One would like to argue that the realities of the study that are outlined above for educators are not an exception for knowledge workers transitioning to hybrid work in hybrid organisations. Indeed, one discovered that transitioning to hybrid work posed challenges and

difficulties for knowledge workers since most of the workers have enjoyed an uninterrupted period of working mostly from home during the hard lockdown restrictions in South Africa around 2020/2021. They were now suddenly required to adjust to a new way of working which was partly in the office and partly remote. It was hence “timely and pertinent to equally raise awareness” (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020, p. 829) on how knowledge workers can be supported by their managers during hybrid working.

Another useful reviewed research study that was underpinned by the SDT is the one by Slemp et al. (2021). They outlined the fundamental role of organisational leaders as being to continually seek the approaches to improve employee well-being, motivation, and performance to achieve organisational success. In their study, the SDT is also viewed as an effective motivational theory that is essential to create optimal working conditions that are required for autonomous motivation and for growth through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (Slemp et al., 2021). As similarly considered by Orsini and Rodrigues (2020), these need-supportive interventions in the workplace have been summarised below, and they are inclusive of what Fowler (2018) believes are the actions that frustrate autonomous motivation. The researcher identified a need to weave in the contradictory views by Slemp et al. (2021) and Fowler (2018) to balance the perspective of what happens when the needs are satisfied or thwarted.

Autonomy support – The actions that increase autonomy include but are not limited to allowing employees to explore, by empowering them to oversee what they need to deliver on, as well as by affording them the opportunity to make work contributions and encourage proactiveness (Slemp et al., 2021). Contrary to this, leader’s practices and actions that erode a sense of autonomy in employees include being controlling, micromanaging, applying pressure, pushing down goals and often depending on the external rewards as well as the incentives to influence employee behaviour (Slemp et al., 2021).

Competence support – The actions that foster competence include sharing knowledge with employees, providing guidance and structure, giving feedback, and establishing realistic yet challenging goals (Slemp et al., 2021). The leader practices and actions that destroy a sense of competence include heightening the focus on performance results whilst underlooking the importance of learning outcomes, by being punitive and by not providing sufficient support and guidance (Slemp et al., 2021).

Relatedness support – The actions that support relatedness include showing care and interest to the team, nurturing relationships, taking time to listen to the needs of the team, and encouraging connections among team members (Slemp et al., 2021). Leaders

compromise a sense of relatedness by neglecting the importance of explaining the why, as well as by disregarding the feelings of employees and building up isolation and loneliness through the lack of fairness and openness (Fowler, 2018, p. 187).

Through their systemic qualitative study, Slemp et al. (2021) confirm an increase in organisational research that is underpinned by the SDT over the past decade. Despite the increase, the trio acknowledged the lack of documented organisational interventions that are useful to promote the support for the basic psychological needs in the workplace. Upon systematically searching for past studies relating to the organisational interventions that are designed to effectively cultivate autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and in turn, promote autonomous motivation in organisational settings, only ten studies were found to be eligible for inclusion in their study (Slemp et al., 2021). The intent of the study was to systematically assess the effectiveness of the identified interventions. Although there was a discrepancy in their findings, seven out of the ten studies showed favourable effects, and they confirmed the effectiveness of the interventions through creating change in leader behaviour post the leadership development programmes and the follow ups (Slemp et al., 2021).

In their conclusion, Slemp et al. (2021) indicate that the intervention-based literature that is framed by the SDT is still in its early stage with inconsistent but promising findings. As such, this conducted study added value to identifying the management/leader practices that are need-supportive in the unique context of hybrid working organisations. Another essential recommendation that was made by Slemp et al. (2021) which is similar to that of Koestner and Holding (2021) and which was useful for this study was to look beyond “autonomy support which is thought to nurture all three basic needs (not just the need for autonomy)” (2021, p. 21), but it also explores the benefit of the competence and relatedness-supportive management practices in yielding autonomous motivation and other positive outcomes in organisations. This study aimed to explore the value of holistically satisfying all the three basic needs for knowledge workers.

In addition, Slemp et al. (2021) also recommended that the future studies that are geared to explore the effectiveness of the need-supportive training interventions should focus on employing multi-level sampling strategies that include both leaders and their individual team members (Slemp et al., 2021). This conducted study aimed to advance the literature on the work conditions that create autonomous motivation by exploring the views of the sampled knowledge workers with and without people management responsibilities, thereby ensuring that the findings from the study bring a balanced view from both parties. Lastly, the reviewed study revealed that the approaches that are need supportive or need-thwarting yield related yet different concepts (Slemp et al., 2021). It was useful for this study to look at what

knowledge workers perceive as being the need supportive leader practices and work conditions and whether such will be related but different in terms of the undesirable leaders' practices and work conditions.

A third valuable research study containing the foundations of the unifying framework of the SDT is that conducted by Fowler (2018) who holds the view that, among the common leadership theories that exist and that are in use, most of them tend to have a top-down, command and control tone. Fowler (2018) asserts that these kinds of theories are not always effective, particularly when it comes to developing teams, and fostering high performance that is sustainable over time which ultimately leads to employee's health and well-being. Furthermore, this scholar posits that most popular leadership competencies that are endorsed by HR professionals are leader centric as opposed to being focused on the needs of employees. As such, the needs of employees and the importance of motivating others is "peripheral to leadership, rather than central or vital to effective leadership" (Fowler, 2018, pp. 186–187). The above stems from the fact that although the SDT has been vastly covered in recent literature, for leaders to adapt the competencies based on the principles of the SDT, it will require "HR professionals and organisational leaders to understand SDT and appreciate its implications on organisational leadership".

Similar to the two preceding literature reviews that were shared on the use of the SDT in work settings, this study positions the SDT to enhance leaders' understanding of how to support individuals to experience as sense of autonomy that brings about superior motivation for optimal functioning and increased performance (Fowler, 2018). It is further believed that leaders who work towards helping their teams to experience high-quality motivation are more likely to help their teams experience a sense of autonomy and meaning which will help leaders to depend less on extrinsic rewards to motivate action in others. This realism necessitates a need for leaders to be educated on how to nurture peoples' optimal motivation through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological aspects as already outlined (Fowler, 2018). Since the psychological needs are empirically validated and are arguably deemed universal, it was useful to understand how these needs can indeed promote autonomous motivation and most importantly, whether their application can help to reshape leadership competencies that are useful in the context of hybrid work.

Fowler (2018) recommends three leadership competencies integrated with SDT that organisational leaders ought to have to develop and guide their individual team members as they are shaped to encourage leadership behaviours that are deemed necessary to create optimal workplace environments where teams thrive and are fueled to work towards reaching

organisational goals. The motivation competencies that are considered to be fundamental as they affect the leadership behaviour in the different contexts are expanded next (Fowler, 2018).

Encourage Autonomy – This competency includes the skills where leaders do not use controlling language but rather, they invite a sense of choice, as well as create and explain the boundaries within which employees can explore. They also set goals in a collaborative manner, with outlined timeframes to guide the team to work towards set goals (Fowler, 2018). Critical to the latter is a view that Fowler (2018) holds which is that autonomy differs from freedom and it is rather an internalised awareness of choice and a sense of control despite the set rules, the work requirements, as well as the regulations or boundaries as communicated in a manner that does not bring about guilt or fear due to the power or the status of a leader (Fowler, 2018).

Deepen Relatedness – This competency includes the skills where leaders show empathy, care for their teams, listen to the needs and concerns of employees, provide informal feedback, openly explain the why, as well as share personal and organisational information, to aid individual members to align their role and responsibilities to their own personal values, and to focus on the bigger picture. For leaders to deepen relatedness, they ought to be alert to the needs of their teams without disregarding their emotions (Fowler, 2018).

Build Competence- This competence speaks to the “leader’s ability to help people feel effective at meeting everyday challenges and opportunities, help them demonstrate skill over time and help them appreciate their growth and learning” (Fowler, 2018, p. 191). This is achieved when leaders emphasise both learning and performance, by showing interest in their team’s ongoing development, as well as by offering learning opportunities. They may also alter their leadership style based on the employee’s level of competence, thereby guiding teams to solve problems and to offer timely feedback. Achieving the above requires leaders to gauge the development needs as well as the performance levels of their teams. They can also offer guidance and structure based on the identified gaps where the less experienced as well as the under performers are offered enough guidance while the experienced and high performers are awarded more flexibility without micromanaging any of their team members (Fowler, 2018).

What is interesting about Fowler’s (2018) work is the acknowledgement that the satisfaction of employees’ psychological needs is a critical strategic advantage particularly during

periods of forced disruption where organisations should remain competitive. For South African organisations to successfully step into the hybrid ways of work, they would require an army of highly motivated teams that are ready to perform. Hence the emphasised need for this study which will aid leaders to identify the emerging approaches and skills that are effective to mobilise teams to perform regardless of the place of work through encouraging autonomy, deepening relatedness, and building competence (Fowler, 2018).

In addition to the reviewed literature, a McKinsey study by Scharf and Weerda (2022) reveals that effective people management practices in a hybrid environment for both leaders and employees include but are not limited to; focusing on the performance outcomes by empowering employees to take ownership of their work under clearly set goals, building and maintaining trust together with team cohesion and doing away with micromanagement, fostering team engagement as well as adopting an environment where teams can solve business problems collectively to encourage ownership (Scharf & Weerda, 2022). These are useful insights as they widen the lense of how leaders ought to lead hybrid teams and align with the shared rationale of the reviewed literature.

Of equal importance is Gartner's (2021) Hybrid Employee Survey which was recently conducted on 4 000 employees across a wide range of industries that revealed a gap that exists in the sentiments between executive leaders and employees who are individual contributors. These gaps include six key areas that are required to create a desirable employee experience for organisations that consider a hybrid working model. This research was of particular interest to this study as their key findings closely align to the outlined psychological needs that were informed by the SDT as described above and it was necessary to see whether there is congruency in the context of South African hybrid organisations. Highlighted below are the key findings that are indicative of the gaps:

- **A Culture of Flexibility** (*aligned to the need for autonomy in the SDT*) – This gap speaks to seeing flexibility and remote work as a default way of work that should be promoted and that is as valid as on-site work. The findings reveal that whilst 75% of the executives in the study believe that they are operating within a culture of flexibility that aligns their own needs with those of their teams and business needs, only 57% of the individual contributors believe that their organisations embrace flexibility. In addition, there is also a gap that exists with regards to how the executives and the individual contributors feel about the inherent autonomy over deciding to work flexibly. Executives (at 72%) believe they can work out their flexible work arrangement whilst “only half of the individual contributors feel

they have the same privilege” (Gartner, 2021). The research company is of the view that this gap poses an acute risk “for employees’ sense of fairness, which in turn will likely become a greater driver of engagement in a hybrid environment” (Gartner, 2021).

- **Ability to Work from Home** (*aligned to the need for competence in the SDT*) – This gap speaks to equipping employees with the right tools and technology to work effectively from home and to offer emotional support to help employees to minimise the risks of remote work such as difficulty switching off and reducing virtual meeting overload whilst at the same time, leading by example. In this factor, only 59% of individual contributors agree that they have received the resources required compared to the 76% of the executives who have favourable work conditions at home pursuant to their financial muscle due to their seniority (Gartner, 2021).
- **Trust** (*aligned to the need for autonomy in the SDT*) – This gap speaks to fostering trusting relationships regardless of the reduction of visibility into the work patterns of employees in a hybrid environment which in itself may compromise the levels of trust. Whilst hybrid work makes it possible for employees to manage and control their workday, leaders may not necessarily trust employees not to abuse the flexibility at their disposal. In fact, only 53% of the individual contributors believe that their leaders demonstrate high levels of trust toward them as opposed to 74% of the executives who believe they trust their teams. Gartner (2021) is of the view that “without trust, employees may feel wary of sharing their honest opinions about how, where and when they want to work”, thereby compromising the individual contributors’ possibility to freely share their preferences.
- **Inclusiveness of employee preferences** (*aligned to the need for relatedness in the SDT*) – This gap highlights the importance of considering the preferences of the employees and allowing them to influence decisions that affect them in hybrid ways of work. This includes having the liberty to influence how, where and when to work and being listened to. An alarming 72% of the executives believe they do consider employee preferences whilst only 59% of the individual contributors hold the same sentiment. Jungert et al. (2021, p. 2) warns that taking the diverse viewpoints of the employees’ needs and preferences into account “is essential to designing an inclusive future work model that is free from inherited biases and systematic discrimination” to improve the work experience of all the employees and to avoid having employees who are disengaged (Gartner, 2021).

- **Communication** (*aligned to the need for relatedness and competence in the SDT*) – This gap speaks to the need to authentically and openly communicate with employees to ensure that no one is left uninformed about organisational goals. This includes communicating the preferred place of work for all. The findings from Gartner (2021) show a disconnect between the executives and the individual contributors, which indicates that the communicated information is often interpreted differently. As such, it was found that 73% of the executives believe that communication in their organisations is open and honest whilst only 52% of the individual contributors hold the same view, thereby indicating that perhaps whatever needs to be communicated is not communicated consistently across the workforce (Gartner, 2021).

- **Organisational connectedness** (*aligned to the need for relatedness in the SDT*) – This gap speaks to feeling connected to one’s organisation and having a sense of purpose. Employees can only feel like this when they believe that their own preferences and needs are met. The data from the study shows that 77% of the executives agree to feeling a sense of being a part of something meaningful at their organisation whilst only 59% of the individual contributors feel like that. In addition, 73% of the executives feel like they are being cared for whilst only 52% of the individual contributors agree that their organisation cares about them (Gartner, 2021).

2.6 Implications of the Self-Direction Theory to the Study Conducted

From the reviewed literature, what is already known is that the achievement of autonomous motivation through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs yields positive results essential for organisational success. Various studies as presented do show that the “autonomy-supportive behaviours are effective in increasing autonomous types of motivation and basic need satisfaction across different contexts” (Jungert et al., 2021, p. 2). However, what is not known and remains unclear is which motivation theory provides the frameworks that have the most impact to motivate employees if applied in hybrid work settings (Jungert et al., 2021). Manganelli et al. (2018) confirm this assumption when they posit that leaders are not aware of the practices that are considered to be essential to foster motivation by means of satisfying the three basic psychological needs. To this end, based on the principles and on the assumptions of the SDT as outlined earlier, this study is anchored on the research gap that was identified through the reviewed literature. The researcher intends to explore if the theory is indeed suitably positioned to address employee motivation among knowledge workers in today’s hybrid organisations, which is a new context (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

In addition, the varying interests of employees with regards to hybrid working does lead to many unanswered questions that need to be answered for a sustainable workforce of the future (Franzen-Waschke, 2021). The SDT has been selected as a framework for this study because it is a dominant theory that has endured various criticism specially around the importance of rewards and pay in the workplace as the determinants to improve performance (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). For this study, one argued that employee compensation is an extrinsic reward which is not on its own sufficient to translate into high quality workplace performance, motivation, and wellbeing particularly among knowledge workers who are mostly highly paid (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021). In consequence, the researcher assumed that there may be other factors that are considered more valuable by knowledge workers other than just receiving high salaries. Also, the workplace environments that are autonomy supportive are more attractive than the organisations that focus only on the rewards to motivate performance and wellness (Deci et al., 2017).

That being so, the SDT is useful and relevant to understanding organisational behaviour, particularly with regards to creating the fundamental conditions that are required to cultivate and foster autonomous motivation for knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. In terms of the implications for the workplace, the SDT also provides tested concepts that are essential for the creation of policies, guidelines, and practices to promote high-quality performance (Deci et al., 2017, p. 19). The latter will be invaluable for South African organisations that are in their early stages of shaping and maturing hybrid models and working conditions as informed by policies and practices that are not well thought of and that may compromise the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. Lastly, organisations that aim to improve their hybrid work experience for their employees would need to evaluate their policies to check if knowledge workers experience a sense of freedom to experiment hybrid working and can initiate their own preferences without being pressurised or coerced to follow the return-to-work mandates (Deci et al., 2017, p. 38).

2.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter started off by a description of knowledge workers, and it was then followed by a presentation and an examination of the adopted theoretical framework to anchor the study. A comprehensive review of how the three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) can be satisfied for the achievement of autonomous motivation was discussed in line with the past studies. In addition, the autonomy-supportive leader practices and workplace experiences that are necessary to create optional working conditions were also reviewed. The reviewed literature identified a gap that leaders are not aware of the practices that are considered to be essential to foster motivation by means of satisfying the three basic psychological needs. To this end, the following chapter outlines the research questions that

the study attempted to answer. The reviewed desirable and the undesirable leader practices have been summarised in Figure 2.1 below based on the reviewed literature.

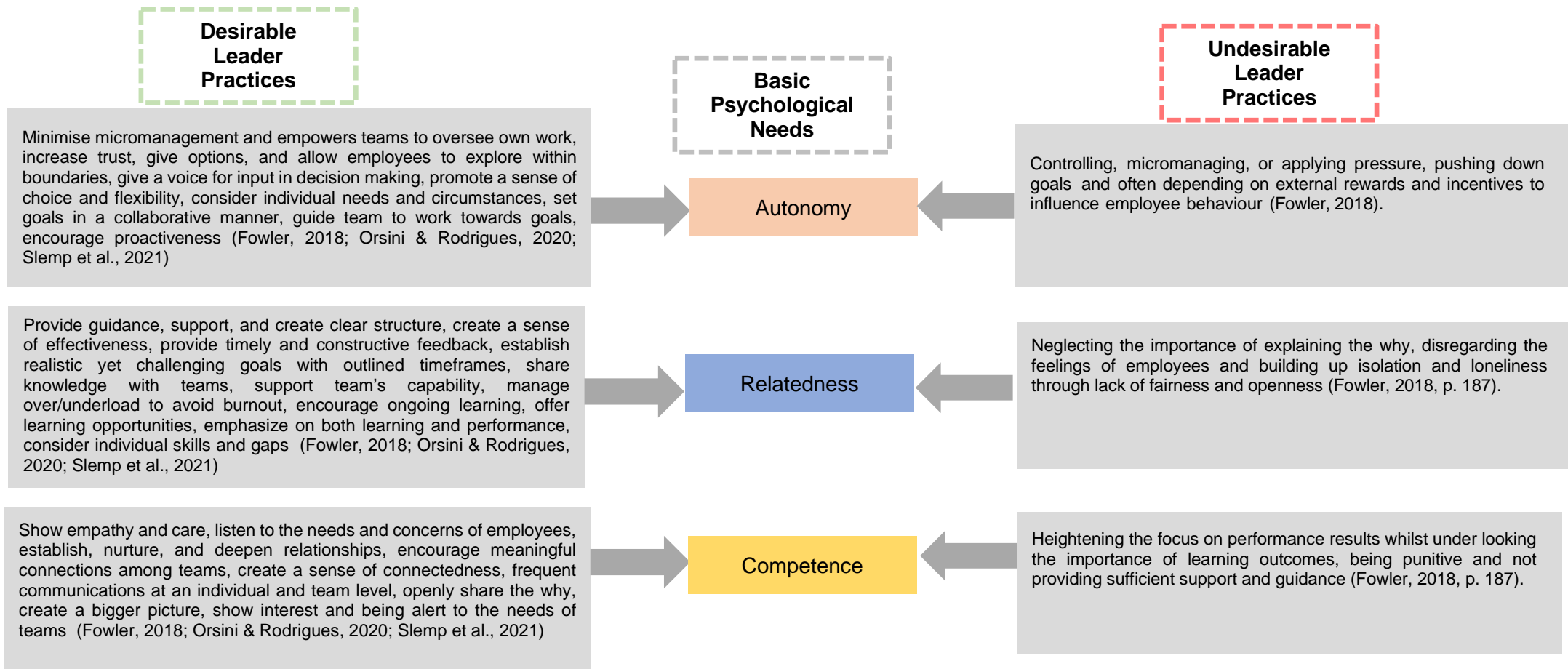


Figure 2.1: A Summary of Desirable and Undesirable Leader Practices against the SDT Three Basic Psychological needs based on literature reviewed (Author's own)

3.1 Introduction

Considering the above outlined business and theoretical emerging concerns about organisations adopting hybrid ways of work, the aim of the exploratory study was to answer the following research question as outlined below:

How should leaders cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations?

The research aimed to draw and gain insights from knowledge workers in the South African consulting services firms and in the financial services industry who have fully adopted hybrid ways of working. The intent of the research question was to identify and to understand the leader practices and the work experiences that are considered fundamental to cultivate autonomous motivation for knowledge workers. To achieve this, three sub-research questions were designed to operationalise the main research question to allow for a deep exploration of the experiences of knowledge workers in the said industries. The outlined sub-research questions were designed based on the literature review that was presented in Chapter 2 of this report.

3.2 Sub-research Question One

What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

The aim of this question was to understand what knowledge workers consider to be the fundamental leader practices and work experiences that drive and cultivate autonomous motivation. By systematically collecting data on the leader practices and the work experiences that are considered to drive and cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations, this question yielded insights into how leaders can practically enhance how they lead knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The results can potentially highlight knowledge workers' desired work experiences in hybrid organisations and equally expand the awareness and the knowledge on the sound leader practices that can become the blueprint for managers who aim to continually motivate their hybrid teams to drive their own work despite the place of work.

3.3 Sub-research Question Two

What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

This question was included to bring a balanced view on the insights that are perceived to prevent knowledge workers from experiencing a sense of autonomous motivation in light of working in hybrid organisations. The aim was to identify the leader practices and the work experiences that knowledge workers currently face as they continue to work partly in the office and partly remotely that are deemed to frustrate their sense of autonomous motivation. The findings to this question will present an opportunity to highlight the management practices to be avoided by managers when leading hybrid teams.

3.4 Sub-research Question Three

How should leaders support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

This question was designed to bring understanding on what leaders can do (enablers) to support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation. The insights to this question will aid managers across all the levels leading hybrid teams to broaden their understanding on the enablers that can be adopted to help knowledge workers to continually satisfy their basic psychological needs in the context of hybrid working.

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

The practical contribution that the study will make is to establish what leaders can do (as perceived by knowledge workers) to cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with greater autonomous motivation in the hybrid settings. The insights that will be gathered will translate into the sound evidence-based approaches and practices for modern HRD to capacitate organisational leaders to cultivate a culture of high-quality motivation where knowledge workers are motivated from the inside to inspire affective commitment, which is key to organisational success (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Furthermore, the study adds to the emerging literature and to the Self Determination Theory. It expands the theory on what is currently known about the approaches to motivate employees.

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the research was to explore how leaders should cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. To gain deeper insight and the necessary in-depth understanding to answer the exploratory research question, the conducted research study was qualitatively oriented. This chapter offers an account of how the study was carried out. It sets out all the critical aspects pertaining to the research design and strategy that was adopted to address the posed research question and the three sub-research questions as outlined in Chapter 3. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the research methodology that was employed to collect data which is inclusive of the articulation of the research population and setting, the unit and level of analysis and the sampling strategy. The researcher gives an account of the employed measurement instruments and a detailed account of how the data was collated, analysed, coded, and grouped into relevant themes that yielded the research findings. This chapter also gives an account of the different criteria that the researcher had to adhere to for validation such that the conducted study produced in-depth outcomes that are reliable and credible. Lastly, all the ethical considerations of the study are addressed including the presentation of the identified limitations which are discussed at the concluding part of this chapter.

In terms of the time horizon, the study was conducted over a period of six months between September 2022 and March 2023. The first step was for the researcher to apply for ethical clearance. This process commenced in September 2022 and approval was granted in early October 2022. The researcher then started with the data collection process in mid-October 2022. A total of seven participants were interviewed during the month of October 2022. The most interviews were conducted during the month of November 2022, totaling engagements with 10 participants. The last (18th) participant was interviewed during the month of January 2023. Data analysis, the write up of the research findings and the discussion of the findings were completed between January and March of 2023. The final research report was submitted in mid- March 2023.

4.2 Research Design

Simply put, the research design entails a plan of how a researcher intends to approach a research study, which is dependent on the various factors that must be taken into consideration. These factors are informed by the research topic to be explored, who the study is intended for, the resources available to the researcher and the type of study that is suitable

to address the research topic (Greener, 2008). The research design also outlines the philosophical assumptions underpinning the kind of knowledge that is being sought and how the knowledge will be produced as informed by the choice of research that is undertaken (Lanka et al., 2021). Figure 4.1 below outlines the research design that was adopted by the researcher, which will also be expanded on in the following sections.

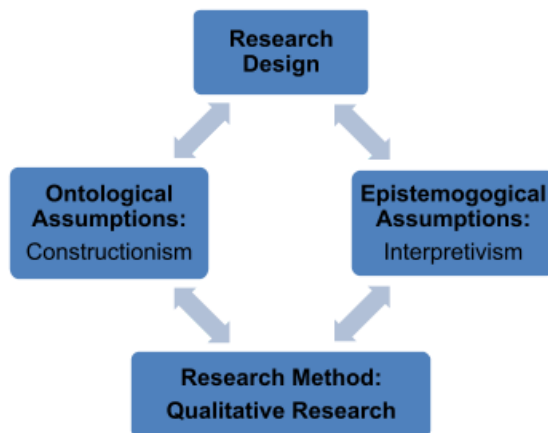


Figure 4.1: Adopted Research Design, researcher’s own summary adapted from (Yilmaz, 2013)

4.3 Research Philosophy and Assumptions

Researchers have their own set of assumptions, beliefs and values that ultimately shape their world views within which any research takes place (Ajagbe et al., 2015). These set of assumptions and beliefs guide researchers to first choose what they wish to study and the process to be followed to interpret the findings (Greener, 2008). The two common philosophical assumptions that were of particular interest to this study are ontology and epistemology. Ontology is concerned with the assumption that people make about what is it that exists in the world and the nature of its reality. It is about what people can possibly know about the world around them (Al-Saadi, 2014). Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned about the nature and the form of knowledge and how one looks at the world in the hope of wanting to make sense of it. In other words, how does one produce, uncover or build up knowledge (Al-Saadi, 2014; Lanka et al., 2021).

Researchers who have previously conducted studies related to this study have found that there is a phenomenon called a “copernican turn” (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). The said term positions individual employees in modern organisations as empowered actors who are capable to voice out and define their preferences on the aspects that enhance motivation and engagement. This necessitated a need for a socially constructed reality through the

exploration of knowledge workers' own interpretation of the meaningful experiences to deeply understand what organisations can do to build engaging and motivating cultures (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). For the researcher to seek reality that is subjective and dynamic in nature, it was necessary to understand this reality within the subjective experiences and views of the individual participants who were the social actors involved in the study to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Lanka et al., 2021). As such, the philosophical assumption that was undertaken to understand the nature of reality through the eyes of the participating knowledge workers was constructionism in that the knowledge was socially constructed between the participants and the researcher (Al-Saadi, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013).

In addition, a philosophical assumption that was appropriately undertaken by the researcher to make sense of the studied world was interpretivism (Al-Saadi, 2014). Fundamental to this elected paradigm of interpretivism is an assumption that 'universal truth' does not exist as truth is subjective and is informed by layered and multiple contextual perspectives from people's lived experiences and how such experiences are interpreted and understood by the researcher (Hays & Singh, 2011; G. Ryan, 2018). Accordingly, the researcher took a decision to involve knowledge workers as the subjects that are essential to produce and bring about knowledge through the exploration of their social world (Al-Saadi, 2014). The researcher further attempted to understand the voices of knowledge workers through the collaborative dialogue over the held semi-structured interviews to uncover their lived leader practices and work experiences that they perceived fundamental to cultivate and drive autonomous motivation. The participants were given an opportunity to share through their subjective lenses, their own unique perceived truth for the researcher's further analysis and interpretation.

Since the researcher took part in the social phenomenon and is also a knowledge worker who worked in an organisation that had adopted hybrid ways of work at the time of the study, it must be noted that the researcher's biases and subjective assumptions may somewhat have been weaved into the construction of the new meanings based on the interpretations of the collated data of knowledge workers' experiences. It was critical for the researcher to apply the concept of bracketing which is achieved by intentionally approaching the study without any pre-conceptions and perceptions that were going to negatively impact the data collection, as well as the analysis and the interpretation processes thereby cluttering the outcome of the research findings (Yilmaz, 2013). Because of this, the researcher avoided being blinded by the familiarity of her own experiences of working in a hybrid organisation (Yilmaz, 2013), but rather focused on taking advantage of the gained insights from the reality and the

perspective of knowledge workers. The findings were as such, reasonably stated en-vivo as gathered and related by the participants. This was critical for the co-creation of meaning at a collective or 'social' level. The evidence produced is therefore subjective in nature as it revealed the meanings that knowledge workers attached to their experiences of working in hybrid environments as interpreted by the researcher.

4.4 Research Approach

Since little was known about the phenomenon being studied and the researcher took a decision to involve the participants in the construction of the meanings of the social phenomenon as described by the participants, the research approach undertaken for this study was inductive (Lanka et al., 2021). This essentially implies that the researcher used own perceptions, interpretations, and words to build the knowledge from the ground up by means of looking for patterns from the observed phenomenon as described by the knowledge workers (Lanka et al., 2021). This approach required the researcher to act as the instrument, to create theory and meaning from the collated data rather than to test what already exists in theory (Al-Saadi, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). This approach required the researcher to explore the topic within context by looking at the emerging patterns and themes whilst searching for understanding to answer each of the research questions (Yilmaz, 2013).

4.5 Research Strategy

The exploratory conducted study employed a narrative research strategy to seek quality and reach answers to the 'what' and 'how' questions (Yilmaz, 2013). This strategy explores the social phenomenon by placing emphasis on creating meaning from the world views of the participants through their lived experiences and narratives (Bell et al., 2022). A major advantage of using the semi-structured one-on-one interviews that was informed by the open-ended questions is that the researcher was able to enter the minds and the mental worlds of the interviewed participants to gather rich data insights. This enabled the researcher to observe a much richer context, thereby understanding the participants' world views and their daily lived experiences that are necessary to uncover knowledge workers' deeply perceived leader practices and work experiences that are considered fundamental to cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in their natural setting and context of hybrid organisations (McCracken, 2011).

4.6 Research Methods

The main research question focused on exploring how leaders should cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. To gain the deeper insight and in-depth understanding that is necessary to answer the exploratory

research question, the conducted research study was qualitatively oriented. According to Yilmaz (2013), qualitative research takes a natural approach to study people or a phenomenon in natural settings with the hope to uncover expressed meanings that the studied individuals attach to their experiences of the world around them. Thusly, the intention is to focus on the quality and the richness of the evolving stories, and the shared experiences of the participants as explained by the researcher. The emphasis for the selected research method was to derive meaning that is experientially lived and not experimentally assessed. As such, a mono research method was applied to guide the collection of primary data that was necessary to answer the set research questions (Hays & Singh, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). Accordingly, semi-structured interviews were used as a single data collection tool for later analysis using Atlas.ti as a suitable analysis software (Hays & Singh, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019).

This method allowed the researcher to explore the presented phenomenon in context (Hays & Singh, 2011), by means of seeking and reporting on the detailed views of knowledge workers. Given the flexibility of this qualitative research method, the participants had an opportunity to openly articulate and share their lived experiences in their work settings. The application of a qualitative methodology was fitting to this study as human beings are complex in nature and their perception of reality is mostly influenced by the various connected constructs that inform their own understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). By choosing a qualitative inquiry as an approach of choice, the researcher anticipated to find the contextual explanations for the challenge that is currently faced by South African organisations who are still trying to understand the effective ways to lead teams in a hybrid work setting.

4.6.1 Population and Research Setting

The target population that was relevant for the study was knowledge workers who work for organisations that have adopted hybrid ways of working. Knowledge workers formed the focus of the study inquiry since today's competitive knowledge economy is made up of knowledge workers who are mostly highly talented and difficult to retain (Serrat, 2017). In addition, there is notably a growing number and a relevance of knowledge workers who differ from traditional employees, thereby necessitating the need to focus on them (Davenport, 2008). The research setting was South African consulting services firms and organisations in the financial services industry who have fully adopted the hybrid ways of working.

4.6.2 Unit and Level of Analysis

According to Kumar (2018), the 'who' and 'what' questions that can be studied in business research are limitless although a researcher would typically collate the data from individuals

or objects as units of analysis. The researcher chose the individual knowledge workers (who was studied) as the unit of analysis for the conducted study in line with the research question of seeking to understand knowledge workers' perspective of autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. This unit of analysis was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, the organisations that inform the research setting mostly employ knowledge workers – thus making knowledge workers better placed to act as the data sources for the phenomenon that was being studied. Secondly, there is arguably an increased demand of knowledge workers in the modern-day organisations, yet it is a challenge to retain them. Thirdly, due to the nature of their complex work, knowledge workers also require continuous motivation (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021).

The level of analysis (what was studied) was South African consulting services firms and the organisations in the financial services industry who have fully adopted hybrid ways of working. This level of analysis was chosen because it was anticipated that such targeted organisations employ a range of knowledge workers due to the nature of their business. Most importantly, the researcher could later imply that the findings from the sampled hybrid organisations can be implied to the other hybrid organisations (Kumar, 2018).

4.6.3 Sampling Strategy

This section discusses the sampling frame, the sampling technique, the sampling criteria, and the sample size for the conducted study.

4.6.3.1 Sampling Frame and Technique

The study was concerned with a setting of South African consulting services firms and organisations in the financial services industry who have fully adopted the hybrid ways of working. At the time the study was conducted, only Deloitte and Nedbank had publicly announced going hybrid (Business Tech, 2021) in a population of many other companies within the said industries who could possibly form part of the study. This meant that there was no sample frame or a full list of either the individuals (knowledge workers) or the organisations in the said industries who have adopted hybrid ways of work and the researcher had to develop one.

Aligned to the need for the primary inclusion of the set sample frame, the researcher had to be intentional and purposive about the choice of the sample group to provide relevant information to align with the research objectives and ultimately gain depth versus the breath of the understanding of the explored topic. Purposive or judgement sampling was employed to first identify organisations that have adopted hybrid ways of work supported by a hybrid

policy, as well as by communicated guidelines and or principles (Etikan, 2017; Hays & Singh, 2011). To this end, the researcher first conducted a desktop search to identify organisations in the targeted industries who have adopted a hybrid working model. During this exercise, what was most valuable was for the researcher to purposefully interact with a small group of colleagues in the HR field and other colleagues that are employed by such targeted industries who were able to provide information on whether the targeted companies in the two industries had adopted hybrid working practices. To add another layer of eligibility, when conducting the actual interviews, the first primary eligibility question that the researcher asked at the start of each interview discussion was aimed at confirming that the identified participants were knowledge workers who were employed by South African organisations in the required settings.

Since the researcher had limited information about knowledge workers who worked in the targeted organisations that made the setting of the study, the snowball sampling technique was the second sampling technique that was used. In this instance, the researcher had already established organisations that had adopted hybrid ways of work. The participants then needed to be identified and selected through the established networks. However, the researcher had a limited number of contacts who worked for the identified organisations. It was necessary for the researcher to use the few individuals who were identified for direction and referral to the other suitable knowledge workers who could possibly take part in the study (Etikan, 2017). The researcher used the newly established contacts to further establish new contacts from the hybrid organisations and knowledge workers who ultimately formed part of the study (Bell et al., 2022).

4.6.3.2 Sampling Criteria

The researcher developed the criteria that guided the selection of the participants. The stipulated criteria required the researcher to focus on both the male and the female participants from the various racial groups. To this end, the actual sample group for this study was representative with regards to gender and race to ensure a fair representation of the South African population. Secondly, the researcher undertook to explore the diverse perspectives of knowledge workers consisting of a mix of professionals, specialists, experts, and consultants with and without people-management responsibilities to obtain a comprehensive understanding of autonomous motivation as a phenomenon. A total of 18 participants confirmed that they worked as knowledge workers in various organisations that had recently adopted hybrid ways of working in the required setting. The description of the sample is outlined in detail in Chapter 5.

4.6.3.3 Sample Size

When conducting any exploratory study, the researcher must continue conducting interviews until data saturation point is reached from the collected responses (Ajagbe et al., 2015) as the participant's unique real-life experiences and perceptions cannot be the same from one participant to the next (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Hence, it remains debatable to determine a perfect number of a sample size that outlines the number of participants to be interviewed. However, it is still paramount for researchers to reach some level of data saturation to maximise the quality of the conducted research. To address the dilemma of when one can deem the conducted interviews to be enough, the researcher undertook to focus on collecting quality data that is rich, detailed and layered with nuanced insights to facilitate data validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Lanka et al., 2021).

A solution was reached by adapting to the general principle that was applied by other researchers wherein data saturation is reached when the researcher observes that there is no longer any new additional information, codes or themes that are coming forth from participants as reflected by the continuous use of existing codes and further unique coding cannot be established from the data that has already been gathered (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For this study, the researcher had envisaged that working with a minimum of 20 participants from a heterogenous group would provide sufficient data for the study. However, the actual sample size was determined during the data collection process, when the researcher noted that data saturation had been reached. An indication of how data saturation was reached is presented in Chapter 5.

4.6.4 Measurement Instrument and Data Collection Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the measurement instrument (Yilmaz, 2013). As such, the researcher acted as the main research instrument in the conducted study by first creating a conducive virtual environment to influence the conduct of the semi-structured one-on-one interviews (Ajagbe et al., 2015; Yilmaz, 2013). The researcher designed an interview guide as presented in Appendix 4 to use as a practical data collection instrument to guide the interviews. The interview questions that were contained in the interview guide were thoughtfully drawn from the reviewed literature with regards to the needs-supportive or the thwarting leader practices and work experiences (Saunders et al., 2019). In aiming to ensure that quality data was collected in line with the study being exploratory, the interview questions were open-ended to cover salient observable elements that are closely related and aligned to the outlined research questions (Prosek & Gibson, 2021).

In preparation of the data collection process, the researcher considered it prudent to first conduct pilot interviews prior to the actual commencement of the qualitative research immersion. A pilot study provides an opportunity for the researcher to conduct a preliminary investigation at a small scale before committing to conducting the actual study. Furthermore, through this exercise, the researcher can validate the clarity, the soundness and the relevance of the set interview questions in a safe environment (Ajagbe et al., 2015). A total of two pilot interviews were conducted with experienced knowledge workers who are colleagues in the HR field to quality check the anticipated process to be followed. The researcher reviewed the critical aspects such as the sufficiency of the duration of the pilot interview discussion, that is whether the pilot interviewees were able to produce the necessary information that is required to answer the research questions through the clarity of the set interview questions. Secondly, the researcher got to experience how the actual interviews were going to unfold. In so doing, the researcher was able to finetune and make the necessary minor adjustments to the interview questions as outlined in the interview guide to ensure a rigorous data collection process (Saunders et al., 2019). Most importantly, the researcher confirmed the validity and the reliability of the research instrument. None of the participants who took part in the pilot study were included in the population sample of the study (Ajagbe et al., 2015).

4.7 Data Collection Process

The semi-structured interviews that were guided by the shared interview guide were conducted by the researcher to collect primary qualitative data as informed by the study's exploratory approach. The use of one-on-one interviews enabled the researcher to gain unfiltered personal experiences from the participants based on their lived experiences (Yilmaz, 2013). The researcher decided to use the same interview guide to facilitate interview discussions for knowledge workers with and without the people management responsibilities. The latter decision was aimed to achieve a multi-level perspective of the phenomenon and to enhance the quality findings that were inclusive of the views of knowledge workers who are managers and knowledge workers who are individual contributors as this was already an identified gap in the discussed reviewed literature (Slemp et al., 2021).

In aiming to align to the busy work schedule of knowledge workers, all interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft (MS) Teams which is a collaborative online/virtual platform for engagement. Using MS Teams was also a preference of all the participants as it provided them the flexibility to meet with the researcher at their preferred time given their hectic work schedule. Distance or time limitations were therefore not an issue when conducting the interviews. All the participants were comfortable to use MS Teams as it was a standard tool

that is used for teams to connect in their respective organisations. Prior to formally conducting the required interviews with the identified participants, the first step in the process was for the researcher to establish close contact with the research participants. The researcher achieved this by reaching out to all the potential participants via email or telephonically to share the rationale and the purpose of the research study. The connection was also used to determine the suitability of the participants against the set criteria; as well as to ascertain the willingness of the identified participants to take part in the study; and to agree on the suitable date as well as the time for both parties to hold the respective interviews. This was followed by the scheduling of the meetings by the researcher on MS Teams as per the agreed timeframes.

The researcher then sent out an electronic email to each respective participant which contained a unique link for each participant to join the interview discussion and a consent form which the participants were requested to sign off prior to the actual scheduled interview time. Issuing the consent form beforehand provided the participants with sufficient time to go through the form to make an informed decision about taking part in the research study. There were only two instances where the researcher had to reschedule the confirmed meetings as per the request of the two participants who had to attend to family emergencies. Only one participant cancelled a scheduled meeting and never provided another suitable time for the researcher to hold the interview despite numerous attempts of requesting for a suitable timeframe. This participant was as a result not included in the research study.

The researcher joined each scheduled meeting five to 10 minutes before the set time. The researcher's MS Teams camera was always on, which encouraged the participants to mirror the behaviour by also switching on their cameras throughout the discussion, thereby enhancing the virtual connection for a conducive interview discussion. The researcher could then observe the facial expressions and the body language of the participants when the participants' cameras were on which aided the researcher to look for cues of confusion or frustration or when they needed clarity on something being said or asked. The only time where the cameras were switched off by the research participants was due to load shedding challenges or bandwidth challenges, which would essentially compromise the quality of the conversation if the camera was kept on. Once the researcher welcomed each participant to the virtual meeting space, the researcher asked for permission to have the meeting recorded on MS Teams for further analysis of the collected data at a later stage. No participant objected to have the proceeding of the interview discussion recorded.

The researcher started off each interview discussion by reminding the participants the shared rationale about the study and by outlining what to expect during and after the interview

discussion. The latter made the participants to be at ease with the anticipated process that followed the rest of the interview discussion. The researcher used the first four interview questions that are outlined in the interview guide under the theme 'background' to confirm the sample's suitability and to build rapport with each participant to encourage open and honest dialogue.

During all the interview discussions that were held, care was taken by the researcher to listen intently, and not to ask closed or leading questions but rather focus on open-ended questions and open-ended responses from the participants (Yilmaz, 2013). Accordingly, the researcher guided the rest of the interview discussion by seeking to find answers to questions like 'what' and 'how' to ensure that the data that was gathered is rich in quality versus quantity, which is critical in the qualitative studies (Yilmaz, 2013).

Since the study was a narrative inquiry, the researcher applied a flexible approach to facilitate the discussion and was receptive to the unfolding stories by allowing the interview discussion to flow with minimal interruption. As shown, although the researcher consistently used the same interview questions, the order and sequence of some of the interview questions that were posed to the participants slightly differed given the complex context and the dynamics that were encountered in line with each participants' unique setting (Saunders et al., 2019). Where required, the researcher was able to use probing questions to clarify and confirm the information as received from the participants. The researcher also made minor adjustments and addressed emerging concerns regarding the shared insights in a safe space. The latter allowed for meanings to emerge from the collected data for the identification of the patterns that are related to theory (Saunders et al., 2019). Prior to concluding each interview discussion, the researcher asked the participants if they had any additional comments or information to add to the already shared insights to further enrich the data. Where the participants had further information or comments to add, the researcher allowed this to happen before thanking the participants for their time and willingness to take part in the study. The researcher stopped the recording of the meeting after thanking each research participant.

Following the end of the discussion, the researcher downloaded the transcript of each participant from MS Teams when a lot of the gained insights still lingered vividly in the researcher's mind. The researcher then listened to the interview audio recording to validate the auto captured information and to clean up each transcript for later analysis, thereby minimising any loss of information and reducing the pressure of having to clean up the transcripts at a later stage. By having observed the outlined aspects, it is believed the richly collected data was bias free (Saunders et al., 2019).

The researcher conducted the semi-structured one-on-one interviews with a total of 18 participating knowledge workers who worked for different companies that had adopted the hybrid ways of working in the financial services and the consulting services industries. It took the researcher a total of 702 minutes to conduct the interviews, with an average of 39 minutes per interview discussion. The longest interview was 51 minutes long whilst the shortest was 25 minutes. The researcher spent an average of 90 minutes to clean up each interview transcript for later analysis. Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the time investment on the conducted interviews.

Table 4.1: Duration of Interviews as Conducted

Participant	Interview Duration	Summary
Participant 12	49.30	Total minutes = 701.75 Shortest Interview = 25.35 Longest Interview = 50.50 Average Time = 38.98
Participant 13	47.07	
Participant 2	36.09	
Participant 7	50.05	
Participant 1	29.13	
Participant 4	43.27	
Participant 9	50.50	
Participant 11	50.09	
Participant 6	26.17	
Participant 10	36.36	
Participant 3	35.50	
Participant 8	28.55	
Participant 5	25.35	
Participant 16	42.40	
Participant 17	50.17	
Participant 18	38.33	

4.8 Data Analysis Approach

Prior to commencing with the data analysis process, the researcher had to decide on a data analysis instrument to use. According to the research conducted by Woods et al. (2016), researchers have increased the usage of the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) programs for effective data management and for the analysis of the qualitative studies. These tools aid researchers to efficiently and accurately code, retrieve and ultimately analyse and interpret the complex data that is derived from the data collection process. In this conducted study, the Atlas.ti software was used for data analysis as its usage on the interview-based studies has been widely recorded by other researchers. The Atlas.ti software allows researchers to “better test qualitative evidence for emerging theoretical propositions” and it promotes data transparency, thereby enabling the demonstration of "validity, rigor, and trustworthiness of the analysed data" (Woods et al., 2016, p. 2). After gaining access to the

Atlas.ti software, the researcher first familiarised herself with the software by attending tutorial videos to understand how best to use the tool for data analysis. The above was done in the background before the actual commencement of the data analysis process.

The data that was collected by the researcher portrayed everything that was described by Yilmaz (2013) as it was thorough, multifaceted, and broad. As such, the rich data required careful analysis that demanded sufficient time investment by the researcher for ongoing analysis. Chenail (2012) was accurate when he posed that there are challenges that researchers can face when they conduct qualitative data analysis as it usually entails large sets of data to work with, thereby resulting in the difficulty in establishing accurate analysis. The data analysis approach that was used in the study is thematic analysis, which is considered as a flexible and generic yet foundational approach to analyse large qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2019). Thematic analysis allows for the “identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). When adopting thematic analysis, the researcher engages with the collated data in a deliberate, iterative, and recursive approach to actively identify and discover the patterns of meaning and ultimately report on the meanings of the identified patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Below is an outline of the phases detailing how the collected data was analysed during the conducted research study.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

The first step in the data analysis process was for the researcher to gain familiarity with the collected data. It was necessary for the researcher to first transcribe the collected data for each interview discussion. Since the researcher relied on the functionality of Microsoft (MS) Teams to generate the transcriptions of the recorded audios, each transcript was downloaded from the platform and stored safely on a folder that was only accessible to the researcher as it had password controls. The researcher then spent time organising and cleaning up each transcript before reading the content of each document. This entailed removing all the unnecessary information to only remain with the text version of the transcript, removing the name of the participants on each transcript, and replacing that with an assigned participant code; formatting the document to the required standard; adding the participant’s assigned code, putting the interview date and time as the heading of the document; as well as adding the research sub-questions and the interview questions under the relevant sessions to give structure to each transcript.

Only after the above cleaning up process was concluded was the researcher then able to acquaint herself with the transcribed set of data by listening to the audio recordings to ensure

that the transcripts are correctly captured, and they reveal a true reflection of what was discussed and shared by the participants. Upon listening to the audio recording whilst reading the transcript, the researcher was able to correct all the unnecessarily repeated data that was mentioned in the document such as the pauses in between a conversation, the 'umms' and the 'ahhs' fillers, and any unnecessarily repeated words. The researcher was also able to correct any words or sentences that were incorrectly captured or spelled due to the unclear language accents that the platform could not pick up. The researcher spent an average of 90 minutes to clean up and organise each interview transcript before analysis. Only after this rigorous process was the researcher able to then immerse herself with the organised data by reading it in an active manner to gain familiarity with the data. Doing this aided the researcher to start searching for the meanings and the patterns early in the process. Key to this phase was for the researcher to become familiar with the data by reading and re-reading it to generate an initial list of ideas and noticing anything interesting about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher ensured that the audio recordings as recorded on the MS Teams and the cleaned transcripts were saved electronically in accessible formats in the Cloud Storage with password controls and privacy measures to protect the confidentiality of the collected data. All the identifiers of the participants were removed to ensure anonymity. The researcher then took all the cleaned transcribed data that were accurately labelled and transferred them on to the Atlas.ti software under a project name that was created by the researcher for systemic coding and for the organisation of data, thereby allowing a detailed analysis and interpretation of the complex data that was derived from the data collection process (Woods et al., 2016). Unique codes were used to differentiate each transcript by adding race, gender, industry, and the job level of each knowledge worker including the participant's assigned code. Below is an extract (Figure 4.2.) from the Atlas.ti software listing all the 18 transcripts from the 18 interviewed participants as uploaded by the researcher.

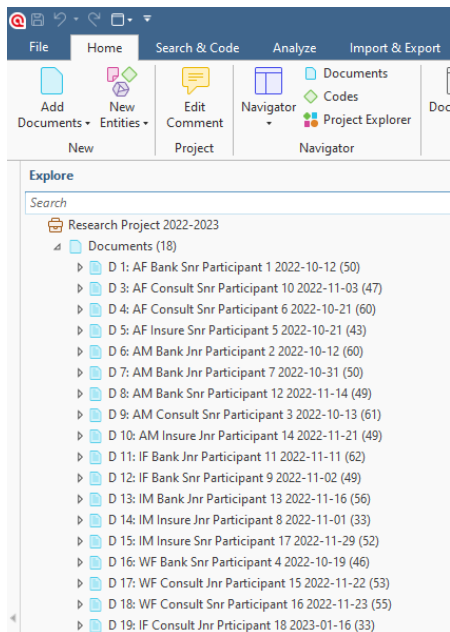


Figure 4.2: Extract from the Atlas.ti software with a list of Interview Transcripts

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Once the researcher had uploaded all the transcripts that she had already familiarised herself with on to the Atlas.ti software, the researcher re-read each document to systematically begin to identify any interesting features in the data. Generating codes is part of the analysis process as it helps researchers to organise data into meaningful chunks of information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was at this point that the researcher began to formally create and assign the initial codes from the entire data set of each transcript. Where required, the researcher added the notes under the created codes to describe the meaning behind the code. To ensure that the researcher does not lose an ‘audit trail’ of where the codes were derived from, the researcher highlighted the verbatim quotes from the actual data set to support each created code. That being so, the verbatim quotes appeared parallel to each created code for meaning to start to emerge from each transcript (Chenail, 2012).

A total of 39 new codes were generated from the first transcript that was coded. The highest number of codes that were generated from one transcript was 69, with the least generated codes per transcript being 32. A total of 351 codes were initially generated across all the 18 participants. The researcher then reviewed all the generated codes on the Atlas.ti software and corrected the codes that were not correctly captured and began to search for similar codes that were given different names. In such instances, the researcher was then able to merge the codes that had similar data and meanings. This helped the researcher to reduce the generated codes from 351 to a total of 121 codes as outlined on the extract on the next page (Figure 4.3) from Atlas.ti, thereby making the data to be manageable for the researcher to work with for a

thorough sense making process to unfold. It was at this point that the researcher started to notice that the themes and the patterns were starting to emerge from the data that initially had open coding that was too broad (Yilmaz, 2013). The list of all generated codes, code groups/categories and themes has been outlined in Appendix 5.

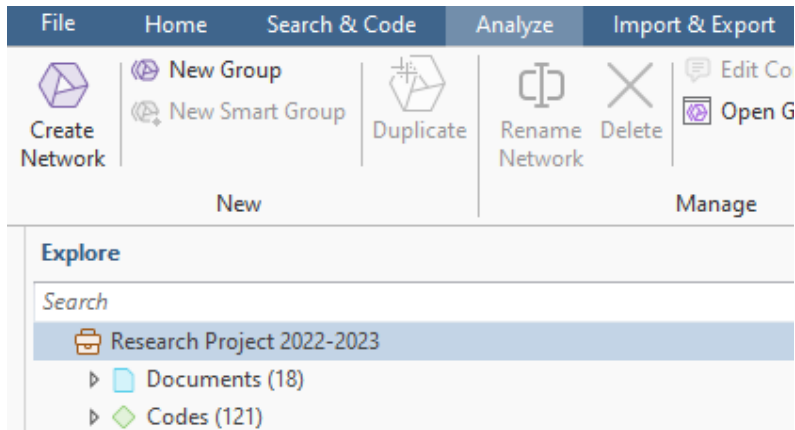


Figure 4.3: Extract from the Atlas.ti software with number of Generated Codes

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Following the process of generating codes, the researcher further reviewed the 121 codes to then create code groups on the Atlas.ti software. A total of 10 code groups were accordingly created and mapped against the 121 codes. It was at this point that the researcher downloaded the 121 codes combined with the 11 code groups onto a Microsoft Excel file for further analysis. Working on Microsoft Excel enabled the researcher to further analyse the different identified codes and subsequently to create new categories that were next to each code. All the codes that were assigned similar categories and had similar patterns were then grouped together to form new themes, which resulted in a third level of data analysis. Accordingly, each category was mapped with the established themes which enabled the researcher to move from the detail that was provided by participants as per their lived experiences into the concepts at abstract level to create meaning to address the set research question and the sub-questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was at this point that the researcher started to derive the rich explanations, the categories, and the key themes that were essential for theorising the findings (Saunders et al., 2019). By the end of this phase, the researcher had refocused the analysis process by means of moving from codes to paying more attention to forming the overarching themes. The latter enabled the researcher to search for categories, patterns and themes from the interpreted data to identify and recognise the relationships that are linked to the reviewed literature (Saunders et al., 2019). Below is an extract (Figure 4.4) from the Atlas.ti software containing the 10 code groups as generated.

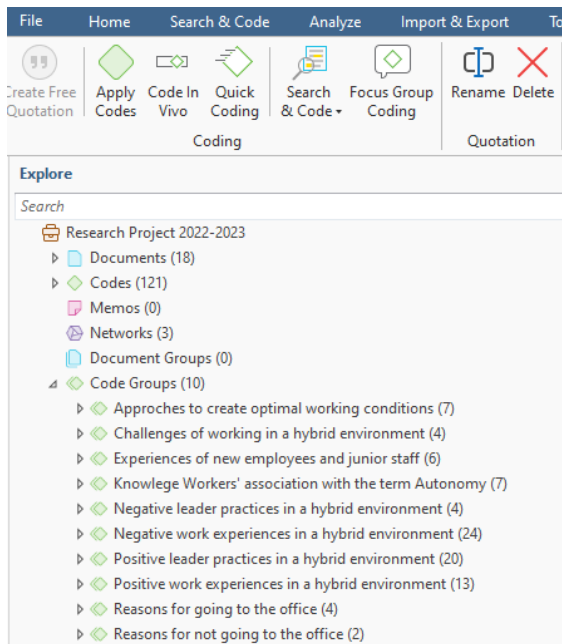


Figure 4.4: Extract from the Atlas.ti software with number of Generated Code Groups

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

The researcher then spent some time checking if the identified themes work in relation to the established codes to generate a thematic map that works against the identified codes, themes, and data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher further refined the identified themes based on whether there was sufficient data to support the themes or to check whether some of the identified themes were too broad to work with. It was at this point that the researcher merged or separated some themes into the final ones to work with. The researcher ensured that the data within the themes was meaningful, and the themes were clear and distinct. Refining the themes at this phase was critical for the researcher to ascertain if the identified themes worked in relation to the available data set. By the end of this phase, the researcher ensured that the themes fit together and were beginning to tell a story about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is important to note that there was no need for the researcher to rename the themes as they were clearly defined and there were also no gaps that were spotted. The clearly named final themes for the final analysis have been outlined in Chapter 5 under data findings where the compelling stories about the detailed data are outlined (Prosek & Gibson, 2021; Saunders et al., 2019).

In adopting the above phases, an inductive approach to theory formulation and development was employed which aided the researcher to gain new insights from the collected data. The information that was gathered from the participants enabled the researcher to validate the assumptions of the SDT based on the detailed insights of the identified themes and the established new patterns of meaning (Lanka et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2019).

4.9 Research Quality and Rigour

Qualitative inquiry studies must be conducted in a rigorous and credible manner to increase the trustworthiness, accuracy, and the trueness of the findings of the study for both the researcher and the participant, but also for the readers of the study. In addition, the process embarked on to conduct the study must be consistent over time which means it can be applied in the other contexts or settings (Yilmaz, 2013). Since the researcher was the data collection instrument of the study, the researcher applied the below quality controls to maintain and defend the integrity and the credibility of the conducted research:

Credibility is a qualitative research quality criterion which refers to the correctness and the consistency of the study (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). To achieve this, since the interview discussions were recorded with clear audio, the researcher was able to access an account of the interview discussion for the validation of the retrieved data in relation to the participants' perspective and experiences. The researcher also shared the transcribed scripts with the participants for the confirmation of correctness, congruence, and for the relevance of the investigated phenomenon (Bell et al., 2022; Daniel, 2019).

Transferability or applicability is another qualitative research quality criterion which refers to the extent to which the findings are generalised to reflect the context of the participants and it can be applied in other settings (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). To ensure transferability, the researcher produced rich accounts of the details describing the phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher ensured that the collated content of the interviews was reflective of the participant's lived experiences. The context of the study has been described in detail together with the characteristics of the selected sample. The researcher also sought to work with the participants that are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study and could speak confidently about the concept of hybrid working (Bell et al., 2022; Daniel, 2019; Saunders et al., 2019).

Dependability or consistency is another criterion for quality in qualitative research. This criterion assesses the reliability of the findings (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). To ensure dependability, the researcher documented in this chapter, a step-by-step detailed description of the research context, the articulated research questions, the selection of the research participants, the research design, the methods, and the processes followed, together with the undertaken decisions. The researcher also outlined how the data was analysed and interpreted for the replication of the study where required. The researcher recorded any slight changes in relation to the focus of the study and gave an account of how the study emerged for later reference (Saunders et al., 2019).

Confirmability is the last criterion for quality in qualitative research which assures that the research results reflect the perspectives of the participants than those of the researcher and can therefore be replicated if need be (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). To achieve this, the researcher checked/verified the correctness of the collected data and used a systematic process to organise and analyse data. This is reflected on the findings through an independent analysis process that was guided by the assigned supervisors to exchange the ideas on the interpretation of the data and the test out findings. The researcher also identified their own biases, assumptions, and experiences; and as such, anticipated the multiple realities of the data findings (Saunders et al., 2019).

The other measures that were undertaken by the researcher to enhance data quality included but were not limited to the following:

- The researcher ensured that the participants understood the posed research questions before allowing them to answer the questions without clarity;
- The use of the interview guide that was designed by the researcher allowed for a consistent flow of interviews;
- The use of the MS Teams audio recordings allowed for the verbatim narration of the phenomenon and for accurate transcripts for later analysis; and
- The researcher ensured the suitability of the research participants before and during the data collection process.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

It is a widely accepted practice for qualitative researchers to follow appropriate and rigorous research methods to ensure that the research they conduct is ethical and safe. This is done to also ensure that the interests of the participants are protected throughout the research process (Halai, 2006; Hammarberg et al., 2016). In aiming to protect the rights of the research participants and enhance the research validity as well as maintain scientific integrity (Bhandari, 2021), the researcher observed the below ethical considerations and principles throughout the in-depth research process:

- It is of great importance to note that the study was guided by the principles and the guidelines that are set forth by the Research Ethics Committee of the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). To this end, prior to embarking on the fieldwork, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the GIBS's Ethics Committee in September 2022. The application was approved, and the researcher was accordingly granted permission to conduct the study in early October 2022 (see Appendix 1). It was after this process that the researcher reached out to two colleagues who could

inform the pilot study. The researcher adhered to the ethical conduct by maintaining professionalism whilst engaging with the participants throughout the study.

- When working towards gaining access to knowledge workers who ultimately informed the research sample, the researcher shared a brief write up with each participant to request their consideration to take part in the study (see Appendix 2). The write up contained relevant information that was sufficient to provide adequate context and rationale about the purpose of the study and the methods to be employed to collect the data. The researcher was also able to address any raised concerns prior to gaining commitment from the participants to commence with the data collection process. This practice enabled all the participants to freely decide whether they wished to participate in the study or to be given the choice to withdraw or opt out from the study at their own will (Arifin, 2018; Bell et al., 2022). It is to be noted that the researcher also used this level of engagement to confirm the nature of work for each participant and to check whether they worked for organisations that had adopted hybrid working principles.
- The researcher obtained an informed consent from all the participants who volunteered to take part in the study. The participants were requested to electronically sign off a consent form (see Appendix 3), which they had to email back to the researcher before the start of the interview discussion to confirm voluntary consent to be a participant in the study. All the written consent forms with the personal information of the participants were stored in a secure file which was only accessible to the researcher and to GIBS (Arifin, 2018).
- The researcher assured the participants of the confidentiality of their shared information and advised them that their identity will not be divulged at any point during the data analysis and in the reporting of the findings and upon the completion of the study (Halai, 2006). The participants were also informed that where applicable, their verbatim quotes were to be outlined in the research report to support the data findings without any identifiers to protect their privacy (Arifin, 2018). Adhering to these guidelines enabled the researcher to gain “credibility and trustworthiness” (Batt & Kahn, 2021, p. 1080). The names of the hybrid organisations that the participating knowledge workers worked in were not disclosed during and after the research process for the privacy of such organisations.
- The individual interviews with each participant were conducted remotely via the Microsoft Teams online platform. As such, there was no harm to any party. Although all the interviewed knowledge workers were accustomed to using Microsoft Teams as a collaboration tool in their respective organisations, care was taken by the researcher

to confirm that each participant knew how to access the digital platform and that they had access to Wi-Fi for connectivity prior to the start of the interview discussion. The researcher asked each participant for permission to record the online interview for later review and for the cleaning up of the auto generated transcripts to ensure accuracy of the shared data. Adopting virtual interviews maximised the availability of the participants who had limited time to participate in the study, as a result enabling the participants to fit the interview schedule to their preferred time. In addition, choosing online or virtual interviews limited the apprehension the participants had to engage in close contact with the researcher, thereby consequently compromising their safety from the viruses such as the Corona (Arifin, 2018).

- Since the auto generated transcripts from Microsoft Teams needed further cleaning up to ensure data accuracy, the researcher independently carried out this exercise and used headphones to avoid third parties from listening into the voice recordings. All the signed consent forms, the anonymised transcripts and the Microsoft Teams audio recordings were kept safe. The anonymised transcripts were submitted to GIBS as required at the end of the research project (Arifin, 2018).

Adhering to these principles was critical to ensuring that the study is conducted appropriately to minimise the potential risks that could ultimately compromise the quality of the study and the derived benefits of the results thereof.

4.11 Limitations of the Research Design and Methods

The study was restricted to only focus on the individual knowledge workers who worked in two industries as specified, thus limiting the study to focus on a broader South African workforce. This may have resulted in a small sample group to work with which may be regarded as a limitation of the general applicability of the findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The researcher employed purposive sampling and only engaged with a maximum of two participants who worked for the same organisation to increase reach and to widen the representation of the organisations who formed part of the research setting. However, this may have resulted in gaining breadth and not depth of the collected data from each organisation (Ross & Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

The study was cross-sectional, and it was conducted at a point in time, data collection was as such limited to the knowledge workers who were based within the Gauteng Province as that is where the adoption of hybrid work was widely spread by most big corporates that were targeted at the time the research was conducted (Ross & Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Since the adoption of hybrid work in most South African organisations is a fairly new practice following the relaxed lockdown restrictions that were initially implemented at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, some participants could not necessarily make a distinction of remote work versus hybrid work and there was a natural compulsion or urge to take the discussion to the start of the hard lockdown remote work experiences.

Since the exploratory study was conducted by an inexperienced researcher, the researcher may have compromised the outcome of the data collection process and the interpretation process. To minimise the said risks, the researcher structured all the data to reduce biases. The researcher also adhered to the use of the designed interview guide to facilitate all the interviews. The researcher also conducted pilot interviews with their colleagues to quality check the anticipated process to be followed and to assess the clarity of the set questions and the timing of the interviews. The researcher also worked with the assigned supervisors to reduce bias in the data interpretation process (Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013). Conducting all the interviews may have compromised the authenticity of the participants, particularly where the participants were asked to convey undesirable leader practices of their managers. To encourage honesty and openness, the researcher used examples of what other participants shared, which may have led to the hesitant participants to use similar examples as their own experiences.

4.12 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter outlined the adopted research design, the methodology and the decisions that were taken by the researcher to conduct the study. An exploratory qualitative method was employed to collect data through the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 18 study participants. The details of study participants are outlined in Chapter 5. The interview discussions were guided by an interview guide that was designed by the researcher who acted as the main research instrument for data collection. An account of the decisions that were taken to inform the sampling strategy, together with the indication of how the participants were selected has been discussed in detail. The knowledge workers who took part in the study were the unit of analysis (who was studied) whilst the level of analysis (what was studied) was South African consulting services firms and the organisations in the financial services industry who have fully adopted the hybrid ways of working. The data collection process span across three months. The researcher also played a role of a transcriber to clean up all the auto generated transcripts. The researcher used Atlas.ti to perform the initial data analysis after which Microsoft Excel was used to further analyse the data to establish the categories and the themes. All the considerations to ensure that the study was rigorous and credible have been outlined accordingly. Chapter 5 presents the study's findings for each sub-research question.

5.1 Introduction

The study aimed to explore how leaders should cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. To this end, three sub-research questions as outlined in Chapter 3 guided the process of searching for the answers to this study. The sub-research questions were informed by the reviewed literature on autonomous motivation which is based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as presented in Chapter 2. Following a qualitative analysis process outlined in Chapter 4, the presented findings were first coded, then categorised, and then grouped into the themes that were aligned to each research question. This chapter presents the key findings of the analysed data as collated during the conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the 18 participants.

The findings to the study confirm that the newness of the concept of hybrid working is gaining momentum in the South African context and that companies are starting to embrace changing to this new way of working. This was observed from five companies in the consulting services industry, from four commercial banks and from three insurance companies in the financial services industry who were the employers of the 18 knowledge workers who took part in the study. This observation supports what was revealed by Business Tech (2021) who outlined that South African companies in the banking sector do embrace changing towards hybrid working. It is evident that not only the banking sector embraces hybrid working, but so do the consulting services companies and the insurance companies as discovered in this study.

The highlights of the findings include both the desirable and the undesirable leader practices as well as the work experiences that are deemed to cultivate or thwart autonomous motivation as perceived by participating knowledge workers. In addition, the enablers that are considered essential for the satisfaction of the psychological need for autonomous motivation were also revealed. The section starts off with an outline of a detailed description and the suitability of the sample against the set sample criteria to provide background information and context about the participants that were being interviewed and to validate the fit of the actual sample group to the defined criteria. This is followed by a presentation of the emerged themes to inform the findings per sub-research question.

5.2 Sample Description

Prior to presenting the research study findings, it is of utmost importance to provide a description of the sample group that took part in the conducted exploratory study. The researcher interviewed a total of 18 participants who met the sampling criteria as set out in Chapter 4. The participants accordingly confirmed that they worked as knowledge workers in

various organisations that had recently adopted hybrid ways of working in the prescribed setting. The recent proves that the participants were credible respondents and that the findings they offer bear weight. It is, however, to be noted that despite an adoption of hybrid working conditions, a few knowledge workers predominantly worked from home at the time of the study due to office space challenges. There was therefore a tendency to view and refer to hybrid working as remote working. This arrangement may have impacted on the theory development process as the findings were not completely drawn from a hybrid work model in its true sense where one regularly works partly in the office and partly remotely.

A total of ten of the participants were female whilst eight participants were male. A total of 10 senior knowledge workers were managers with people management responsibilities and eight knowledge workers were individual contributors with no people management responsibilities. The knowledge workers' field and the nature of work, as well as the level of complexity and the seniority of the roles also varied. A total of 12 participants represented the views of the financial services industry with eight participants who worked for four commercial banks and four participants who worked for three insurance companies. On the other hand, a total of six participants worked for five consulting firms, and as a result represented the views of the consulting services industry. Participant 15 was employed by a consulting company and at the time of the interview was doing consulting work on a full-time basis at a client in a mining house. Her views and rich insights were as such intertwined with her experiences of working in a hybrid environment at a mining house.

The identity of the participants has been anonymised by assigning each participant a unique code to protect their confidentiality as agreed in the signed consent forms. The actual job title of each participant was replaced with a high-level job title and field of work. It must be noted that all the participants were based in the Gauteng Province of South Africa as that is the region where hybrid working is most prevalent.

Table 5.1 on the next page provides high-level information about the participants who took part in the study. The outline is according to each participant's race, gender, work industry, job title, their field of work and the level of responsibility.

Table 5.1: Research Study Participants

Participant Code	Race	Gender	Industry	Job title and field of Work	Level of responsibility
Participant 1	African	Female	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Head: Data Management	Knowledge worker Managers with direct reports
Participant 3	African	Male	Consulting Services Industry	Assistant Manager: Audit	
Participant 4	White	Female	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Head: Tax	
Participant 5	African	Female	Financial Services, Insurance Industry	Head: Reinsurance	
Participant 6	African	Female	Consulting Services Industry	Senior Programme Manager: Learning	
Participant 9	Indian	Female	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Head: Client Experience	
Participant 10	African	Female	Consulting Services Industry	Associate Director, IT	
Participant 12	African	Male	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Team Leader, IT	
Participant 16	White	Female	Consulting Services Industry	Manager, Industrial Psychologist	
Participant 17	Indian	Male	Financial Services, Insurance Industry	Senior Consultant, Retirement	
Participant 2	African	Male	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Supplier Relationships Manager	Knowledge Worker Individual Contributors with no direct reports
Participant 7	African	Male	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Software Engineer	
Participant 8	Indian	Male	Financial Services, Insurance Industry	Actuarial Specialist	
Participant 11	Indian	Female	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Growth Manager	
Participant 13	Indian	Male	Financial Services, Banking Industry	Learning and Change Specialist	
Participant 14	African	Male	Financial Services, Insurance Industry	Retirement Funds Consultant	
Participant 15	White	Female	Consulting Services Industry	Lead: Change Management	
Participant 18	Indian	Female	Consulting Services Industry	Project Manager	

5.3 Data Saturation

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the researcher had envisaged to work with a minimum of 20 participants from a heterogeneous group to obtain sufficient data for the study. However, the actual sample size was determined during data collection process, when the researcher noted that data saturation was reached. This was achieved at a point when the scripts for Participants 15, 16 and 18 were respectively coded as shown in Figure 5.1 on the next page.

These codes fell into existing categories and themes and so reflected data that was unanimous to what was already gathered (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

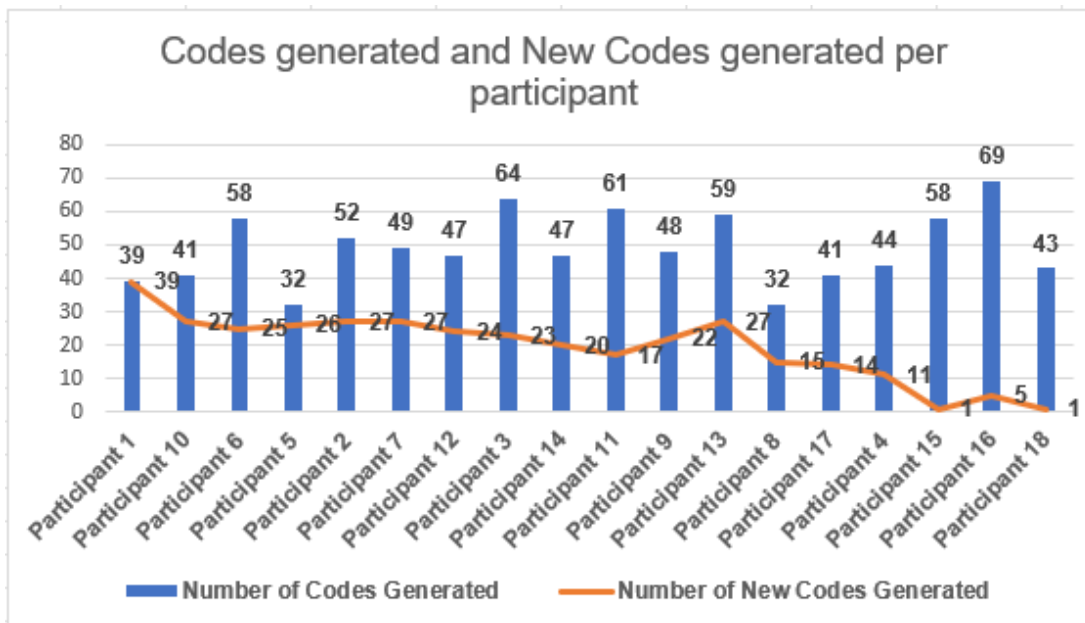


Figure 5.1: Data Saturation Graph Per Participant

Figure 5.2 below outlines an additional view of how the data saturation was reached.

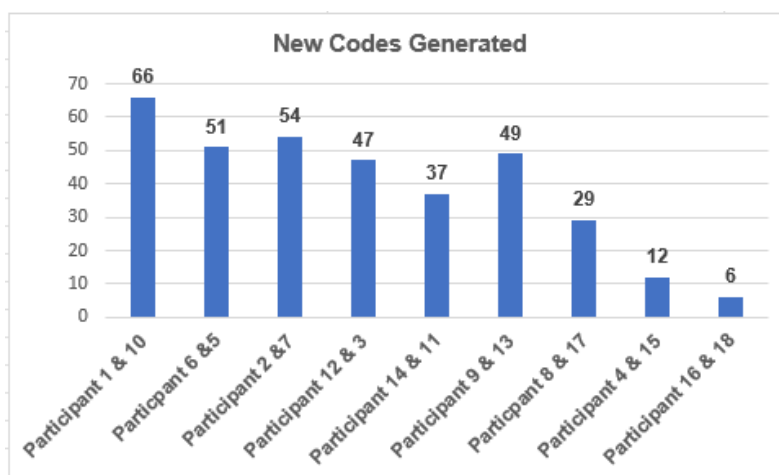


Figure 5.2: Data Saturation Graph in Pairs of Participant

5.4 Presentation of Findings

As discussed in detail in Chapter 4, the researcher used Atlas.ti to generate the codes and the code groups which were later transferred to a Microsoft Excel file for further analysis. The researcher created new categories that were aligned next to each code. All the codes assigned to similar categories with similar patterns were grouped together to form new

themes. These findings that were informed by themes will now be presented per sub-research question.

5.4.1 Findings for Sub-Research Question One

What are knowledge workers’ perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

The aim of this question was to understand what knowledge workers consider to be the fundamental leader practices and work experiences that drive and cultivate autonomous motivation. Three interview questions were linked to exploring the insights from the participants.

5.4.1.1 Positive Leader Practices that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation

Figure 5.3 below outlines the five themes that describe the leader practices that are believed to drive and cultivate autonomous motivation in a hybrid environment together with an indication of the code frequency per theme. Each of the leadership practices is elaborated on next and will be supported by verbatim quotes from the gathered data.

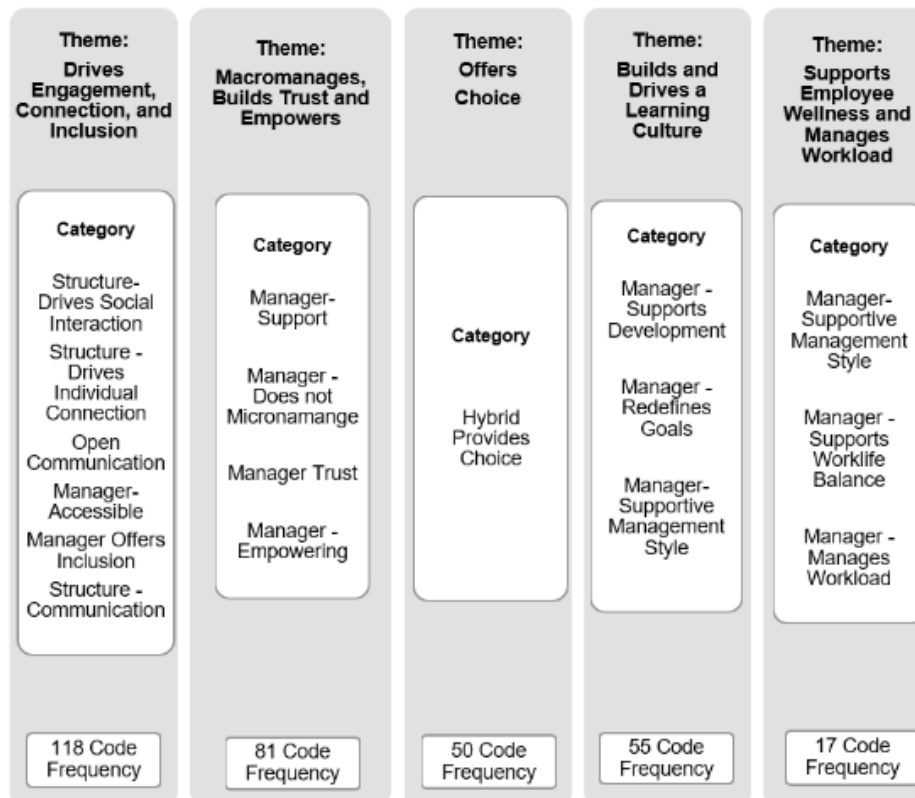


Figure 5.3: Positive Leader Practices that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation (Author’s own)

Drives Engagement, Connection, and Inclusion

Table 5.2 below outlines the first themed leader practice which had six categories and a total of 118 generated codes.

Table 5.2: Sub-research Question One – Positive Leader Practices: Theme One, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular team sessions for human interaction and to share work updates/concerns and be human 	Structure - Drives Social Interaction	Drives Engagement, Connection, and Inclusion	54
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular individual check-ins with manager to connect/discuss work/receive guidance 	Structure - Drives Individual Connection		13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent open communication and transparency 	Open Communication		12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager is accessible, encourages open communication, social interaction and working together 	Manager – Accessible		20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion when discussing matters with clients Manager who celebrates your individuality/sense of inclusion 	Manager - Offers Inclusion		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create different channels of communication 	Structure – Communication		15

This theme revealed a leader practice where managers are required to drive engagement, connection, and inclusion. This is driven by regular team sessions to allow for human interaction and for colleagues to share work updates, raise concerns and to just experience a sense of human-centeredness. This finding was strongly emphasised by 17 out of the 18 participants. Most participants called these engagement sessions, check-ins. These team sessions are encouraged by leaders of knowledge workers, and they occur on a regular basis. Pursuant to business and to the requirements of the team, the sessions are held weekly, monthly, or even quarterly. The formal team sessions are mostly reserved to discuss work updates, capacity needs and progress whilst the informal team sessions are geared to simply find out how the team is doing at a personal and emotional level. The participants have expressed the importance of getting together as a team to connect, particularly if such sessions are held in-person and not virtually.

" We prefer having socials in person. Be it at the restaurant, be it a corporate activity, event or whatever it may be or year-end. So yeah, I think the dynamics have changed since the hard lockdown. But right now, we don't do virtual socials any longer" (Participant 17).

" We have a morning call and then you just talk about what is your plan of action today, or what are you doing today? Do you maybe have capacity to help somewhere? So, what managers do is they sometimes create a space where we don't necessarily talk about work. We just check on everybody's well-being as well. So, I think that helps a lot on the team staying connected because it's a place where we want everybody to be honest" (Participant 3).

Of the 17 participants, four of them also mentioned that the team sessions are also used to allow the teams to network, collaborate and to share information on critical emerging trends that are work related.

"It is for collaboration purposes and for one to stay abreast of latest information. So, to give an example the last speaker we had was from our global markets division where we starting to look at Crypto currencies and assuming risk on South Africa, on our balance sheet" (Participant 4).

The attendance of some of the team sessions is compulsory for some participants whilst for others, it is optional.

"Even in a hybrid environment, it would be nice to have like one physical engagement a month. You know one that was compulsory, compulsory or even if it wasn't a physical engagement" (Participant 9).

Over and above the team sessions that were held, there were regular individual check-in sessions with the manager, and they were also viewed as a necessary leader practice to cultivate and drive autonomous motivation. A total of 11 participants considered these sessions as critical in that the sessions provided them a safe space to discuss work challenges, work progress, or personal concerns. A lot of these individual sessions are held monthly and usually they entail a formal discussion.

"But from a formal perspective, we do have monthly one-on-one sessions. There is a set time of 1 1/2 hours every month, she's booked it in our diaries and we go through what we've done in terms of the work for the month, what are the next projects and then if there's anything from her side" (Participant 13).

"If they're experiencing any challenges without really per se babysitting. So consistent one on ones, that would make it much better. So, you can get the guidance and stuff and you can also see the value add" (Participant 2).

Like the need for regular human connection as discussed above, nine participants also felt that a manager should be accessible to increase their level of autonomous motivation. This can be achieved through continuous engagement to build a sense of togetherness. The need for accessibility is not only attributed to managers only, but also to the team members.

"Availability. My manager's always available, no matter how busy they are, they will make the time, take the time. Open door policies" (Participant 15).

"They are always available, so if I wanna, if I have an issue, they are always available" (Participant 9).

Seven participants also viewed the need for frequent and open communication as a leader

practice that is crucial, more so when managers are transparent in sharing critical information that affects employees. Most participants found WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams to be useful channels of communication to discuss urgent matters and to help them to stay connected as a team.

"Definitely continuous communication, so always being available on the various platforms as I've mentioned. So, for me to know that they are just literally on the other side of the line really helps me to stay engaged" (Participant 16).

"...with my colleagues as well, whenever I need to work with somebody else, I know their Teams or cell phone call away" (Participant 14).

The need for inclusion also came out quite strongly from two participants. This is mostly critical when dealing with client projects that are particularly complex in nature or are at initial client engagements. In so doing, the participants felt that they were better able to add value. Two other participants also valued the need to have their individuality celebrated by their managers.

"We've adopted that approach and it's also feedback that I've given him and we agreed to in the next year to make sure that there is time to discuss certain projects and also to include me in the initial phases of that project" (Participant 16).

"But I think I've been, I'll call it blessed to have the type of leadership that I have where they've embraced that 'you're not like us and we celebrate you for you being different'" (Participant 1).

As the participants do not have the luxury of seeing their colleagues or managers on a regular basis due to hybrid working, ten participants indicated the need to stay connected through different channels of communication to help them stay engaged and motivated to drive their own work. The common channels of communication that were used are WhatsApp or Microsoft Teams as they help in delivering instant messaging and spontaneous connection. It seems the participants had also given their colleagues permission to be reached via these modes of communication as it allowed for flexibility to quickly get clarity on the questions that one may have which require someone else's urgent attention. Regular communication in this fashion did seem to fuel the need to stay connected to colleagues and managers.

"We are constantly engaging on WhatsApp and Teams. We have a team Teams group. We have a WhatsApp group" (Participant 11).

"So, we are a very small team. So, we do touch base regularly informally you know, I mean we have access to each other via WhatsApp, via Microsoft Teams. If I'm busy she would just send me a message. If she's busy I would just send a message" (Participant 13).

One participant also indicated that their company encourages them to have cameras on during virtual meetings to help to create connections in a virtual environment.

"The other thing that they also do is that they encourage...our cameras to be on...every single person, my manager's camera is always on whether he's in the office or he's not in the office. His camera is always on. So, I think that connectivity and letting us know that we are here for you empowers us because when we have sessions with our teams, like you said, I wanna see you so I can connect with you" (Participant 9).

Macromanages, Builds Trust and Empowers

Table 5.3 below outlines the second themed leader practice which had four categories and a total of 81 generated codes.

Table 5.3: Sub-research Question One – Positive Leader Practice: Theme Two, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager offers support, guidance and sets clear goals 	Manager - Support	Macromanages, Builds Trust and Empowers	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager does not micromanage/monitor but focusses on output 	Manager - Does not Micromanage		20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust from manager is key motivator to drive own work 	Manager Trust		26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sense of feeling disempowered/demotivated • Empowered to drive own work 	Manager – Empowering		11

A leader practice that is most valued by the interviewed participants is macro-management which is a term that encapsulates the manager's ability to trust and empower the teams as they drive their own work. This term is essentially the opposite of micro-management. Since all the interviewed knowledge workers work in hybrid environments where they do not have the luxury to interact with their managers daily, 11 out of the 18 participants felt strongly about working for leaders who do not micro-manage or monitor their daily actions to promote autonomous motivation. This is particularly so as the participating knowledge workers considered themselves as specialists who, are skilled to perform their duties independently.

"And it was just a matter of saying now that we're not in the office and the work that we do, you don't need to micromanage anyone. I've got a team of specialists and I'm a deep specialist myself, so it's always knowing that whether you're at the office or not, there's certain things that needs to be delivered" (Participant 1).

"First and foremost, it is the type of management style where you manage your own time, so you are quite independent in terms of how you manage your day, and you are not micromanaged" (Participant 13).

A few of these 11 participants placed emphasis on having leaders who should rather focus on output, not on how the work is done. It is to be noted that the higher the level of trust that the participants experienced, the higher the likelihood of the participants not feeling a sense of being monitored or micro-managed.

"And I mean basically we're saying we cannot police people as long as your target, your outputs, you meet them however way you meet them" (Participant 6).

"I think he has a very hands-off approach, he's not a micromanager" (Participant 5).

One participant found that being given flexibility helped him to experience motivation as there was no sense of being micromanaged.

"She's given me the flexibility to do my work at my own time. So, that obviously motivated me, it wasn't as if she was micromanaging me in terms of my work" (Participant 17).

On the other hand, two participants associated a sense of being empowered by virtue of not being micromanaged.

"How do we then support you to do what you then need to do. So, I have not been disempowered yet" (Participant 1).

"I think we are empowered enough at least from my side" (Participant 12).

Approximately half (9) the number of the interviewed participants highly regarded being trusted by their managers as a key leader practice that drives autonomous motivation. In doing so, most of the participants indicated that the nature of the relationship that they have with their managers determines whether there will be a sense of trust. The participants expressed that when they felt trusted by their managers, they were able to perform their jobs with a lot more ease, and without getting a sense that they are being micro-managed.

"Hybrid should be based in an element of trust and the relationship that we have with the superior and your output. And that's what matters. Nothing else" (Participant 6).

"The motivation is trust. I mean, I have been with the bank now for 10 years with you know pretty much the same boss. So, I think she knows how I work. But I would say it's that trust element that even if I don't respond in half an hour, she knows that I will get it done as soon as, that trust is just going to become such a big thing because you could be anywhere, you could be doing anything" (Participant 4).

Although four participants felt the need to be trusted and left alone to drive their own work, the need for support and guidance where required is also something that is valued, particularly

where the manager should first set clear goals to work towards. The support required was not only associated with work but with having space to also discuss the personal matters.

"We also have the kind of relationship where I'll be like, I don't understand this concept. It's something he can tell me, or I have to go and read up on it. And then we sit, and I check my understanding. But he's very good at like, this is a task. Where do you need assistance with technical understanding, where do you need like a peer review?" (Participant 5).

"If you are burning, they would rather know and help you solve, than let it go completely sideways and then you are stuck. They like to be part of the process, especially if things are going wrong. And genuinely having managers that are people centric, empathetic, they themselves are very family orientated" (Participant 15).

Offers Choice

Table 5.4 below outlines the third themed leader practice which had one category and 50 generated codes.

Table 5.4: Sub-research Question One – Positive Leader Practice: Theme Three, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid presents choices/options/freedom/liberating/convenience 	Hybrid Provides Choice	Offers Choice	50

When asked about the desirable leader practice that was required in a hybrid environment to drive and cultivate autonomous motivation, what was overwhelmingly evident and revealed a compelling finding is that hybrid work presents choices, options, a sense of freedom and convenience. This was strongly outlined by 16 participants who all confirmed this reality. The need for all these aspects is not necessarily only left for the manager to fulfil, but rather it is considered as something that should be offered at an organisational level. Some participants indicated that this is truly experienced when they are given the liberty or freedom to choose their preferred place of work instead of being forced to return to the office and that alone, is considered liberating. The participants also felt that the sense of choice means they are empowered to make decisions about going to the office or working from home with an acknowledgement of the importance of reaching the work goals as agreed.

"It is absolutely about having choice" (Participant 10).

"Things right now that the management team can do is to continue giving us that flexibility, the freedom of working remotely and managing our time" (Participant 17).

The choice that hybrid presents also speaks to deciding on when one should perform work and it allows knowledge workers to do what works for them, depending on their needs and preferences. What really seemed to increase the level of autonomous motivation is that the participants felt that they could plan their day, however, they want which can be attributed to having the flexibility to truly experience work and life balance.

"Taking traveling time into consideration, family time, just actual organisation of day-to-day activities and putting that into an everyday in office routine is much difficult as opposed to having the flexibility of... So, it gives me that flexibility to pop in, do this whatever is that I need to, and not have to be physically in front of somebody and still get as much value out of it" (Participant 11).

"But also, to fulfil your duties, sometimes it is better to be there with the team and everybody else. So, I think they pretty much have a good formula working. I wouldn't say there's anything that they can do to improve because there's no room for them to improve because they've given us pretty much the freedom, so it's what more than the freedom we've given you" (Participant 3).

Builds and Drives a Learning Culture

Table 5.5 below outlines the fourth themed leader practice which had a total of three categories and 55 generated codes.

Table 5.5: Sub-research Question One – Positive Leader Practice: Theme Four, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager gives feedback, holds open and honest career conversations • Manager offers work exposure/stretch projects/think outside box • Manager recommends learning interventions • Ongoing learning and career development is encouraged 	Manager - Supports development	Builds and Drives a Learning Culture	47
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefine organisational goals to align to hybrid ways of work 	Manager - Redefines Goals		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager helps create bigger picture thinking and shares the vision about my company 	Manager - Articulates vision		4

It emerged that that the need for learning and continuous development was emphasised by eight participants as the sample itself consisted of knowledge workers who continually want to build new skills. A total of nine participants viewed the need for managers to offer regular feedback and hold open and honest career conversations as a critical leader practice to drive and promote autonomous motivation. They also referred to the importance of creating a safe space for the participants to freely share their career aspirations and knowing that they will be supported to work towards them.

"Every now and then they will provide me with a catch-up session where they provide me with feedback on how I'm progressing. So, that was mostly what kept me progressing and growing and stuff like that and you able to get more confidence in what I was doing" (Participant 14).

"Having an open and honest conversation with your manager around your aspirations. So, feeling comfortable enough to share it with them. And I've been privileged enough to work with managers that I really don't have a problem going to tell them what my aspiration is, and sometimes when I feel like I don't actually know what my next step should be. Also being comfortable to have that conversation" (Participant 10).

The researcher found that five participants also valued managers who supported their ongoing development by means of recommending training to close any identified skills gaps. In addition, nine participants indicated that they enjoyed being assigned stretch projects or exposure to doing work that will enhance their capabilities.

"So, if I have a project where I don't feel capacitated or I don't feel competent for the specific project, I can ask for training. So, we discuss things like that in those meetings and then the manager can obviously then say agreed, let's go for this training" (Participant 16).

"I think in my line of work, mostly it's to give me more of unfamiliar sections and for me to go to territories that I haven't been in my job and that helps to keep me learning more and more in what I do" (Participant 3).

One participant also appreciated that his manager finds ways to create a bigger picture to ensure that he can see how his contributions add value to the entire value chain.

"But I think where there's a, there's a strategy, there's a vision, there's we're going in a certain place and we're making progress. Also, these are the small wins that we're getting along the way. And also, this is the plan that we have to get for your career in this organisation that will definitely be like, OK, I'm working towards this and it's great at home, at the office, it doesn't really matter, but I think vision, strategy, bigger picture. This is where you fit in" (Participant 5).

Most participants found value in advancing their set technical knowledge and being able to explore other fields of work where their skillset can be enhanced for the benefit of the organisation or for their own career growth. Different channels of learning were also specified, be it online training, on the job learning, information sharing sessions or community of practices. These findings revealed the need for organisations to continually encourage their employees to learn and grow, more so in the context of hybrid working.

"... It's the eagerness of wanting to learn new skills. And also working from hybrid and then saying can I be able to cross pollinate into other teams to go and learn what it is that they're doing without leaving my current space...So, the openness of wanting to acquire new skills in the likelihood that we're all still working from home" (Participant 1).

"At this point...I'm also trying to get in as much experience as possible, you know for myself. So, whatever it is, throw me into the deep end" (Participant 3).

"You know, I wanna be the best Cloud Engineer or whatever and stuff like that to say now from when, put time frames... So that's the culture of our environment, to learn and grow" (Participant 12).

Supports Employee Wellness and Manages Workload

Table 5.6 below outlines the fifth themed leader practice which had three categories and a total of 17 generated codes.

Table 5.6: Sub-research Question One – Positive Leader Practice: Theme Five, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like my manager's management style Manager supports hybrid work 	Manager – Supportive management style	Supports Employee Wellness and Manages Workload	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager encourages work-life balance 	Manager - Supports Work-life Balance		6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager should help us manage workload and push back from business 	Manager - Manages workload		4

A total of six participants felt that another form of support that was required from managers that is mostly appreciated and is considered a good leadership practice includes a need for managers to encourage work-life balance for their teams to enable them to experience a sense of autonomous motivation. Two other participants who indicated that their managers support hybrid work and like the idea of mostly working from home, such managers tended to be the ones who encouraged their teams to take breaks in between work.

"So they have the understanding that not everybody can be on a call between 4:00 and 6:00, for example, if you've got small children, those things are taken into account" (Participant 15).

"I think is it to manage how we are taking breaks because sometimes it's common that I haven't taken a break or we are just saying at 3:00 o'clock for example, I'm taking my lunch.

And maybe for management to make it strict to say, roughly between 11am and 1pm, there should be sometime where you are off" (Participant 12).

The biggest challenge that most participants raised that the researcher outlined under the section that outlines work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation is the workload and the number of meetings that the participants must attend to. There were two participants that appreciated the support that was received from their managers to manage workload or being supported to not attend unnecessary meetings, thereby contributing to their sense of wellness.

"Yes, in the beginning, some used to just set up meetings even when they see that the whole calendar is blocked, but because they know that this came from senior management that on Wednesday no meetings, I know that this person is available. With my manager, he encouraged us not to accept those meetings. As the senior management said that you need that day to focus on your tasks, to do what you need to do, I also encourage you to do the same. So, if anyone sends you a meeting request for Wednesday, just reject it" (Participant 7).

"I think it's mainly understanding the amount of workload, understanding there's only so many hours in the day. And pushing back to the business, to the different business stakeholders" (Participant 13).

5.4.1.2 Positive Work Experiences that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation

Figure 5.4 below outlines the five themes that describe the desirable work experiences that are believed to drive and cultivate autonomous motivation in a hybrid environment. Each of the work experiences is elaborated on next and will be supported by verbatim quotes from the gathered data.

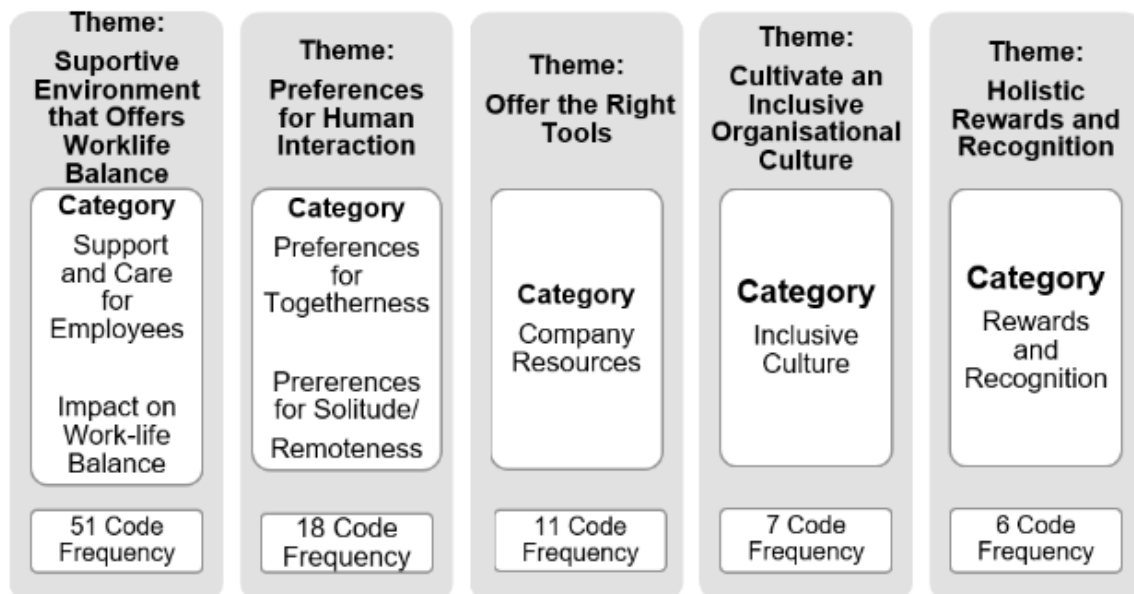


Figure 5.4: Positive Work Experiences that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation (Author's own)

Supportive Environment that Offers Work-life Balance

Table 5.7 below page outlines the first themed work experience which had two categories and a total of 51 generated codes.

Table 5.7: Sub-research Question One – Positive Work Experiences: Theme One, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistically care for and support employees 	Support and care for employees	Supportive Environment that offers Work-life Balance	34
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid work offers work-life balance 	Impact on work-life balance		17

A total of 12 participants referred to the importance of employee wellbeing. Some referred to the need to care for those who are vulnerable and may need support to sustain their mental wellness. The structures such as the Employee Assistance Programme and other support systems were considered to be useful initiatives to support staff to experience holistic wellbeing. This includes the role that is played by HR in supporting employees who are faced with challenges that affect their sense of wellbeing. One participant emphasised the need to create and protect the boundaries for work time and home time as that is ultimately her sense of wellbeing. Another participant further expanded that companies should encourage their employees to set boundaries as managers do not necessarily play a commendable role in helping one to thrive within an organisation.

"It was important that I set those boundaries which contributes to my well-being and my ability to be able to, because my well-being I guess is also connected to me feeling like I'm spending enough quality time with my family, right? So that was important for me" (Participant 10).

"They are pushing Wellness Wednesday and every Wednesday you get an e-mail where you know, you're being told it is OK to take a break. Don't feel like you do not have to take a break. It is OK to set boundaries. You know you're being encouraged so it doesn't directly, you know your manager is not your direct impact in terms of how you thrive within the firm, there are other supporting structures" (Participant 6).

What was striking that was outlined by two participants is that the responsibility to drive wellness does not rest with the manager but rather with the organisation as the employer. The

pair further outlined the need for companies to invest in their people.

"So, I think the bank, the company as a whole should invest in the people. They're not, just leave it to the managers themselves to take care of the people because the managers, they get busy, and they tend to fail. So, what they're doing at my organisation, and I think that's what they should focus on doing going forward, is making sure that I not only feel the love from my manager, but I feel the love from the bank itself. They've sent us Goodies and stuff like with socks and tea during winter and a power bank, you know, things like that as the bank "
(Participant 2).

"Your well-being does not depend on your manager. We've got other factors that affect you know you could go to the Wellness Centre; you could go to wherever. So, it's not directly linked to your manager to be well. It's your initiative to find roots and use you know the available channels to make sure that you your mental health is taken care of" (Participant 6).

Contrary to the above, some participants indicated that managers have a role to play in driving employee wellness by means of encouraging their teams to take breaks, to switch off and enjoy time with family.

"The other thing he has been encouraging us to also take breaks. It's not just only about work."
(Participant 7).

"...They are making us aware of taking the time to breathe, to take time for yourself. To understand when is work and when is family time or switch off time basically" (Participant 11).

The researcher found that the participants seemed to perceive an interrelatedness between the concept of work-life balance and how that drives one's wellbeing as discussed in the previous findings. A total of 13 participants referred to how one can align their personal commitments to their work schedule. As such, the flexibility that the hybrid environment brings was much appreciated by the participants with or without small children. A lot of the participants indicated how they are now able to work around their children's needs and family needs. Be it simple doing a school drop off, early school pick up, assisting children with homework, spending quality time during family over a lunch break, carrying for the young and the sick, or going to the gym. The concluding factor indicated their ultimate work and personal life balance which they considered comes with the benefit of hybrid working.

"I'm actually at home now because my husband tested positive for COVID, so we are quarantining. So, I think that's where hybrid helps out because normally, I wouldn't have been able to work I suppose. Or I would only have been able to do self-work without having meetings" (Participant 9).

"it's been a wonderful experience in the sense that I could spend time, first of all, breastfeeding when I gave birth to my baby girl and I'm in between have breaks, spend time with my husband, do lunch together, quickly put in washing, so just being in your personal space really helped me to manage the motherhood and the working person balance" (Participant 16).

Consider Preferences for Human Interaction

Table 5.8 below outlines the second themed work experience which had two categories and 18 generated codes.

Table 5.8: Sub-research Question One – Positive Work Experiences: Theme Two, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes longer to get to know colleagues, longs for interaction • Extrovert- longs for human interaction 	Preference for togetherness	Consider Preferences for Human Interaction	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences for Introverts- not lonely or in need of social connection 	Preferences for solitude/remoteness		5

The participants who considered themselves to be extroverts or those who stayed alone longed for regular human interaction, and they had a yearning to experience a sense of regular togetherness with fellow colleagues as outlined by six participants.

"I'm an extroverted person, so I hate working alone, so I love this. I love chatting to people. I love, you know that my camera will always be on and so just working alone in my office and it's I'm alone here, there's no one, so I think at home, working alone when I wanna have lunch, I have to go to the kitchen by myself" (Participant 9).

"I think being a people person, to moving from being around people and having those distractions as I mentioned earlier on, to now be very isolated and yeah, it was hard in the beginning" (Participant 18).

The four participants who joined a company or a new team during remote or in the hybrid work era also indicated a longing to regularly meet the others in person as they experienced that it takes longer to get to know fellow colleagues in a hybrid environment. This was also confirmed by the participants who had new colleagues join their team during remote/hybrid working.

"I would probably say that thing at the beginning whereas a new person, I felt like I was working a lot to form the connections with people..." (Participant 5).

"It's one because I'm new, so I don't really know everybody. I know them telephonically; I know them on e-mail. I know them for the less than five times that I've even seen them in this year. But I don't know them further to that. And you know, sometimes you need an informal work setting to get to know people better" (Participant 13).

Contrary to the above, the experiences of five participants who considered themselves introverts differed in that they did not experience a sense of loneliness or a need for social connection with colleagues. If anything, they enjoyed the solitude brought by hybrid work to some extent.

"I'm an introvert by nature. I can work on my own. I honestly, I never miss people. I connect with people because it's a must. But if and obviously with the people that I need to connect with work wise, I mean they are reachable if they are reachable on Teams or wherever." (Participant 6).

"I suppose I'm slightly different to everybody. I'm naturally an introvert or I tend towards introversion if you had to use the Myers Briggs, the MBTR. Working from home, if I know what I'm doing and I have a very succinct plan and I know exactly what I can do and I don't have to go get multiple approvals, I can simply take over. Being at home is fine" (Participant 15).

Offer the Right Tools

Table 5.9 below outlines the third themed work experience which had one category and 11 generated codes.

Table 5.9: Sub-research Question One – Positive Work Experiences: Theme Three, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company provided the right office equipment or IT support • Office space- renovations/limited space 	Company resources	Offer the Right Tools	11

A total of eight participants deemed being supported by their companies as being offered the necessary office equipment and infrastructure as it enabled them to stay connected and it helped them to achieve their set goals. This includes tangible tools such as laptops, ergonomic chairs, desks to work from, and gadgets for internet connection. The need for comfort was emphasised, hence the task to use the right office chair for those extended long

days of sitting on a chair whilst working. The participants appreciated that their employers supported them by carrying the cost in providing these tools.

"...We were provided with the office equipment. So, if you've got a table and you don't have an office chair, you can come to the office and take a chair. Also, there were routers and 3G cards that were then sent out, saying here is network connection for you to be able to work from home" (Participant 1).

"The other thing is also providing the necessary tools and access to technology. So, I mean having the laptop, having access to Teams and being able to do everything. I even got an extra screen as well that allows me to do my work, especially when I need to compare data or design learning material so that helps a lot. I do have Wi-Fi at home...but when the Wi-Fi does go down, then I do have a data SIM also on my laptop so they have empowered us in terms of giving us the tools and making sure we have all the equipment and so on" (Participant 13).

Another ask by four participants was the issue around office space. The researcher found that these participants outlined their companies to have either sold some buildings or were doing renovations to restructure for hybrid working. They outlined that if the companies are going to ask employees to sometimes work from the office, they need to have a conducive working environment with sufficient office space.

"The space where the entire team works in was taken up by one person having quite a lot of online meetings, so the people couldn't actually engage with one another. People couldn't have their own meetings. People couldn't call clients, you know, just have a quick conversation..." (Participant 16).

"But it all depends now, the current situation is because we're going through some renovation in our offices, our organisation has discouraged people from coming into the office and rather work remotely" (Participant 17).

Cultivate an Inclusive Organisational Culture

Table 5.10 below outlines the fourth themed work experience which had one category and seven generated codes.

Table 5.10: Sub-research Question One – Positive Work Experiences: Theme Four, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive culture where employees are consulted • Culture thrives where there is engagement 	Inclusive culture	Cultivate an Inclusive Organisational Culture	7

Another revealed finding was around the need for organisations to cultivate an inclusive culture where the employees are consulted for critical decision making. This was raised by five participants who had different experiences. The key aspect that was raised was around the need for employers to take the time to listen to the perspective of their employees.

"There's a lot of collaboration. They welcome your opinion and your suggestions. And I think all that combined creates a culture of trust, empowerment and to be perfectly frank, actually drives you to want to do better and want to actually deliver no matter where you are" (Participant 15).

"One thing they encourage is inclusivity with everyone where they want everybody to be part of the decision making and not having one big boss... making all the shots" (Participant 3).

Two other participants found that culture thrives where there is constant engagement and connection. These participants encouraged the need for organisations to provide structures for their teams to regularly engage to enhance company culture.

"And as I've said, once a year we actually go away, and we discuss our strategy, and we discuss our values, and we hold each other accountable for whether we actually actioning our values. Can we see it in one another's behaviours, and where do we not see it? How can we improve that? So regular conversations around our values, our strategy, what we are aiming for, how we do things on a daily basis and most important is the feedback" (Participant 16).

"...Culture thrives when there is engagement. Engagement means I need to see the people... culture is not about I need to see you on Teams. But how you speak, what you do? How you treat me, how I see you treating other people. So, it's like this whole ecosystem. It's not just one little piece..." (Participant 9).

Holistic Rewards and Recognition

Table 5.11 below outlines the fifth themed work experience which had one category and six generated codes.

Table 5.11: Sub-research Question One – Positive Work Experiences: Theme Five, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewards and recognition - money and intangible 	Reward and recognition	Holistic Rewards and Recognition	6

The last finding revealed in terms of work experiences that are deemed to cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations is the issue around rewards and recognition as raised by five participants. Three of these participants mentioned the ask for organisations to conduct salary benchmarks to ensure that they are paid for the work they perform and are aligned to the continuous rising inflation rate.

"Recently they went and did, like I said, it's not about money, but they went out and did sort of an alignment of salaries where they looked at for example, my role and say what is someone in my role getting at a different bank and they went and increased your salary without consulting your manager" (Participant 2).

"It's this thing that people are then saying it's a funny one of salary benchmarks. Can we please get paid for the jobs we do. So, it's just that money aspect of then saying things are going up, how as a business we then also get to pay our employees accordingly to then adjust to inflation" (Participant 1).

Two other participants mentioned that the non-monetary rewards of recognition are also necessary to drive autonomous motivation, even though they too, also valued money as a source of motivation.

"There are softer things besides financial that we can look at. But I think the most important one because our jobs are always changing and they tend to think that because of working from home, we don't spend money on petrol and stuff like that. That we are OK. I mean, cost of living is rising here is rising at a crazy speed. So, for me, yeah, that's number one, financial resources" (Participant 14).

"I think besides the money, well, I think what the bank is doing now in terms of rewarding beyond the objectives. You know, the extra things that you do. Recognising people, building that family culture" (Participant 2).

5.4.2 Summary of Findings for Sub-Research Question One

The aim of this study was to explore the concept of autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The 10 principal findings on leader practices and work experiences that are considered to drive and cultivate autonomous motivation are summarised below. It is anticipated that these findings contribute to answering the main research question to this study.

- Driving and encouraging human connection at an individual and team level is viewed as critical. This includes formal sessions to discuss work updates, capacity needs and progress whilst the informal team sessions are geared to connect at a personal level;
- Compelling findings reveal a longing for macromanagement versus micromanagement where the high levels of trust should be built, and teams are empowered to drive their

own work. This approach to leadership requires leaders to focus on the output and avoid monitoring their teams' daily actions;

- What was evidently highlighted is the need for knowledge workers to be given choice, options, a sense of freedom and convenience to choose when and where to work in line with their preferences;
- Managers are viewed as the key role players to continually encourage ongoing development and career growth through regular feedback and honest conversations;
- The direct role for managers to manage the workload, to reprioritise goals, and to encourage work-life balance was also raised as essential to maximise employee wellness;
- Both organisations and leaders are viewed as critical role players to drive work-life balance by offering holistic wellbeing support to their workforce;
- The findings also reveal a need to acknowledge that employees have individual preferences to be considered when driving engagement;
- Equipping the workforce with the right office tools helps to create conducive work environments and it is a necessity regardless of place of work;
- Despite the dispersed team, organisations ought to cultivate inclusive work environments where there is regular connection and engagement to enhance company culture; and
- Both monetary and non-monetary rewards are valuable motivators for knowledge workers in hybrid settings.

5.4.3 Findings for Sub-Research Question Two

What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

This question was included to bring a balanced view on the insights that are perceived to prevent knowledge workers from experiencing a sense of autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. The aim was to identify negative leader practices and work experiences that are deemed by participating knowledge workers to frustrate their sense of autonomous motivation as they continue to work partly in the office and partly remotely. Three interview questions were linked to exploring insights from the participants.

5.4.3.1 Negative Leader Practices that thwart Autonomous Motivation

Figure 5.5 on the next page outlines the four themes that describe the negative leader practices that are believed to thwart or prevent autonomous motivation in a hybrid

environment. Each of these undesirable leader practices will be discussed next in a lot more detail and will also be supported by verbatim quotes from the gathered data.

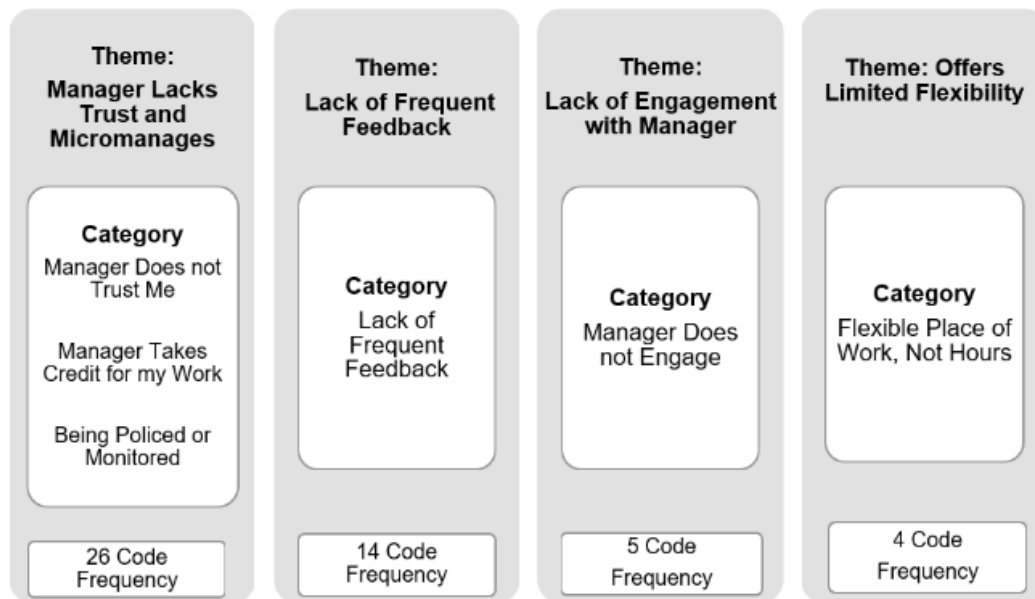


Figure 5.5: Negative Leader Practices that Thwart Autonomous Motivation (Author’s own)

Manager Lacks Trust and Micromanages

Table 5.12 below outlines the first themed undesirable leader practice which had three categories and 26 generated codes.

Table 5.12: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Leader Practices: Theme One, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager lacks trust, doubts my capabilities/double efforts • Reason for going to the office - non-performance or manager does not trust team 	Manager does not trust	Manager Lacks Trust and Micromanages	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager takes credit for my work/interferes 	Manager takes credit for my work		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of being policed or monitored 	Being policed/monitored		8

A handful of five participants felt strongly that one of the negative things that a manager can do to prevent autonomous motivation is by failing to trust them, which results in a feeling of being disempowered. This practice typically manifests when managers doubt their team's capability or by asking teams to work from the office especially where managers suspect poor performance.

"It used to kind of disempower me a little bit because I'd have to do something twice. You've confirmed something and then it's like, no, I don't think that's the answer. Can you go back and check again? So, those types of things, yeah" (Participant 14).

"Lack of trust plays a role where people would be policing you, whether you are on or off, how long you've been away or whatever" (Participant 6).

Lack of trust is also experienced when managers want to be involved in every detail of work or when they want to resolve business problems by means of taking over their work as outlined by two participants.

"They had to find a way to oversee what we do. And initially they had to be included in everything" (Participant 14).

"What's the point of having me there if you're just going to fix it anyway?... But all you're just doing is creating a cycle of every time we reach like a stalemate, then you jump in and then it's sorted" (Participant 5).

One participant raised a concern that the lack of trust also results in double the effort of work which unnecessarily increases the workload. There were two other participants who outlined that the lack of trust can manifest where a manager takes credit for work that was done by a team member.

"...But if you have a manager who either doesn't trust you to do it...And he gives this to every single other person to do, the result is ineffectiveness, because it's duplication of work, it's additional effort, unnecessary...." (Participant 9).

"This idea that I've had..., I've drafted it, but she will sign it from both of us...but it doesn't cancel the effect of you feeling shy, you know, bit disempowering and I'm finding that more and more in an environment where we don't meet face to face" (Participant 4).

The lack of trust is also associated with micromanagement. A total of three participants emphasised how they have experienced a sense of being monitored or micromanaged in a hybrid environment which impacts on their level of motivation. These participants mentioned that this practice is usually displayed when managers continually check their availability on online collaborative tools such as Microsoft Teams.

"... But I would say that it's sometimes assumed that managers are constantly checking if you're online or you know if you are working or in a meeting or you know..." (Participant 11).

" He is the type of guy that would, if you are not in front of your computer, obviously you can check. Remember Outlook tells you that somebody is there or not there and then that would be

the time that he chooses to maybe say on IM (Instant Messenger), can you chat about something" (Participant 6).

"... But now you feel like you are being checked to say, hey you have been offline from this time ..." (Participant 12).

Lack of Frequent Feedback

Table 5.13 below outlines the second themed undesirable leader practice which had two categories and 14 generated codes.

Table 5.13: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Leader Practices: Theme Two, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causes of inefficiency - manager fails to give timely feedback or input and takes long to meet 	Lack of frequent feedback	Lack of Frequent Feedback	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprioritise goals 	Redefined goals		1

Another negative leader practice as perceived by the participants is when a leader fails to give frequent feedback which is considered to also cause inefficiency as outlined by six of the participants. Working in a hybrid environment leaves little room for participants to have constant manager availability which ultimately affects the provision of ongoing feedback and thereby derailing work.

"Currently I would say the only challenging part because obviously we are at home where now I can no longer just walk to him anytime. Yes, I can call anytime, he has an open-door policy, it's just that there will be those times where because he's also a manager he's in these meetings with senior management where sometimes it can be difficult to get hold of him" (Participant 7).

"I would definitely be inefficient if I can't get information quick enough or can't get my questions answered quick enough. So, that's definitely, it's still standing that that reason and I think also quick and effective feedback" (Participant 16).

Lack of Engagement with Manager

Table 5.14 on the next page outlines the third themed undesirable leader practice which had two categories and five generated codes.

Table 5.14: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Leader Practices: Theme Three, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager does not interact/encourage engagement 	Manager does not engage	Lack of engagement with manager	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our team drives our connections, not manager 	Who drives interaction		1

A total of three participants also brought into light another angle on the need for engagement. Their experience of their managers is that these managers do not necessarily want to engage at a social level with the team which also impacts on their motivation levels in a hybrid environment.

"... he's not connecting to us at the social level at all to the entire team. It might just be his personality because he's new, but I also think it might be seen as a weakness, a leadership weakness because you know, you need to have that ability whether it is at a social level, from an entertainment perspective or even from a CSI perspective" (Participant 9).

"So, when we do go to the office, sometimes the manager is clogged with meetings with other people and other responsibilities. So, whilst the rest of the team interacts etcetera, we don't get to interact as much with them. So, then you fall by the wayside in the social aspect...But in a social context, it starts building a much greater divide" (Participant 8).

Offers Limited Flexibility

Table 5.15 below outlines the fourth themed undesirable leader practice which had two categories and four generated codes.

Table 5.15: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Leader Practices: Theme Four, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No flexible hours, just flexible place of work 	Flexible workspace not hours	Offers Limited Flexibility	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced return to office • Log your working hours to track where you worked from 	Hybrid Policy		2

Another revealing finding that is unique to this new way of working is that one participant felt that the flexibility that she gets of working either in the office or from home is not fully flexible, particularly if the employer still wants her to be in an office environment at a certain time. Another participant indicated that being forced to return to the office may be perceived as a lack of flexibility.

"Working hours to the best of my knowledge, have remained the same, so you are expected to be online or at work. Whether you're at home or in the office between a certain set of hours. They haven't quite implemented the flexi time" (Participant 15).

"But I can see that for a business owner, they might want us back to get the people there" (Participant 2).

5.4.3.2 Negative Work Experiences that thwart Autonomous Motivation

Figure 5.6 below outlines the four themes that describe the negative work experiences that are believed to thwart or prevent autonomous motivation in a hybrid environment. Each of these undesirable work experiences will be elaborated on next together with selected verbatim quotes from the gathered data.

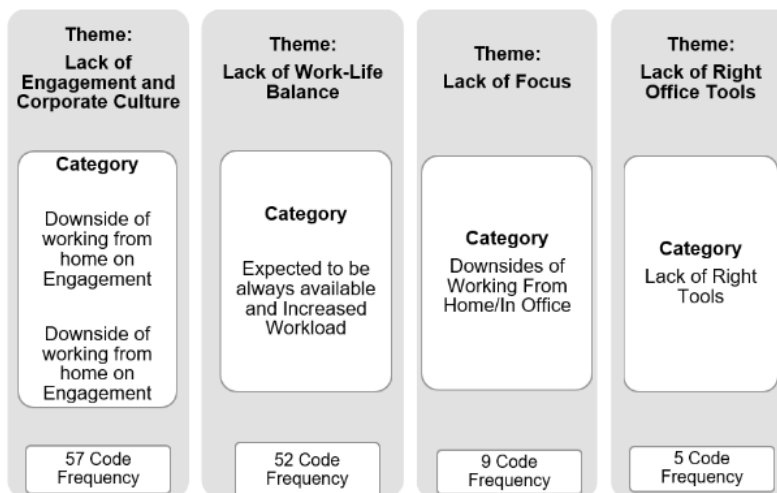


Figure 5.6: Negative Work Experiences that Thwart Autonomous Motivation (Author's own)

Lack of Engagement and Corporate Culture

Table 5.16 on the next page outlines the first themed undesirable work experience which had two categories and 57 generated codes.

Table 5.16: Sub-research Question One – Negative Work Experiences: Theme One, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges of hybrid - limited social interaction/spontaneous/informal engagements and connection Connecting virtually is not impactful on relationships/stakeholder management Started new job during remote/hybrid work Junior staff don't have the experience of office life, don't learn as much and need more support and engagement Difficult to network across the business Difficult to keep up with own/new networks 	<p>Downside of working from home on engagement</p>	<p>Lack of Engagement and Corporate Culture</p>	35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of exclusion Feeling excluded in complete remote setting (2) Difficult to integrate into the organisation, requires a strong mindset (5) Difficult to make your mark in a new company/your worth invisible (3) No sense of connection to the brand of the organisation or feeling like a part of it (2) Company culture diluted I miss dressing up for work 	<p>Downside of working from home on culture</p>		22

A total of nine participants conveyed how difficult it is to engage with colleagues in a hybrid environment as opposed to the spontaneous interactions that they would experience in an office environment. The need for engagement is considered critical from a work perspective as well as from a social perspective.

"But in terms of collaboration with the team, it's also been tricky because you end up finding yourself meeting from 6 to 6 because you cannot quickly run to someone's desk" (Participant 2).

"I, however, do miss the interactions and physically seeing people and you know, sometimes that really does bring a very different spin to your attitude and the way your day even turns out sometimes" (Participant 11).

One participant also indicated how this lack of spontaneous office interaction can jeopardise the ability to share ideas and collaborate effectively.

"The corollary, so lack of availability, not being able to share ideas as readily as you would say in an office where you can walk up to somebody. Basically, turning off the channels that don't allow you to communicate with them when you need to get hold of them. Not being collaborative" (Participant 15).

Another group of eight participants alluded to the fact that connecting virtually with colleagues is not impactful on the relationships or to some extent, stakeholder management due to a lack of personal touch that one experiences during an in-person engagement. The quality of engagement is as such compromised.

"It's very difficult to understand, you'd read a lot in the body language and facial expressions. But things like not turning their video on can be very exclusionary. Even though you have a really good working relationship, when you are discussing something difficult, to not be able to see those facial features as it is, you can't see a lot of the body language...." (Participant 15).

"... it becomes very impersonal and also the way people relate to each other because you're not physically in front of each other, even though your camera can be on sometimes people are very sharp in the way they communicate. You know, if the person was in front of you, body language and all those different things will play out differently" (Participant 13).

The researcher found that the four participants who started a new job during remote/hybrid work experienced challenges in terms of integrating into their respective organisations and teams.

"Moving into a new role in hybrid is very difficult" (Participant 11).

"So, the transition, even though it, you know, a lot of people may have eased into it over the many months, for me, it was a shocker, moving from traditional to hybrid" (Participant 13).

Since the junior staff joining hybrid organisations do not have the experience of office life, their learning is compromised when they join hybrid organisations with limited impromptu support and engagement from colleagues as outlined by one participant.

"But I do also feel the young guys that are coming into the job environment have lost that touch in terms of what we had experienced working from the office" (Participant 17).

"And then the second was really the people interaction. So, especially when you have younger members of the team starting, they don't benefit as much, and you don't learn as much as to how to work with them" (Participant 8).

There were two other participants who mentioned how difficult it is to manage one's networks or to network across the organisation due to hybrid working, alluding to work experiences that can create discomfort and ultimately can demotivate one.

"... there's been so many changes in staff, and they are in different positions, you know the network you had four years ago just before lockdown, those key people have moved on. They've either left the bank, or they are in new positions" (Participant 4).

"And it's difficult to network with them, engage with them and get things done. So, the social and the communication aspect that technology is giving is not enough" (Participant 13).

Few reasons were indicated that made the experience of hybrid work arguably negative. Two participants cited a sense of exclusion when they work remotely as they were finding it difficult to make a mark in a new company.

"So, in a completely remote setting, it was very difficult because sometimes you'd hear that people had certain conversations and then you were not invited to the meeting, and sometimes it's not because people want to be funny. It's just that they forgot to include you in a meeting"
(Participant 10).

"How will people know my worth and who I am and what I can do. They broadly see what is coming from performance appraisal and you know they don't really know me because they only hearing my voice over Teams. How will people know me? And it's so difficult to network to get opportunities and or to also grow in your career as well"
(Participant 13).

Moreover, one participant indicated how difficult it was for him to identify with the company's brand.

"And that's what's been missing in this hybrid working space because you feel, sometimes you don't feel connected to the organisation apart from getting your salary on payday. You know, so it's very difficult to identify with the brand and feel like you are really part of this bank or whatever" (Participant 13).

Four participants shared their views about feeling excluded in critical engagements, an experience that will not be felt in a normal work environment.

"... if they have an EXCO, certain people are invited to the physical venue and then some of the people are invited on Teams. So now you think, the same people keep getting invited to the physical venue. So, I would have thought that if it's an EXCO and if we are all members of the EXCO, they should rotate the physical invitation, right? So, they're not doing that..."
(Participant 9).

"... if there are key meetings and I'm not in and she hasn't invited me..." (Participant 4).

One participant raised a concern about the reality of hybrid working in that it dilutes the culture within his organisation, more so for those who join an organisation during this new way of working.

"One of the things we are also struggling with is company culture...you have the cohort that was there before lockdown happened. And I think in their minds, they also still have a certain idea of this is what work looks like. This is how work at this company looks like. And then you have people that have joined since lockdown happened who are trying to figure out what is the culture for the company. But actually, that doesn't exist anymore because that's not the work environment" (Participant 5).

Another participant raised a concern about the lack of gender equality in his hybrid environment as he is the only male employee among a few females. He outlined how this has

a negative impact in terms team dynamics, thereby negatively impacting on his work experiences.

"You are very weary of the way you conduct yourself and what you're saying because you don't want to offend. So, that does give me isolation because from a gender equality perspective in a hybrid working space, it's not equal. There are no other males for me to interact with."

(Participant 13).

Two participants indicated how they miss dressing up for work which is a corporate image they enjoyed about being professionals.

"Ever since COVID happened, and ever since recently, I haven't been able to wake up, put on a suit..." *(Participant 3).*

"And I think the other way I feel isolated is just not dressing up and showing up..."

(Participant 4).

Lack of Work-Life Balance

Table 5.17 below outlines the second themed undesirable work experience which had one category and 52 generated codes.

Table 5.17: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Work Experiences: Theme Two, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload, long hours, duplication of work, no switching off, no boundaries 	Expected to be always available and increased workload	Lack of Work-life Balance	48
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deemed always available 			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disempowered means you cannot say no to increasing workload 			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of working from home mentally and socially 		2	

A significant number of 16 participants have referred to the challenges that impact on work-life balance in a hybrid environment which include aspects such as increased workload, working for extended long hours or even weekends which makes it difficult for the participants to completely switch off from work due to blurred boundaries.

"After working hours, I'm needing to actually do my work. And on weekends, I needed to do my work. So that takes me away from time with my family and my studies. I'm already exhausted"

(Participant 13).

"The downfall of those is one, you don't switch off and it might have an impact in your body. And then you might be sick before you know it where you just overwork yourself. So, the effect of not switching off, that's the actual disadvantage of it" (Participant 12).

The need to 'stay on' as described by one participant was fuelled by fear as he did not want his manager to think that he is not working. Other challenges include having to manage too many virtual meetings in a hybrid environment which are considered wasteful engagements or conflicting goals to be prioritised.

"I remember at the beginning, because of the idea of being worried that if they don't see me on Teams, it means I'm not working. Uh, so like you will spend a lot of hours like, I mean, by 8:00 o'clock you already on the laptop somehow 5-6, you are still on the laptop" (Participant 7).

"There's a lot of meetings, a lot of engagements, a lot of workshops" (Participant 11).

The increased workload as reflected by two participants was also associated with the duplication of work that these participants have to endure.

"I'm doing this and then somebody else and somebody else and somebody else now, he says. Ohh yeah, now I need you to pull it together. So, I said to him, OK, but now it's going to take even longer. So, it's a very ineffective" (Participant 9).

"Maybe a bit of duplication. So, I'm just thinking if we have like, maybe more calls like you'll have a call then someone else needs to be engaged so there's another call and then there's another e-mail, whereas I think, I think working in the office, everyone could be pulled together in a meeting so it's a lot of duplication and I think...." (Participant 4).

Lack of Focus

Table 5.18 below outlines the third themed undesirable work experience which had one category and 13 generated codes.

Table 5.18: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Work Experiences: Theme Three, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges of hybrid - home distractions 	Downsides of working from home/in office	Lack of Focus	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges of going to the office – Presenteeism Reason for not going to the office – petrol costs and traffic (1) Reason for not going to the office- office distractions/no sense of real work (3) 			7

The downside of working from home or from the office as depicted by some participants is that both work environments have their unique set of challenges that are a reality for hybrid working. Three participants mentioned that working from the office is not a solution as some employees may simply show up physically but not be productive.

"Also, it could be the issue of presenteeism at the office, for example, that people will report into the office, but they're not actually working in the office...or they feel like they wanna take multiple breaks because one of the friends have invited them for a break" (Participant 17).

"I think it's that whole notion of me physically being in front of you and I could be physically sitting right in front of you and not listening to a word you said, right?" (Participant 11).

Whilst office distractions were a common concern for three participants, other reasons included the rise of petrol costs and traffic and lack of sufficient office space as some buildings were either sold or office space was undergoing renovations.

"I'm actually loving the isolation because I get to concentrate on closing the work. At the office, like honestly being at the office, you find there's coffee sessions. There are longer lunch hours, and all those things" (Participant 1).

"Hence, we often feel that when you go to the office, you don't get much work done because you trying to catch up with that one, the other and everyone. So yeah, so that's what the problem is with having to go to the office because you are spending most of the time catching up with others" (Participant 6).

Working from home is equally challenging due to home distractions that if not well managed, can create a negative work experience as indicated by five participants.

"I think it's most people where they try to do a lot during a meeting, they are not paying attention or whether they are driving and their excuses are bad connection, but they're not paying attention" (Participant 2).

"So, when I'm at home working from home, I find everything just intertwines. I've got the vacuum cleaner in the background...you are on a call and you're trying to be professional " (Participant 4)

Lack of Right Office Tools

Table 5.19 below next page outlines the fourth themed undesirable work experience which had one category and five generated codes.

Table 5.19: Sub-research Question Two – Negative Work Experiences: Theme Four, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of right office equipment • Load shedding causes network challenges • Lack of office space - some buildings sold 	Lack of Right Tools	Lack of Right Office Tool	5

Lastly, two participants have indicated that a lack of the right office equipment can create a negative work experience when one is working in a hybrid environment.

"The only thing which I don't really have is from an economic perspective. So, I mean, I had to buy my own desk and obviously I mean looking at the space in my home, I can't get a big one. So, I got a compact one which doesn't give me enough space, you know, with my screen and to really look at my stuff and then I don't have an office chair, so I sit on one of these normal plastic chairs which really ties me out from a posture perspective, it drains me out. At the beginning, they were allowing staff to borrow chairs from the office, and then they've just stopped it recently..., having the proper ergonomics in place, that's a bit hectic, yeah"
(Participant 13).

5.4.4 Summary of Findings for Sub-Research Question Two

The aim of this study was to explore the concept of autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The eight principal findings on the undesirable leader practices and the work experiences that are believed to thwart or prevent autonomous motivation in hybrid settings are summarised below. These findings contribute to bringing a balanced view on what hybrid organisations and leaders leading the teams should avoid. What is compelling about these findings is that they mostly contrast what has already been discussed in Sub-research Question One. In addition, it is anticipated that these principal findings contribute to answering the main research question to this study.

- The lack of trust is an undesirable leader practice that leaves knowledge workers feeling disempowered. This practice manifests when leaders doubt the capabilities of their teams or when they take over work which leads to double effort and increased workload as a side effect. Forced office return was also outlined which inherently takes away the sought after flexibility as described by the knowledge workers;

- The lack of frequent feedback by the manager is also viewed as a negative leader practice, thereby causing inefficiencies or derailed delivery of outputs;
- The knowledge workers also raised the need to connect with their managers at a social level, lack of which is considered as damaging to their motivational levels;
- As the participating knowledge workers find themselves in hybrid settings, the limited flexibility in a sense of fixed office hours or mandated office returns is also considered a negative leader practice;
- The knowledge workers also consider the lack of engagement as something that directly impacts on the organisational culture. The findings revealed that engaging in virtual settings compromises the quality of engagement in various forms. Whether the knowledge workers engage to collaborate, network or for social reasons, the impact is considered to not be the same as that of the in-person engagements. Also, some knowledge workers who are new joiners or who are junior staff may struggle to integrate into a new company/team or receive the required support. Essentially, the virtual collaboration that is not well managed may create a sense of exclusion or even dilute the corporate culture of a given organisation;
- Two of the challenges of hybrid working which have a direct impact in compromising work-life balance is increased workload and increased number of unproductive meetings. The earlier translates into knowledge workers failing to switch off due to extended hours of work, thereby consequently affecting their wellbeing;
- The lack of focus regardless of the office/remote based work is another raised concern as exacerbated by the number of office/home distractions that if not well managed, can affect one's productivity; and
- The unique setting of hybrid work requires knowledge workers to be well equipped to work in conducive environments. Where there is lack of the right office equipment, performance is hampered.

5.4.5 Findings for Sub-Research Question Three

How should leaders support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

This question was designed to bring about the understanding of what leaders can do (enablers) to support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation. One interview question was linked to exploring the insights from the participants. The insights from this research question were also combined with the interview closing question which focused on what the organisations can do to create optimal working conditions that are suitable for future ways of work. Each of the themes that derived from the research question will be expanded on next together with supporting verbatim quotes selected from the

data findings. Figure 5.7 on the next page outlines five themes that emerged.

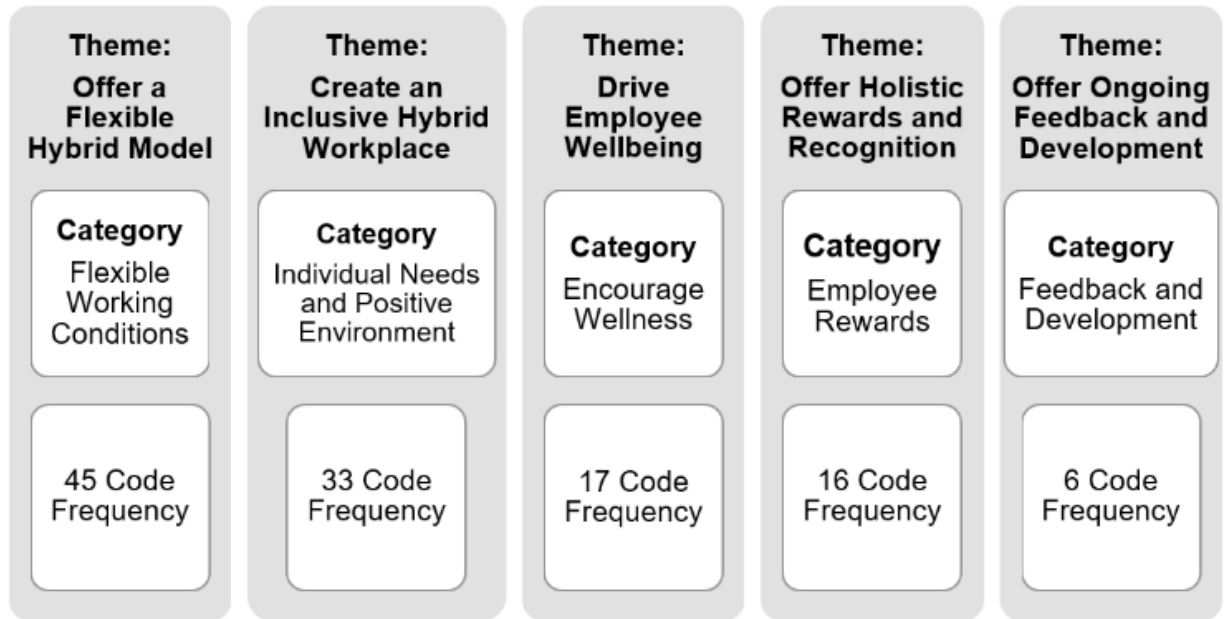


Figure 5.7: Enablers to Satisfy the Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment (Author’s own):

5.4.5.1 Offer Flexible Hybrid Model

Table 5.20 below outlines the first theme which had one category and 45 generated codes.

Table 5.20: Sub-research Question Three – Enablers to Satisfy Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment: Theme One, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer an inclusive but flexible hybrid policy that’s not too prescriptive, yet brings structure Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer option to choose where to work from 	Flexible working conditions	Offer a Flexible Hybrid Model	45

A total of 12 participants outlined that one of the desirable ways that organisations can consider is to create optimal working conditions through offering knowledge workers flexible hybrid work policies that are not too prescriptive and yet bring structure to their work.

"I'm saying to you that there must be some structure, not total structure. They're not going to say to me, you have to be back at the Office 8 to 5, some structure" (Participant 9).

"... I think flexi hours is something that my client really should consider. Some people travel very long distances and they wanna come in early and leave early..." (Participant 15).

This same group of 12 participants also felt strongly that organisations should retain hybrid working as a motivator for them to not consider leaving their employers for competitors.

" I guess the one thing that would make me leave is if anyone was to take away the ability to have a flexible working environment" (Participant 10).

"I think for me this type of hybrid arrangement is very important in my life. If my company has to say we're going back full time, I will go and seek elsewhere where I can have a hybrid structure" (Participant 11).

Another group of 12 participants felt strongly that an effective way to create optimal working conditions is to offer them an option to choose where to work from. Being forced to return to the office was something that was certainly not desirable by most of the participants.

"Give me the option to choose where I want to work, and I understand there's going to be those special cases. But can it give me the allowance to have the opportunity to choose where I want to work?" (Participant 1).

"...they shouldn't consider forced return to the office. That would be the biggest mistake. That would be the biggest mistake, number one, they should just continue as we've been with remote working" (Participant 14).

Lastly, three participants also raised a need to be given an option to work from anywhere locally or even abroad as a key motivator and retention strategy for future ways of work.

"... Again, I can't say this specifically for me, but that's the way I see the future, is you have to have almost pop-up offices... That's how you're going to retain employees because everyone wants the flexibility" (Participant 4).

"... we have an international footprint and there might be some way to promote this digital nomadness. So, I could, for example, work in another office in Bahrain, but still do the work for my South African office... And it's something that I know people consider when they want to leave. Can I travel?" (Participant 8).

5.4.5.2 Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace

Table 5.21 on the next page outlines the second theme which had two categories and 33 generated codes.

Table 5.21: Sub-research Question Three – Enablers to Satisfy Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment: Theme Two, Categories and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to create optimal working conditions - employee preferences/needs taken into account 	Focus on individual needs	Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace	22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to create optimal working conditions - create a conducive work environment 	Positive work environment		11

Another compelling finding on creating optimal working conditions was how most of the participants outlined the need for organisations to focus on the individual needs and preferences to create inclusive hybrid work environments. This was confirmed by 13 participants, although their needs varied to include the preferences for working parents, the needs for those who have moved out of the Gauteng Province, the needs for those who do not prefer to have regular interactions, the needs for those who wish to be involved in decision making, and the needs to cater for a multigenerational workforce among others. But the key thing is that these needs must be taken into account by employers.

"Everybody's different. If some people prefer coming to the office, allow them to do that. If some people want to work remotely, they can do that as well. Be it remotely in their hometown or remotely in a family member's farm, as long as the work is done" (Participant 17).

"...there are multigenerational workforces that is working in this hybrid environment. So, each of us will interact differently to how we do our work, how we communicate. There's very different approaches from the different generations..." (Participant 13).

Another critical aspect as raised by eight participants was for organisations to create conducive work environments. What came out strongly was the need for organisations to ensure that everyone has the tools to work from home, but also taking into consideration the unique needs of the employees based on their unique home set up.

"And, in terms of tools of trade, for example, what sort of devices that you're going to be using. Instead of subjecting all the employees to use one specific device model, in a new way of work may not be the most flexible way of doing things..." (Participant 17).

"There's one in making things as comfortable as you can at home...The office has given us inverters etcetera so that we are able to work from home. We've also got Wi-Fi subsidy, so there's a lot of things that are done there. But that doesn't suit everybody's needs..."So, for me...I would have preferred if they invested in a better chair for me for example... I'm almost 2 meters tall..." (Participant 8).

5.4.5.3 Drive Employee Wellbeing

Table 5.22 below outlines the third theme which had one category and 17 generated codes.

Table 5.22: Sub-research Question Three – Enablers to Satisfy Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment: Theme Three, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - drive employee wellness and work-life balance 	Encourage wellness	Drive employee wellbeing	17

A total of 10 participants also outlined the need for organisations to drive employee wellness by facilitating work-like balance for their workforce as a valuable practice to create optimal working conditions in a hybrid environment. Most participants valued the fact that they could attend to a family crisis, as well as attend to the needs of their young children but also deliver as required.

"Instead of spending that time travelling, ... Now I'm able to go run in the morning, do my morning run, maybe between 6:00 and 7:00... At 8:00 o'clock I'm working. So, you can actually do a lot of things because of this working from home possibility" (Participant 7).

"I think for me the stress component of it has just been so much lighter and better and I feel like I eat better. I feel like I drink more water, I honestly feel like it's just been better for me..." (Participant 11).

Some participants outlined how they can live much fuller lives through the benefit of work-like balance in hybrid environments.

"If I need to go to the doctor, I don't need to check in with anyone. I'll just book it out to my calendar. I've got music lessons for my baby on a Friday, that's like a set standard thing in my calendar. My whole team knows about it, so they don't book meetings during that time. So just respecting one another's personal life is very important for all of us...So, if that can continue, I will definitely not leave because my family is extremely important to me" (Participant 16).

5.4.5.4 Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition

Table 5.23 on the next page outlines the fourth theme which had one category and 16 generated codes.

Table 5.23: Sub-research Question Three – Enablers to Satisfy Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment: Theme Four, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer monetary and non-monetary rewards and recognition 	Employee rewards	Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition	16

A total of seven participants outlined that offering the employees holistic rewards and recognition would be an attractive way to create optimal working conditions. This is inclusive of both monetary and non-monetary rewards.

"You want the company that recognises your talent and your contribution" (Participant 2)

"They should really look at look at the compensation aspect. They need to really go back and ensure that everybody's being paid correctly." (Participant 14)

One participant indicated the need to be compensated for costs incurred whilst working from home was as an area that requires organisations' attention. Another participant mentioned companies should consider paying employees from the time they prepare to get ready for work, not only for the actual hours worked for.

"Will the company start compensating staff because they're using their electricity, and they'll also support staff maybe to get the nice comfortable chairs, or they will increase basically salaries..." (Participant 12)

"I really do believe like companies need to pay us from the time we wake up. Because the things you go through from the time you wake up preparing for work to get to work, they can't only pay us from the time you sit on that desk...." (Participant 3)

5.4.5.5 Ongoing Feedback and Development

Table 5.24 one the next page outlines the fifth theme which had one category and 6 generated codes.

Table 5.24: Sub-research Question Three – Enablers to Satisfy Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in a Hybrid Environment: Theme Five, Category and Code Frequency

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - encourage ongoing development and honest regular feedback/communication 	Feedback and Development	Offer Ongoing Feedback and Development	6

The need for companies to encourage ongoing development and honest regular feedback was considered a positive approach to create optional working conditions as outlined by three participants.

"... So, those kinds of opportunities that are being offered for me, it says that I'm working for a company that really cares and not only for me to do their work, but for me to also develop personally..." (Participant 7)

"very important to continue with this is regular feedback, regular check-ins, regular communication" (Participant 16)

5.4.6 Summary of Findings for Sub-Research Question Three

The aim of this study was to explore the concept of autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The five principal findings on the enablers to satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid settings are summarised below. These findings contribute to adding another layer of insights on how organisations and leaders can cultivate and promote autonomous motivation among knowledge workers, thereby contributing to answering the main research question to this study.

- One of the key enablers to satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation is to offer a flexible hybrid model as considered by the participants. This should be informed by flexible work policies that are not too prescriptive yet bring about the required structure in the workplace. It also includes a choice to choose the place of work and having fluid working hours;
- The knowledge workers also consider the need for organisations to create inclusive hybrid workplaces as key. The individual needs and preference should be considered, thereby including the issuing of office equipment where required;
- Organisations are also urged to drive work-life balance to maximise a sense of wellbeing where knowledge workers are cared for at an individual level;

- The findings also reveal a need for organisations to offer both monetary and non-monetary forms of rewards and recognition; and
- Lastly, the need for ongoing feedback and development is also emphasised as critical in hybrid settings.

5.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings to the three sub-research questions that are posed in Chapter 3. The three sub-research questions were designed to answer the main research question which was aimed to explore knowledge workers' perspective on how leaders should cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. The themes outlined above for each sub-research question emanated from the detailed analysis of the data that was collated from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with the participants. The intention of the researcher was to present these findings en-vivo as narrated by the 18 participants who took part in the study. There is a range of compelling insights as informed by the revealed findings which will be useful in contributing to the understanding of ways organisational leaders can consider to cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations.

Summary of Findings for Sub-research Question One

The key findings to this question suggest that there are several leader practices and work experiences that are valued by the participants and that are considered essential to drive autonomous motivation in hybrid work settings. A total of five themes that are informed by the data from 17 categories speak to the desired leader practices that cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. These themes include the need for managers leading hybrid teams to:

- Drive engagement, connection, and inclusion;
- Macromanage, build trust and empower teams;
- Offer choice;
- Build and drive a learning culture;
- Support employee wellness and manage workload.

On the other hand, a total of five themes that were informed by the data from the seven categories outline the valued work experiences that cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. These themes include the following:

- Supportive environment that offers work-life balance;

- Consider preferences for human interaction;
- Offer the right office tools;
- Cultivate an inclusive organisational culture;
- Offer holistic rewards and recognition.

Summary of Findings for Sub-research Question Two

The important findings to this study also reveal that there are several leader practices and work experiences that are believed to thwart autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. A useful insight is that most of the undesirable leader practices and work experiences were seemingly indicative of what was lacking from the presented desirable leader and work experiences that cultivate autonomous motivation as discovered in Sub-research Question One. A total of four themes as informed by eight categories speak to the negative leader practices. These themes include practices that should be avoided by managers leading hybrid teams:

- Manager lacks trust and micromanages;
- Lack of frequent feedback;
- Lack of engagement with manager;
- Offers limited flexibility.

On the other hand, a total of four themes that were informed by five categories speak to the undesirable work practices that the participants feel prevent their sense of autonomous motivation in hybrid work settings:

- Lack of engagement and corporate culture;
- Lack of work-life balance;
- Lack of focus;
- Lack of right office tools.

Summary of Findings for Sub-research Question Three

The significant findings to this question reveal the enablers to satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation for hybrid organisations and for managers leading hybrid teams to consider. A total of five themes that were informed by five categories emerged. These findings also reveal that some of the findings to this question were related to those that were revealed in Sub-research Question One, accordingly confirming the leader practices and the work experiences that are arguably the most critical in creating optimal working conditions in hybrid organisations. These findings include the need for hybrid organisations to:

- Offer a flexible hybrid model;
- Create an inclusive hybrid workplace;
- Drive employee wellbeing;
- Offer holistic rewards and recognition;
- Offer ongoing feedback and development.

Chapter 6 entails the discussions of the shared findings against the reviewed literature. The researcher was able to explore whether the results from the past studies from the reviewed literature aligned to the findings from this study or whether there were new insights, that were therefore adding to the theory.

Figure 5.8 and Figure 5.9 as outlined below respectively depict how the presented themes relate or contrast to each other as per the findings from the three Sub-research Questions.

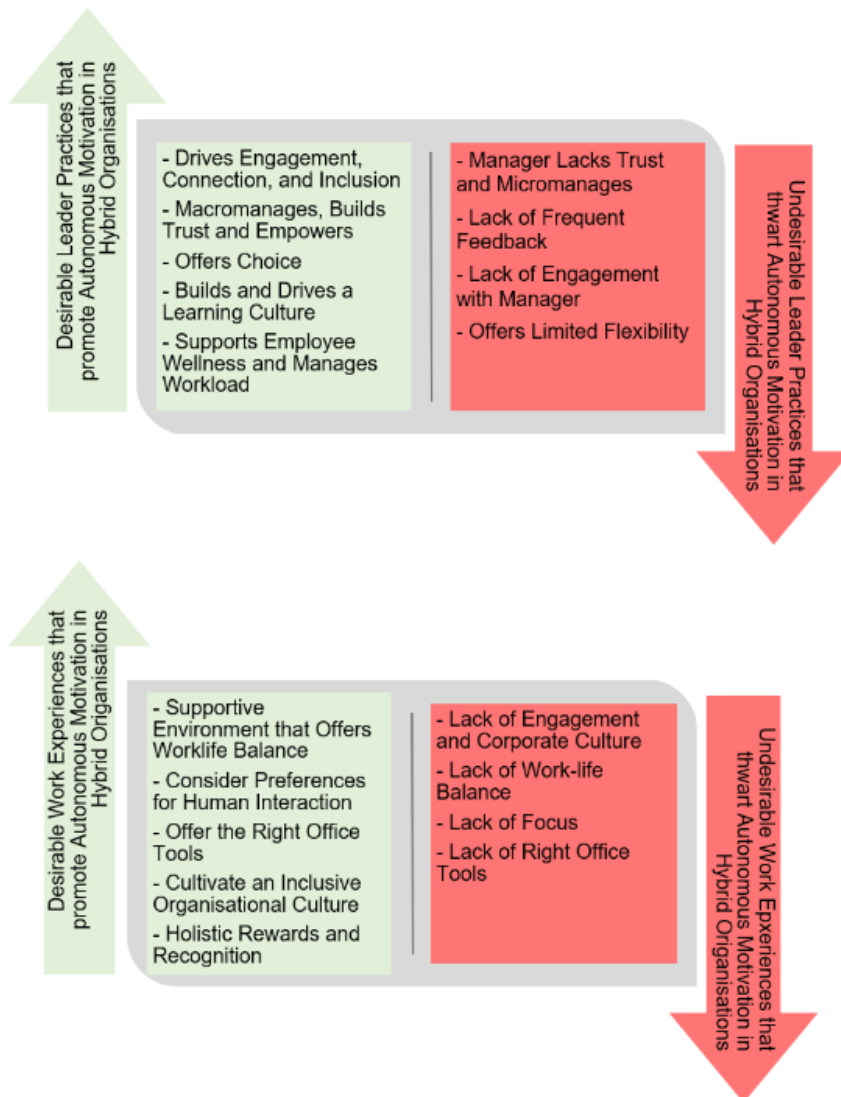


Figure 5.8: Themes on Desirable and Undesirable Leader Practices and Work Experiences that promote or thwart Autonomous Motivation in Hybrid Organisations (Author's own)

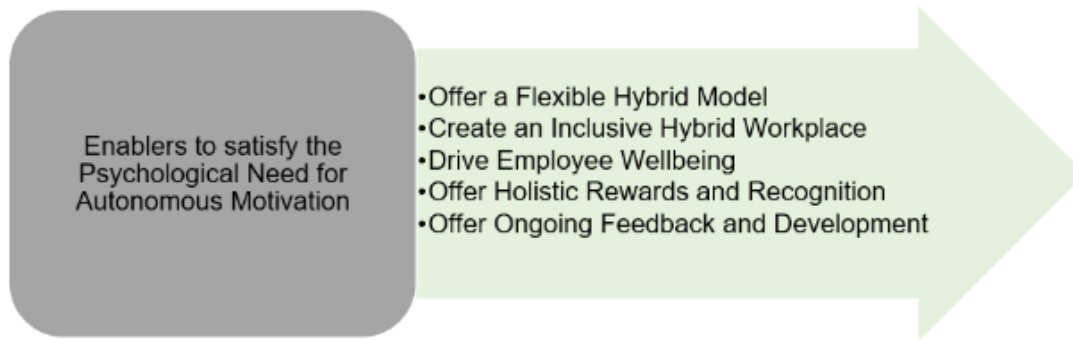


Figure 5.9: Themes with Enablers to Satisfy the Psychological Need for Autonomous Motivation in Hybrid Organisations and future ways of work (Author's own)

6.1. Introduction

The research study was aimed at exploring knowledge workers' perspective of autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. The participants met the prescribed sample criteria, consequently providing credibility to the study findings. Chapter 6 details the discussion and the interpretation of the study findings. In discussing the research findings, the aim was to compare the significance of the findings to the reviewed literature of the past studies regarding the phenomenon under exploration as presented in Chapter 2.

The findings uncovered the expectations of how knowledge workers desire to be managed to increase autonomous motivation. This was achieved through the identification of the leader practices and the work experiences that promote or thwart autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers. The gained insights contribute to an improved understanding of how leaders can satisfy the psychological need for the autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The discussion of the findings is aligned to the three sub-research questions.

6.2. Discussion of Findings

This section enabled the researcher to explore how the past studies from the reviewed literature align to the findings from this study or whether there were new insights, thereby adding to theory.

6.1.1 Discussion of Findings for Sub-Research Question One:

What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Sub-research Question One sought to explore the leader practices and the work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations as perceived by the interviewed knowledge workers.

Positive Leader Practices that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation

The study findings revealed five key leader practices that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. These leader practices include 1). Driving engagement, connection, and inclusion; 2). Macromanaging, building trust and empowering; 3). Offering choice; 4). Building and driving a learning culture; and 5). Supporting employee wellness and managing the workload. Each of the emerged leader practice is discussed below in detail.

Drives Engagement, Connection, and Inclusion

The first leader practice reveals an expectation for leaders to drive engagement, connection, and inclusion. This leader practice can be attributed to the need for *relatedness* in the SDT (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021) and it was mentioned most by the participants. This finding opposes Koestner and Holding's (2021) observation that there is a greater need for *autonomy* over the other psychological needs. The need for *relatedness* as per the SDT places a lot of emphasis on regular and open communication, the deepening of relationships, a sense of connectedness even in a virtual space, and encouraging connections among the team members (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

This novel finding is not surprising because in the context of hybrid work, knowledge workers have a heightened need for regular connection with their managers at an individual and team level to stay connected as hybrid work takes away the luxury of constant engagement and connections. The latter supports a study by McKinsey's researchers (Scharf & Weerda, 2022) who argued that building team cohesion and fostering team engagement is a critical management practice in the context of hybrid work. A total of two researchers who respectively conducted the reviewed past studies between 2020 and 2021 also showed a common thread in terms of the importance of establishing and nurturing relationships and building team cohesion through creating meaningful team connections (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This leader practice seems to be more prevalent in the context of hybrid work where employees may have a stronger need for relatedness which provides a sense of belonging (Rigby & Ryan, 2018) for dispersed teams and a scattered workforce.

The study conducted by Fowler (2018) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevalence of remote or hybrid work indicated that leaders placed more value on providing direction to the teams, thereby painting a bigger picture of where the organisation was headed and articulating the why as well as having teams to align their roles to their personal values among others. In that manner, the leader practices that Fowler (2018) encouraged did not reflect the current study findings wherein engagement, connection and inclusion are much needed by knowledge workers in the context of hybrid work because the context is different. Jungert et al. (2021)

outlined that autonomy-supportive behaviours are effective in increasing autonomous motivation across the different contexts. One can in this manner argue that although the SDT may offer a base for leaders to create optimal autonomy-supportive environments (Koestner & Holding, 2021; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020), these fundamental psychological needs to foster autonomous motivation among the employees seems to shift, based on context and the experienced demands and challenges. One can as such argue that the satisfaction of the psychological needs is context dependant as revealed in the study findings.

Another finding that relates to how leaders can drive engagement, connection, and inclusion revealed the importance of managers to be accessible to their team members and for the team members to be accessible to each other as a practice to build a sense of togetherness and accordingly enhance autonomous motivation. Although the reviewed literature does address the need for managers to listen to the needs and concerns of the employees (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021), the context in which the studies were conducted does not seem to indicate the importance of manager accessibility which is a common need in hybrid work settings, in that manner necessitating the need to expand on these leader practices. What is becoming apparent is that managers should not only consider frequent and open communication to keep their teams informed but they should also consider tapping into technological advancement where they can use instant communication channels to communicate the key messages to timeously reach the dispersed teams. This is supported by Orsini and Rodrigues (2020) who encourage leaders to use the online platforms that are designed to strengthen the connections and for timeous collaboration. Organisational leaders should as such put in place collaborative tools that will help the employees to stay connected with each other and also to solve problems collectively.

Macromanages, Builds Trust and Empowers Teams

The second leader practice that is expected of managers as depicted in the study findings revealed the need for leaders to macromanage (a term that encapsulates manager's ability to set clear goals so as to empower and trust teams to drive their own work) as outlined by Britcher (2018), that they must build trust and empower teams (which is attributed to the need for *autonomy*). According to the reviewed literature, the need for *autonomy* speaks to giving employees a sense of ownership, choice, freedom and being able to drive one's life (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). When it comes to the leader practices that managers can employ to support a need for autonomy as per the reviewed literature, what emerged strongly is for leaders to empower their teams, reduce micromanagement, and create a sense of choice in driving one's work (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). These concluding leader

practices supported the findings in this study where macromanagement was preferred over micromanagement to cultivate autonomous motivation. What was striking about the study findings is how knowledge workers compared driving their own work with the need for leaders to focus on output (performance results) and not on the input (process/ the how) which also translates into showing trust in the teams. A considerable number of the participants who experienced high levels of trust did not feel a sense of being monitored or micromanaged. These findings are supported by the McKinsey study that revealed effective management practices in a hybrid environment to include the need to focus on performance outcomes, build and maintain trust and doing away with micromanagement (Scharf & Weerda, 2022).

Unexpectedly, inside the reviewed literature that focused on the leader practices that drive autonomous motivation, the need to increase trust in the workplace was only perceived as critical in one study (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). The latter explains why a recent study by Gartner (2021) speaks of an existing gap in terms of fostering trusting relationships, more so where there is reduced visibility into the work patterns of employees working in a hybrid environment. Consequently, the study findings reveal a need for leaders who manage knowledge workers in hybrid teams to build and maintain trust through strengthening the relationships with their team members. Lastly, although the study findings revealed the need for managers to trust their teams, it does not, however, imply that managers should stop supporting their teams. In fact, the findings revealed that manager support was one of the effective leader practices to drive autonomous motivation. The latter finding brings new insight that is not covered under the reviewed literature in terms of defining the essence of the need for autonomy.

Offers Choice

The expectation for leaders to offer choice to their teams was the third leader practice that was considered to cultivate and promote autonomous motivation in hybrid work settings. This finding can also be attributed to the need for *autonomy*. Based on the reviewed literature, the need for *autonomy* speaks to giving employees a sense of ownership, choice, freedom and being able to drive one's life (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). An overwhelming detail of findings revealed that knowledge workers consider hybrid work as a phenomenon that presents choices, options, a sense of freedom and convenience. This sense of choice should ultimately translate to being given the liberty or freedom to choose a preferred place of work instead of being forced to return to the office and choosing when to perform work, thus disregarding the traditional official office hours. The shared findings were expected as one researcher from the reviewed literature holds the view that forcing employees to return to the office can result in negative

connotations as it compromises the inherent meaning of flexibility, which is often viewed by employees as the autonomy to decide when and where one should work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021). Orsini and Rodrigues (2020) expand the need for autonomy to include promoting a sense of choice and flexibility. In contrast, Fowler (2018) holds that autonomy differs from freedom but it is rather an internalised awareness of choice and a sense of control despite the set rules, the work requirements, the regulations or boundaries as communicated in a manner that does not bring about guilt or fear due to the power or status a leader holds. Regardless of the earlier views, what is prevalent is that organisational leaders who aim to improve their employee hybrid work experience should evaluate their policies to check if the employees experience a sense of freedom to experiment hybrid working where they can articulate their own needs and preferences without being pressurised or coerced to follow the rigid rules such as the return-to-office mandates (Deci et al., 2017).

This is critical for hybrid work settings as perceived by Gartner (2021) who suggests that flexibility and remote work should be considered a default way of work that organisations should promote, and it is as valid as the office-based work. If knowledge workers embrace flexibility as a favourable practice that cultivates autonomous motivation, it is pertinent for leaders to pay attention to the needs and to the preferences of their workforce.

Builds and Drives a Learning Culture

The fourth finding on the leader practices that was expected of managers leading knowledge workers in hybrid organisations is building and driving a learning culture (which is attributed to the need for *competence*). According to the reviewed literature, the need for competence involves feeling competent or efficacious due to inherent skills and expertise and the ability to continually grow to widen one's capabilities to meet future work demands (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). What was revealing and compelling in the findings was how knowledge workers valued ongoing learning despite the valuable knowledge and skills that they possess to solve complex problems through critical thinking as outlined in the reviewed literature (Davenport, 2005; Stone et al., 2009; Surawski, 2019). The participants outlined the different actions that their managers employ to build and deepen their competency levels and capabilities. These included the need for managers to offer regular feedback, to hold open and honest career conversations, to create psychological safety for the employees to share their career aspirations, and to encourage ongoing development through the attendance of training or involvement in stretch projects. All the latter findings closely align to the recommended leader practices that are geared to promote autonomous motivation in the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The reviewed literature positions the Self-Determination

Theory as an effective motivational theory that is essential to create optimal work that is required for autonomous motivation and growth through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Slemp et al., 2021). In this case, the satisfaction of the need for *competence* was certainly highly regarded by knowledge workers.

Supports Employee Wellness and Manages Workload

Lastly, the fifth finding that was revealed in this study on the leader practices that were expected of managers leading knowledge workers in hybrid organisations is the need for leaders to be supportive to drive employee wellness and to manage the workload (which is attributed to the need for *competence* and *relatedness*). This practice translates to the need for managers to foster work-life balance for knowledge workers to achieve employee wellness, particularly as the findings to the study revealed that the increased workload was a major challenge in hybrid work settings. The previous point shows that employee wellness is a valuable factor in the context of hybrid work. One of the reviewed literatures indicates that through the need for *competence*, leaders can support their teams by means of managing the workload to avoid employee burnout (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). On the other hand, the need for *relatedness* requires leaders to care for their teams (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Accordingly, managers who deeply care about their teams are likely to support their teams to manage the excessive workload and thereby foster employee wellness. The above findings support what was outlined by Deci et al. (2017) who put it that the workplace environments that are autonomy supportive motivate employee wellness. Seemingly, the latter positions wellness as an outcome, whereas when one looks at the study findings, knowledge workers value employee wellness as something that should be managed through the actions by leaders, one of which includes managing the workload.

Positive Work Experiences that Cultivate and Drive Autonomous Motivation

The study findings revealed the five work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. These are, 1). Supportive environment that offers work-life balance; 2). Consider preferences for human interaction; 3). Offer the right tools; 4). Cultivate an inclusive organisational culture; and 5). Offer holistic rewards and recognition. Each of the work experiences as emerged is discussed below in detail.

Supportive Environment that Offers Work-Life Balance

This work practice is associated with the need for *competence* and *relatedness* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The study found a clear expectation for the organisations to genuinely care for their employees by offering support through the use of employee wellness structures and support systems to bring about a holistic sense of wellbeing. The findings revealed that the mechanisms to bring about the work-life balance should be driven at an organisational level and must not be left to managers who are equally overburdened. Indeed, the work-life balance is thought to bring about wellness in the context of hybrid work. The latter finding did not come across strongly from the reviewed literature except where Orsini and Rodrigues (2020) point out that leaders can support their teams by means of managing the workload to avoid employee burnout. One can attribute this finding to the fact that prior to the prevalence of remote and hybrid work and at the time that the SDT was developed in the 1980s, there was perhaps minimal attention to focus on managing the workload as employees could switch off at the end of a workday and there were also clearer boundaries between work time and home time. In the context of hybrid work, the lines are blurry, thereby leaving employees with a compulsion to carry on with unrealistic work goals, sadly to the detriment of one's wellbeing.

Consider Preferences for Human Interaction

Researchers who have previously conducted the studies related to this study have found that there is a phenomenon called a 'copernican turn' which positions individual employees in modern organisations as empowered actors who are capable to voice out and define their preferences on the aspects that enhance motivation and engagement (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). If employees are empowered actors, that means they have the flexibility and the freedom to choose, which relates to the psychological need for autonomy (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Considering the individual needs, the preferences and the concerns are also attributed to the need for relatedness based on the SDT's psychological needs (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). As anticipated in this study and based on the reviewed literature, the studied knowledge workers had differing preferences and needs when it comes to the need for human interaction (Franzen-Waschke, 2021). The extroverts and the participants who had just joined a new company or team during remote/hybrid work longed for regular human interaction and connection to integrate into their new work environment and to quickly get to know their colleagues whilst the introverts enjoyed the solitude of hybrid work and preferred minimal or no interaction at all. Based on the above, it is evident that employers should indeed pay attention to the needs and the preferences of the employees with regards to deciding on the frequency of team engagement sessions to

foster autonomous motivation (Altman, 2021; Franzen-Waschke, 2021).

Offer the Right Office Tools

The third positive work experiences that knowledge workers valued was being offered the right office equipment and the right tools for uninterrupted connection whilst working from home and having ergonomically designed office infrastructure for conducive and comfortable work environments from home. What was striking was how the participants also outlined the need for a spacious and conducive workspace for the days that they work from the office. This finding is new and is unexpected based on the reviewed literature on the SDT as the theory places emphasis on the arguably intangible leader practices and work experiences that cultivate autonomous motivation. One can argue that the lack of emphasis on the tangible tools such as but not limited to the office chairs, the work desk, the WIFI connection, and the extra computer screens is related to the context where, in the traditional workplace employers typically offer the required tools to their workforce in an office environment. However, the current work context where employees can work remotely requires organisations to ensure that their workforce is equipped to work from home by means of offering the right office tools and thereby create favourable work conditions. This finding shows that the satisfaction of psychological needs is arguably based on context and what matters for individuals in that context. The concluding point is supported in the reviewed literature of a recent study in response to current and future ways of work (Gartner, 2021). Hence, whilst managers expect their teams to stay motivated for optimal performance despite the place of work, employees should also be equipped to do so with the hard tools.

Cultivate an Inclusive Organisational Culture

This study found that knowledge workers valued the need for organisations to cultivate an inclusive culture where their views and voices are heard and listened to, and they are consulted for critical decision making. Moreover, an inclusive culture as considered by a few participants involved a need for constant engagement and connection. These findings were expected as they support what has been outlined by researchers where they explored ways for organisations to create optimal working conditions that cultivate autonomous motivation in the reviewed literature. The need for autonomy emphasises how organisations should give employees a voice in decision making, thereby affording them an opportunity to make contributions, and by collaborating when setting goals (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). On the other hand, the need for relatedness outlines the need for organisations to listen to the needs and to the concerns of the employees and creating a sense of connectedness (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The latter was

supported by the reviewed study that was conducted by Gartner (2021) where they identified gaps between the leader and the employee sentiments on the future employee experience. The study revealed that employees feel a sense of organisational connectedness when their needs and preferences are met and when they are allowed to influence the decisions. It is evident that whilst knowledge workers find themselves working in unique environments when they are dispersed on the days that they work remotely, there is still a need for them to experience a sense of connection through inclusive cultures at an organisational level, something that can bind people together amidst their place of work.

Holistic Rewards and Recognition

This exploratory research study found that whilst participants appreciated all the support that they received from their employers to adjust to working remotely which later transitioned to hybrid working, there was still a yearning by some participants for their employers to consider offering holistic rewards and recognition. A few participants suggested for their employers to conduct salary benchmarks to ensure that the participants are paid fairly for the work that they perform and to consider offering non-monetary rewards and recognition. This finding was not expected based on the literature reviewed which placed primary focus on the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs to drive motivation and engagement in work settings (Ryan & Deci, 2019a). Moreover, the SDT was selected as a framework for this study because it is a dominant theory that has endured various criticism specially around the importance of rewards and pay in the workplace as determinants to improve performance and motivation (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). Although one had argued that employee compensation is an extrinsic reward which is not on its own sufficient to translate into high quality workplace performance, motivation, and wellbeing particularly among knowledge workers who are mostly highly paid (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021), it is evident that some participants did value money as a source of motivation. It is therefore a finding worth noting in the context of hybrid work for knowledge workers who are arguably difficult to retain (Serrat, 2017) and could as such potentially consider leaving their employer for increased pay amidst the rising inflation and the living costs in the South African context.

6.1.2 Summary of Discussed Findings for Sub-Research Question One

The five emerged themes as discussed outlined the desirable leader practices that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in a hybrid organisation as perceived by knowledge workers. What has emerged is that the revealed leader practices are expectedly shaped by the Self-Determination Theory, and they are directly linked to the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as per the reviewed literature (Gagné et al., 2022;

Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). In addition, the themed leader practices are equally aligned to the recommended leadership practices as outlined by the various researchers who have conducted past studies in different contexts (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Although the emerged leader practices from the study are supportive of creating autonomous motivation in hybrid work settings, what was unexpected is the perceived level of importance that was allocated to the needs, based on the context of hybrid working. The emerged desirable leader practices are summarised below:

1. **Managers to drive engagement, connection, and inclusion.** This practice is attributed to the need for *relatedness* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The key findings revealed that knowledge workers in hybrid working have a heightened need for relatedness which provides a sense of belonging (Rigby & Ryan, 2018) for the dispersed teams. In addition, it was revealed that managers should be accessible to their team members and so should the team members to each other as a practice to build a sense of togetherness and thus enhance autonomous motivation in hybrid settings.
2. **Managers to macromanage, build trust and empower teams.** This leader practice is attributed to the need for autonomy as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The key findings revealed that leaders should embrace macromanagement which is a term that encapsulates the manager's ability to empower the teams, reduce micromanagement, and create a sense of choice in driving one's work to cultivate autonomous motivation (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
3. **Managers to offer choice.** This leader practice is attributed to the need for *autonomy* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). An overwhelming detail of findings revealed that knowledge workers consider hybrid work as a phenomenon that presents choices, options, a sense of freedom and convenience. Hence, employees should have the autonomy to decide when and where one should perform work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021), thus potentially leading to a need to refine traditional working hours.
4. **Managers to build and drive a learning culture.** This leader practice is attributed to the need for *competence* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Compelling findings revealed that knowledge workers value ongoing learning despite the valuable knowledge and skills they possess (Davenport, 2005; Stone et al., 2009; Surawski, 2019).

5. **Managers to support employee wellness and manage workload.** This leader practice is attributed to the need for *competence* and *relatedness* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The study findings revealed that employee wellness is a valuable factor in the context of hybrid working and managers should find ways to foster a work-life balance for knowledge workers to achieve employee wellness and help the teams to manage the increased workload which is a major challenge in hybrid working.

In addition to the desirable leader practices described above, the study findings also revealed the following work experiences as critical to cultivate and promote autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. The emerged desirable work experiences are summarised below.

1. **Supportive environment that offers work-life balance.** The study findings revealed that work-life balance is thought to bring about wellness in the context of hybrid work. The findings also revealed that the mechanisms to bring about work-life balance should be driven at an organisational level and not be left to managers who are equally overburdened. Organisations should as such show that they genuinely care about their workforce by managing the workload to avoid employee burnout. These findings are in line with the need for *competence* and the need for *relatedness* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
2. **Consider preferences for human interaction.** More than ever, individual employees can voice out their needs and preferences particularly on aspects that enhance their motivation (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). The studied knowledge workers had differing preferences and needs when it came to the need for human interaction (Franzen-Waschke, 2021)
3. **Offer the right office tools.** Knowledge workers indicated the value of being equipped with the right office tools as one that fosters a conducive work environment required for creation of autonomous motivation. This finding was unexpected as the reviewed literature on the SDT places emphasises on the arguably intangible leader practices and work experiences that cultivate autonomous motivation. Office equipment is as such viewed as a means to empower teams to perform (Gartner, 2021).
4. **Cultivate an inclusive organisational culture.** The findings revealed that organisations should cultivate an inclusive culture where the views of employees are heard and listened to, as well as where constant engagement and connection is encouraged. These findings are in line with the need for autonomy and the need for relatedness as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

5. **Holistic rewards and recognition.** The findings were that knowledge workers also value both monetary and non-monetary rewards as well as recognition as a source of motivation. This finding was not expected based on the literature that is reviewed where the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs to drive motivation and engagement in work settings (Ryan & Deci, 2019a) is elevated over the importance of the rewards and pay as the determinants to improve performance and motivation (Gerhart & Fang, 2015).

6.1.3 Discussion of Findings for Sub-Research Question Two:

What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Sub-research Question Two sought to explore the leader practices and work experiences that thwart or prevent autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations as perceived by the interviewed knowledge workers.

Negative Leader Practices that Thwart Autonomous Motivation

The study revealed four key negative leader practices that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. These undesirable leader practices include 1). Manager lacks trust and micromanages; 2). Lack of frequent feedback; 3). Lack of engagement with manager; and 4). Offers limited flexibility. Each of the undesirable leader practice is discussed in detail below.

Manager Lacks Trust and Micromanages

The first negative leader practice revealed in this study is the lack of manager trust as showcased in various forms that make knowledge workers feel disempowered and demotivated, consequently compromising on their autonomous motivation. The lack of manager trust is also associated with micromanagement where managers get overly involved in the detail of work or worse, where managers continually monitor the whereabouts of their teams in the context of hybrid work. The findings revealed in Sub-research Question One confirmed that knowledge workers feel empowered and motivated when they experience a sense of trust from their managers- which supports the satisfaction of the need for *autonomy*. It is evident that when managers do not trust knowledge workers, there will be an experience of demotivation and a sense of disempowerment by knowledge workers as the need for *autonomy* is frustrated (Ryan & Deci, 2019a; van den Broeck et al., 2014).

The latter is supported by Fowler (2018) who outlined that the negative leader practices that

erode a sense of autonomy in the employees include but are not limited to being controlling, micromanaging and being punitive. There was evidence from the study that when managers do not trust that their team members are performing, the reaction from managers is punitive and this was reflected through the forced office return or continuous monitoring of one's activity or lack of. One concurs with the reviewed literature that it is crucial for managers to foster trusting relationships in hybrid settings regardless of the reduction of visibility into the employee's work patterns (Gartner, 2021) to enhance autonomy which translates into autonomous motivation where the employees are fully engaged and motivated to perform. In addition, offering trust to knowledge workers is a sound leader practice as this calibre of employees enjoy being given the space to utilise their capabilities and expert knowledge (Serrat, 2017).

Lack of Frequent Feedback

As expected, the second observed finding revealed that the lack of frequent and timely feedback from the manager is a negative leader practice that also results in inefficiencies due to derailed work. This finding was anticipated as the need for *competence* as discussed in the reviewed literature places emphasis on the need for managers to provide guidance and structure, timely and constructive feedback (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). It is evident that where knowledge workers are not provided sufficient support, timely feedback, and guidance to solve business problems, there is a frustration of the psychological need for *competence*, which yields a sense of inadequacy. The latter adds weight to the reviewed literature where failure to satisfy psychological needs for knowledge workers results in a reduced sense of optimal functioning (van den Broeck et al., 2014).

Lack of Engagement with Manager

The third unexpected finding to this study revealed the lack of engagement with the manager, particularly at a social level as another undesirable leader practice. The participants believed that managers should not only interact with the teams to discuss work, but they should also build and strengthen the relationships, more so where there is reduced interaction due to hybrid working. The latter is in line with the reviewed literature where leaders are expected to establish, maintain, and deepen close relationships with their teams (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Where leaders are viewed to compromise a sense of relatedness, there may be reduced organisational commitment and engagement (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). What is compelling is that the emphasis was placed on managers to engage with the teams at a social level which arguably implies that knowledge workers have sufficient

occurrences to engage and connect with fellow colleagues at a team level, but not with their managers, thus underestimating the benefits of the social interactions.

Offers Limited Flexibility

Lastly, the fourth finding revealed that managers who offer limited flexibility showcase a negative leader practice. In line with new ways of working, there is a need for leaders to increase flexibility with regards to working hours. This is the flexibility that enables knowledge workers to choose when and where to work from. These findings contradict what was already discussed under Sub-research Question One under the theme 'Offers Choice'. Currently, some knowledge workers feel that they do not have the flexibility to make those choices which frustrates their psychological need for *autonomy*. The participating knowledge workers do not experience a full sense of choice, freedom, options, and the flexibility to work within the set boundaries (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Because of this, these findings raise awareness for organisational leaders to consider refining the working hours for future ways of work. It remains unclear whether South African organisations who have adopted the hybrid ways of work would consider offering extreme flexibility outside of the core office hours.

Negative Work Experiences that Thwart Autonomous Motivation

The study revealed four negative work experiences that are believed to thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations as perceived by knowledge workers. These are, 1). Lack of engagement and corporate culture; 2). Lack of work-life balance; 3). Lack of focus; and 4). Lack of right office tools. Each of the undesirable work experiences as emerged is discussed in detail below.

Lack of Engagement and Corporate Culture

The first negative work experience finding revealed the difficulties among knowledge workers to have meaningful engagements with the colleagues to share ideas or collaborate in a hybrid environment as regular spontaneous office interactions are no longer the norm. In addition, it was found that the virtual connections and engagements are not as impactful as in person engagements, therefore compromising the quality of relationships among co-workers or even the ability to network across departments. An unexpected finding to this study also revealed how hybrid working compromises on the ability for organisations to build effective corporate cultures. The findings indicated how some knowledge workers felt excluded in some critical engagements that they would normally be a part of. Another finding revealed a sense of dilution in the experience of the organisational culture particularly for new joiners. The lack of

gender diversity within the teams was also considered as a negative work experience for those in a hybrid work set up.

These findings are evidently negative work experiences that can lower a sense of autonomous motivation, more so because the need for *relatedness* is compromised as per the reviewed literature (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Although knowledge workers may have the opportunity to virtually engage with managers and the co-workers on a regular basis, a question remains on whether the quality of relationships is not compromised and communication is left at a superficial level when mostly experienced in a virtual environment, thus resulting in building up a sense of isolation and loneliness that some knowledge workers have experienced (Fowler, 2018). The challenge that remains is how should the companies create strong virtual corporate cultures where everyone experiences a sense of belonging (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). The context of hybrid work is different to the context that prevailed when the SDT was developed, thus making room for possible refinements on ways companies can consider building stronger relationships and enhanced organisational cultures where everyone experiences a sense of belonging and connectedness (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

Lack of Work-life Balance

The second finding to this study demonstrates that a lack of work-life balance is a negative work experience that knowledge workers continually experience in the context of hybrid work. The main contributing factor to this challenge is an increased workload and an increased number of meetings which has a ripple effect on the aspects such as extended hours beyond the normal office hours and one's inability to switch off. On the other hand, the findings revealed that some participants had a compulsion to 'stay on' to avoid being considered unproductive. Whilst participants may be intrinsically motivated to work long hours to achieve set goals due the value they attach to their work (Stone et al., 2009), it may be an unsustainable practice as knowledge workers may experience burnout, therefore leading to unavoidable health challenges.

The key concepts around the Self Determination Theory speak about autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. The latter is associated with negative outcomes where employees in work settings may feel pressurised to do something (Jungert et al., 2021; Olafsen & Deci, 2020). In this case, if knowledge workers experience any form of external pressure to meet the daily work demands (Koestner & Holding, 2021), or fear the power their managers hold,

that implies that they may have a compromised sense of autonomy to plan how to accomplish tasks. It may also imply that they do not have organisational support to manage work overload to avoid burnout as performance goals may be pushed down due to a heightened focus on performance results versus employee wellbeing (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Lack of Focus

The third finding to this study indicated that regardless of whether knowledge workers are office based or they are working remotely, both work environments have their unique set of challenges that are a reality for hybrid working and that affects the ability for one to intently focus on the deliverables. Those who go to the office may simply show up (presenteeism) without putting effort to their work whilst those who work remotely can also experience home distractions that if not well managed, can result in negative work experiences and reduced performance. If the reviewed literature places focus on reducing micromanaging and monitoring employees to rather giving employees the space to perform daily tasks, what can certainly help knowledge workers as posited by Fowler (2018) is to establish timeframes to guide teams to work towards with clearly set goals. The latter is also supported by the other researchers who argue that employees should be given a sense of ownership to increase motivation and productivity, thereby empowering teams to oversee what they need to deliver on (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Although managers can also offer enough guidance and support which speaks to the need for *competence*, it is evident that the satisfaction of the needs for *autonomy* and *competence* as described by the SDT are not in their own right, which is sufficient to create conducive work environments where aspects such as the background noise from a vacuum machine or from a lawn mower at home or the disturbances from the colleagues trying to catch up socially in the office after periods of not seeing each other. These are the current realities of hybrid working that need the attention of organisational leaders. Whilst employers may have limitations with regards to minimising the home distractions, they have a role to play in creating conducive work environments in the office space where issues of noise or presenteeism can be managed to increase the quality of motivation and engagement in and across teams.

Lack of Right Office Tools

The study confirmed that one of the primary needs that knowledge workers have is the need for access to the right office tools, failure to which may create negative work experiences. This need is expected in the context of hybrid work, but it is not adequately covered in the reviewed literature. What was evident was how the knowledge workers often likened being empowered

to being given the right office tools (WIFI, ergonomic chairs, extra screens, inventors). The type of required office equipment varied per individual, based on their unique needs, preferences, and home circumstances. The latter supports what theory says about taking time to listen to and understand the needs and the concerns of the employees through the satisfaction of the need for relatedness (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Indeed, in the context of hybrid, empowering teams do not only relate to an empowered state of mind for one to perform, but rather being equipped to work from home as postulated by Gartner (2021).

6.1.4 Summary of Discussed Findings for Sub-Research Question Two:

The revealed negative leader practices that emerged from this study are expectedly linked to the three basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). What is compelling is that the discussed study findings oppose the positive leader practices and work experiences that are discussed under Sub-research Question One. The concluding observation is alarming as the reviewed literature by Davenport (2008) cautions that organisational leaders who apply traditional leadership practices designed for the industrial age to manage knowledge workers compromise their own ability to create optimal working conditions geared to motivate knowledge workers to pursue excellence in line with the principles of autonomous and sustainable motivation (Stone et al., 2009).

The four emerged themes as discussed outlined the undesirable leader practices that managers should avoid if they are to create optimal working conditions. These are summarised below:

1. **Managers who lack trust and micromanage.** The findings revealed that the lack of trust from managers is a leader practice that erodes empowerment and motivation. This negative practice is believed to manifest through micromanagement where managers continually monitor the whereabouts of their teams, in this way frustrating the need for *autonomy* as per the reviewed literature (Ryan & Deci, 2019a; van den Broeck et al., 2014).
2. **Lack of frequent feedback.** The study revealed that the failure to give knowledge workers regular feedback can compromise their need for competence which results in inefficiencies and derailed work deliverables. The latter also included the

failure to offer ongoing support to the team members (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

3. **Lack of engagement with manager.** The study discovered that knowledge workers do not only wish to engage with their team members at a social level, but also with their managers to strengthen relationships. Where this need for relatedness is not satisfied, it reduces organisational commitment (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
4. **Offers limited flexibility.** The study revealed the longing knowledge workers have for flexible working hours and flexible working environments based on their needs and preferences. The study found that the level of autonomy and flexibility that knowledge workers currently have may be limited, which negatively impacts on their need for *autonomy* (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

In addition to the undesirable leader practices described above, the study findings also revealed four themes of the undesirable work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. These are summarised below:

1. **Lack of work-life balance.** The study revealed the increased workload and the number of meetings as the two main challenges for knowledge workers. The latter compromises on their ability to balance the work and life priorities, thereby leading to the frustration of the need for *competence* where one may experience burnout and unavoidable health challenges (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
2. **Lack of engagement and corporate culture.** The study showed the ineffectiveness of the virtual communication channels that compromise the ability for knowledge workers to experience quality connections and meaningful engagements, and as such also compromising the quality of the relationships among the co-workers. The latter impacts on the quality of engagements, but particularly making it difficult for the new joiners to integrate. The result is the feelings of isolation and exclusion where a sense of belonging is compromised and the need for relatedness is frustrated (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
3. **Lack of focus.** The study revealed that the office environments and the home environments can negatively affect the ability for knowledge workers to fully concentrate on their deliverables due to distractions. The latter requires knowledge workers to be given sufficient guidance and support through the need for competence

and empowering teams to oversee their deliverables which speaks to the need for autonomy (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemm et al., 2021). The latter requires organisational leaders to create conducive workspaces.

4. **Lack of the right office tools.** The study showed the importance of equipping knowledge workers with the right office tools. Where knowledge workers do not have the required tools based on their needs and circumstances, their sense of empowerment and the need for *autonomy* to drive their own work is compromised (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemm et al., 2021).

6.1.5 Discussion of Findings for Sub-Research Question Three:

How should leaders support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Sub-research Question Three sought to explore the enablers for leaders to support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations as perceived by knowledge workers. The study revealed five enablers that are 1). Offer a flexible hybrid model; 2). Create an inclusive hybrid workplace; 3). Drive employee wellbeing; 4). Offer holistic rewards and recognition; and 5). Offer ongoing feedback and development. Each of the enablers is discussed in detail below.

Offer a Flexible Hybrid Model

The first enabler as expected of organisations and managers by knowledge workers is for organisations to offer a flexible hybrid model. This expectation translates into creating flexible hybrid work policies and guidelines that are not too prescriptive yet offer sufficient structure and guidance. As discussed earlier in the preceding findings, there is a yearning for flexibility with regards to giving an option to choose when and where one should work, including the options to work remotely from anywhere, locally, and abroad. The previously outlined discussion of the findings for Sub-research Question One under the positive leadership practices to satisfy autonomous motivation confirms that hybrid work is likely to continue to shape the future ways of work (Microsoft, 2022b). Thus, the above finding expectedly confirms the desire by knowledge workers for hybrid work conditions to be retained as a motivator and retention strategy. What is required though as suggested by Gartner (2021) is to offer a flexible hybrid model that embraces a culture of flexibility to create desirable work experiences.

Create an inclusive hybrid workplace

The study findings also revealed the need to create inclusive hybrid workplaces as a second enabler to create optimal working conditions. The latter requires the organisations to focus on the individual needs and preferences over the standard mandates to create inclusive hybrid work environments. Employers hire diverse workforces, and this should be reflected in how the policies are drafted to ensure the diverse needs of the workforce are not neglected. Key to this as suggested by Gartner (2021) is to strengthen organisational connectedness which places emphasis on paying attention to the individual needs and to the preferences of the employees, thereby extending care and fairness at an organisational level, and offering the same level of treatment to the employees across the board to drive inclusion and ultimately engagement and autonomous motivation.

Drive Employee Wellness

The third revealed enabler which is a looming challenge for the employers in hybrid settings is the need to drive employee wellbeing through the facilitation of work-life balance. The ask is to give the employees the flexibility to attend to urgent and spontaneous family matters as they arise, particularly where knowledge workers are committed to perform but are equally balancing that with the needs of their personal lives. One of the fundamental roles for organisational leaders is to continually seek approaches to improve employee well-being (Slemp et al., 2021). It is thus pertinent and fitting for organisations to explore approaches to enhance employee wellbeing. As previously discussed under Sub-research Question One, leaders can help to maximise employee wellbeing by supporting employees to switch-off and to manage the excessive workload as the latter appears to be a key contributor to employees feeling a sense of illbeing (Gartner, 2021). If the fulfilment and satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs as described above is essential for optimal functioning for the promotion and for the maintenance of well-being among other things (Deci et al., 2017; Reeve & Lee, 2019), and findings to this study reveal that one way to create optimal working conditions is through driving employee wellbeing, then it is evident that organisational leaders have a compelling responsibility in the context hybrid work to drive employee wellness.

Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition

An unforeseen finding to this question and as discussed in Sub-research Question One is the need for organisations to offer holistic rewards and recognition (both monetary and non-monetary rewards) as an attractive practice to create optimal working conditions. Contrary to the research findings, the SDT is viewed as a framework that has endured various criticism specially around the importance of rewards and pay in the workplace as the determinants to

improve performance (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). It is for this reason that it was striking that some knowledge workers asked for compensation for the costs incurred whilst working from home, especially because there is a suspicion that employers save on the facility costs that are associated with running a fully occupied office space. Some knowledge workers felt strongly that they should be remunerated for the effort they put in preparing for a day's work (e.g., petrol costs and travel time), not just for the actual number of hours put in. The latter was posited by Serrat (2017) who argued that strategies to motivate knowledge workers in hybrid work settings remain widely open for interpretation, thus necessitating a need to look at both the tangible and the intangible rewards as sources of motivation. The latter implies that the SDT may offer strong and compelling building blocks to enhancing employee motivation, but what remains prudent is the need to holistically look at what matters to the workforce.

Offer Ongoing Feedback and Development

Expectedly, the need for ongoing feedback and development was viewed as a critical enabler to optimise the working conditions necessary in future ways of work. This finding is fitting for a work environment where there is limited face to face interaction. Based on the collected data, if there is reduced quality of conversations and feedback between managers and teams with regards to work goals and priorities, the need for *competence* gets frustrated. It is thus critical for leaders to support the team's capability and creating a sense of effectiveness by creating clear structure with outlined timeframes and goals (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). Moreover, in support of the reviewed literature, leaders ought to encourage ongoing learning to enable and capacitate teams to address daily disruptions and challenges, by offering learning opportunities and most importantly by prioritising ongoing learning and development over unrealistic performance expectations (Fowler, 2018).

6.1.6 Summary of Discussed Findings for Sub-Research Question Three:

The discussed findings revealed the five enablers that can be adopted to satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation that are essential to create optimal working conditions in hybrid work settings. These enablers are expectedly linked to the three basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). What was compelling is that not only leaders were viewed to have a significant role to play in creating optimal working conditions for their teams, but organisations as employers should also support employees to create these optimal working conditions particularly during periods of change and uncertainty, which was the case in the studied context (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). The enablers are summarised on the next page:

1. **Offer a Flexible Hybrid Model.** What knowledge workers are after is certainly the flexible hybrid models that present them with choice and autonomy to choose when and where to work from. This enabler aligns with the need for *autonomy* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
2. **Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace.** As South African organisations mostly employ a diverse workforce, they should equally create inclusive hybrid work conditions that will take care of the needs of their workforce. The latter will aid organisations to strengthen connectedness, which aligns to the need for relatedness as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
3. **Drive Employee Wellness.** The findings revealed a need for the organisations to drive employee wellbeing through the facilitation of work-life balance, reduction of excessive workload and encouraging teams to switch off. These findings are in line with the need for *competence* as per the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
4. **Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition.** The findings showed a need for organisations to offer their knowledge workers holistic rewards and recognition that are reflective of monetary and non-monetary rewards. This is a new finding that is considered to be attractive by knowledge workers when describing the enablers that could make them stay in their current employ. This need contradicts what the reviewed theory says about what is considered fundamental to drive intrinsic motivation (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).
5. **Offer Ongoing Feedback and Development.** In line with the reviewed literature around the need for *competence* (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021), knowledge workers also emphasised the need for ongoing development and regular feedback from their managers to aid them to stay competent for optimal performance.

6.3. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter offered an interpretation and a discussion of the research study findings through the contextualisation of the findings against the reviewed literature and past similar studies, thereby exploring the relevance of this study to the principles and assumptions of the SDT that anchored this study. The first key highlight about the discussed findings is that the SDT is a motivational theory that offers a strong base for the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs in a manner that contributes to creating autonomous motivation as desired by the participating knowledge workers. These three basic psychological needs (autonomy,

relatedness, and competence) are satisfied or thwarted in different forms that either speak to leader practices or work experiences at an organisational level.

Secondly, there is an interrelatedness and or a contrast that exists as influenced by the revealed leader practices and work experiences. Where the desired leader practices and work experiences are felt and experienced by knowledge workers, their sense of autonomous motivation is cultivated and enhanced. Where the undesirable leader practices and work experiences are felt and experienced by knowledge workers, their sense of autonomous motivation is frustrated, thus leading to demotivated teams. Moreover, some of the leader practices and work experiences can equally affect the outcomes of the other leader practices and work experiences. For example, where managers fail to manage the workload, employee wellness is affected, thereby resulting in a lack of work-life balance. Also, where there is a heightened need for social engagements and employee preferences for the need for human interaction are not taken into account, knowledge workers would equally feel frustrated in how their need for human interaction is satisfied due to these inherent preferences for introverts and extroverts.

Thirdly, the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs is context dependant and the importance of the needs seemingly shift, based on the contextual demands from which the needs are supported. For example, engagement, connection, and inclusion are much needed by knowledge workers in the context of hybrid work because that is what the context demands for the dispersed teams. In addition, since hybrid working is inherently considered a phenomenon that should present choices, options, a sense of freedom and convenience about when and where to perform work, knowledge workers expect to be given a sense of choice in line with the reality of hybrid working where primary decisions revolve around where to work from and when to work.

The identified findings on the enablers required to support the satisfaction of the need for autonomous motivation in a way that creates optimal work conditions in the current and future ways of work closely link to the desirable leader practices and to the work experiences that are desired to cultivate autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers.

There are also new findings that were considered critical to cultivate autonomous motivation in the hybrid settings which are not necessarily mentioned in detail when one looks at the assumptions and the principles of the SDT, thereby indicating the academic gaps. For example, both momentary and non-monetary rewards are viewed as valued sources of motivation by the studied knowledge workers.

Lastly, the discussed findings ultimately explored what happens when the basic psychological needs are satisfied or frustrated, thus providing a balanced perspective on the concept of autonomous motivation, how it can be created and promoted and how it can equally be frustrated or thwarted (Fowler, 2018). Table 6.1 on the next page provides a summary of the key findings as discussed and it brings in the constructs of the research study as informed by the Self Determination Theory.

Table 6.1: Summary of Study Findings mapped with the Three Basic Psychological Needs of Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness as per the SDT (Author’s own source)

■ Positive effects on needs satisfaction ■ Negative effects on needs satisfaction ■ New Finding

Predictors of Autonomous Motivation	SDT Psychological Needs		
Desirable and Undesirable Leader Practices	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness
Drives Engagement, Connection, and Inclusion			
Macromanages, Builds Trust and Empowers			
Offers Choice			
Builds and Drives a Learning Culture			
Supports Employee Wellness and Manages Workload			
Manager Lacks Trust and Micromanages			
Lack of Frequent Feedback			
Lack of Engagement with Manager			
Offers Limited Flexibility			
Desirable and Undesirable Work Experiences			
Supportive Environment that offers Work-life Balance			
Consider Preferences for Human Interaction			
Offer the Right Office Tools			
Cultivate an Inclusive Organisational Culture			
Holistic Rewards and Recognition			
Lack of Engagement and Corporate Culture			
Lack of Work-life Balance			
Lack of Focus			
Lack of Right Office Tools			
Enablers to satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation and create optimal work conditions in hybrid work settings			
Offer a Flexible Hybrid Model			
Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace			
Drive Employee Wellness			
Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition			
Offer Ongoing Feedback and Development			

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this closing chapter is to present the conclusions that can be drawn from the comprehensive key findings that are discussed in Chapter 6. The final conclusions and implications that were derived from the three sub-research questions are outlined to answer the overarching research question that informed this study. This is followed by an outline of the relevant contributions that are made to the academia and the business context, including the implications to the various stakeholders. Then a brief reflection of the unforeseen study limitations is outlined. Lastly, the recommendations for future research directions are suggested.

This study aimed to explore knowledge workers' perspective of autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations. The outlined objectives in Chapter 1 were designed to answer the three sub-research questions and the study objectives which were:

- I. To explore knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Olafsen & Deci, 2020; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021)
- II. To explore knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that prevent autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Fowler, 2018)
- III. To explore how leaders can support knowledge workers and thereby enable them to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations (Olafsen & Deci, 2020; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

To explore what knowledge workers perceive to be the concept of autonomous motivation in the context of South African hybrid organisations, the Self-Determination Theory and its key principles and assumptions were used as a foundational theoretical framework to anchor and unify the study with the hope to meet the study objectives. The adopted theoretical framework was discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and it is inclusive of the reviewed literature. The SDT provided a base that leaders can use to create autonomy-supportive work environments for knowledge workers in hybrid settings. To achieve a balanced perspective, the reviewed literature focused on both the desirable and the undesirable leader practices and work experiences that can either cultivate or thwart autonomous motivation.

Both perspectives were explored to ultimately identify the enablers for organisations and for organisational leaders to support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation necessary to create optimal working conditions in hybrid work

settings. The reviewed literature enabled the researcher to arrive at the formulation of the research questions presented in Chapter 3. Due to the nature of the posed research questions, the study took an exploratory approach to deepen the understanding of the identified phenomenon. Chapter 4 provided an account of how the study was conducted as informed by the adopted research design and methodology. The raw findings to the study were presented in Chapter 5, and the interpretation of the study findings was discussed in Chapter 6. This chapter concludes the study by presenting the principal conclusions and recommendations.

7.2 Conclusion of Findings to Sub-Research Questions

The next section provides a summary of the principal findings that were aimed to answer the three sub-research questions. Although a significant amount of the findings as discussed in Chapter 6 correspond with the insights and the arguments of the reviewed literature, there were also unexpected findings that brought new insights to the reviewed literature. The study findings provided an additional understanding of the critical leader practices and work experiences that enhance the nuances that are suitable to lead and manage a hybrid workforce. A summary of the principal findings for each sub-research question is outlined below.

7.2.1 Sub-research Question One

The aim of this question was to explore what knowledge workers consider to be the leader practices and the work experiences that drive and cultivate autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. The question aimed to yield insights into how leaders can expand their knowledge and awareness on sound leader practices and work experiences that can be employed to practically motivate their hybrid teams to continually drive their own work despite the place of work.

Key findings

Three principal conclusions emerged which describe the autonomous motivation that is required by knowledge workers in the hybrid settings as informed by the revealed desired leader practices and the work experiences as discussed in Chapter 6. When these leader practices and work experiences are fulfilled by managers and organisations as the employers, knowledge workers undoubtedly experience a sense of autonomous motivation. The revealed leader practices and work experiences are expectedly shaped by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and they are directly linked to the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence as per the reviewed literature (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

Satisfaction of the need for Relatedness

The first principal finding in the context of hybrid working is that knowledge workers have a heightened need to satisfy the psychological need for *relatedness* as informed by the SDT in the reviewed literature (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The efforts to satisfy the need for *relatedness* require managers to drive engagement and connections with their direct reports and across teams to bring a sense of belonging and inclusion for the dispersed teams (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Moreover, managers and teams should be easily accessible to each other to strengthen connections. One can conclude that whilst knowledge workers enjoy hybrid work where they are at times dispersed from their managers and colleagues, a facilitation of continuous individual and team engagements strengthens a sense of belonging and that is where autonomous motivation is ultimately cultivated and experienced. Fostering team engagements is therefore critical in the hybrid settings (Scharf & Weerda, 2022) as it cultivates autonomous motivation.

However, when managers decide on the frequency of these social engagements that aid in creating a sense of belonging, they should also consider the preferences of the individual knowledge workers. For instance, the extroverts tend to appreciate regular human interaction whilst the introverts prefer less human interaction. Accordingly, organisations should cultivate inclusive organisational cultures as a desired work practice where knowledge workers' voices are heard and listened to when creating a sense of connectedness (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This is an organisational work practice that can certainly cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers.

Another effort to satisfy the need for *relatedness* requires managers to support employee wellness by means of managing employee workload (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). As knowledge workers continually deal with the challenge of the increased workload, managers should find ways to foster a work-life balance to enhance employee wellness. Where knowledge workers are competent to perform to meet set objectives, it should not translate into an unmanageable workload that results in employee burnout. Knowledge workers experience autonomous motivation when their managers support them to manage their increased workload to ultimately experience a sense of wellbeing. Thus, the ultimate work experience that enhances the work-life balance and cultivates employee wellness will require organisations to deeply care about their workforce by managing their workload to avoid employee burnout. Organisations should therefore create supportive work environments that offer a work-life balance as it yields into creating autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Satisfaction of the Need for Autonomy

The second principal finding in the context of hybrid working is that knowledge workers have a heightened need to satisfy the psychological need for *autonomy* as informed by the SDT in the reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). To satisfy the psychological need for autonomy, managers are expected to macromanage (a term that encapsulates the manager's ability to set clear goals, empower teams and thereby minimise micromanagement); to build trust, and to create a sense of choice, ownership, and freedom to drive one's work life (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). This is another finding that is context dependent as managers have reduced visibility into the work patterns of their teams and are often tempted to monitor or micromanage the teams. Managers who can build trust, allow their teams to drive their own work and they only focus on the output versus monitoring input, they are able to cultivate the autonomous motivation that is required in the hybrid settings as perceived by knowledge workers.

In addition, to satisfy the need for autonomy in a hybrid context that is already considered a phenomenon that should present choices, options, a sense of freedom and convenience, managers are expected to offer knowledge workers the choice to decide when and where one should perform work (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This is particularly because knowledge workers are skilled enough to drive their own work (Stone et al., 2009) and due to the nature of their work, they can perform work from anywhere (Surawski, 2019). When knowledge workers are offered this level of choice where they are not confined to rigid office hours and where they are given the freedom to decide on their preferred place of work instead of responding to forced office return mandates (Deci et al., 2017), their need for autonomous motivation is thoroughly cultivated.

The above indicates that a work practice that is desirable in the context of hybrid working and enhances autonomous motivation includes considering employee preferences and needs and consulting knowledge workers when making decisions about a preferred place of work. Knowledge workers should be empowered to make such decisions for themselves based on their preferences and unique circumstances (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This is another critical organisational work experience that can certainly cultivate autonomous motivation among knowledge workers.

Satisfaction of the Need for Competence

The third principal conclusion in the context of hybrid settings is that knowledge workers have a need to satisfy the psychological need for *competence* as informed by the SDT in the

reviewed literature (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This is achieved when managers build and drive a learning culture that enables knowledge to continuously learn despite their possessed valuable knowledge and skills (Davenport, 2005; Stone et al., 2009; Surawski, 2019). Knowledge workers' autonomous motivation is thereby cultivated and experienced when managers offer them the required regular feedback and guidance, when they can hold open and honest career conversations with their managers and equally share their career aspirations; and receive the required training to enhance their capabilities. In addition, the need for *competence* is again satisfied when managers support the teams by managing the workload to avoid burnout (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). The reduction of the workload for knowledge workers in the context of hybrid working is critical as it directly links to fostering employee wellness which is aligned to the need for *relatedness* (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). In other words, knowledge workers cannot fully experience a sense of wellness when the challenge of increased workload is not resolved in hybrid settings.

Unexpected findings

Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition

Over and above the three presented principal conclusions, what was striking and unexpected with regards to the outlined desired work experiences is the expectation for organisations to offer knowledge workers holistic rewards and recognition that is inclusive of both monetary and non-monetary benefits. This desired work experience was not expected since the reviewed literature reveals that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs to drive motivation and engagement in work settings (Ryan & Deci, 2019a) is elevated over the importance of the rewards and pay as the determinants to improve performance and motivation (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). Contrary to the concluding statement, the findings from the study outline that knowledge workers do value tangible and extrinsic rewards as sources to create autonomous motivation in the South African context.

Offer the Right Office Tools

Another finding that is expected in the context of hybrid working but is unexpected in terms of the SDT's three basic psychological needs as desired by knowledge workers is the need for organisations to offer the right office tools and equipment. Knowledge workers indicated the value of being equipped with the right office tools as it fosters conducive work environments that are required for the creation of autonomous motivation. Thus, where knowledge workers are given the right office tools, they feel empowered to perform and therefore they experience

autonomous motivation. This finding was unexpected as the reviewed literature on the SDT places emphasis on arguably intangible leader practices and work experiences that cultivate autonomous motivation, whilst this work experience is very much tangible and is a requirement for hybrid settings (Gartner, 2021).

The outlined principal conclusions against the reviewed literature position the SDT as an effective motivational theory that is essential to create autonomous motivation through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs of *autonomy, relatedness and competence* (Ryan & Deci, 2019; Slemp et al., 2021). This was revealed through the desired leader practices and work experiences that knowledge workers experienced and considered to positively bring about autonomous motivation in their unique hybrid work settings.

7.2.2 Sub-research Question Two

The objective of this question was to bring about a balanced view on the insights that are perceived to prevent knowledge workers from experiencing a sense of autonomous motivation in the hybrid settings. The aim was to identify the undesirable leader practices and work experiences that frustrate a sense of autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in hybrid organisations. The findings to this question presented a list of leadership practices and work experiences to be avoided by managers leading hybrid teams.

Key findings

Three principal conclusions emerged that describe the leader practices and the work experiences that can thwart autonomous motivation among knowledge workers in the hybrid settings. When these undesirable leader practices and work experiences are displayed by managers or not managed by organisational employers, knowledge workers' sense of autonomous motivation is frustrated and compromised. The revealed undesirable leader practices and work experiences are directly linked to the SDT and the outlined three basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence as per the reviewed literature (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

Thwarting the need for Autonomy

The first principal finding in the context of hybrid working as perceived by knowledge workers is that the psychological need for *autonomy* as informed by the SDT in the reviewed literature is mostly comprised when managers lack trust and tend to micromanage the teams as posited by Fowler (2018). This is a significant concern for knowledge workers in the context of hybrid

working where there is an inherent need for knowledge workers to fully drive how they work. The principal conclusion of Sub-research Question One confirmed that knowledge workers feel empowered and motivated when they experience a sense of trust from their managers which supports the satisfaction of the need for autonomy. It is evident that when managers do not trust their knowledge workers and, they compromise a sense of autonomy through controlling behaviours or micromanaging knowledge workers. Knowledge workers end up experiencing demotivation and a sense of disempowerment by knowledge workers as their need for autonomy is frustrated (Ryan & Deci, 2019a; van den Broeck et al., 2014). Where knowledge workers are micromanaged or where they do not feel trusted by their managers, autonomous motivation is compromised.

In addition, the dissatisfaction of the psychological need for *autonomy* is experienced when managers offer limited flexibility. In line with new ways of working, knowledge workers have an expectation to increase flexibility with regards to the working hours and the option to choose their preferred place of work. This finding is mostly unique in hybrid settings where there is an inherent need for knowledge workers to fully decide on where to work from and when to actually perform work. This finding contradicts what was already discussed under the principal conclusions for Sub-Research Question One where knowledge workers value experiencing a sense of choice in choosing when to work and preferred place of work. Where managers do not offer the required level of flexibility, autonomous motivation is compromised as knowledge workers do not fully experience a sense of choice when there are mandates on when to come to the office against rigid working hours (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Thwarting the need for Competence

The second principal finding in the context of hybrid work environments as perceived by the interviewed knowledge workers is that the need for *competence* as informed by the SDT in the reviewed literature is compromised when knowledge workers are not given regular and timely feedback (Fowler, 2018). This is usually experienced when managers are out of sight and there are limited opportunities for spontaneous guidance, something that is usually not experienced in the traditional work environments where managers are accessible. This negative leader practice derails work completion, brings inadequacy, and ultimately compromises the ability for knowledge workers to experience autonomous motivation (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Moreover, when knowledge workers do not experience work-life balance due to increased workload and inundated virtual meetings which have a ripple effect on unanticipated extended

working hours, their psychological need for *competence* is also compromised as knowledge workers feel a compulsion to 'stay on' to catch up with the increased workload. This negative work experience also negatively impacts on employee wellness as knowledge workers experience burnout as they are pressurised to perform and meet unrealistic performance objectives (Jungert et al., 2021; Olafsen & Deci, 2020). It is for this reason that lack of work-life balance negatively compromises autonomous motivation among knowledge workers.

Thwarting the need for Relatedness

The third principal finding in the context of hybrid work environments as perceived by the interviewed knowledge workers is that the psychological need for *relatedness* as informed by the SDT is compromised when managers fail to connect with their teams (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). The reviewed literature indicates that managers are expected to establish, maintain, and deepen the relationships with their teams (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). What is evident in this study is that some knowledge workers' managers do not always want to engage with their teams at a social level as managers underestimate the benefit of social interactions in creating autonomous motivation and a sense of engagement (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Adding to the above undesired leader practice, the lack of engagement and corporate culture are considered a negative work experience that thwart the psychological need for *relatedness*. The challenge that remains is how should companies create strong virtual corporate cultures and quality virtual engagements where every employee including new joiners experience a sense of belonging (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). When knowledge workers consider their corporate culture to be lacking inclusivity, autonomous motivation is compromised due to the frustrated need for relatedness.

Unexpected findings

Lack of Right Office Tools

Over and above the three presented principal conclusions, what was equally striking in terms of the SDT principles but expected in the hybrid settings is the fact that the lack of the right office tools is also revealed as a negative work experience. The latter opposes the revealed unexpected finding discussed in Sub-research Question One where the need for organisations to offer the right office tools was highly regarded as a positive work experience (Gartner,

2021). When knowledge workers are not equipped with the right office tools, they feel disempowered to perform which negatively impacts on their sense of autonomous motivation.

Lack of Focus

In addition, the work environments that are not conducive can negatively impact on one's ability to perform without distractions. This is a significant concern in hybrid work environments as employers cannot fully control what happens in their employees' personal work environments. Moreover, organisations that fail to create conducive work environments for days when employees are expected to meet at the office also mean that such days in the office may end up being unproductive due to unmanaged office distractions (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

The outlined principal findings for Sub-research Question Two reveal that the frustration of the three basic psychological needs of *autonomy, relatedness and competence* as per the reviewed literature is damaging to one's experience of autonomous motivation (Fowler, 2018). Knowledge workers have clearly outlined the instances where their work environments were not need-supportive through the undesirable leader practices portrayed by their managers and also work experiences that are experienced at an organisational level. What is compelling is that these undesirable leader practices and work experiences directly oppose what was discussed under principal conclusions for Sub-research Question One, thereby positioning the SDT as a useful motivational theory to promote autonomous motivation.

7.2.3 Sub-research Question Three

This question was designed to bring about the understanding of what leaders and organisations can do to support knowledge workers to continually satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation and thereby create optimal working conditions within hybrid organisations.

Key findings

Three principal conclusions emerged that all describe enablers that leaders and organisations can consider supporting knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid settings as perceived by the interviewed knowledge workers.

Enabler to support the need for Autonomy

The first enabler as revealed in the study is that organisations should offer flexible hybrid work models. This enabler strongly aligns to the need for *autonomy* as per the reviewed findings

where knowledge workers desire to be given a sense of choice and autonomy to choose when to work and decide on a preferred place of work (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). Organisations that strive in supporting the need for autonomous motivation would need to embrace a culture of flexibility where hybrid work policies are not too prescriptive as there is a yearning for flexibility by knowledge workers, which brings about autonomous motivation.

Enabler to support the need for Relatedness

The second enabler revealed a need for organisations to create inclusive hybrid workplaces where the diverse needs of employees are considered over standard practices to create inclusive work environments. Where the needs of knowledge workers are not neglected, and the employees are treated fairly across the board, it strengthens the connections among knowledge workers and thereby it supports the need for autonomous motivation (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Enablers to support the need for Competence

The third enabler revealed a need for organisations to drive employee wellness by reducing the excessive workload to maximise the work-life balance which has a direct impact on employee wellness (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021). This enabler carries significant weight in the context of hybrid working where knowledge workers experience increased workload. In addition, knowledge workers also view ongoing feedback and development as enablers that can aid them to stay competent to achieve optimal performance (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021).

Unexpected finding

Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition

Surprisingly and as presented in the principal findings for Sub-research Question One, knowledge workers value both monetary and non-monetary rewards, which is why a useful enabler is for organisations to offer holistic rewards and recognition for their employees. The latter invariably supports what was posited by Serrat (2017) who argued that the strategies to motivate knowledge workers in hybrid work settings remain widely open for interpretation, thus necessitating a need to look at both tangible and intangible rewards as sources of motivation.

The highlighted enablers presented as principal findings for Sub-research Question Three are expectedly linked to the three basic psychological needs of *competence, relatedness, and autonomy* (Gagné et al., 2022; Gilbert & Sutherland, 2013; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). One can accordingly argue that all three SDT's basic psychological needs play a significant role in contributing to promoting a sense of autonomous motivation in hybrid work settings. It is of utmost importance to also outline that the discussed enablers closely relate to positive leader practices and work experiences already discussed in Sub-research Question One.

In conclusion, what promotes and cultivates autonomous motivation among knowledge workers are all the outlined desirable leader practices and work experiences that managers and organisations should pay attention to in hybrid work settings, a context characterised by unique demands that require some level of flexibility in how the described basic psychological needs can and should be satisfied. The outlined enablers (which are similar to the outlined desirable leader practices and work experiences) required to support knowledge workers to continually satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation also confirm what brings about autonomous motivation and aid in creating optimal work conditions that will make it difficult for knowledge workers to consider leaving their employ for a competitor. On the other hand, what thwarts autonomous motivation are all the outlined undesirable leader practices and work experiences that ought to be avoided by managers leading hybrid teams and in hybrid organisations.

7.3 Academic and Practical Contributions of this Research Study

This section presents contributions of this study from a theoretical and practical perspective.

7.3.1 Academic Contributions

Academically, the study revealed a refined understanding and meaning of autonomous motivation as perceived by knowledge workers in hybrid work settings. Firstly, knowledge workers expressed the need for fluid hybrid work models to fully experience flexibility (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). What was apparent in the study is a confirmation of the fact that the sought-after flexibility in the context of hybrid work is indeed no longer about working remotely, but rather flexibility is more to do with fostered employee autonomy, where knowledge workers ought to be the primary decision makers to choose where and when one should perform work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

In addition, knowledge workers associate autonomous motivation with work flexibility which translates into having the autonomy to plan (*how*) and manage one's day and driving one's

work responsibilities, the autonomy to decide (*when*) on a suitable time to work, and the autonomy to decide (*where*) on preferred place to work from. *Autonomous motivation can thus be summarised to having the flexibility and autonomy to decide on how, when, and where one should perform work in the context of hybrid working.* This definition consistently adds to what other researchers have said about the concept of autonomy in hybrid work environments (Manganelli et al., 2018; PWC, 2022; Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

The study contributes to the body of the SDT as it confirms that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs is believed to be a key contributor to achieving autonomous motivation in hybrid settings and thereby a base for leaders to create optimal autonomy-supportive environments (Koestner & Holding, 2021; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020).

What has also been revealed is that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs to foster autonomous motivation and the importance of the needs as perceived by recipients seem to shift to contextual demands and challenges. One can as such argue that the satisfaction of the SDT basic psychological needs is context dependant.

Although the reviewed literature does address the need for managers to listen to the needs and the concerns of employees (Fowler, 2018; Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020; Slemp et al., 2021), the context where past studies were conducted do not seem to indicate the importance of manager accessibility which is a common need in hybrid work settings, in that manner necessitating the need to expand on leader practices required to provide autonomy supportive environments in hybrid work settings.

The study revealed an unexpected finding where both monetary and non-monetary rewards are valued sources that drive autonomous motivation over and above the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. The reviewed literature elevated the importance of the satisfaction of the psychological needs over extrinsic rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2019a), thereby outlining a gap to relook into reward strategies informed by the SDT in the context of hybrid working to improve motivation in the 4th industrial revolution age (Gerhart & Fang, 2015).

In the reviewed literature that focused on leader practices that drive autonomous motivation, the need to increase trust in the workplace was only perceived as critical in one study (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020). This explains why a recent study by Gartner (2021) speaks of an existing gap in terms of fostering trusting relationships, more so where there is reduced visibility into work patterns of employees working in a hybrid environment. Britcher's (2018) proposed term of macromanagement can suitably add to the understanding of approaches to enhance trust in hybrid settings in line with SDT principles.

Lastly, the provision of the right office tools and equipment in hybrid work settings as proposed by Gartner (2021) is considered by knowledge workers as a practice that brings a sense of empowerment and an increase of autonomous motivation. The SDT was developed in the year 1985. Since then, the context and nature of work has changed due to technological advancements. There is as such a need to review how the three basic psychological needs can further be satisfied in a manner that is relevant to the realities and demands of future ways of work characterised by the 4th industrial revolution.

7.3.2 Practical Contributions

The study was aimed at exploring the approaches that organisational leaders can employ that are best suited to cultivate and promote autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations in a manner that will result in engaged employees that perform exceptionally well, despite their place of work (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2021).

Human Resources (HR) Leaders

The findings of this study hold critical implications for the South African Human Resources (HR) community of practice. The SDT provides tested concepts essential for the creation of policies, guidelines, and practices to promote high-quality performance (Deci et al., 2017, p. 19). The latter will be invaluable for South African organisations that are in their early stages of shaping and maturing hybrid working models and conditions. Where adopted policies and practices are not well thought, it may compromise the satisfaction of the outlined basic psychological needs which are valued by knowledge workers.

There is still room to shape and refine the hybrid strategies that organisations can employ to motivate their workforce to enhance autonomous motivation, engagement, and wellbeing. The below suggested approaches can aid HR leaders to strike a balance in enhancing effectiveness of hybrid working.

- The study findings point out a compelling need for HR leaders to consider refining the working hours in the South African context to maximise the fluidity that is required for hybrid working.
- The findings also revealed a compelling need for HR leaders to relook into reward and recognition strategies that would be valuable for a workforce that has adopted hybrid working. For example, a review of salaries and how knowledge workers ought to be

remunerated for the time they spend preparing to start work were raised as well as pay for use of home WIFI, electricity etc., particularly due to the looming challenges of load shedding which has major impact on connectivity and productivity levels.

- The study highlights a need for HR leaders to pay attention to the diverse needs and the preferences of their diverse workforce. HR leaders can accordingly enhance their Employee Value Proposition (EVP) by designing or enhancing inclusive hybrid work policies that also have an impact on strengthening an inclusive hybrid corporate culture. Failure to recognise the needs and preferences of employees when drafting or refining hybrid policies can result in increased levels of turnover as employees hold the power to decide where to work (PWC, 2022).
- HR leaders and organisational leaders should ensure that work offices provide conducive work environments to help the workforce to have focussed time to perform with minimal disruptions (noise levels, limited office space, lack of equipment etc.). This includes providing guidance on suitable home offices and capacitating the workforce with the right office equipment.
- HR leaders should pay attention to the looming concern around the increased workload for knowledge workers, which if left unattended, may have a negative impact on the employees' overall wellbeing and vitality.
- HR leaders must consider designing onboarding programmes that work for the hybrid workforce to ensure that the new joiners are effectively integrated into the workplace, and they can identify with the corporate culture of the organisation.
- HR leaders have a role to play in enhancing the staff retention strategies. The study explored the various work experiences that are suitable for organisations to explore and to enhance employee motivation and engagement in the hybrid work settings (Franzen-Waschke, 2021). Figure 7.1 on the next page outlines the desirable work experiences that can be considered when drafting or refining the hybrid policies. It also shows the undesirable work practices to be avoided in hybrid organisations that employ knowledge workers.

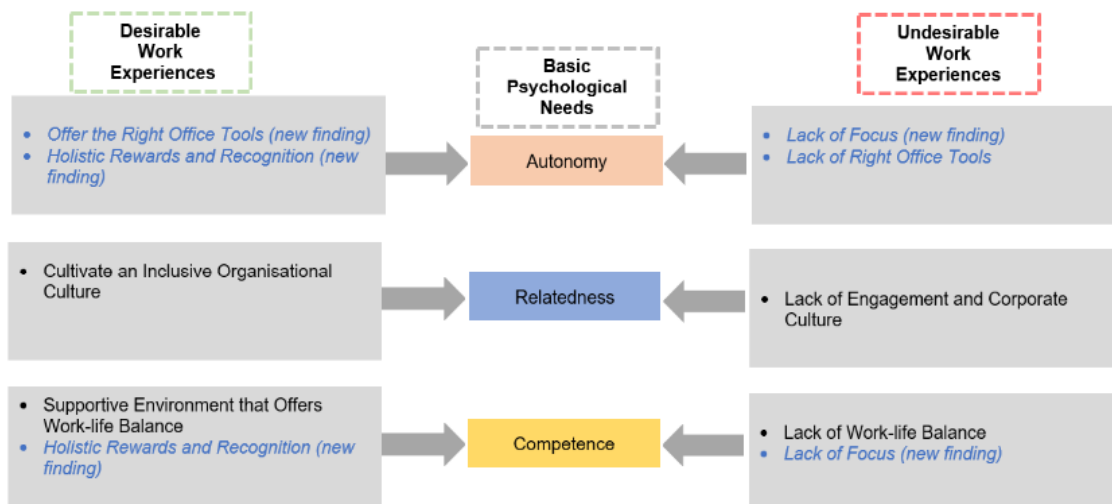


Figure 7.1: Desirable and Undesirable Work Experiences in Hybrid Teams (Author's Own)

Organisational leaders

Since a vast number of South African managers and leaders do not feel well equipped to manage their virtual and hybrid teams as for many, it is their first time that they had to lead in this new way of working (Microsoft, 2020), the study contributed by revealing practical approaches for organisational leaders to refine how they ought to lead and support their hybrid teams to flourish by cultivating autonomous motivation essential to create optimal working conditions (Alexander et al., 2021). Those who manage hybrid teams should avoid applying traditional leadership practices in the fourth industrial era that is characterised by employees who have a voice, particularly where the war for talent intensifies due to skill shortages in the South African context. Organisational leaders can as such use findings from the study to unpack how they can support employees to satisfy their psychological needs in the context of hybrid working.

The findings as depicted in Figure 7.2 on the next page outline the critical implications for organisational leaders who desire to improve their approach to leading hybrid teams. The HR leaders can also use the recommended leadership framework to enhance their leadership development programmes where leaders can be capacitated to effectively lead hybrid teams, regardless of place of work.

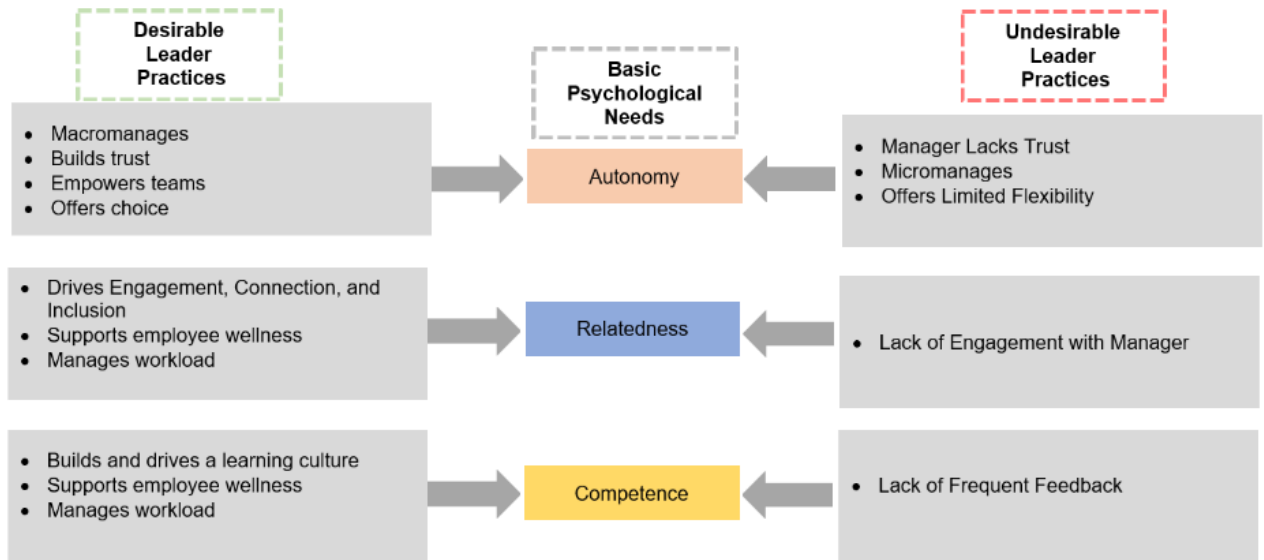


Figure 7.2: Recommended Leadership Development Framework to Lead Hybrid Teams (Author's Own)

7.4 Research Study Limitations

According to Ross and Zaidi (2019), most research studies have limitations. As such, the interpretation of this study findings is conditional upon the following observed limitations which were outside the researcher's control and may thus impact on the study outcomes (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Firstly, from a methodological perspective, whilst the 18 participants who participated in the study provided multi-perspectives of knowledge workers with and without people management responsibilities, thereby enriching the insights gathered, the concern is the use of cross-sectional data collated at a point in time. As a result, the study was limited to draw insights from knowledge workers that are only based in the Gauteng Province where the adoption of the hybrid work was widely spread. The findings of this study were therefore limited to the views of the sample group from one part of the country which may affect one from drawing causal conclusions from such data (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Secondly, the study was restricted to only focus on individual knowledge workers who worked in two industries as specified, as a result restricting and narrowing the focus on a broader South African workforce and thereby leading to a limitation on external validity or general applicability of findings to larger multiple industries that can suitably adopt hybrid ways of work (Ross & Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Thirdly, the researcher employed purposive sampling and only sampled a maximum of two participants in each identified company to increase reach and to widen the representation of organisations who formed part of the research setting. The explorations were accordingly drawn from a varied list of companies explored, thereby reaching breadth in data gained rather than depth from each organisation. Although the latter parameters were consciously set by the researcher (Ross & Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018), the possibility of arriving at similar findings as presented if the same study is conducted in one context is not guaranteed as the views of knowledge workers varied in the degree to which they perceived their managers and organisations to be autonomy supportive.

Fourthly, although all knowledge workers who participated in the research study worked for organisations that have adopted hybrid ways of work, the nuances and conditions that informed their respective hybrid models differed (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In addition, some knowledge workers still predominantly worked from home despite an adoption of hybrid working conditions due to office space challenges. There was as such a tendency to view hybrid working as remote working by some participants which may have resulted in biased input (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). As a result, limiting obtaining findings from purely hybrid working settings in its trueness where one works partly in office and partly remotely on a regular basis.

There is also limited research on the application of the Self- Determination Theory (SDT) principles and assumptions on needs-supportive interventions in the context of hybrid working. Very few studies have been published regarding how leaders can promote autonomous motivation through the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* among knowledge workers in hybrid settings. In addition, due to the limited number of studies on the explored phenomenon, the number of comparable studies were not sufficient to provide a wide range of leader practices and work experiences to draw from, subsequently restricting one to generalise on findings of this study.

Lastly, the researcher worked with large sets of data which may have limited the ability to recognise the relationships between the main categories and themes as emerged from the ground up and ultimately affecting the interpretation of the findings as presented (Saunders et al., 2019). Caution that the findings may, consequently, not be replicated (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

7.5 Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study was conducted in South African organisations that have adopted the hybrid ways of working in the financial services and consulting services industries, further research should explore and investigate the views of knowledge workers regarding the studied

phenomenon in the other industries. Moreover, further research can look at exploring the same study in a different timeline when the adoption of hybrid working has matured and its implementation generally consistent across different organisations and industries.

The unexpected findings reveal the new insights that are outside the recommended need-supportive practices as informed by past reviewed studies for the Self Determination Theory. Future research could as such investigate if there are any additional conditions that speak to the defined psychological needs and how these conditions can be satisfied or frustrated in the context of hybrid working (Gagné et al., 2022). This will be salient as the future way of working is anticipated to be continually shaped by hybrid working (Microsoft, 2021; PWC, 2022).

The study findings revealed a strong need for organisations to deeply care about their workforce by reducing the workload to enhance employee wellbeing among knowledge workers. Future research is as such necessary to explore how organisations can enhance employee wellbeing in the context of hybrid work by using the principles of SDT. The study findings also revealed a growing need for leaders to foster trusting relationships in the context of hybrid working, the scholars can in future unpack how trust can be fostered in hybrid organisations, particularly using the SDT as a base.

7.6 Summary and Conclusion

The trend of hybrid working has indeed gained momentum and is found to be on the rise as few companies as studied embrace this new way of working in the South African context. From the study findings, there is indeed uncertainty about how leaders ought to manage the hybrid teams to cultivate autonomous motivation (Alexander et al., 2021). To this end, the researcher explored knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate or thwart autonomous motivation, with the objective of also aiming to identify the enablers that satisfy the psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations. The outcomes of this study contribute to enabling leaders to rethink how they are going to lead and support their hybrid teams to flourish as it revealed the sound leader practices and the work experienced to re-energise teams through fostered autonomous motivation (Alexander et al., 2021; Brafford & Ryan, 2020).

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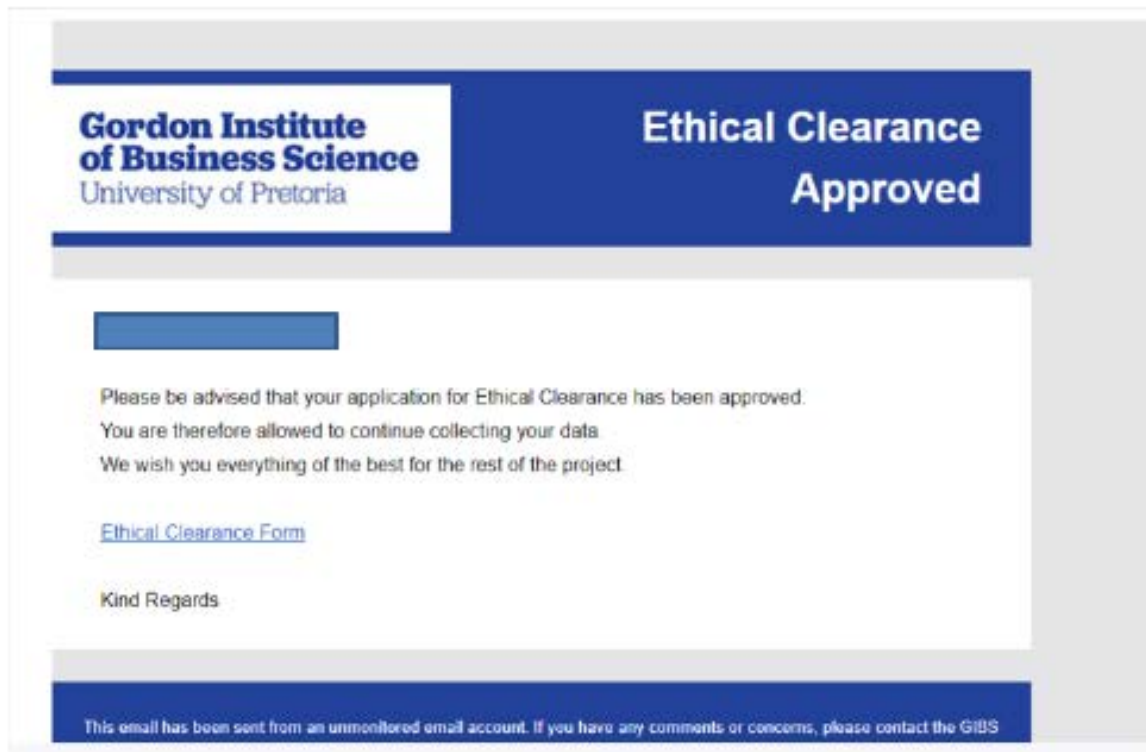
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



STUDENT RESEARCHER/APPLICANT:

29. I affirm that all relevant information has been provided in this form and its attachments and that all statements made are correct.

Student Researcher's Name in capital letters: [Redacted]

Date: 16 Sep 2022

Supervisor Name in capital letters: [Redacted]

Date: 16 Sep 2022

Co-supervisor Name in capital letters: [Redacted]

Date: 16 Sep 2022

Note: GIBS shall do everything in its power to protect the personal information supplied herein, in accordance to its company privacy policies as well the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013. Access to all of the above provided personal information is restricted, only employees who need the information to perform a specific job are granted access to this information.

Decision:

Approved

REC comments:

Date: 03 Oct 2022

APPENDIX 2: REQUEST TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY COMMUNIQUE

Background

Hello, I'm a Student Researcher reaching out to you via a mutual friend or colleague. I'm currently completing a Master of Philosophy in Change Leadership with the Graduate Institute of Business Science (GIBS). In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct a research project for academic purposes.

The title of my study is **Exploring autonomous motivation: knowledge worker perspective of South African hybrid organisations.**

The setting of my research is South African **Consulting Services firms and organisations in the Financial Services Industry** who have fully adopted hybrid ways of working (employees who work partly remote and partly in office) and guided by a clearly stipulated Hybrid Work Policy or Guidelines.

Criteria for my Research Participants

My target population is **Knowledge Workers** employed by companies that fall under the above-mentioned setting.

Participants can be:

- Any racial group
- Male or female
- Individuals who are knowledgeable about **autonomous motivation** (being internally or inherently motivated to manage and drive your own work to achieve set goals)
- Can be professionals, specialists, experts, consultants with or without people management responsibilities.

Type of Study

The study will employ a **Qualitative Inquiry** with the intention to focus on the quality and richness of stories and shared experiences of participants.

I will need to conduct a **1-hour interview via MS Teams** using a structured Interview Guide to channel our conversation.

Please let me know if you can assist and I will share more information and get us to schedule an interview accordingly.

I can be reached on the shared number and email address.

Thanking you in advance

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Brief Description of the Research Project

The aim of the proposed exploratory study is to answer the following research question: *'How should leaders cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations?'* The research question is aimed at drawing insights from knowledge workers to identify and understand what leader practices and work experiences they consider to be fundamental to cultivate autonomous motivation.

Research Study Consent Letter

Dear Research Participant

I am conducting a research study based on the research description outlined above. I confirm that the research interview with you is expected to last one-hour. The interview is aimed to help me to understand "How should leaders cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations"? Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. By signing this Consent Letter, you are indicating that you have given me permission for:

- The interview to be recorded;
- Where the recording is transcribed by a third-party transcriber, the transcriber will be subject to a standard non-disclosure agreement;
- Verbatim quotations from the interview to be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation;
- The data to be used as part of the report will be publicly available once the examination process has been concluded; and
- All data to be reported and stored without identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please contact my Supervisors or myself as Researcher. Our contact details are provided below.

Researcher Details	Lead Supervisor Details	Co-Supervisor Details
Name:	Name:	Name:
Email:	Email:	Email:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:

Researcher's Signature

Participant's Signature

Date signed:

Date signed:

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Main research Question: How should leaders cultivate and entrust knowledge workers with autonomous motivation in South African hybrid organisations?

Research questions	Interview questions	Literature supporting interview questions
Background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your role in your organisation? 2. What is your experience of working in a hybrid environment? 3. Do you have a hybrid work policy/ set of guidelines/principles? 4. What was your contribution to drafting such policy/guidelines/principles in your organisation? 	N/A
Research question 1: What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. What actions has your manager taken to make you feel empowered and motivated to conduct your own work in a hybrid environment? 6. What does your manager do to support you to remain competent and knowledgeable to reach your set goals? 7. What does your manager do to help you stay socially connected with your team or colleagues? 	Orsini and Rodrigues (2020), Rigby and Ryan (2018), Serrat (2017), Slemp et al. (2021), Reisinger and Fetterer (2021), Gilbert and Sunderland (2013), Gagne et al. (2022), Slemp et al. (2021),
Research question 2: What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that are believed to thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. What actions have you observed from your manager that make you feel disempowered and demotivated to conduct your own work in a hybrid environment? 9. What actions have you observed from your manager that create a sense of inefficiency in reaching your set goals? 10. What makes you feel isolated and lonely in a hybrid environment? 	Orsini and Rodrigues (2020), Rigby and Ryan (2018), Serrat (2017), Slemp et al. (2021), Reisinger and Fetterer (2021), Gilbert and Sunderland (2013), Gagne et al. (2022), Slemp et al. (2021),
Research question 3: How should leaders support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. What should your manager do to improve your well-being and promote autonomous motivation to help you stay engaged and motivated to perform regardless of your place of work? 	Olafsen and Deci (2020), Orsini and Rodrigues (2020), Fowler (2018), Reisinger and Fetterer (2021) Slemp et al. (2021), Fowler (2018), Koestner and Holding (2021), Deci et al. (2017), Reeve and Lee (2019)
Closing question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Looking into future ways of work, what should your organisation do to create optimal working conditions that will make it difficult for you to consider leaving your organisation for a competitor? 	Orsini and Rodrigues (2020)
General probing questions that will be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please tell me more about your experiences • Can you provide an example of leader practices to illustrate this? • Can you share more details? 	N/A

APPENDIX 5: LIST OF CODES, CATEGORIES AND THEMES

Study Findings: Sub-Research Question One: What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that cultivate and drive autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Positive Leader Practices			
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular team sessions for human interaction and to share work updates/concerns and be human 	Structure - Drives Social Interaction	Drives Engagement, Connection, and Inclusion	54
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular individual check-ins with manager to connect/discuss work/receive guidance 	Structure - Drives Individual Connection		13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent open communication and transparency 	Open Communication		12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager is accessible, encourages open communication, social interaction and working together 	Manager – Accessible		20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion when discussing matters with clients Manager who celebrates your individuality/sense of inclusion 	Manager - Offers Inclusion		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create different channels of communication 	Structure – Communication		15
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager offers support, guidance and sets clear goals 	Manager - Support	Macromanagements, Builds Trust and Empowers	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager does not micromanage/monitor but focusses on output 	Manager - Does not Micromanage		20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust from manager is key motivator to drive own work 	Manager Trust		26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sense of feeling disempowered/demotivated Empowered to drive own work 	Manager – Empowering		11

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid presents choices/options/freedom/liberating/convenience 	Hybrid Provides Choice	Offers Choice	50
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager gives feedback, holds open and honest career conversations Manager offers work exposure/stretch projects/think outside box Manager recommends learning interventions Ongoing learning and career development is encouraged 	Manager - Supports Development	Builds and Drives a Learning Culture	47
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefine organisational goals to align to hybrid ways of work 	Manager - Redefines Goals		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager helps create bigger picture thinking and shares the vision about my company 	Manager - Articulates Vision		4
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like my manager's management style Manager supports hybrid work 	Manager – Supportive Management Style	Supports Employee Wellness and Manages Workload	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager encourages work-life balance 	Manager - Supports Work-life Balance		6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager should help us manage workload and push back from business 	Manager - Manages Workload		4
Positive Work Experiences			
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistically care for and support employees 	Support and Care for Employees	Supportive Environment that Offers Work-life Balance	34
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid work offers work-life balance 	Impact on Work-life Balance		17

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes longer to get to know colleagues, longs for interaction • Extrovert- longs for human interaction 	Preference for Togetherness	Consider Preferences for Human Interaction	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences for Introverts- not lonely or in need of social connection 	Preferences for Solitude/Remoteness		5
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company provided the right office equipment or IT support • Office space- renovations/limited space 	Company Resources	Offer the Right Tools	11
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive culture where employees are consulted • Culture thrives where there is engagement 	Inclusive Culture	Cultivate an Inclusive Organizational Culture	7
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards and recognition - money and intangible 	Reward and Recognition	Holistic Rewards and Recognition	6

Findings for Sub-Research Question Two: What are knowledge workers' perceived leader practices and work experiences that thwart autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Negative Leader Practices			
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager lacks trust, doubts my capabilities/double efforts • Reason for going to the office - non-performance or manager does not trust team 	Manager Does not Trust	Manager Lacks Trust and Micromanagements	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager takes credit for my work/interferes 	Manager Takes Credit for my Work		4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of being policed or monitored 	Being Policed/Monitored		8
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes of inefficiency - manager fails to give timely feedback or input and takes long to meet 	Lack of Frequent Feedback	Lack of Frequent Feedback	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprioritise goals 	Redefined goals		1
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager does not interact/encourage engagement 	Manager Does not Engage	Lack of Engagement with Manager	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our team drives our connections, not manager 	Who Drives Interaction		1
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No flexible hours, just flexible place of work 	Flexible workspace not hours		2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced return to office • Log your working hours to track where you worked from 	Hybrid Policy	Offers Limited Flexibility	2
Negative Work Experiences			
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of hybrid - limited social interaction/spontaneous/informal engagements and connection • Connecting virtually is not impactful on relationships/stakeholder management • Started new job during remote/hybrid work • Junior staff don't have the experience of office life, don't learn as much and need more support and engagement • Difficult to network across the business • Difficult to keep up with own/new networks 	Downside of Working from Home On Engagement	Lack of Engagement and Corporate Culture	35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of exclusion • Feeling excluded in complete remote setting (2) • Difficult to integrate into the organisation, requires a strong mindset (5) • Difficult to make your mark in a new company/your worth invisible (3) • No sense of connection to the brand of the organisation or feeling like a part of it (2) • Company Culture Diluted I miss dressing up for work 	Downside of Working from Home On Culture		22
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload, long hours, duplication of work, no switching off, no boundaries 	Expected to be always available and Increased Workload	Lack of Work-Life Balance	48
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deemed always available 			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disempowered means you cannot say no to increasing workload 			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of working from home mentally and socially 		2	
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency

		Analysis)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges of hybrid - home distractions 	Downsides of Working From Home/In Office	Lack of Focus	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges of going to the office – Presenteeism Reason for not going to the office - petrol costs and traffic (1) Reason for not going to the office- office distractions/no sense of real work (3) 			7
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of right office equipment Load shedding causes network challenges Lack of office space - some buildings sold 	Lack of Right Tools	Lack of Right Office Tool	5

Findings for Sub-Research Question Three: How should leaders support knowledge workers to satisfy their psychological need for autonomous motivation in hybrid organisations?

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer an inclusive but flexible hybrid policy that's not too prescriptive, yet brings structure Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer option to choose where to work from 	Flexible Working Conditions	Offer a Flexible Hybrid Model	45
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - employee preferences/needs taken into account 	Focus on Individual Needs	Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace	22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - create a conducive work environment 	Positive Work Environment		11

Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - drive employee wellness and work-life balance 	Encourage Wellness	Drive Employee Wellbeing	17
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer monetary and non-monetary rewards and recognition 	Employee Rewards	Offer Holistic Rewards and Recognition	16
Codes (Level 1 Analysis)	Categories (Level 2 Analysis)	Themes (Level 3 Analysis)	Code Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to create optimal working conditions - drive employee wellness and work-life balance 	Encourage Wellness	Drive Employee Wellbeing	17

APPENDIX 6: RAW CODES

Code	Grounded
○ Announcement of hybrid work not well communicated	1
○ Autonomy means being able to 'Say no"	2
○ Autonomy means being able to choose where to work from	3
○ Autonomy means being able to drive own career growth and learning	6
○ Autonomy means being disciplined and capable to plan, make choices to drive own work at own time	23
○ Rewards and recognition - money and intangible	6
○ Causes of inefficiency - manager fails to give timely feedback or input and takes long to meet	13
○ Causes of non-performance unknown	1
○ Challenges of going to the office - Presenteeism	3
○ Challenges of hybrid - home distractions	6
○ Challenges of hybrid - limited social interaction/spontaneous/informal engagements and connection	18
○ Changing ways of work	5
○ Children understand new ways of working	2
○ Companies are saving more	1
○ Company culture diluted	1
○ Company has Hybrid Policy/Set of Guidelines/Principles	16
○ Hybrid presents choices/options/freedom/liberating/convenience	50
○ Connecting virtually is not impactful on relationships/stakeholder management	16
○ Contributed to drafting Hybrid Policy/Guidelines/Principles through surveys/consultation	10
○ Inclusive culture where employees are consulted	5
○ Office space- renovations/limited space	4
○ Deemed always available	1
○ Difficult to keep up with own/new networks	1
○ Delivery expectations or goals remained the same	8
○ Difficult to integrate into the organisation, requires a strong mindset	9
○ Disempowered means you cannot say no to increasing workload	1
○ Junior staff don't have the experience of office life, don't learn as much and need more support and engagement	5
○ Flat structure	1
○ Forced return to office	1
○ Frequent open communication and transparency	12
○ Encouraged to return to office	1
○ Holistically care for and support employees	34
○ Enjoys hybrid work	12
○ Experience of hybrid is from a client in a mining house	1
○ Experiences for Introverts- not lonely or in need of social connection	6
○ Extrovert- longs for human interaction	10
○ Feeling excluded in complete remote setting	2
○ Impact of working from home mentally and socially	1
○ Log your working hours to track where you worked from	1
○ Manager offers work exposure/stretch projects/think outside box	12
○ Future ways of working - 4-day work	2

o Culture thrives where there is engagement	2
o HR prepared us to work from home	3
o Hybrid model options	1
o Hybrid Policy being drafted	1
o Engaged workforce	2
o Benefits of hybrid working - focussed time to work/do more/efficiency which leads to higher productivity	18
o I drive my own social interaction/networks	2
o Regular individual check-ins with manager to connect/discuss work/receive guidance	13
o Mental/social challenges of working from home	1
o I stay alone	1
o Office space - some buildings sold	1
o Implementation of Hybrid Policy at manager/department's discretion	8
o Our team drives our connections, not manager	1
o Manager gives feedback, holds open and honest career conversations	15
o Hybrid work offers work-life balance	17
o Started new job during remote/hybrid work	4
o Reprioritise goals	1
o Difficult to network across the business	2
o I miss dressing up for work	2
o Inability to receive immediate help/support from colleagues	2
o Manager lacks trust, doubts my capabilities/double efforts	13
o Inclusion when discussing matters with clients	2
o Manager does not trust hybrid work	1
o Manager who celebrates your individuality/sense of inclusion	2
o Manager does not micromanage/monitor but focusses on output	20
o Manager is accessible, encourages open communication, social interaction and working together	20
o Manager offers support, guidance and sets clear goals	24
o Manager does not interact/encourage engagement	4
o Trust from manager is key motivator to drive own work	26
o Manager helps create bigger picture thinking and shares the vision about my company	3
o Manager supports hybrid work	3
o Empowered to drive own work	4
o I like my manager's management style	4
o Manager takes credit for my work/interferes	4
o Manager should help us manage workload and push back from business	4
o Lack of right office equipment	2
o Mixed feelings about hybrid work	7
o Mostly works from home	4
o Mostly works from office	1
o No contribution to Hybrid Policy drafting	8
o Load shedding causes network challenges	2
o No hybrid policy- small team of 5. Unwritten agreement and understanding of how this work	1
o Difficult to make your mark in a new company/your worth invisible	3
o Redefine organisational goals to align to hybrid ways of work	4
o No significant changes in working from office/remote	1
o No flexible hours, just flexible place of work	2

○ Ongoing learning and career development is encouraged	15
○ Company provided the right office equipment or IT support	11
○ Lack of structure is demotivating	3
○ Prefers to work remotely	3
○ Reason for going to the office - home distractions	1
○ Reason for going to the office - load shedding	2
○ Reason for going to the office - team catch ups/meetings/sessions, connect and network	31
○ Reason for going to the office - non-performance or manager does not trust team	6
○ Reason for not going to the office - petrol costs and traffic	2
○ Reason for not going to the office - space challenges	2
○ Reason for not going to the office- office distractions/no sense of real work	7
○ Manager recommends learning interventions	5
○ Regular team sessions for human interaction and to share work updates/concerns and be human	54
○ Manager encourages work-life balance	6
○ Remote work has accelerated growth in South Africa	1
○ Remote work initially challenging	1
○ Remote working was lonely	1
○ Delayed career growth and progression	4
○ Create different channels of communication	11
○ Roster timetable for office days	1
○ Routine interrupted	2
○ Senior with team, Banking Industry	4
○ Senior with team, Consulting Industry	4
○ Senior with team, Insurance Industry	2
○ Workload, long hours, duplication of work, no switching off, no boundaries	48
○ Sense of exclusion	7
○ Sense of loneliness when I am alone at home	2
○ Set day to go to office	3
○ Some challenges at home are similar to office challenges like not being able to get immediate help	1
○ Specialist with no team, Banking Industry	4
○ Specialist with no team, Consulting Industry	2
○ Specialist with no team, Insurance Industry	2
○ No sense of connection to the brand of the organisation or feeling like a part of it	2
○ Takes longer to get to know colleagues, longs for interaction	15
○ Those who do not cope due to inability to change routine	1
○ No sense of feeling disempowered/demotivated	7
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - encourage ongoing development and honest regular feedback/communication	6
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer an inclusive but flexible hybrid policy that's not too prescriptive, yet brings structure	29
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - employee preferences/needs taken into account	22
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - drive employee wellness and work life balance	17
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer option to choose where to work from	16
○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - offer monetary and non-monetary rewards and recognition	14

○ Ways to create optimal working conditions - create a conducive work environment	11
○ Weekly sessions at start of covid to openly share feelings/raise concerns	1
○ Worked remotely before COVID	5
○ Working together and maintaining trust	1
○ Sense of being policed or monitored	8