

**Remote work adoption's influence on engagement, job satisfaction,
discretionary effort and turnover intention: insights from remote
workers in a post-Covid-19 pandemic business environment**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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Abstract

While the concept of remote work has existed since the 1970s adoption by organisations has been limited. This rapidly changed during 2020, when lockdowns imposed by governments across the globe to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus forced many organisations to close their offices and adopt remote work. As a result, many organisations and workers were exposed to remote work and have found both advantages and disadvantages of the practice. With the Covid-19 pandemic now subsiding and restrictions lifted this research seeks to provide insights into the impact of remote work on workers in a post-pandemic business context.

This research study employed a qualitative research methodology, with 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with workers who have recently experienced remote work. These interviews explore the lived experiences of the participants and focused on the impact of remote work on the key constructs of engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and intention to turnover.

The results from this study provide empirical evidence to support the body of knowledge on remote work and further contributes through the analysis of remote work in a post-pandemic business environment. The research report also provides practical implications and considerations for management to consider when adopting remote work.

Keywords

Remote work, Job satisfaction, Engagement, Discretionary effort, Turnover intention, Post-Pandemic

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration 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 and consent to carry out this research.

Robert Marston

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem

1.1 Background to Research Problem

In 2020 governments across the world implemented lockdowns and put in place restrictions to curb social interactions to contain the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus (Dunford et al., 2020; B. Wang et al., 2021). These restrictions resulted in many office-based workers being forced to work from home and caused organisations to rapidly digitize and transform their business practices to accommodate employees working remotely (Hern, 2020).

While the rapid shift to remote work was initially highly disruptive for both workers and organisations alike, the benefits of remote work started to emerge as the pandemic progressed. For employees, remote working meant they need not commute to their place of work, had flexibility in terms of scheduling where and when they work and allowed for time and financial savings (Routley, 2020). Workers found more time to spend with families and took an overall view that remote work was leading to a healthier work-life balance (Salman & Goenka, 2022). For organisations with employees working remotely, benefits such as productivity increases, increases in employee retention and satisfaction, access to an expanded labour pool, savings related to downsizing, and reductions in unscheduled workplace absenteeism were noted (Green, 2020). These benefits realised during the pandemic have caused both employees and employers to consider continuing remote work even as the pandemic subsides and restrictions are lifted (Goldberg, 2022). As a result of the experience gained from the pandemic, many employees now see remote work as a potential benefit to working for an organisation (Owl Labs, 2022), while for organisations remote work policies are seen as enabling both cost savings and a method to attract top talent to their organisations (Ahuja, 2022; Young Entrepreneur Council, 2021). Even organisations without full-time remote work policies are adopting more flexible hybrid remote work policies, with employees either alternating between office-based and remote work during the work week, or groups of employees remote working full-time (Yang et al., 2022).

While the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the number of workers working remotely at a scale never previously seen before (Yang et al., 2022), the concept of remote work has existed since the 1970s (Allen et al., 2015) and large companies such as Yahoo and IBM have attempted to adopt it at scale within their organisations, before later abandoning it (Goudreau, 2013; Simons, 2017). Many of the benefits that organisations and employees realised during the pandemic have been discussed in previous studies on remote work in

addition to potential drawbacks, such as employee isolation, productivity declines, challenges innovation and collaboration, challenges with the management of employees and loss of work-life balance for workers due to unclear boundaries (Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020; W. Wang et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022).

1.2 Purpose statement

The Covid-19 pandemic's impact on the global economy and life of many people across the world cannot be understated, the loss of life and economic damage caused by the pandemic is nothing short of tragic, with the effects of the pandemic likely to be seen for many years to come. For many workers across the globe, however, the pandemic has shifted their mindset around work and the office environment with workers either wanting flexibility in choosing where to work on days during the workweek or have simply decided to relocate and work remotely full-time (Becker et al., 2022; Salman & Goenka, 2022). Having such a large portion of employees working remotely, either full-time or several days a week, is likely to present a host of challenges to organisations in the coming years. Organisations need to balance the desire of employees for remote work arrangements with the impact that remote work has on innovation, collaboration, and ultimately the performance of the organisation. With the Covid-19 pandemic waning and activities returning to pre-pandemic levels, organisations need to consider their remote work policies holistically to ensure this balance between remote work and organisational performance is found.

The purpose of the proposed research is therefore to gain further understanding of the impact of remote work in the current business context, as the Covid-19 pandemic subsides and organisations look to navigate the post-pandemic business environment. This research seeks to draw from real-life experiences of workers and explore how remote working has impacted their engagement levels, satisfaction with their job, discretionary effort offered to their organisation and how willing they are to leave their organisation.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the concept of remote work and how the Covid-19 pandemic has forced more workers to work remotely than at any other point in history (Yang et al., 2022). This forced shift has brought with it both perceived benefits and drawbacks for organisations and workers, with major shifts in both organisational policies around remote work, in addition to workers' attitudes and desires around remote work. The section

concludes with the purpose of the research in undertaking to gain a better understanding of remote work in a post-pandemic context and what workers' views are regarding remote work and its impact on engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention. The next section will review the academic literature on each of these identified constructs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided background and context to the research problem that many organisations face regarding remote work emerging from the pandemic. This section seeks to review literature related to the core concepts that this research will focus on, namely, remote work, engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and intention to turnover. The section will cover the history of remote work and key findings from the literature regarding its perceived benefits and drawbacks. This is followed by an introduction to the literature related to engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention, together with what previous research has found regarding the links between remote work and each of these constructs.

2.2 Remote Work

The concept of remote work has existed since as early as the 1970s (Allen et al., 2015; Raiborn & Butler, 2009) with earlier literature defining several the practice of working from home, or a remote location, using telecommunication technologies, including “Telecommuting”, “Telework and “Distributed Work”, (Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). More recently the term “Remote Work” has been popularised for the practice, with extensive use during the Covid-19 pandemic (Becker et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Madero Gómez et al., 2020; Toscano & Zappalà, 2020; B. Wang et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). In addition, consideration must be given to what extent remote work is done by the team or individual of an organisation (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden & Veiga, 2005; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020; Virick et al., 2010). Remote work intensity is taken to mean the extent to which remote work is performed by an individual or team, with high-intensity remote work taken to mean that a worker is remote working the majority, if not all the time, away from the office and low-intensity remote work referring to workers spending most of their time in-office with remote work done occasionally, or only a few days in the week (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

2.2.1 Perceived benefits of remote work

For workers that are working remotely, several benefits have been explored in the literature. The first perceived benefit is flexibility & autonomy (Allen et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Remote workers can choose to either work from home or another suitable location that is convenient for them and may be able to schedule their work around other commitments more easily than if they were in an office

(Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Remote workers can also choose when to respond to work communication more easily than if they were based in the office, thereby contributing further to autonomy (Liu et al., 2022). A second benefit explored in literature is that of a better work-life balance. Remote work has the potential to reduce work-family conflict by balancing demands more easily between work and family, allowing more time to be spent with family as a result of not needing to commute in and out of work, or scheduling work around family members' schedules (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Morganson et al., 2010). Extensive remote work may even allow remote workers to schedule their work around their leisure activities (Thompson, 2019). Reduction in expenses is another perceived benefit for remote workers, which may be due to savings from not needing to commute into and from the office, or from being able to move further away from the office into areas where rental and housing costs are less (Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Remote work has been linked to several organisational benefits, including expansion of the labour pool, the ability to attract talent to the organisation, savings resulting from office space and consumables reduction, as well as increased employee performance and satisfaction (Bloom et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Sytch & Greer, 2020).

Remote work has also been associated with environmental sustainability, as workers not commuting in and out of the office work can reduce road congestion, emissions, and dependency on fossil fuels (Pérez et al., 2004; Raiborn & Butler, 2009; Shabanpour et al., 2018). Additionally, for organisations with workers working remotely, the need for office space can be reduced along with energy consumption (O'Brien & Yazdani Aliabadi, 2020; Pérez et al., 2004).

2.2.2 Perceived drawbacks of remote work

A recent study by Yang et al. (2022) on an extensive set of data from a large tech firm, where a large portion of employees were working remotely, found that the collaboration network across employees becomes heavily siloed with these silos becoming increasingly densely connected. In addition, the collaboration network across the firm becoming more static with fewer ties being added and deleted each month and asynchronous communication increasing as a result of workers using email and instant messaging to communicate with each other. Yang et al. (2022) go on to expect the effect of these changes in communication patterns to have an impact on productivity within the organisation and potentially stifle innovation in the long term. When Marissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo at the time, stopped the practice of remote work in 2013 she referred to communication and collaboration as being challenges resulting from employees not

working together at Yahoo's offices (Goudreau, 2013). Van der Lippe & Lippényi (2020) in their study of over 11,000 employees across 259 organisations in Europe, found that individual workers perform better when their colleagues do not work from home and that the higher the percentage of co-workers working from home, the worse the individual worker's performance. In addition, Van der Lippe & Lippényi (2020) also found that manager-reported team performance was worse when co-workers were working from home frequently.

The potential for remote work to impact negatively an employee's career has been explored in the literature (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003) with anecdotal evidence to support that remote work hinders career and remuneration progression. Bloom et al. (2015) found that workers who were able to remote work returned to the office because of the perception that they were being discriminated against in terms of career progression. A study by Golden & Eddleston (2020) found that, while remote workers do not differ from non-remote workers in terms of promotions, they do appear to be behind in terms of salary growth and that individuals who remote work only occasionally received more promotions and higher salary growth those who remote work extensively. Additionally, Golden & Eddleston (2020) noted that employees who extensively remote work appear to be penalised in careers if they work in a team where remote work is not the standard, they perform little supplemental work, or where face-to-face contact with their supervisor is lacking. Thus, the organisation's and supervisor's approach to remote work, in addition to the type of work the employee does, and how often they remote work may play a role in whether the employee's career progression is influenced by their choosing to remote work. In their study of both public and private sector employees, Cooper & Kurland (2002) found that remote work does not afford workers development opportunities that occur in a conventional work setting, including interpersonal networking with others in the organisation, informal learning that builds work-related skills and distribution of information, as well as mentoring from colleagues and superiors.

In contrast to the literature on the improvement of work-life balance due to remote work, the effect on work-life balance for some remote workers may be negative due to the blurring of boundaries between work and home life (Allen et al., 2021; Morganson et al., 2010). Becker et al. (2022) found that some remote workers struggled with feelings of work-related loneliness and that these feelings were not related to having children in the household or living with a significant other. Instead, the researchers suggested that this

loneliness may be due to low-quality personal relationships coupled with the importance of workplace relationships. Similarly, Bloom et al. (2015) found that half of the workers who were working from home during the experiment returned to working in the office as a result of feelings of isolation and loneliness.

The cost savings that some literature suggests may also not materialise as a result of added expenses such as increased energy consumption (O'Brien & Yazdani Aliabadi, 2020), or due to the requirement to have space to practise remote work within the worker's dwelling, which can result in additional rental and housing cost if workers choose to remain in their current dwelling or area, and don't relocate to a new lower-cost area (Stanton & Tiwari, 2021).

2.3 Engagement

Kahn (Kahn, 1990) was one of the first to use the term "personal engagement" and rereferred to it as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Kahn (1990) essentially theorises that three psychological conditions are related to engagement in their work, namely meaningfulness, safety and availability. Kahn (1990) proposed that workers are more engaged at work when it offered them psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety when they were psychologically available.

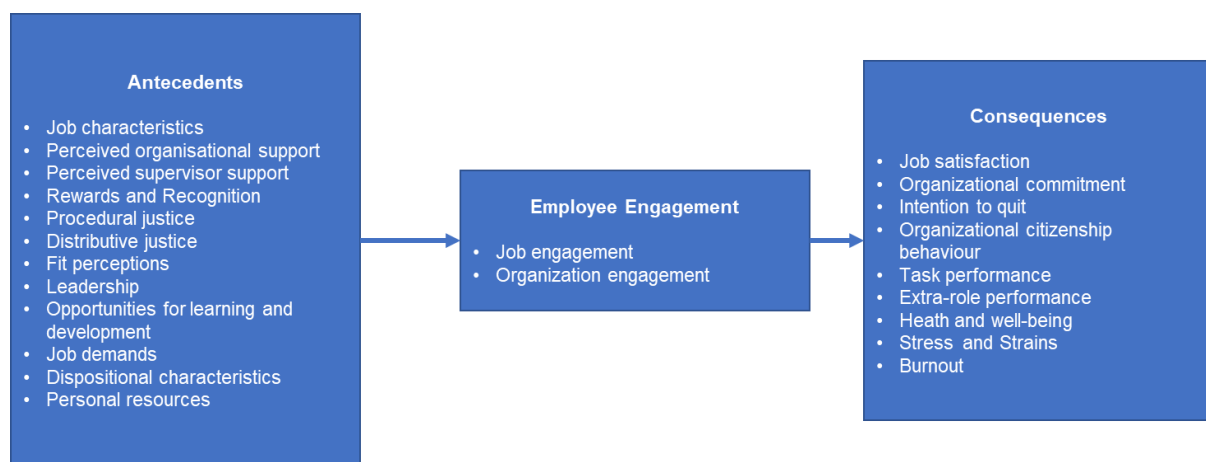
Building on Kahn (1990), May et al. (2004) empirically tested the model put forth by Kahn (1990) and found that meaningfulness, safety, and availability were significantly related to engagement. In their study, May et al. (2004) found that job enrichment and work role fit were positive predictors of psychological meaningfulness. Rewarding co-worker relationships and supportive supervisor relations were positively linked to psychological safety, while conformance to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were found to be negative predictors. The availability of resources was positively linked to psychological availability while taking part in activities that were external to the organisation was found to be a negative predictor.

Saks (2006), later revisited in Saks (2019), explored the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. Saks (2006) defined two types of engagement, job engagement and organisational engagement, with job engagement being related to the role that the worker performs and organisation engagement being the relationship between the worker and their organisation. Saks (2006) found a meaningful difference between job

engagement and organisational engagement and that, although the two constructs are related, the antecedents and consequences differed in several respects, suggesting that psychological conditions that lead to job engagement and organisational engagement, as well as their consequences, are not the same. Saks (2019) builds on Saks (2006) through additional antecedents and consequences to the original model proposed in Saks (2006), see Figure 1. Saks (2019) found that organisations can drive engagement by focusing on skill variety and by providing social support, rewards and recognition, procedural and distributive fairness, as well as opportunities for learning and development.

Figure 1

Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement



Note. This model was produced by Saks in 2019, showing the antecedents to employee engagement and its consequences. From Saks, A. M. (2019). “Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited,” by M. A. Saks, 2019, *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness*, 6(1), p. 32. Copyright 2019 by Emerald Insight.

Several studies have explored job characteristics as an antecedent to employee engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2017; Bailey et al., 2017; Mäkikangas et al., 2022; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006, 2019) with these studies finding that task variety, task significance, autonomy and feedback were all positively related to engagement.

Several studies in the literature have found engagement to be linked to the performance of workers, with workers that are more engaged showing higher performance than less engaged employees (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2019). In a systematic synthesis of narrative evidence from 213 studies, Bailey et al. (2017) found that engagement was positively associated with individual morale, task performance, extra-role performance and organisational performance. In a meta-analysis of literature related to engagement, Motyka (2018) identified forty-eight studies that found a statistically significant relationship

between employee engagement and job performance, as well as seven studies that found a statistically significant relationship between employee engagement and an organisation's financial performance.

Literature that deals with employee 'burnout' offers an alternative model to engagement whereby 'burnout' is considered the antithesis of engagement and the erosion of engagement with one's job. Maslach et al. (2001) theorised that there are six areas of work-life that lead to burnout or disengagement by workers, namely, workload, control, rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness and values. Maslach et al. (2001) argue that engagement, like burnout, mediates the link between these six work-life factors, consistent with research by May et al. (2004) and Saks (2019), and that job engagement is associated with a sustainable workload, autonomy, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work (Alexander et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Remote work and engagement

W. Wang et al. (2020) found that remote workers felt less emotionally connected to their organisation, implying that their organisational engagement is lower as a result of remote work, with workers tending to remain at their organisation to conserve resources or due to limited employment alternatives rather than a sense of connection or obligation to the organisation. Pattnaik & Jena (2020) through an analysis of remote work literature theorised that remote work has seemingly led to the disengagement of employees in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Much of the discussion around the factors that potentially cause the disengagement of employees when remote working ties with the antecedents that Saks (2019) proposed, including job characteristics and the support from the employee's organisation and supervisor.

Mäkikangas et al. (2022) performed a longitudinal study of remote workers' engagement by identifying four profiles that described within-person work engagement processes related to remote work job resources as well as personal strengths and behaviours. The majority of the study sample (75%) had average to high levels of work engagement, and after a short increase, was found to be stable through the ten-month period over which the study was conducted. A decrease in engagement was observed in the remaining sample of workers who already had a low level of engagement at the beginning of the study. Mäkikangas et al. (2022) also found that high levels of organisational support, the functionality of a worker's home as a work environment, job-related self-efficacy, and job crafting corresponded with profiles that remained at high levels of engagement during remote work.

2.4 Job satisfaction

There exist many definitions for job satisfaction in literature (Aziri, 2011), however these definitions predominately associate job satisfaction with the feelings that a worker has with their current job. Employees with wither high job satisfaction are considered to have positive feelings towards their job, in contrast to employees who have lower job satisfaction and who tend to have negative feelings towards their job. Several factors can contribute to job satisfaction including, the kind of work the worker does, how challenging the work is, financial rewards, supervisors, subordinates and colleagues (Aziri, 2011).

Studies on job satisfaction and its impact on job performance have found a positive relationship between higher job satisfaction leading to improved job performance (Fu & Deshpande, 2014; Rashid et al., 2003; Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007). In a study done by Loan (2020) the researcher found that job satisfaction played a mediating role between organizational commitment and job performance. Furthermore, the research also showed that organisational commitment had a positive effect on job performance. These findings tie together organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job performance such that changes in organisational commitment and job satisfaction of a worker can affect their job performance, either positively or negatively.

2.4.1 Remote work and Job satisfaction

An increase in job satisfaction due to remote working has been discussed in the literature and attributed to factors including the ability to better balance work and family, increased autonomy and flexibility, fewer distractions, less stress and better time management (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Morganson et al., 2010; Wheatley, 2017). Studies done by Bloom et al. (2015) and Kelliher & Anderson (2010) found a positive effect on job satisfaction despite an increase in work intensity for workers working remotely. The implication is that the negative of working more intensely is offset by the positive factors associated with remote working, thus leading to increased job satisfaction for remote workers. Kelliher & Anderson (2010) found that flexibility and being able to control when they work contributed to remote workers' satisfaction, and that they were appreciative of the organisation allowing them to remote work, with a feeling of loyalty towards the organisation as a result.

In contrast to an increase in job satisfaction as a result of remote work, researchers have pointed to decreased social interactions with co-workers and supervisors as well as an increase in feelings of isolation as having the potential to decrease job satisfaction when

remote working (Bloom et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Virick et al., 2010). Golden & Veiga (2005) developed the hypothesis that the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction is curvilinear with an inverted u-shape. Results from the study of 321 professional employees at a large tech firm supported the hypothesis that workers who worked remotely less often had higher levels of job satisfaction than workers who worked remotely extensively. Golden & Veiga (2005) reasoned this result to be due to workers who remote work occasionally experiencing more face-to-face relationships at work and being less likely to have a feeling of isolation, than workers who remote worked extensively. A further study by Virick et al. (2010) seemingly supported the findings of Golden & Veiga (2005) in showing that working remotely beyond several days provides no further benefits to job satisfaction.

2.5 Discretionary effort

Discretionary effort is described as the voluntary effort that workers provide their organisation above the minimum required by their job and would include voluntary actions by workers such as putting in extra hours at work or persisting in activities over time (Lloyd, 2008). Discretionary effort is linked to engagement and is seen as a consequence of it (Saks, 2019). Shuck et al. (2011) found a significant relationship between discretionary effort and employee engagement in their study of 238 workers across service, manufacturing, professional and nonprofit industries. In a study done by Lloyd (2008), both workers' skills and autonomy were positive predictors of discretionary effort. Both engagement and discretionary effort have been positively linked to increased job performance and company performance (Lloyd, 2008; Shuck et al., 2011).

2.5.1 Discretionary effort and remote work

Kelliher & Anderson (2010) found evidence that workers with a flexible work arrangement may feel obligated to intensify their work effort as a result of the perceived flexibility afforded to them. (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) also found that some workers worked the time saved as a result of not commuting instead of using the additional time for non-work related activities. According to Cooper & Lu (2019), one factor contributing to workers working outside of traditional work hours or overworking has been remote work and the use of modern technology, such as mobile devices, causing workers to work outside of the workplace and during personal time. Workers are thus finding it hard to 'switch off' as they are constantly bombarded by instructions and queries sent through their Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and finding it difficult to manage work-life boundaries as a result (Cooper & Lu, 2019). Gadeyne et al. (2018) also examined the role

of ICT in workers working outside of office hours and found evidence to support previous studies that the practice is a result of organisational factors and workers feeling pressured to respond quickly to work-related communications. Working after hours may not always be the result of employees using discretionary effort, Cooper & Lu (2019) proposed that one reason for workers working after hours may be a result of the flexible nature of remote work and being able to attend to personal matters during office hours, thus feeling they need to work back the time outside of the traditional office hours.

2.6 Turnover intention

Turnover refers to the situation where a worker leaves the membership of an organisation and a new worker enters the organisation as a replacement (Ngo-Henha, 2017). Ellett et al. (2007) categorise three types of turnover seen by an organisation, namely; unavoidable turnover, desirable turnover, and undesirable turnover. Unavoidable turnover is related to when a worker leaves the employment of an organisation due to factors such as illness, relocation of the employee or reaching retirement age. Desirable turnover relates to when a worker who the organisation sees as undesirable, due to reasons such as incompetence or disobedience, leaves the organisation and is, therefore, a desirable outcome for the organisation. Undesirable turnover is the opposite of this and occurs when a worker who is deemed competent by the organisation, leaves because of factors such as insufficient remuneration, lack of opportunities for promotion and supervisor conflict. Turnover can be either due to an employee's voluntary resignation, employees quitting the organisation without notice, or due to the employer dismissing the employee for reasons such as incompetence, breaking of rules, or dishonesty (Carrell et al., 2018). For this research, undesirable turnover will be the primary focus as this has been shown to harm organisations, due to the cost of administration of the separation, cost of recruitment to replace the employee, cost of training of a new hire as well as indirect costs of lost productivity because of the separation (Carrell et al., 2018).

Workers' turnover intention has also been linked to engagement, with workers who are less engaged at work having a higher intention to turnover (Saks, 2019; Shuck et al., 2011).

2.6.1 Remote Work and Turnover Intention

Studies on the impact of remote work generally point to remote work having a positive effect on turnover due to increased autonomy, increased job satisfaction, and less stress (Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). In their study of remote workers in a

Chinese call centre, Bloom et al. (2015) attributed the savings that the organisation realised in part to the reduced turnover of employees who were working from home. In contrast, remote work may have a negative influence on turnover intention where remote workers have feelings of isolation, perceive that they receive less career support than office-based co-workers, have an impersonal feeling of the environment at their organisation, or experience more work-family conflicts (Ferreira et al., 2021; W. Wang et al., 2020).

2.7 Conclusions and Motivations for research

The literature covered in this chapter appears to be divided between the benefits and the disadvantages of remote work. Studies on the subject often point to the advantages of better work-life balance, better morale, increased productivity, reduction in costs, increased worker autonomy and fewer distractions amongst others (Allen et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Other studies point to contradictory findings regarding family and personal problems in work-life balance, increased workload resulting in stress, collaboration and knowledge sharing challenges, time management, and interruptions (Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Yang et al., 2022). Additionally, many of the previous studies were conducted before 2020 and, as a result, did not take into account the accelerated nature of the dilemma facing organisations emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in gaps in research that need to be filled by new post-pandemic research such as the study contemplated here.

The inference from the contradictory findings regarding remote work benefits and drawbacks appear to be highly contextual and influenced by the individual, type of work, organisation, family circumstances and technology (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Another factor that is constantly evolving is that of the technology used to perform remote work, the technology used in the early 2000s is likely to have been predominantly text and voice-based communication. Advancements in personal computing and higher Internet bandwidths allow for a far richer set of interactions today through video conferencing and immersive virtual spaces. Further still, many studies done before 2020 would have been done where most workers would not have been practising remote work. The Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally changed this, workers and organisations across the globe were forced to rapidly adopt remote work, through the use of modern collaboration tools and telecommunication technologies, in response to the pandemic. Despite this, much of the remote work done during the pandemic was forced due to

lockdowns and restrictions, where organisations were forced to send workers home and workers may have been unprepared in terms of workspaces, subject to factors such as children being at home due to closing of schools, and others in the household also remote working. Post-pandemic organisations are now able to choose their policies around remote work and workers can determine how they remote work and are subject to different circumstances to those experienced during the pandemic (Ferreira et al., 2021). Thus, an opportunity for research into remote work in post-pandemic society presents itself to further understand how in the current context remote work may affect workers' engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort, and turnover intention.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature related to the core constructs of the proposed research. From the literature review, there appear to be several gaps in research resulting from contradictory findings on advantages and disadvantages, as well as the current context of remote work post the Covid-19 pandemic, thus presenting an opportunity for new research to develop an understanding of the impact of remote working from the perspective of remote workers. The following chapter will cover the key research questions that the research seeks to address.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1 Introduction

With an understanding of the research problem and context (Chapter 1), together with an understanding of the literature related to remote work, engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention (Chapter 2), the following research questions have been developed to guide this research:

3.2 Research Questions

3.2.1 RQ1: How has remote work changed workers' engagement with their job and their organisation?

Research question 1 is aimed at understanding which factors of remote work individuals perceive to have the most influence on their engagement with both their jobs as well as with their organisations.

3.2.2 RQ2: How has remote work changed workers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job?

Research question 2 is aimed at understanding which factors of remote work individuals perceive to influence the satisfaction they have with their job.

3.2.3 RQ3: How has remote work impacted workers' discretionary effort?

Research question 3 seeks to understand which factors of remote work have impacted workers' discretionary effort that they provide to their organisations.

3.2.4 RQ4: How has remote work changed workers' intention to turnover?

Research question 4 is aimed at understanding which factors of remote work are influencing individuals' intentions to stay or leave their organisation.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has listed the research questions developed as a result of the problem identification and literature review research. The following section will provide an in-depth description of the methodology used in seeking answers and insights to the research questions proposed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details and defence of the choice of methodology for the research, in terms of the purpose of the research design, philosophy, approach selected, methodological choices, strategy and time horizon of the research study. This is followed by an in-depth description of the study's research methodology which covers the population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size, measurement instrument, data gathering process, analysis approach and quality controls, before concluding on the limitations of the study.

4.2 Purpose of research design

Qualitative exploratory studies seek to discover causal relationships between key constructs to find an explanation for a specific occurrence (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The purpose of this study was to understand the relationships between the construct of remote work and the dependent constructs of engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and intention to turnover. From a review of the literature, it is evident that there is a division in the findings of previous research studies regarding remote work and these different constructs. Furthermore, the forced shift to remote work as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic presented an opportune time to revisit theories around remote work, as many workers and organisations seek to navigate the post-pandemic business environment (Ferreira et al., 2021).

4.3 Philosophy

A research philosophy refers to the researcher's system of beliefs and assumptions that the researcher has used development and interpret knowledge gained during the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The purpose of this research study was to gain an understanding of the lived experience of individuals who have been remote working, or are currently still remote working, following the Covid-19 pandemic. The research philosophy that aligns with this is interpretivism, as it seeks to understand how human beings function and their role as social characters in the phenomenon (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), and was thus the philosophy adopted for this research study.

4.4 Methodological choices

A mono methodology (Saunders & Lewis, 2018) was adopted using qualitative interviews with participants owing to the limited time afforded to conduct the research and which would not allow mixed or multi-methods to be undertaken.

4.4.1 Strategy

The phenomenology strategy (Sanders, 1982) was used to explore the nascent experiences of post-pandemic remote work and how it affects remote workers' engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention. In a phenomenological study, the common meaning across several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon is described (Creswell & Poth, 2016) and the phenomenological reality is comprehended through the embodied experiences of the participants through close examination of their individual experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Through the collection of views and experiences of workers who were at the time of the interviews either remote working, or having remote worked within twelve months prior, the researcher sought to describe the essence of post-pandemic remote work through the description of the varied experiences of remote workers in the different contexts in which they experienced remote work (Creswell et al., 2007).

4.4.2 Approach selected

The approach selected was that of induction, as this was consistent with the phenomenology strategy and assisted with the creation of codes and themes, as well as identifying the relationships between theoretical constructs found in the data collection phase of the research (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018; Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

One challenge however with an inductive approach highlighted by critics is that it can never be entirely 'pure', as researchers always bring their lens and conceptual frameworks to the research, and that data can never be free of theoretical influence due to the researchers' theoretical undertakings and prior knowledge of a phenomenon (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). As the Researcher had conducted an extensive literature review on the theoretical constructs, as well as having personally experienced the phenomena of remote work, there was an element of a deductive approach in the researcher in terms of the codes that were used and the lens that the researcher viewed the research from. Combining both approaches in qualitative analysis is however typical and consistent with exploratory research, given that there are no rigid divisions between the approaches of deduction and induction (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

4.4.3 Time horizon

The study was designed to be cross-sectional due to the time-frame limitations of the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), with a single interview being conducted with each participant recounting their experiences between just before the Covid-19 pandemic up until the day of the interview, a period of approximately three years.

4.5 Research Methodology

4.5.1 Population

The population for a research study is the complete set of group members identified and from which a sample, or sub-group, is drawn to conduct the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The population identified for this study was workers from organisations who were permitted by their organisation to work remotely at the time of the interview, or had worked remotely in the last twelve months prior.

Characteristics of the workers, including age, location, type or size of organisation and industry, were not limited in an attempt to capture themes and insights from as broad a population as possible and to allow for further segmentation and analysis of data if required.

4.5.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for a phenomenological study is the individual (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In the context of this research study, the unit of analysis was the individual worker who at the time of the interview was currently remote working or had within the previous twelve months experienced remote work.

4.5.3 Sampling method and size

Given the qualitative nature of the research design, the sampling method chosen for this study was purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), whereby the researcher selected sample members using the researcher's judgment to determine participants who were representative of the typical case of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Sample members were recruited through the professional social media platform, LinkedIn, and from the researcher's professional network. The researcher was careful to screen applicants to ensure they fit the sample requirements before arranging an interview with each of the applicants at a time convenient to both the researcher and the applicant.

When conducting phenomenological research the exploration of the phenomenon is done with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon with group sizes ranging from 3 to 5 individuals up to 10 to 15 (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Given that many organisations were forced to have employees remote work due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the population for this study was deemed to be substantial and allowed for a heterogeneous sample set to be collected. The researcher thus had a target of 15 sample members given the heterogeneity of the sample where sample sizes where between 12 and 30 interviews are considered large enough for research purposes (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In total, the researcher was able to interview 16 sample members from the target population with all 16 of the interviews being used in the analysis of this study. In targeting a high number of participants, the researcher also sought to achieve data saturation however for exploratory studies such as this, researchers are typically satisfied when a study offers new insights that offer significant contributions to the field or challenge current understandings and do not aim for a complete description of all aspects of the phenomenon under study (Malterud et al., 2016). Much of the new insights from the research study were noted during initial interviews, with the later participants echoing much of what the earlier participants had already spoken about, albeit in terms of their specific experience.

4.5.4 Measurement Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide as a research instrument (See Appendix 1) used for the data-gathering process. Semi-structured interviews are useful when gathering data about a particular topic and generating data to enable theory development (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are flexible, allowing for questions to be omitted, if not relevant to a particular participant, as well as allowing more in-depth exploration of the topic through, additional questions, or checking the interviewer's understanding of what the participant had said (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The interview guide was based on the research questions proposed in Chapter 3 together with questions related to the participant's demographics, experiences of remote work during the pandemic, policies implemented by their organisation in terms of remote work, tools and procedures implemented by participants' organisations as well as their views of work-life balance before and after the pandemic. The questions were designed to be open-ended without reference to the literature or theory (Creswell, 2009). As the researcher conducted the interviews, certain questions were modified or expanded on by the researcher, in a manner consistent with emerging design (Creswell, 2009), to assist in

clarity and gain additional insights from the participant. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked each participant if there were any further insights or thoughts they had before concluding the interview, in many cases this resulted in valuable additional data being shared and captured outside of the responses to the set questions, or provided the opportunity for the participant to clarify and emphasis points they deemed important.

4.5.5 Data gathering process

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants over three weeks, with a time allocation of one hour per interview to allow sufficient time for the participants to answer the questions and exploratory or follow-up questions to be asked. The researcher trialled the interview with a fellow research colleague to gauge the length of time needed per interview, ensure the questions were understood correctly and were not leading, as well as ensure that they obtain the relevant data required for the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The interviews were all conducted online using the Zoom video conference platform as this was convenient for participants, many of whom were familiar with the platform as a result of remote work, and enabled the researcher to include participants who were located geographically far from the researcher. The use of Zoom also allowed for easy recording of the interviews for purposes of transcription and review with participants giving their consent to the recording (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). During the interview, the researcher made detailed notes on each participant's answers in an attempt to capture the essence of what the participant was sharing and to note any particularly good insights, correlations or patterns in the responses.

Following the interviews, the researcher downloaded each of the audio recordings from the interviews conducted and manually transcribed each recording into a text document. The researcher chose manual transcription of the interviews, as opposed to making use of a transcription service or computer software, to gain an intimate understanding of the data captured and help to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data captured. During the transcription process, the names of people and organisations were not captured to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The audio recordings and transcriptions were then stored on a cloud-based digital drive with password protection.

4.5.6 Analysis approach

Following the transcription of each of the interview audio recordings, the researcher loaded each transcription into the computer software program ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti

Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2022) which supported code generation and thematic analysis of the data.

The thematic analysis was conducted using a six-step process, outlined by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which has been widely adopted within qualitative literature (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The first step in the analysis was to relisten to the recordings and read through the notes captured during the session to ensure familiarity with the data. This was followed by step two of the process, whereby initial codes were generated using an inductive approach and used to label parts of the data that correspond to the relevant code(s). The researcher made use of structural coding to identify sections related to the research questions, together with categorising in an attempt to capture the participants' sentiments that linked to the theoretical constructs of the research (Saldaña, 2014), as per Appendix 2. Once this was completed for each of the transcriptions, the third step in the process was to examine the codes and data to look for any themes of broader significance before a re-examination of the themes and data to ensure proper fit as part of the fourth step. The fourth step continued through the rationalisation of the themes to check if they fit meaningfully with the data set and whether the entire body of work fits within the thematic map. Given the use of semi-structured interviews as a measurement instrument, as well as the inter-relatedness of constructs regarding engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention, the researcher had to use some discretion in assigning codes based on theory to where the codes best fit the constructs and often in response to questions that were intended to analyse a specific construct, thereby taking somewhat of a deductive approach. Step five in the process was creating a definition and narrative description for each of the themes and how they relate to the topic of the study. The sixth and final step was to write up the final analysis and provide a description of the findings in the generation of this document.

4.5.7 Quality controls

Determining quality, validity and credibility in qualitative research is a complex and much-debated topic (Chan et al., 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Rolfe, 2006). Through the use of several methods and procedures identified from the literature, the researcher attempted to ensure the research was of a quality and standard from which credibility and validity could be positively judged.

Use of bracketing

The use of bracketing in phenomenological research is the suspension of one's own beliefs and experience with the phenomenon under study and is one such way of demonstrating the validity of the research (Chan et al., 2013). Given the researcher's own experience of remote work and the extensive literature review undertaken for this study, bracketing was necessary for both the data collection and analysis processes of the study. The researcher made use of bracketing through the development and use of semi-structured interviews with several overlapping open-ended questions designed to check the consistency between the answers provided by the participant (Chan et al., 2013). The interview guide was checked and approved by both the researcher's supervisor as well as the university's ethics committee before a trial-run interview was performed with a colleague (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher asked each of the questions in the interview guide to every participant without reference to theory and with only slight adaptations for later interviews, consistent with emerging design (Creswell, 2009). Each participant was allowed to recount their experiences without interruption from the researcher, all of which were recorded and transcribed manually by the researcher for the analysis stage of the research, with a minimum of editing such as correcting grammar or removal of references to names or organisations. The researcher also attempted to build rapport with the participants before the recorded sessions by discussing the purpose of the research with participants and stressing that all data gathered during the interview would be treated as confidential with no storing of unique identifiers. In doing so the researcher attempted to ensure the essence of the participants' experiences was captured in alignment with the phenomenological research philosophy (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Rolfe, 2006; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Furthermore, the audio recordings of the interviews and the transcriptions were stored in a secure cloud-based folder for maintaining an auditable trail of the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Additional processes and procedures used for the validity and accuracy of the research

Throughout the interview process, the researcher made use of member checking (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000) by repeating back to the participant the researcher's understanding of the data that the participant had offered to confirm the credibility of the data and the narrative account provided by the participant. The researcher also attempted to disclose the researchers' assumptions, beliefs and biases throughout

this study but particularly in the limitations section of this research report (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The researcher conducted interviews with a sample size that was at the higher end of sample sizes noted in the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2016) to aim for saturation and with noted consistency in experiences across participants. Triangulation of the data was done through the comparisons across participants' experiences, published literature and media coverage of related studies done on remote work (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The data collection methods and analysis strategies have also been reported in detail in this study to provide transparency in how the data was captured and analysed by the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

4.5.8 Limitations

There are several perceived limitations to the study.

Qualitative study

Qualitative research by its very nature requires interpretation by the researcher and interaction with the participants resulting in a range of strategic, ethical and personal issues that are introduced by this form of research (Creswell, 2009). Several biases may have existed in the research. This includes confirmation bias by the researcher when identifying key themes and findings in the research, founded on the researcher's own experience and views on remote work. Sample selection bias by participants who self-volunteered based on their interest in the research, as well as the researcher when responding to participants. When interviewing participants familiarity with the researcher may have led the participant to hold back from sharing data, modifying it to avoid judgment by the researcher, or making statements based on popular media topics rather than their own experiences. The majority of these limitations have however been mitigated as described in the quality controls section of this study, however, there still may be elements that have infiltrated the study.

Timeframe

The study is cross-sectional and only representative of a point in time given that the participants were only interviewed once and recounted experiences from a period between just before the pandemic and the time of the interview (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the ways and nature of work continue to change, together with participants' experiences, research conducted at a later stage may provide different results. This

however is unavoidable and why business research will continue to be required to ensure academia and management are aware of trends and developments.

Generalisability

Given the vastness of the entire population under study in comparison to the sample size and selection from the researcher's professional network, the results from the study may be limited and not generalizable across all the industry vertical, geographical, cultural as well as individual-level contexts (Queirós et al., 2017).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed and defended the choice of methodology for the research, in terms of the purpose of the research design, philosophy, approach selected, methodological choices, strategy and time horizon of the research study. An in-depth description of the research methodology of the study covers the population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size, measurement instrument, data gathering process, analysis approach and quality controls and finally the perceived limitations of the research.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the key findings and results of the research study. These are related to the research questions presented in Chapter 3. The data was obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted as per the interview guide set out in Appendix 1.

5.2. Description of sample

The participants were obtained via the researcher's professional network through direct contact or in response to requests for participants on the LinkedIn network platform. No restrictions were placed on the type of industry, position in the organisation, geographical residence or the generation of the candidates. The reason for this was to gain as much insight into the phenomena as possible and to obtain perspectives from a diverse set of individuals as to what common themes would emerge.

As this was a qualitative study, the researcher interviewed 16 participants for the study and all the interviews were used in the data analysis. The sample included a total of nine female and seven male participants, all of which were Generation Y except for two of the male participants who were both Generation X. The majority of the participants were geographically residing in South Africa with the exceptions of Participant 4, Participant 9 and Participant 10 being based in Germany, the United Kingdom and Australia respectively. All of the participants had obtained a degree or diploma after leaving school with the majority of the participants either holding a bachelor's or a master's degree. Participants were all from the middle or senior management, with titles held including engineer, senior manager, manager, head and executive. All participants had experienced remote work as a result of the various lockdowns and work-from-home orders put in place as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and thus fit the criteria required for the interview. A detailed breakdown of the sample demographics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1*Participant demographics*

Participant	Gender	Generation	Highest Level of Education	Industry	Job Title	Tenure
1	Female	Gen Y	Master in Business Administration	Consulting	Manager	1 Year
2	Female	Gen Y	Master in Business Administration	Financial Services	PMO Senior Manager	1 Year
3	Female	Gen Y	Bachelors in Education	ICT	Marketing Manager	7 Years
4	Male	Gen Y	Master of Business Administration	Industrial Manufacturing	Director of Operations & Performance	18 Months
5	Female	Gen Y	Master of Business Administration	Information Comm	Client & Marketing Specialist	5 Years
6	Male	Gen Y	Bachelor of Science (Engineering)	Industrial Manufacturing	Strategy Consultant	3 Years
7	Female	Gen Y	Post Graduate Diploma in Management	Chemical Industry	Marketing Assistant	4 Years
8	Female	Gen Y	Post Graduate Diploma in Management	Financial Services	Head of Strategic Projects	6 Months
9	Female	Gen Y	Bachelor (Computer Science)	ICT	Software Engineer	1 Week
10	Male	Gen Y	Master of Science (Electrical Engineering)	Financial Services	Manager - Integration & Onboarding	4 Years
11	Male	Gen X	Diploma	ICT	Head of Business Development	4 Months
12	Male	Gen X	Master of Business Administration	ICT	Chief Executive Officer	2 Years
13	Female	Gen Y	Bachelor of Science (Information Technology)	Aviation / ICT	Business Development Manager	3 Years
14	Male	Gen Y	Diploma	Software / Financial Services	Head of Bureau	3 Years
15	Male	Gen Y	Bachelor of Science (Animal Science)	Agriculture	Regional & Sales Manager	8 Years
16	Female	Gen Y	Master of Science (Archaeology)	Software as a Service	Sales Manager	5 Months

Note. This table provides demographic information of the participants who were interviewed for this study, including gender, generation, the highest level of education achieved, the industry they work in, the title of the role they hold as well as the time they have occupied their current role.

The majority of participants' organisations were operating a hybrid remote work policy allowing them to work some days in the office and the remainder elsewhere. Participant 16 was required to work full-time in the office by their manager, despite others in the organisation being able to work remotely. In determining the number of days and which days of the week the participants were required to be in the office, the majority indicated that it was determined by their manager and that they had as a team discussed it with their manager to determine the frequency of when they needed to be in the office as well as the exact days of the week.

In terms of the technologies and policies that organisations had implemented to support remote work, the majority of participants noted how their organisation had already started to make use of technologies such as Microsoft TEAMS, Zoom and other collaboration tools before the pandemic, however, due to the pandemic and because of remote work there had been rapid adoption and usage of these tools by themselves and their colleagues. Participants also noted how their organisation had supported remote working in their organisation through the use of collaboration software, issuing of laptops and in several cases benefits for remote office setup such as equipment, furniture or allowances for internet connectivity.

5.3. Presentation of Results

Following the approach as described in Chapter 4, the codes and themes generated in response to each of the research questions posed in Chapter 3 are shown in Table 2.

As touched on in Chapter 4, it should be noted that since the interviews with participants were done using a semi-structured interview format, combined with the inter-relatedness of constructs regarding engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention, participants often touched on their experiences related to one or more constructs when answering each of the research questions. The results are thus presented not necessarily against the specific research question to which they were answered but against the research questions that the researcher believed best aligned with the literature and theory.

Table 2*Codes and Themes generated from research data*

Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy with remote work policy • Sentiment towards organisation • Freedom & Flexibility • Perceived Fairness • Indifferent • Culture • Attitude towards job • Empathy 	T1: Allowing workers to remote work has a positive effect on engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of isolation • Lack of connection 	T2: Full-time or extensive remote work may negatively impact engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Satisfaction • Indifferent • Freedom & Flexibility • No commute • Less stress • Comfort 	T3: Job satisfaction has generally increased as a result of remote working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Connection • Teamwork & Collaboration 	T4: Issues with teamwork, collaboration and lack of human interaction are reasons for dissatisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary effort • Work-Life Boundaries • Expectations and Perceptions • Geographical Teams • Technology Triggered • Habit of working after hours • Compensate for personal time use • Conscious of work-life boundaries 	T5: Workers are more likely to work outside of traditional office hours due to the blurring of lines between personal and work hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote or Hybrid Policy • Turnover Intention • Freedom & Flexibility 	T6: Forcing workers full-time back into the office affects their intention to turnover

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to remote work • Remuneration • Incentives & Benefits • Culture & workplace environment 	T7: Workers consider remote work alongside remuneration, incentives, benefits and perceived company culture when job seeking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid Policy Preference 	T8: Hybrid remote work policies are preferred

5.1.1 RQ1 findings and results

Research question one attempted to understand what the impact has been on engagement for employees who work remotely. Two key themes emerged from the interviews with a positive effect on engagement due to remote work, as well as potential negative effects on engagement when the remote work intensity is high for an individual.

Table 3

Remote works impact on engagement

Code	Frequency
Happy with remote work policy	13
Sentiment towards organisation	13
Freedom & Flexibility	6
Perceived Fairness	5
Human Connection	4
Indifferent	4
Culture	3
Attitude towards job	2
Empathy	2

5.1.1.1. Allowing workers to remote work has a positive effect on engagement

The majority of participants indicated they were happy or satisfied with their organisation's policy around remote work and expressed positive sentiment towards their organisation as a result. Participants mentioned that the remote work policy gave them freedom and flexibility on when and how they work, giving them a sense of autonomy. Also, several participants noted how they believed the organisation's remote work policy was fair for all workers across the organisation and by having a policy of hybrid or remote work, participants felt the organisation had empathy for the workers and was keeping up with

modern times and trends. Participants were also appreciative of the support from their organisation for home office setups such as equipment, furniture and allowances.

"I think it's one of the things that can create a bond between employees and the organisation. The fact that you can work from home, you can be there for your children, you can be flexible or whatever. So even similarly with me, I had always appreciated the fact that the company has granted me an opportunity to watch my boys grow from small and be present." – P5: Specialist Client & Marketing - ICT - Female - Gen Y

"Yeah I think I am appreciative, I am more satisfied. I like the flexibility and it leaves me with more positive feelings about my employer." – P12: CEO - ICT - Male - Gen X

"...about this time last year I was looking for a new job and you begin to almost judge the companies that you are looking at in terms of okay, do they offer hybrid work. What does that mean in terms of commitment to your work-life balance? What does that mean in terms of their trust for their employees, so their employees will get the work done and don't need to watch over them and micro-manage them? So it has, my whole view of it has changed quite a bit but in terms of what a company is willing to offer for you to be able to either work from home or not, I have seen that a lot of my colleagues as well, I now everyone is pushing why can't we have one day at home." – P16: Sales Manager - ICT - Female - Gen Y

5.1.1.2. Full-time or extensive remote work may negatively impact engagement

Several participants conveyed how extensive remote work has negatively impacted their engagement with their job and organisation, particularly during the period when workers were required to work remotely full-time.

"... before Covid, it almost felt like our company was a family. We had that togetherness and there was just that beautiful culture that we had, and it now feels like now we have kind of lost who we are." – P1: Manager - Consulting - Female - Gen Y

"So I have mentioned motivation, some days are easier than others. You can feel a bit disconnected from the organisation, like I mentioned some days I feel like I just work for a laptop. So that has been a bit of a challenge for me as I have been doing this for 3 years now. Motivation is one and you also feel a bit disconnected from the organisation because you have to make the effort to network, otherwise, you only get exposed to the members in your team." – **P6: Strategy Consultant - Energy & Heavy Industrial - Male - Gen Y**

"... our Melbourne office has hired a few tech persons, an infrastructure support tech person who is completely remote from the rest of his team, which is based in Toronto and India. The challenge and we have a very high churn, so they pretty much haven't been able to last for over a year. What I have noticed is that if they are working 100% remote and if they have no working relationship with anyone locally here it makes it very hard for them to come into the office. Even if they do come in they don't necessarily need any interaction with the rest of the team." – **P9: Manager Integration & Onboarding - Financial Services - Male - Gen Y**

Participants also highlighted challenges with management employees working remotely and determining their workloads and outputs.

"... in the office you always used to know what everybody was busy with and what capacity was available to certain individuals. Now with remote you kind of don't know. Anybody can tell you that they are swamped and you won't know if that's the truth or not, and whether you are able to give them a new task or not." – **P1: Manager - Consulting - Female - Gen Y**

"... there are some people I don't see them, and I never ask where they are, I have always seen their productivity. There are other people that you don't hear from them, you don't see them and you worried 'what are they actually doing?'" – **P12: CEO - ICT - Male - Gen X**

Participant 14 also highlighted how engagement is being impacted negatively for workers who are working extensively.

“... the electronics and the always online is not perfect and it needs to be addressed because you see workers fatigued, people are tired, people aren’t as efficient. They are working very long hours, so it actually gone about negative effective to the high work rate. You actually have to force people to turn off... So yeah, that affects us because we have made mistakes with our staff, working them to the bone, seeing guys leaves, resign for something better, more money, less hard work.” – P14: Head of Bureau - ICT - Male - Gen Y

5.1.2 RQ2 findings and results

Research question two attempted to determine how remote work has impacted workers' satisfaction with their job. Two key themes emerged from the interviews regarding increased satisfaction as a result of being able to work remotely but also raised dissatisfaction due to a lack of human connection and issues with teamwork and collaboration.

5.1.2.1. Job satisfaction has generally increased as a result of remote working

The majority of participants felt that they were more satisfied with their job because they could work remotely. The reasons given varied across the interviews but commonly cited reasons included having the freedom and flexibility to choose when and how they attended to their work tasks, being able to work in a more comfortable and less stressful setting than the office, how they could be efficient and productive due to not needing to commute or having fewer distractions, as well as from being able to attend to personal matters such as laundry and dishes while working from home.

Table 4

Remote works impact on job satisfaction

Code	Frequency
Increased Satisfaction	12
Indifferent	7
Human Connection	6
Teamwork & Collaboration	6
Freedom & Flexibility	5
Commute	4
Disruptions	4
Less stress	3
Comfort	2
Efficiencies	2
Increased meetings	2

"So because I have more flexibility, I don't take it as seriously but I actually end up doing more. I would say I am much more relaxed because I am not having to be in an office environment, When you are out of the office environment it's a different mentality" – P4: Director Ops & Performance - Industrial Manufacturing - Male - Gen Y

"Yes, it feels good, it feels easy, it feels I don't necessarily feel as much pressure as I do in the office and even when I do, I can dissipate it through my day ... So I think with the pressure of the office, that by the time you leave the office you need to have finished this particular thing but with remote work actually, I am saving one, time because of the commute but also that I can spread out the pressure or the stress of my job throughout my day" – P8: Head of Strategic Projects - Financial Services - Female - Gen Y

"I am definitely more satisfied. Having options, as I mentioned earlier, having options available to manage my time now even more personally and more personalised my time. I do experience that as more freedom and more positively yes." – P15: Regional Sales & Marketing Manager – Agriculture – Male - Gen Y

"... definitely more satisfied because I think it gives me the freedom and the flexibility to decide how I am actually going to go about doing the job ... and the fact that I have this balance while actually completing the job, it's great." – P13: Business Development Manager - ICT/Aviation - Female - Gen Y

Exceptions were noted however from participants 3 and 7 who both felt that remote work had negatively affected work-life boundaries, with Participant 3 also noting how her home had too many distractions when compared with the office.

5.1.2.2. Issues with teamwork, collaboration and lack of human interaction are reasons for dissatisfaction

Several of the participants also noted how remote work had caused challenges for them in terms of teamwork and collaboration with colleagues.

"Collaboration has also gone to a ball of @#!& because there is no corridor coffee chats anymore. You have to get onto a Zoom call. I think that hinders productivity and collaboration because it is easier to get up and get go to the person's desk to have a quick chat about something than get onto a Zoom call." – P3: Marketing Manager - ICT - Female - Gen Y

"maybe because I am old school, people used to joke and say I love to be in the office. I just find if people are around, you can get things done quicker, with your remote or hybrid, someone is running to the coffee shop, you want to have a meeting with them and then it's noisy in the background. It isn't as flowing and succinct communication as possible. So for me, I like to have everything around me and so if I want to answer a question, I can walk up to the person and ask what, how this is done. I think it's just more for me it's more effective communication." – P11: Head of Business Development - ICT - Male - Gen Y

*"... So I think there are efficiencies there. I think the big inefficiency for me is team problem-solving. You can't do that online, it's something that has to be done in person and in a room. That I think you will never get from remote working." – **P6: Strategy Consultant - Energy & Heavy Industrial - Male - Gen Y***

Human connection was a theme that many of the participants touched on and they missed the interaction with their co-workers in their office and were finding it a challenge to keep up relationships with their co-workers.

*"I also like the option where we get into work because I started in this team remotely. It took me 5 months before I met my new team face-to-face. So I like the option of still going to work because it just allows for that physical interaction, getting to know people. For me, it is important because I don't know anyone in corporate investment banking, so kind of having to put these faces to names of people I am speaking to on TEAMS every day was helpful to me." – **P2: PMO Senior Manager - Financial Service - Female - Gen Y***

*"I guess compared to perhaps other roles it probably has to a lesser extent impact because I always had Teams and it's pretty remote. But certainly, I can feel that the lack of face-to-face, probably not just to my self, but to the greater team that is abroad, because we still try meet up from different offices, meet up in Toronto once a year, so the lack of that is definitely throwing a bit more distance to the team, initially. Unless the team try to get used to this new setup and find new means to team build online, virtually and that has been the challenging part. I think that is really the impact, the team bonding is what has been impacted the most." – **P9: Manager Integration & Onboarding - Financial Services - Male - Gen Y***

*"... in terms of mental health, it would be... it's a lot easier to be in the office space and surrounded by people with high energy, especially in a sales environment than it was to be at home on your own, just you and your computer all day, every day." – **P16: Sales Manager - ICT - Female - Gen Y***

Participant 9 raised the issue of remote work intensity potentially affecting recognition.

“... I also get a sense that the less you are being visible, like physically visible to others, the less likely your effort is being recognised. It is hard to say in the world where everyone talks about KPIs and measurable metrics, it is hard to imagine that, but I get the feeling that it's still very much the case that in terms of promotions and recognition, you still need to have that face-to-face interaction with your colleagues. So doing 100% remote robs you of that kind of opportunity and access, which I personally feel that it's very much needed for long periods unless a team is so well designed in their process and procedures, are so well designed to tackle that problem in how you recognise fairly your remote workers. Instead of unintentionally penalising them because they are simply remote.” – **P9: Manager Integration & Onboarding - Financial Services - Male - Gen Y**

5.1.3 RQ3 findings and results

Research question three attempted to understand how remote work has influenced workers' discretionary effort. A primary theme that emerged from the interviews was around the blurring of work and home time causing participants to work outside of traditional office hours, while several sub-themes emerged around expectations on putting in additional hours due to being able to work from home, technology causing them to always be available to respond to communication as well as reinforcing of outside office hours working behaviour.

Table 5

Remote work's impact on discretionary effort

Codes	Frequency
Discretionary effort	23
Work-Life Boundaries	13
Expectations and Perceptions	6
Geographical Teams	6
Technology Triggered	5
Habit of working after hours	4
Compensate for personal time use	3
Conscious of work-life boundaries	3

5.1.3.1. Workers are more likely to work outside of traditional office hours due to the blurring of lines between personal and work hours

The majority of the participants highlighted how working remotely and from home has led to them working outside of traditional office hours due to the blurring of lines between the office and home. For some of the participants, this was due to perceptions that they need to put in more hours because they have the benefit of working from home, however, none of the participants indicated that this was a formal policy enforced by their organisation.

"... I would say there is no boundaries on your time, so there is your work hours are very fluid these days. I tend to do a lot more work in the morning, I usually start earlier and I usually take a break around mid-day and then I find myself working late into the evenings as well." – **P6: Strategy Consultant - Energy & Heavy Industrial - Male - Gen Y**

"Everything has changed because now I am working remotely more and it has changed everything because now I am working more hours. That is why they say never take work home, when home is work you end up doing a whole lot more, you end up going beyond the 7 – 4 hours, you end up working on weekends, so a lot has changed." – **P7: Marketing Assistant - Chemical Industry - Female - Gen Y**

"... I think pre-pandemic you actually had a better work-life balance because, as I said, it was 9 – 5, Monday to Friday, you went to work and you did your thing. There was very little work from home in the evenings, whereas now, it is almost like because you are working from home you are expected to work harder and longer hours, even though you are working longer hours because you are not sitting in traffic and you are not commuting..." – **P3: Marketing Manager - Telecoms - Female - Gen Y**

Several participants highlighted that technology has caused them to be always available and felt the need to respond to communication outside of working hours, especially when working with colleagues across time zones in organisations that span different regions.

*".. I am definitely responding more to emails after hours when I am working from home than when I am in the office. As I said when I go to the office and leave the office, my laptop is shut and I don't open it unless there is something urgent. When I am working from home when something comes up and I hear that TEAMS notification, or that email notification, there is a tendency for me to want to respond even if it's 9 pm or 10 pm. Although it is not mandated that I must respond, just personally I feel the need to respond sometimes." – **P2: PMO Senior Manager - Financial Service - Female - Gen Y***

*"Yes, much more likely. ... If someone were to ping me at 8 o'clock and I looked at my phone I would probably just answer it because I think if I have a moment then I might as well just do it, but I think that's me just not taking the initiative to say actually, I am off the clock and turn it off. So I would say definitely my phone, having that access to my phone, not my laptop or any other device, but because I have it on my phone." – **P10: Software Engineer - Technology - Female - Gen Y***

*"... after covid you seem to be permanently connected to the office. There is no sort of working hours anymore, I get emails at 2 a.m. from our international offices if there is something wrong. People seem to forget that people have lives, you are always available, and you are always online. Because you have that TEAMS app or the Zoom app on the phone and it shows your little green icon that 'he is online, oh he must be free'. So that has been difficult, being always available." – **P14: Head of Bureau - ICT - Male - Gen Y***

Some of the participants noted they were already working outside of traditional office hours and remote work has simply enforced their habit.

*".. so even before I would respond after hours if an email came through and I felt like I had the capacity to do it then. So I guess now, whether it was then now, it depends on whether I have the capacity to do it." – **P8: Head of Strategic Projects - Financial Services - Female - Gen Y***

"I always respond to emails at any time of day, even at 1 in the morning but look for me personally, pre-pandemic there was never a boundary around emails, SMS or WhatsApp's, it wasn't like 5 o'clock was the cutoff but I think I am more included post-pandemic to sit with the computer on my lap while watching tv because it was something we didn't through the pandemic and I feel like it's a bad habit that stuck with me." – **P12: CEO - ICT - Male - Gen X**

5.1.4 RQ4 findings and results

Research question four attempted to understand what impact remote work has had on workers' intention to turnover. From the interviews, three key themes emerged regarding the negative impact on turnover intention if the organisation attempted to force workers back into the office full-time, the considerations of workers when looking for a new job, and the preference for hybrid policies over being fully remote.

Table 6

Remote work's impact on turnover intention

Codes	Frequency
Remote or Hybrid Policy	16
Turnover Intention	11
Remuneration	10
Culture	9
Incentives & Benefits	8
Freedom & Flexibility	6

5.1.4.1. Forcing workers full-time back into the office affects their intention to turnover

When confronted with a full-time return to the office the majority of participants would consider changing jobs or their organisation as workers have become accustomed to the freedom and flexibility that remote work offers.

"So, I haven't changed jobs but 100%, if I was told that I am mandated to go back to the office full time, I would resign. I would definitely resign, I think the one thing that the pandemic has taught me is that we can do this hybrid model, we can do this fully remote model..." – **P2: PMO Senior Manager - Financial Service - Female - Gen Y**

"Yes, I would definitely consider. I just think it feels pointless to rush back to an old system that we haven't really figured out whether it worked or not." – P8: Head of Strategic Projects - Financial Services - Female - Gen Y

"I like the flexibility and I think if completely went away and you have to be in from 9 to 5 every single day I think it wouldn't be as productive for me and it would be very stressful for me because I have a long commute and I have a long child, I would probably have to look at a different option" – P10: Software Engineer - Technology - Female - Gen Y

The exceptions to this were Participants 3, 7, 11 and 12, who would be willing to return full-time to the office with reasons ranging from distractions in the home, better productivity and collaboration in the office or due to wanting to be more social with co-workers. Despite this, all four of these participants did appreciate and would prefer having the flexibility to remote work occasionally if required.

5.1.4.2. Workers consider remote work alongside remuneration, incentives, benefits and perceived company culture when job seeking

Having the ability to work from home or having a hybrid work policy was for many participants as important as remuneration and other incentives. For several of the participants, the policy around remote work was indicative of how the company treated workers and they believed would be indicative of the company culture.

"I think the work policy is I think high up there, to me, it is as important now as remuneration and obviously the job itself, what you going to be doing, but in terms of outside the actual role itself, work policy and I think, especially the work policy gives a really good insight into the overall company mentality" – P4: Director Ops & Performance - Industrial Manufacturing - Male - Gen Y

"... the most important one would be things like the option to work hybrid/remote work, the company culture that is really key as well..., then also remuneration is definitely a big part of it, so I think probably these three that I can think of." – P9: Manager Integration & Onboarding - Financial Services - Male - Gen Y

"... I guess a good test could be something like this, the hybrid way of work because it would also tell me whether this company is actually living in today's world and if they are ready for the digital future we are going into or not. And I think if they are not it probably not the place I want to invest my time in." – **P13: Business Development Manager - ICT/Aviation - Female - Gen Y**

Participants also mentioned how workers are declining offers for jobs where they aren't able to remote work.

"I can tell you from the interviews that I have run that it is a big issue for people. I have been trying to hire data engineers from banks, ... So hiring people from the banks and telling them that they have to pitch up to the office and that they have to negotiate hybrid work, guys were just turning us down." – **P12: CEO - ICT - Male - Gen X**

".. I actually thought about a conversation I had with a friend, it must have been a couple of months ago where she told me that she had applied for a role, with a company that was in, I think they did mining explosives or something like that, I am not sure. But I mean she was telling me how it was great, went to the first interview, then the second interview and then things went well, and then she was at an offer stage and she said, you know I think I made a mistake, I don't think I want to take this role. And I thought why I thought it was great? We looked at the company that is doing well, a South African company that went global. All of that was great but then she said they actually don't allow hybrid working and they don't have a policy for that. And I think in the interview the people sounded very, well the panel, when it came to that question, there were very ... off and they kind of just cut her off that, no we don't do that here type of thing. ... she actually declined the offer and she was like yeah, no it was great, it probably would have been wonderful but I don't know if I want to go back to sitting in traffic with everybody in the morning, in the afternoon again, every single day for a job.." – **P13: Business Development Manager - ICT/Aviation - Female - Gen Y**

5.1.4.3. Preference for hybrid remote work policies

Despite wanting the freedom and flexibility to work remotely, many of the participants preferred a hybrid remote work policy whereby they had to go into the office a few days a week to connect with other people in the organisation, support teamwork and collaboration within the organisation and get to know people when they are new to the team or organisation.

*"What I do miss is having people around you. I actually hope that my company would come up with a policy that at least requires us to be in the office once or twice a week, just to see your team physically and build the connection with them." – **P1:** Manager - Consulting - Female - Gen Y*

*"I don't mind doing hybrid, it's actually quite nice to touch base with your colleagues and team, it's very important, especially when you are starting at a new company. Even coming to the office every day, for the first month or two is worth it. I do recognise the value of being at the office.." – **P5:** Specialist Client & Marketing - ICT - Female - Gen Y*

*"I think just more flexibility, again my preference is to be in the office but if for whatever reason I feel that for two days a week I need to be at home that's ideal, its not going to happen all the time, it's just to have that understanding that we don't have to be in the office all the time." – **P11:** Head of Business Development - ICT - Male - Gen Y*

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed and provided evidence of the key findings and themes that have emerged during the data analysis stage of this research in this study. Many of the findings and themes are consistent with the literature described in Chapter 2, including the benefits of remote work such as autonomy through freedom and flexibility, increased engagement and higher job satisfaction. However, participants also touched on the downsides of remote work that have been explored in literature, including the negative impact on teamwork and collaboration, as well as feelings of isolation and disengagement when remote work intensity is high. These are further analyzed and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter expands on Chapter 5 with an in-depth analysis and discussion of the results supported by the literature and theory discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter aims to present findings from the research that builds on and further contributes to the existing body of literature on remote work and its impact on employee engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention. The chapter is structured per the research questions posed in Chapter 3 with a discussion of the findings and a comparison of the findings to the literature for each of the research questions.

6.2 Research Question 1 - How has remote work changed workers' engagement with their job and their organisation?

Research question 1 explored the impact remote work has had on job and organisational engagement from the participants' perspectives. Two key themes emerged in the results and are discussed here.

6.2.1 Theme 1 - Allowing workers to remote work has a positive effect on engagement

Based on the interviews, the majority of participants indicated they were happy or satisfied with their organisation's remote work policy and were appreciative towards their organisation for embarrassing remote work even after the lifting of restrictions and workers being allowed to return to the office. Several of the participants also mentioned their appreciation for the support the organisation had given in terms of home office setup and equipment. This is consistent with Kelliher & Anderson (2010), who found that participants in their study felt loyalty to their organisation as a result of being able to work remotely and ties to Saks (2019) who found that perceived organisational support was an antecedent to employee engagement.

The majority of participants mentioned that the remote work policy gave them freedom and flexibility on when and how they work. This is consistent both with benefits associated with remote work (Allen et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Liu et al., 2022) and antecedents to engagement in literature where autonomy as a job characteristic is positively related to engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2017; Bailey et al., 2017; Mäkikangas et al., 2022; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2019).

A number of the participants expressed appreciation for their organisations and believed the remote work policy was fair and had taken into account employees' circumstances across the organisation when developing the policy, which is consistent with Saks (2019) in that procedure and distributive fairness can drive employee engagement.

6.2.2 Theme 2 - Full-time or extensive remote work may negatively impact engagement

Pattnaik & Jena (2020) discuss how effective communication helps to maintain trust between a worker and their supervisor, team or co-workers in a remote work environment. They also highlight that the physical proximity of a worker's supervisor and teammates adds to the passion, involvement and desire to align goals to that of the organisations. Several of the participants noted challenges with not being in the office together with colleagues when remote working extensively. Participant 10 described how fully remote workers hired in the IT department had a very short tenure with the organisation and believe this was attributed to the lack of connection with their team and the organisation. Participant 1 also highlighted how she felt the culture of the organisation had been impacted negatively as a result of not being in the office surrounded by co-workers. W. Wang et al. (2020) found that psychological isolation, but not physical isolation, had an impact on remote workers' commitment to their organisation which seemingly ties to Participant 4's experience, whereby his lack of motivation stemmed from his supervisor and team workly extensively over the last several years. Participant 4 also mentioned how he had to actively find ways to connect with co-workers outside of his team and which is consistent with the findings by Cooper & Kurland (2002) in that remote workers miss the opportunity for interpersonal networking with others in the organisation, as well as enhancement of work-related skills and information distribution from informal learning and mentoring from colleagues and superiors.

In their study on remote workers, Mäkikangas et al. (2022) found that workers who already had medium to high levels of engagement maintained the level of engagement throughout the study, while workers with already low levels of engagement going into the study, saw their engagement levels decline further. This corresponds with the view of Participant 10 who felt that there were workers who he wouldn't question, as he felt they were highly engaged before remote working, while there were other workers who he felt were taking advantage of working remotely to avoid work.

Participants 1, 12 and 16 highlighted the challenges of managing teams that were remotely working frequently. This is consistent with Van der Lippe & Lippényi (2020)

whose research found that manager-reported team performance was worse when co-workers were working from home frequently and that managers want to be able to monitor workers.

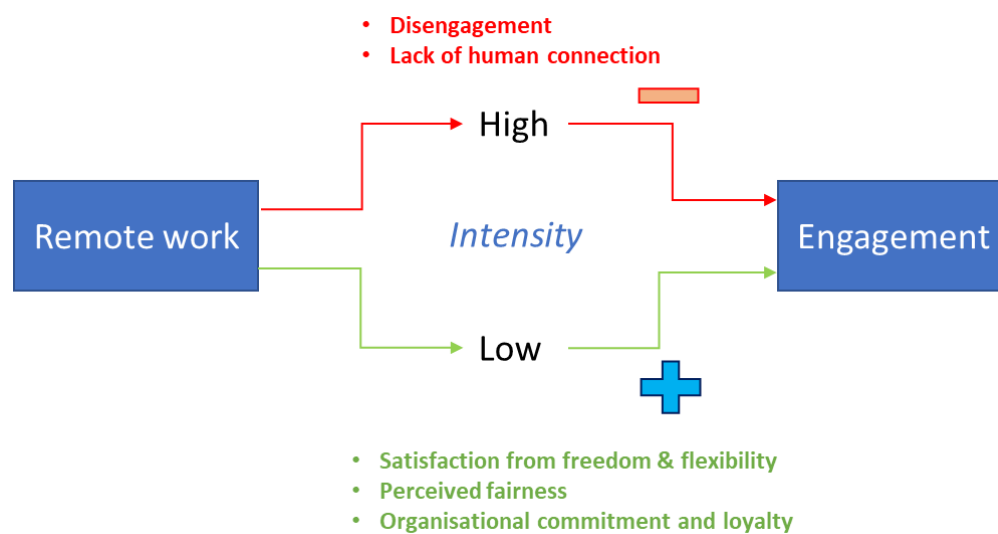
Finally, Participant 14 described how workers in his organisation had feelings of burnout, which led to disengagement and later quitting the organisation, due to the combination of a high workload and being ‘always online’ while remote working. This is consistent with the literature on burnout and whereby workers who have feelings of burnout become disengaged and more likely to turnover (Maslach et al., 2001; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020; Saks, 2019). Participant 14 described how this undesirable turnover resulted in the loss of expertise and disruption to the organisation, consistent with Carrell et al. (2018).

6.2.3 Research Question 1 Summary

Based on the analysis of the data for research question 1 the below conceptual theoretical model can be developed (Figure 2) whereby the extent of remote work can influence employee engagement. Where remote work intensity is low, workers are generally more likely to be engaged as a result of the freedom and flexibility granted to them and the perceived fairness of the organisation, resulting in workers exhibiting commitment and loyalty to the organisation. Whereas, when remote work intensity is high, this can lead to a lack of connection with colleagues and supervisors, resulting in disengagement from the organisation.

Figure 2

Conception theoretical model Development - Engagement



6.3 Research Question 2 - How has remote work changed workers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job?

Research question 2 attempted to understand the impact remote work has had on participants' job satisfaction. Two key themes emerged in the results and are discussed here.

6.3.1 Theme 3 - Job satisfaction has generally increased as a result of remote working

The majority of participants provided reasons for increased job satisfaction as a result of remote working including, having the freedom and flexibility to choose when and how participants attended to their work tasks, being able to work in a more comfortable and less stressful environment compared to the office, being more efficient and productive as a result of not needing to commute or having fewer distractions, as well as from being able to attend to personal matters while working from home. These factors are consistent with the findings of an increase in job satisfaction found in literature including the ability to balance work and family, increased autonomy and flexibility, fewer distractions, less stress and better time management (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Morganson et al., 2010; Wheatley, 2017).

Bloom et al. (2015) and Kelliher & Anderson (2010) found a positive effect on job satisfaction despite an increase in work intensity for workers working remotely, suggesting that the ability to work from home offset the increase in work. This sentiment was also noted by several of the participants in that they found an increase in meetings and working intensity but still felt satisfied with their job with the ability to work remotely.

Expectations were noted in Participant 3, who disagreed and wanted to work from the office to avoid distractions at home and working outside of office hours, as well as Participant 7 who felt that she was working more after hours as a result of remote work.

6.3.2 Theme 4 - Issues with teamwork, collaboration and lack of human interaction are reasons for dissatisfaction

Several participants highlighted the challenges of not being present in the office and being able to discuss issues or ask questions of their co-workers or customers. In their study of literature on remote work and interviews with remote workers, Ferreira et al. (2021) noted how communication was a challenge noted by participants, despite the use of modern collaboration tools. Van der Lippe & Lippényi (2020) found that individual workers perform

better when their colleagues do not work from home and that the higher the percentage of co-workers working from home, the worse the individual worker's performance. The study by Yang et al. (2022) had similar findings where they concluded that collaboration in the organisation would be negatively affected by remote work due to collaboration networks becoming heavily siloed and with workers increasingly using asynchronous text and email for communication.

Literature on job satisfaction has found that, while workers are more satisfied with their jobs as a result of being able to remote work, full-time or extensive remote work can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction as a result of feelings of loneliness (Bloom et al., 2015; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Virick et al., 2010). Golden & Veiga (2005) found support for the hypothesis that the relationship between remote work and job satisfaction is curvilinear with an inverted u-shape, implying that increasing the time spent remote working leads to increase job satisfaction up until a point, after which it plateaus and then can lead to dissatisfaction. Golden & Veiga (2005) reasoned this result may be due to remote workers not experiencing face-to-face relationships due to communication technology and increased social isolation when remote working frequently. This is supported by the responses of the participants in this study as many participants highlighted decreased social interactions with team members and co-workers, with Participant 6 noting his feelings of isolation and low morale from not being able to connect with his supervisors and team members due to high remote work intensity over the past few years.

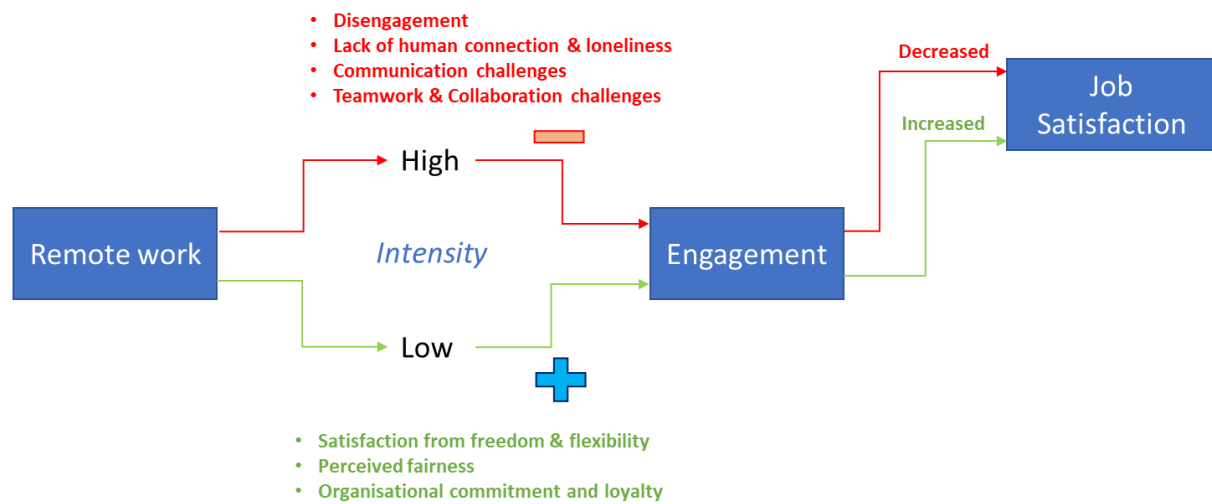
Participant 9 raised the concern about remote work potentially affecting workers' recognition, this paralleled Bloom et al. (2015) where workers returned to the office as a result of the perception of remote work impacting their recognition and career advancement.

6.3.3 Research Question 2 Summary

Based on the analysis of the data for research question 2, the conceptual theoretical model can be developed further (Figure 3) with the negatives of challenges of loneliness, communication, teamwork and collaboration being more prevalent when remote work intensity is high. These drawbacks are however mitigated when remote work intensity by the participant and their team is low. As job satisfaction is generally seen as a consequence of engagement (Saks, 2019), engagement links through to it.

Figure 3

Conception theoretical model Development - Job satisfaction



6.4 Research Question 3 - How has remote work impacted discretionary effort?

Research question 3 attempted to understand the impact remote work has had on participants' discretionary effort. A key theme emerged from the interviews and is discussed here.

6.4.1 Theme 5 - Workers are more likely to work outside of traditional office hours due to the blurring of lines between personal and work hours

Many participants mentioned the blurring of boundaries between work and personal hours as a result of remote work, a common theme found across literature on remote work (Allen et al., 2015, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gadeyne et al., 2018)

Kelliher & Anderson (2010) found evidence that workers with a flexible work arrangement may feel obligated to intensify their work effort as a result of the perceived flexibility afforded to them. This sentiment was echoed several of the participants mentioned how they felt obligated to respond to communications after hours due to the flexibility afforded to them in being able to work remotely by their organisation.

Cooper & Lu (2019) attributed modern technology, such as mobile devices, to excessive availability and working after hours. Again several of the participants highlighted that they were more likely to respond to communications outside of work hours as a result of technology such as their mobile phones. None of the participants indicated that they were forced by their organisation to do so however it may be that factors related to their

organisation (such as teams spread across different time zones) and work environment had given them the perception that they need to respond after hours, which would be consistent with the research by Gadeyne et al. (2018).

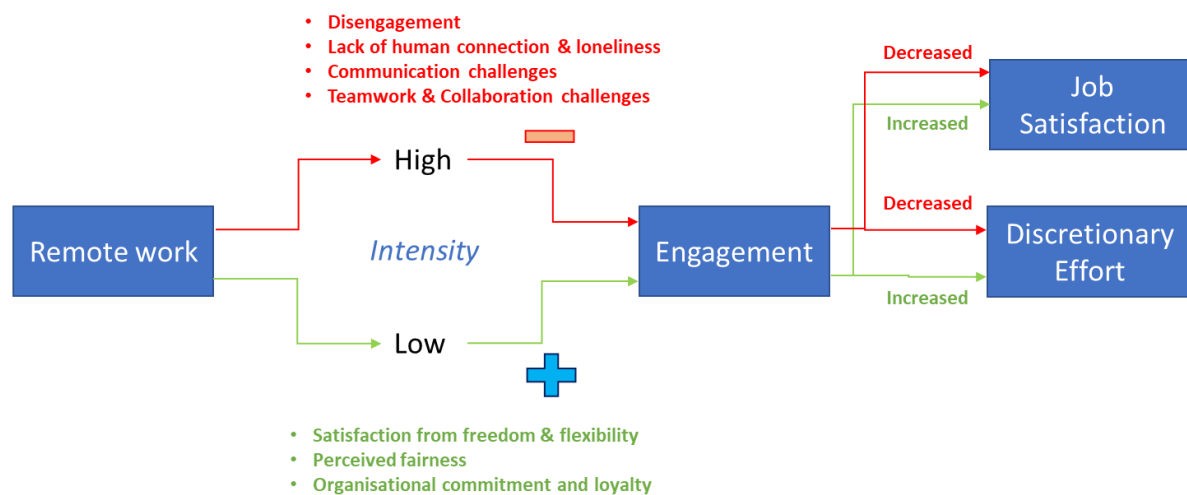
A few of the participants did indicate that they made use of remote work to attend to personal matters during working hours and that they then felt the need to work back this time outside of working hours, which Cooper & Lu (2019) had theorised in their research.

6.4.2 Research Question 3 Summary

Based on the analysis of the data for research question 3, the conceptual theoretical model can be developed further (Figure 4), with discretionary effort increased as a result of improved engagement when remote work intensity is low and decreased as a result of disengagement when the remote work intensity is high. As discretionary effort is generally seen as a consequence of engagement (Shuck et al., 2011), engagement links through to it.

Figure 4

Conception theoretical model Development - Discretionary effort



6.5 Research Question 4 - How has remote work changed workers' intention to turnover?

Research question 4 explored remote work's influence on workers' intention to turnover. Three key themes emerged in the results and are discussed here.

6.5.1 Theme 6 - Forcing workers full-time back into the office affects their intention to turnover

Studies on the impact of remote work on turnover are mixed with some literature pointing to remote work having a positive effect on turnover due to increased autonomy and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), while others point to negative effects based on isolation or perceptions of receiving less career support (Ferreira et al., 2021).

From the findings of this study, the majority of participants' responses aligned with the literature where remote work was found to have a positive effect on turnover intention (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), with participants explaining how they had become accustomed to remote work and appreciated the freedom and flexibility afforded to them. The majority of participants indicated that a forced return to the office full-time would result in them searching for a new role that allowed hybrid or remote work. Participant 16 described how her previous supervisor had forced all of their team to return to the office full-time, as a consequence Participant 16 found another role that allowed remote work and her former co-workers were similarly actively looking for new roles that support remote work. Participants 12 and 13 also provided further insight and examples of individuals who declined offers of employment as a result of the inability to remote work.

6.5.2 Theme 7 - Workers consider remote work alongside remuneration, incentives, benefits and perceived company culture when job seeking

When asked what participants considered when searching for or being offered a new role the majority of the participants included the ability to remote work along with remuneration, incentives and other benefits. Several of the participants noted that company culture was important to them and that for some the policy around remote work was perhaps an indication of the company culture and how management respected workers' needs. While the researcher did not come across this phenomenon specifically in the literature, it can perhaps be inferred that workers who had the option to work remotely would have considered the ability to remote work if they were offered or were searching for a new role. Previously this would have been limited to a small group of workers whereas, following the pandemic, the amount of workers that have been exposed to remote work has increased vastly.

6.5.3 Theme 8 - Preference for hybrid remote work policies

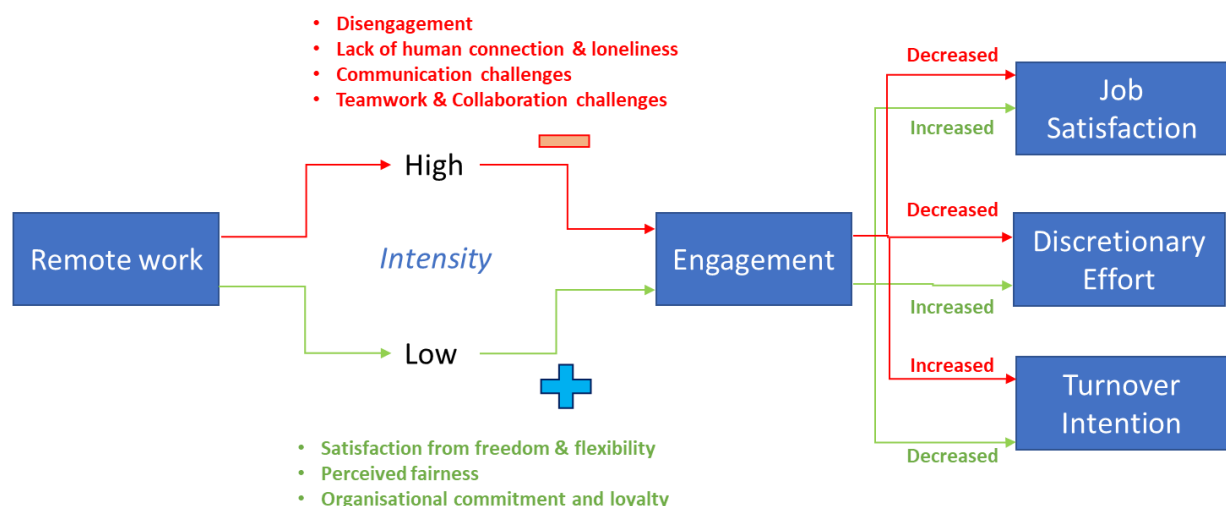
As a result of the benefits and drawbacks discussed in Theme 3 and Theme 4, many of the participants highlighted that they had a preference for hybrid work, whereby workers would spend a few days in the office a week and the rest at home, to get the benefits of both remote and in-office work. This supports the findings Golden & Veiga (2005) and Virick et al. (2010) which showed that job satisfaction for workers increased when provided with the ability to work from home some days of the week but plateaued and declined when remote working extensively. The preference for working some days at home and some days at work is also consistent with other recent studies (Alexander et al., 2021).

6.5.4 Research Question 4 Summary

Based on the analysis of the data for research question 4, the conceptual theoretical model can be developed further (Figure 5) with turnover intention decreased as a result of improved engagement from low remote work intensity and increased as a result of disengagement when remote work intensity is high. As the turnover intention is generally seen as a consequence of engagement (Saks, 2019), engagement links through to it.

Figure 5

Conception theoretical model Development - Turnover Intention



6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings and major themes related to the advantages and disadvantages of remote work that emerged in chapter 4 and which have been found to support the literature and theory discussed in Chapter 2. The following chapter attempts to summarise the findings of the research study and to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to build on the body of knowledge around remote work and provide organisations with meaningful insight to consider when developing policies around remote work in a post-pandemic business environment.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the main findings of the research together with the theoretical contribution, implications for management, limitations of the research and suggested avenues for future research.

7.2 Principal conclusions of the research study

While the concept of remote work has existed since the 1970s (Allen et al., 2015; Raiborn & Butler, 2009) adoption by organisations has been limited, even abandoned in some organisations such as IBM and Yahoo that attempted it at scale (Goudreau, 2013; Simons, 2017). The forced lockdowns and restrictions by governments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic rapidly changed this during 2020 and forced organisations across the globe to adopt remote work, with workers having to go through the process of familiarising themselves with technology and adapting to performing their roles remotely. With the rollout of vaccines and Covid-19 cases drastically reducing governments have lifted lockdowns and removed restrictions imposed on organisations enabling workers to return to the office. Despite this, remote work has remained the standard for many organisations and workers, albeit in a different context with the familiarity of using technology, children have returned to school and other factors being different to what workers experienced during the pandemic (Ferreira et al., 2021).

This research study aimed to draw on real-life experiences of workers to understand the phenomena and to explore the impact remote work has had on workers' engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention in this post-pandemic business environment. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 workers who were still remote working at the time of this study or had been remote working within the twelve months prior. Analysis and discussion were conducted based on the study participants' responses captured during these interviews, with several key themes emerging from the data.

Workers whose organisations had adopted remote work described how they appreciated the freedom and flexibility that had been afforded to them and felt that their organisations had treated them and their co-workers fairly. The result was that participants were more engaged with their organisations, were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, with a reduced intention to turnover as a result, consistent with the literature and studies on remote work's impact on engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intention (Bailey et

al., 2017; Bloom et al., 2015; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Liu et al., 2022).

Participants also spoke about the impact that remote work has had on work-life boundaries with many participants indicating that they are working outside of the working hours of traditional office-based roles. This impact on discretionary effort was found to be attributed to workers feeling obligated to work longer hours as a result of having the flexibility to remote work but also as a result of modern technology that enables workers to be 'always-on'. These factors align with the literature dealing with remote work and the impact on work-life boundaries (Cooper & Lu, 2019; Gadeyne et al., 2018; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

Participants in the study also highlighted challenges as a result of the shift to remote work, including the negative effect on teamwork and collaboration, increased loneliness and negative effect on morale, as well as challenges when managing workers as a result of extensive remote work. These challenges echoed many of the primary challenges found in the literature on remote work (Bloom et al., 2015; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Virick et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2022).

Finally, many of the participants of the study highlighted that they would consider leaving their role or organisation if forced full-time back into the office and their preference for a hybrid approach to remote work combining in-office time to meet with co-workers and supervisors, as well as having the flexibility and freedom to work remotely and in their own time. This approach to working remotely for only part of the week is consistent with studies by Golden & Veiga (2005) and Virick et al. (2010) which showed that higher remote work intensity did not lead to better engagement or job satisfaction but can instead negatively impact these and potentially increase turnover intention.

7.3 Theoretical contribution

This study has provided empirical evidence to support much of the existing body of knowledge regarding the advantages and drawbacks of remote work's impact on engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention.

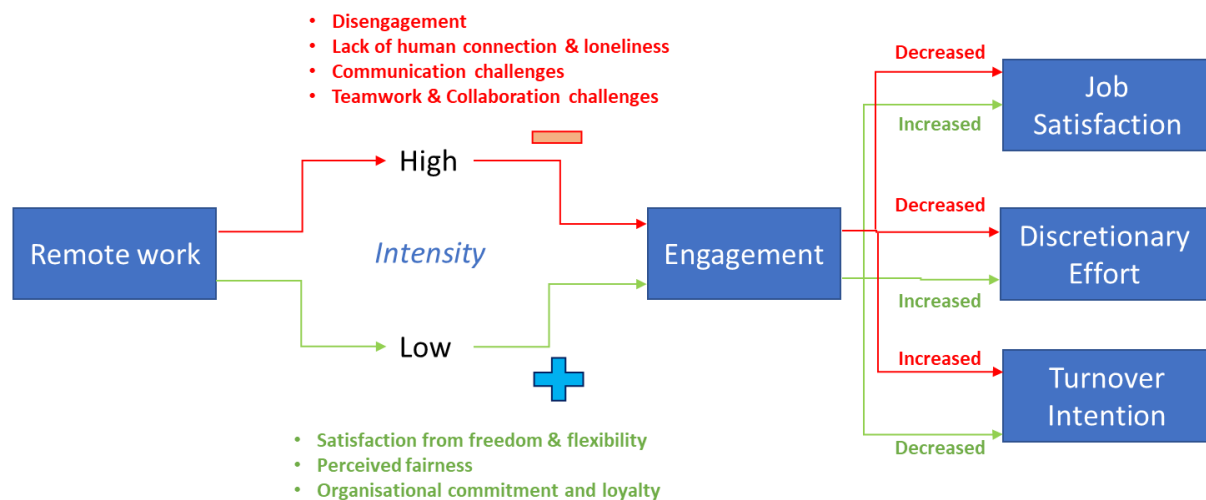
In addition, before 2020 remote work was not widely adopted by organisations and technology that enables remote work was not as widely used, whereas following the pandemic remote work is now common across a wide range of teams, organisations and industries, with many workers familiar with the technology that supports it. This research

has therefore built on and contributed to the body of knowledge on remote work at a time when the future of remote work is uncertain in terms of whether it will remain the standard for office workers or if, given the challenges, remote work will fall away and the majority of workers will return to the office. Findings from this research show that for many workers remote work is very much here to stay and that when seeking new roles, or when deciding to move to another organisation, workers consider the organisation's policy around remote work together with traditional considerations such as remuneration and incentives, benefits and company culture.

Furthermore, a theoretical conceptual model was developed based on the findings of this study, see Figure 6. This model contributes to the knowledge base on remote work and may be used for future studies on remote work's impact on engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention.

Figure 6

The final conceptual theoretical model developed in this study



7.4 Implications for management

This study was conducted among remote workers post-pandemic and provided insight into the perceived benefits and challenges that workers are experiencing and which management can learn from and leverage to better navigate the post-pandemic society and business environment with their workers.

Firstly the study has shown that workers that are allowed to remote work are more engaged and more satisfied with their jobs and organisations, with the result that they are not looking to turnover (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Wheatley, 2017). These workers are

likely to be more loyal to their organisations and increase their discretionary effort (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). The implications of such are that organisations which embrace remote work are likely to see workers with higher performance output and improved organisational performance as a result (Bailey et al., 2017; Motyka, 2018).

Second, it may be true that not all workers want to be able to remote work however, from the demographics of the participants in this study, it can be seen that many of the individuals who do want to continue remote working are highly educated and skilled office workers and who tend to be in roles that support remote work (McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003). The implications of this are such that organisations that are looking to attract and retain skilled and educated workers should consider embracing remote work. For organisations and roles where remote work is not possible, organisations will likely need to find additional incentives and benefits to attract or retain skilled and educated workers, particularly in markets where there is a shortage of such workers in the labour pool. Furthermore, by embracing remote work organisations can expand their labour pool to attract talent from other markets, however, the converse also is true in that organisations may find their skilled and educated workers being solicited by an expanded pool of organisations beyond their traditional in-market competitors.

Third, given the challenges around teamwork and collaboration (Ferreira et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022), challenges when managing workers (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020), together with the potential for increased isolation and decreased satisfaction and morale (Becker et al., 2022; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; W. Wang et al., 2020), organisations should pay careful attention to how to mitigate these challenges and ensure the wellbeing of their workers. Organisations should further consider how rewards and recognition are handled in a post-pandemic business environment, where some workers are office-based and others are remote working (McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003).

7.5 Limitations of the research

Chapter 4 already provided several limitations of this research study, but are repeated here together with additional perceived limitations.

The first limitation is that the study was qualitative, which by its very nature requires interpretation by the researcher and interaction with the participants resulting in a range of strategic, ethical and personal issues that are introduced by this form of research (Creswell, 2009). Several biases may have existed in the research. This includes confirmation bias by the researcher when identifying key themes and findings in the

research founded on the researcher's own experience and views on remote work. Sample selection bias by participants who self-volunteered based on their interest in the research as well as the researcher when responding to participants. When interviewing participants familiarity with the researcher may have led the participant to hold back from sharing data, modifying it to avoid judgment by the researcher or making statements based on popular media topics rather than their own experiences. The majority of these limitations have however been mitigated as described in the quality controls section of Chapter 4 of this study. Despite this, there still may be elements that have infiltrated this study.

Second, attempting to confirm statements made by participants is challenging due to the qualitative nature of the study, thus requiring further research to be conducted to confirm or contradict these statements. As an example, several participants mentioned that they felt they were more productive and efficient in their roles as a result of remote work to the self-reporting by participants it is unknown if their claims are true and they seemingly contradict the likes of Participant 12, who described how in his organisation they had noted a decrease in productivity as a result of remote work. Gajendran & Harrison (2007) similarly highlighted that participants self-reported improvements in productivity as a result of remote work but further work is required to prove or disprove these claims.

Third, as the study was cross-sectional it is representative only of single a point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the ways and nature of work continue to change, together with participants' experiences, research conducted at a later stage may provide different results. This however is unavoidable and why business research will continue to be required to ensure academia and management are aware of trends and developments.

Fourth, although grounded on literature and the findings of the study, the conceptual model developed has not been tested through quantitative research and thus presents a further avenue for research to expand and build on the knowledge of remote work.

Lastly, given the vastness of the entire population under study in comparison to the sample size and selection from the researcher's professional network, the results from the study may be limited and not generalizable across all the industry vertical, geographical, cultural and individual-level contexts (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Queirós et al., 2017).

7.6 Suggestions for future research

The focus of this study has been on the impact of remote work on engagement, job satisfaction, discretionary effort and turnover intention in the context of a post-pandemic work environment. Given the cross-sectional nature of the research, combined with the

ever-evolving business environment, technology and other factors, there will always be a requirement for future research to re-examine the findings and results of this study and to ensure research is relevant to the current context. Several questions and topics emerged during the research that were outside the scope of the study, or which the researcher was not able to explore further given the time constraints. The following is a list of potential topics that address these questions and could build on this study:

- The impact of remote work on productivity: analysis of self-reported vs measured data
- How organisations can attract and maintain critical skills in roles that do not support remote work
- How to foster teamwork and collaboration among remote workers
- Leveraging technology for information dissemination and increased collaboration across remote workers
- Factors that influence the relationship between remote workers and their supervisors
- The role of organisational communication and employee 'check-ins' to prevent loneliness and low morale of remote workers
- How country-specific and cultural differences influence the adoption and impact of remote work

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Preliminary Questions

1. What generation are you based on your year of birth, as a reminder: baby boomers (1936 – 1964), Gen X's (1955 – 1980), Gen Y's (1981 – 1995) or Gen Z's (1996 – 2012)?
2. What is your highest level of education?
3. What is your industry, occupation and job title?
4. How long have you been in your current position?
7. How has the pandemic changed your working arrangement?
8. What is your company's current work policy regarding hybrid or remote work?
9. What tools and procedures has the company implemented to support remote work in your organisation?
10. What was your work-life balance before, and now after, the Covid-19 pandemic and hybrid ways of work?

RQ1: How has remote work changed workers' engagement with their job and their organisation?

11. How do you feel about your company's hybrid and remote work policy?
12. Has remote work changed your attitude toward your job and organisation? If so, how?

RQ2: How has remote work changed workers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job?

13. How has hybrid or remote work impacted your job?
14. How do you feel about your job when remote working?

RQ3: How has remote work impacted discretionary effort?

15. Do you feel the need to go put more effort into your job when you are remote working?
16. Are you more likely to less likely to respond to emails or messages after hours because you are remote working?

RQ4: How has remote work changed workers' intention to turnover?

17. Have you changed jobs or would you consider changing jobs based on the company's policy around remote work?
18. What factors would you consider when looking for, or being approached, for a new role?

Appendix 2: Codebook used for transcription analysis

Research Questions	Codes	Explanation
RQ 1 – Impact on engagement	Happy with remote work policy	The participant indicated they were happy or satisfied with the organisation's remote work policy.
	Sentiment towards organisation	The participant indicated a positive sentiment towards their organisation.
	Freedom & Flexibility	The participant mentioned freedom and/or flexibility of remote work.
	Perceived Fairness	The participant mentioned the perception of fairness.
	Human Connection	The participant mentioned human connection.
	Indifferent	The participant indicated they were indifferent.
	Culture	The participant mentioned the culture of the organisation.
	Attitude towards job	The participant indicated their attitude towards their job.
RQ 2 – Impact on job satisfaction	Empathy	The participant mentioned empathy towards co-workers.
	Increased Satisfaction	The participant indicated an increase in satisfaction.
	Indifferent	The participant indicated they were indifferent.
	Human Connection	The participant mentioned human connection.
	Teamwork & Collaboration	The participant mentioned issues with teamwork and/or collaboration.
	Freedom & Flexibility	The participant mentioned freedom and/or flexibility of remote work.
	Commute	The participant mentioned commute.
	Disruptions	The participant mentioned disruptions.
	Less stress	The participant indicated being less stressed.
	Comfort	The participant mentioned comfort.
	Efficiencies	The participant mentioned improved efficiencies.
RQ 3 – Impact on discretionary effort	Increased meetings	The participant mentioned an increase in meetings.
	Discretionary effort	The participant indicated discretionary effort on their part.
	Work-Life Boundaries	The participant mentioned work-life boundary conflicts.
	Expectations and Perceptions	The participant discussed expectations and/or perceptions of them.
	Geographical Teams	The participant mentioned working with co-workers in other parts of the world.
	Technology Triggered	The participant mentioned the use of technology outside of working hours.
	Habit of working after hours	The participant indicated they worked outside of traditional work hours before the pandemic.
	Compensate for personal time use	The participant indicated they worked outside of traditional hours to compensate for the time used for personal matters.
Conscious of work-life boundaries	The participant indicated they were conscious of work-life boundaries when remote working.	

RQ 4 – impact on turnover intention	Remote or Hybrid Policy	The participant indicated that policy would be a consideration.
	Turnover Intention	The participant indicated they would consider resigning if required to work in the office full-time.
	Remuneration	The participant mentioned they consider remuneration when job seeking.
	Culture	The participant mentioned they consider the culture of the organisation when job seeking.
	Incentives & Benefits	The participant mentioned they consider other incentives and benefits when job seeking.
	Freedom & Flexibility	The participant mentioned valuing the freedom and flexibility of remote work.