

Self-leadership strategies for employees who work from home

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study sought to explore self-leadership whilst working from home. It offers perspectives on the ways employees have adapted the way they self-lead whilst working from home and also explored the self-leadership strategies employed whilst working from home.

Design/Methodology Approach – The researcher conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with individuals that have been working from home since 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, who were still in 2023 working from home. The philosophical underpinning of this study was interpretivist as the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the self-leadership strategies employed as well as how these strategies have been adapted in a work from home environment.

Findings – The results showed that individuals primarily employ behavioural and cognitive self-leadership strategies, whilst the natural reward self-leadership strategies are under-utilised.

Practical implications – Organisations have an opportunity to learn about the various self-leadership strategies that employees employ whilst working from home and can construct training and awareness to further develop individual's self-leadership capabilities.

Originality/value – Previous research on self-leadership has been focussed on defining the concept and in understanding its relationship to work outcomes. This study provides new insight into how self-leadership shows up particularly in a work from home environment.

Key words: Self-Leadership; Working From Home; Remote Working

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.

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TOPIC: SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND WORKING FROM HOME

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to introduce the research topic on the Self-Leadership Strategies employed by employees working from home. In this section of the paper, the researcher highlights the context for the research problem, the purpose of the study, its relevance for business and theory with implications for various stakeholders.

1.2 BACKGROUND: INTRODUCTION TO WORKING FROM HOME AND SELF-LEADERSHIP

In 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic hit the world by surprise, and as time passed it became one of the deadliest pandemics in history. With it came many disruptions as governments around the world attempted to find the best ways to deal with this historic event. Some of those disruptions were economic instability, employment and labour issues, business failures, and social impacts that included disruptions to health systems, people's livelihoods, loss of jobs and food insecurity (WHO, 2020).

One of the salient features of the COVID 19 pandemic was the new way of working, with an increase in individuals working from home. Government-enforced lockdowns forced knowledge workers worldwide to work from home, presenting new technological challenges and impacting those who were previously not permitted or were unwilling to work from home (Waizenegger et al., 2020). This was also primarily driven by the need for organisations to maintain productivity despite the disruptions provided by the pandemic outside of the need to curb the spread of the COVID-19 disease. This meant that many organisations and individuals who had gotten used to the traditional daily commute to an office building had to adjust to the new mode of working from home.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, work from home was not widely used despite its existence and was usually experienced only by the affluent and white-collar workers (Wang et al., 2020). As a result, at the time of the pandemic, many had to quickly adjust to this new way of work and many employees had little experience in working from home (Wang et al., 2020). This means the knowledge on working from home that has been collected in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred (pre-2020) may lack the context of working from home operating at a large scale as it did during COVID and beyond (Wang et al., 2020).

In 2021, according to a study conducted by Old Mutual (2021) about 56% of working South Africans were working from home. In another study conducted in 2021 in the US, with over 2300 individuals working from home sampled, they found that the majority (57%) of the sampled individuals stated that they prefer to work from home full time as most individuals found that they maintained or improved productivity when working from home (Owl labs, 2021). The survey was conducted again in 2022 and revealed an increase of 24% in the number of individuals choosing to work from home when compared to 2021 (Owl labs, 2022). The number of hybrid workers also increased by 16% year on year (2022 versus 2021), resulting in a 24% decrease in individuals interested in office work (Owl labs, 2022).

Even though some individuals found that they were working more hours when working from home, 76% of people maintained they would be happier if working from home continued after the pandemic (Owl labs, 2022). Some organisations are however continuing to demand for individuals that had been working from home since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, to return to the office. On the other hand, other organisations embraced the change of working environments more permanently and reduced office spaces to allow for remote or hybrid work to continue. Owl Lab (2021) found that 22% of companies had reduced their office spaces post pandemic. This tells us that, although there have been many companies that have had individuals return to the office buildings either permanently or on a hybrid basis, working from home is here to stay. This sentiment is also shared by Lund et al., (2020) who expressed that remote work may persist post-COVID-19, necessitating digital infrastructure investments, office space freeing, structural transformations and a deeper understanding around the implications of this on employees and their productivity.

Working from home has brought about an array of challenges and opportunities for individuals and organisations. It was found that while working from home may have some benefits such as improved engagement, flexibility and performance it can also lead to social isolation, reduced collaboration and engagement (De Klerk et al., 2021). There were also challenges of how to lead individuals in this new environment, which would require increased trust and a reduced need to control. Parker et al. (2020) argued that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced many leaders into remote management, requiring different skills than face-to-face management. This sudden

transition, often without training, led to difficulties in trusting remote employees, disrupting work-home balance, and increasing job stress.

Some authors have argued that work from home presents individuals with autonomy and control over their time and tasks and that increasing this responsibility could improve performance outcomes (Deole et al., 2023). This autonomy will require an ability for individuals to self-lead without the supervision of a manager. As such, many organisations have had to let go of control as work from home has forced them to trust that employees are working when they should be.

This ability to self-lead introduces us to the concept defined in literature as self-leadership. Self-leadership as a discipline in organisational sciences has become increasingly more important to understand in various contexts. Harari et al. (2021) describes self-leadership as the motivation and directing of one-self as opposed to traditional leadership which is about leading others.

Despite this loss of control by managers or organisations, Müller and Niessen (2017) stated that employees are “their own leaders” and therefore self-lead most of the time even when in highly controlled situations. Therefore, it could be argued that employees continue to self-lead even in non-controlling or less controlling environments such as when working from home which is an area that requires further research.

Müller and Niessen (2019a) state that working location significantly influences self-leadership behaviours. Furthermore, self-leadership is said to be the driving force behind individuals doing tasks that are naturally motivating as well as those that aren't but are required to be done (Stewart et al., 2019).

Seeing as sales organizations face unique leadership needs and challenges in today's dynamic, complex environment. To adapt, firms are seeking ways to enhance employees' capacity to engage in self-leadership strategies, empowering them to navigate the increasingly complex and ambiguous environment (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015). As such, the researcher observed the need through reviewing of the literature, to understand the ways in which employees have adapted the way they self-lead in a work from home environment as well as a deeper understanding in the strategies used to adapt to this new work dynamic.

The sectors with the most potential, who spends three-quarters of its time on tasks that can be performed remotely without sacrificing productivity are the finance and

insurance sectors (Lund et al., 2020). This is what has also informed the scope for this study, which will obtain insights from employees in the financial services sector, who were previously working in an office building and have been working from home since the beginning of the lockdowns enforced by the COVID -19 pandemic.

1.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

In reviewing the literature, the researcher found that previous studies on self-leadership have contributed to the literature by defining self-leadership and its strategies as it is still a developing topic. It has been studied as well in terms of how self-leadership and its strategies relate to results at work such as performance and antecedents such as conscientiousness (Harari et al., 2021).

Self-leadership is multifaceted and there are various strategies that individuals use or tap into in order to influence oneself positively. These self-leading capabilities could be seen as skills. Browning (2018) describes self-leadership to be at the core of leadership for many leaders and that this is often the key element that differentiates exceptional leaders from the ordinary. That is the ability to self-lead effectively.

Harari et al. (2021) states that encouragement of employee self-leadership may lead to more fruitful thinking, attitudes, and actions. Furthermore, the authors add that organisations may upskill employees' self-leadership through training programs and that certain strategies may be focussed on depending on the intended outcomes (Harari et al., 2021). Therefore, this calls for a deeper understanding on the various self-leadership strategies outside of their pure definitions, more so in the current context of the evolved ways of working which include working from home and hybrid working environments.

A lot of the literature on self-leadership refers to the self-leadership strategies, however, there seems to a limited number of high-quality studies on the self-leadership strategies themselves and how they interact with other constructs. Other studies focussed on self-leadership techniques' mediating function (Lin, 2017), whilst others focussed on one self-leadership strategy and its relation to other outcomes such as in the studies by (Kalra et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2017).

Müller and Niessen (2019) focussed on the relationship of self-leadership behaviour on home vs office days. This study however did not go in depth in terms of unpacking the self-leadership strategies but was primarily focussed on identifying associations

between working location and the self-leading strategies rather than to understand in depth which strategies are employed and how these have been adapted to produce performance. A recommendation for future research from these authors was to look at potential predictors, effects and everyday self-leadership's underlying principles (Müller & Niessen, 2019b).

An unanswered question in the literature reviewed is therefore, which strategies are individuals therefore using on a daily basis when working from home? How have they been adapting to this new working environment? Are these self-leadership strategies? There are still many avenues within self-leadership that can be explored. As stated by Knotts et al. (2022), self-leadership research is still in its infancy and has not matured. This warrants a need for further exploration into this topic.

Although self-leadership can be explored far and wide, the focus of this research project will be limited to understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by employees who work from home and on understanding the self-leadership strategies employed by employees in a working from home context and how they have adapted these to produce work outcomes. This has also been informed by a meta-analysis on self-leadership, which spanned over the last two decades, found an area of focus for future research to be on the complementarity of self-leadership strategies (Harari et al., 2021).

1.4 THEORETICAL RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Self-leadership is made up of three strategies (behavioural, cognitive and natural reward), making it a multifaceted concept. The latest available meta-analysis on the topic of self-leadership by Harari et al. (2021) highlighted that there has not been a systemic analysis of the strategies as previous research has focused primarily on describing self-leadership and its relationship to other elements e.g motivation, personality and self-influence constructs (Neck & Houghton, 2006); team level versus individual level self-leadership (Stewart et al., 2010).

Wang et al. (2020) argued that there is a need to shift research from understanding whether remote working should be implemented to rather finding ways to maximize its benefits. They further state that a systematic understanding of the potential altered character of the work itself in the different contexts is essentially required for such a change in study focus (Wang et al., 2020) . On the other hand, studies on working from home have typically concentrated on the impacts of work from home on

individuals work-life balance and on the effectiveness of working from home as a management technique for firms (Ge et al., 2023). This highlighted the need for research to delve deeper outside of these areas found in literature thus far.

Previous studies on self-leadership has mostly concentrated on prospective outcomes. So far, the study on probable antecedents of self-leadership has been limited to intervention studies, external leadership, personality, and national culture as determinants of self-leadership (Müller & Niessen, 2019a).

In bringing these two elements together (self-leadership and work from home), a study by Sjöblom et al. (2022) found self-leadership to be important for remote work as there is proof that employees who work from home set their own goals more frequently. This highlighted the increased need for additional study around the topic of “self-leadership in remote work” (Sjöblom et al., 2022).

These are the gaps found in the self-leadership and working from home literature, which has informed the focus of this research paper. There is a gap to understand how individuals function when working from home, the challenges and opportunities faced when working from home and more specifically on the strategies they employ in order to remain or continue to be productive in this alternative way of working, and with the differences in the environments (traditional versus working from home) in mind.

1.5 BUSINESS RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As a fundamental aspect of organizational behavior, self-leadership enables people to manage their own work and contribute to the success of the business as a whole. (Stewart et al., 2019). With remote work likely to stay, be that it exists in a hybrid format or a complete working from home arrangement. It is vital for organisations to have a good understanding of the strategies employees are using in that environment in order to continue to add value to the organisations they work for.

Self-leadership strategies exist to support individuals in enhancing employees performance (Sjöblom et al., 2022). In understanding this, organisations can find better more suitable ways to encourage employees. This can also include enabling or empowering managers to better lead employees remotely (Manz, 2015).

Self-leadership training can be a useful technique for raising employee productivity and happiness in unpredictably changing workplaces (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2019).

Su et al. (2022) added that the employees who were less motivated and less likely to enhance customer experiences were those individuals who were less effective in their self-leading capabilities.

Therefore, increased knowledge in this area can enable and inform businesses on how to invest in developing self-leadership skills in their remote workforce to experience improved productivity, motivation, adaptability, and communication, leading to better outcomes and success in the remote work environment. These outcomes can also include fostering a self-leadership culture in today's WFH and hybrid work environments and may have implications even on policy and the resources and support that can be provided to employees.

Moreover, self-leadership effectiveness may depend on various factors, self-leadership can impact the leader-follower relationship positively as individuals with strong self-leadership, may require less supervision which can in turn free up time for leaders to focus on more strategic and crucial responsibilities (Oc et al., 2023).

1.6 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The objective of this research project is to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by employees who work from home and insight into the self-leadership strategies used by employees when working from home in order to produce work outcomes.

1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on self-leadership and work from home in two ways. Firstly, through increasing the body of knowledge by providing a fine-tuned analysis of how employees have adapted the way they self-lead and how each of the self-leadership strategies contribute to performance outcomes in a working from home environment. In understanding this, it can inform organisations on how best to motivate, train and influence employees to perform better in this new work environment.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an overview and review of the literature on the elements covered by the topic constructs namely: Self-leadership, self-leadership strategies, working from home as well the social cognitive theory which underpins this research project.

2.2 THE EVOLUTION OF SELF-LEADERSHIP THEORY

Self-leadership is a study within the organisational sciences field. Its origins in academic literature dates back to the 1980s, which Manz and Sims (1980) referred to as an “internal source of leadership”. In recent years it is still described as a developing theory which has not reached maturity (Knotts et al., 2022). The majority of the earlier literature on self-leadership has been on defining the theory. By 2006, in a study by Neck et al. (2006) which looked at the evolution of self-leadership over 20 years, the domain of study was still under-investigated despite there having been an impressive body of knowledge over that period. There have been other meta-analyses of that kind in recent times (e.g Harari et al., 2021; Knotts et al., 2022) which still refer to self-leadership theory as developing which reflects the multifaceted nature of the theory.

Traditionally leadership has been concerned with the influence and guidance of others as such self-leadership is paradoxical when viewing leadership from this traditional lens. However, literature for the most part seems to agree on the fact that self-leadership is at the core of leadership (Browning, 2018). The literature on self-leadership has also shifted from concentrating only on individual self-influence processes to comprehending self-influence processes for teams because it involves both autonomy and interdependence (Stewart et al., 2019). On one hand, self-leadership requires individuals to be self-reliant and take responsibility for their own success. On the other hand, self-leadership also involves working with others and being aware of how one's actions impact the larger organization (Stewart et al., 2019).

Self-leadership has been studied as a mediator (eg. Lin, 2017; van Dorssen-Boog et al., 2020), as an antecedant (eg. Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Thun et al., 2018) and in relation to other constructs with moderators (e.g Müller et al., 2017).

The literature on self-leadership is abundant but is scattered. Due to its complex nature, literature has moved over the decades from defining self-leadership, understanding what it is, to why it exists. As stated by Knotts et al. (2022) who stated that there is a lack of clarity on its importance. And this also explains the current evolution in the literature which seeks to understand how self-leadership is achieved. This is why we have begun to see studies on the various self-leadership strategies and their relationship to other constructs which seeks to delve into the mechanics of the self-leadership processes. Future directions for research on self-leadership are suggested to focus on the complementarity of self-leadership strategies by studying the self-leadership strategies collectively (Harari et al., 2021).

Müller and Niessen (2017) felt that in order to comprehensively yet succinctly measure self-leadership, future research should pay more attention to other ways of evaluating self-leadership (particularly on a daily basis). In their findings, Müller and Niessen (2017) found that high qualitative overload at the workplace diminishes self-control strength, suggesting that self-leadership, while beneficial in tough work environments, can also be mentally demanding. This leads to the question: how then do individuals use or tap into their self-leadership which can be mentally demanding and what kind of strategies do they adopt to thrive in a demanding work environment?

As leadership studies evolve, the self-leading capabilities that individuals possess become increasingly important as it represents the ability for individuals to self-influence to fulfil work outcomes.

There are 3 categories of self-leadership strategies which are namely: behavioural, cognitive and natural reward strategies (Harari et al., 2021). The behavioural strategies include ways to self-manage such as “goal setting, self-reward, self-observation and self-cueing”, whilst cognitive strategies pertain to thought patterns such as positive self-talk (Harari et al., 2021). Lastly, the natural reward strategies are concerned with building in intrinsically pleasant activities to work (Harari et al., 2021). These self-leadership strategies will be expanded upon in the section to follow.

2.3 SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

In a study by Neck et al. (2006) the authors established three self-leadership strategies that individuals may use. These are behavioural, cognitive and natural reward self-leadership strategies.

The literature that covers self-leadership strategies is often embedded in the study of self-leadership as a whole. The strategies themselves, which pertain to understanding the “how” mechanisms of self-leadership are understudied. The literature also seems to currently have focused on self-leadership strategies separately as opposed to collectively. For example, Kalra et al. (2021) which investigated how behavioral self-leadership strategies and self-efficacy impacted sales success. Singh et al. (2017) found thought (cognitive) self-leadership as a predictor for sales performance. The focus on the self-leadership strategies seems to currently be centered around their relationship or role to performance, additional examples of this include (Singh et al., 2018).

The literature reviews in the studies that touch on the self-leadership strategies, still uses literature that is dated, which seems to point to a lack of recent reliable literature on the topic. Further highlighting the limited number of studies with a focus on these self-leadership strategies.

Singh et al. (2017) highlighted that studying one branch of the self-leadership strategies as they did could be limiting and that to deepen the incorporation of these constructs into literature, future studies should concentrate on all branches of self-leadership strategies. This was confirmed by Kalra et al. (2021) who also stated that the self-leadership strategies should be studied collectively for a more comprehensive analysis in the future.

An in-depth explanation of the various self-leadership strategies will be unpacked below, together with where these stand in the current literature:

Cognitive self-leadership strategies

Cognitive self-leadership refers to the mental processes individuals use to manage their thoughts and emotions. This includes positive self-talk, visualization, and self-reinforcement (Harari et al., 2021).

Cognitive self-leadership, sometimes referred to as “thought self-leadership (TSL)” in literature, involves mental strategies that are positive and constructive (Alnakhli et al., 2020). These strategies can include encouraging self-talk, mental imagery or visualisations, and analysis of unhelpful assumptions and ideas.

Alnakhli et al. (2020) found that when individuals engage in positive self-talk this can dilute the negative thoughts thereby changing the makeup of their habitual thinking

patterns. This translates to better management of goal focus and internal motivation with an outcome of self-leadership.

Positive mental imagery, as a cognitive self-leadership strategy, can have a positive impact on an employee's ability to think constructively and lead themselves. Creating and experiencing the imagined accomplishment of goals is known as mental imagery. Salespeople who use constructive mental imagery see themselves achieving goals before carrying out the necessary tasks to achieve them (Panagopoulos et al., 2015).

Lastly, the third element of cognitive self-leadership assists individuals in altering or removing unfavorable and unhealthy thoughts, as well as encouraging positive thinking by eliminating unfavorable presumptions. Individuals can enhance their cognitive self-leadership capabilities, concentrate more on job objectives, and develop new strategies for overcoming challenges by controlling these beliefs (Singh et al., 2017).

Considering the amount of control one has over their day and tasks whilst working from home, especially for skilled workers who do not work in environments that force their day to be structured a certain way. Individuals can be susceptible to procrastination, which is defined as deliberately postponing a desired course of action while anticipating negative consequences is known as procrastination (Wang et al., 2021). Practising self-leadership strategies such as positive self-talk and constructive thought patterns may reduce procrastination (Wang et al., 2021).

Self-leadership acted as a mediator in the favorable link between leadership empowerment and psychological empowerment. This shows that when managers give their staff members more autonomy, it improves their capacity for self-leadership, which raises psychological empowerment (Inceoglu et al., 2018).

Leaders have a critical role in cognitive self-leadership as it is influenced by the social environment created by the leader as well their leadership style. Cognitive self-leadership also plays a mediating role in the relationship between psychological outcomes such as wellbeing and empowerment and leadership (Inceoglu et al., 2018).

Flores et al. (2018) argued that emotional (cognitive) self-leadership and emotional intelligence are related however cognitive self-leadership offers a more complete perspective by expanding upon and incorporating many elements of emotional

intelligence. In teams, collective emotional intelligence can help team members spot negative emotional spirals and stop them before they cause harm. Team members can effectively regulate their emotional experiences and their reactions to others' emotions if they are aware of their own emotions as well as those of others (Flores et al., 2018).

Spirituality also plays a major role in self-leadership by supporting positive health outcomes such as self-awareness, inner calm and improved management of stress (Singh et al., 2022).

Behavioural self-leadership strategies

Behavioral self-leadership refer to the actions individuals take to motivate and direct themselves towards their goals (Harari et al., 2021). This includes setting goals, rewarding oneself for progress, and using imagery to visualize success.

Behavioural self-leadership strategies pertain to the actions an individual can take. These behavioural self-leadership strategies include: "Self-observation, self-goal-setting, self-reward, self-punishment and self-cueing (Stewart et al., 2010).

These five key strategies of behavioural self-leadership have been defined as follows: Firstly, self-observation involves employees being aware of their own work performance and tracking their progress. Secondly, self-goal setting means that individuals manage themselves using personal goals. Thirdly, self-reward involves creating reward systems to motivate oneself. Fourthly, self-punishment helps regulate undesirable behaviors through feeling guilty in failure situations. Finally, self-cueing entails using physical reminders to keep important tasks at the forefront of one's mind (Kalra et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2010).

In literature, it is found that behavioural self-leadership strategies assist individuals to complete tasks that are necessary and may even be unpleasant (Woods et al., 2023). Van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2021) added that the act of self-observation assists individuals in understanding and being more informed about how they function thus enabling them to change their own behaviour.

Woods et al. (2022) made a claim that self-leadership, through the flexible nature of behavioural strategies such as setting of own goals and ways to self-regulate, may be developed through intervention. They further added that self-leadership tactics combine effort directed towards goals and behavior with positive psychological

resources such as self- efficacy, optimism, and resilience to encourage people to approach learning with optimism and success, driving independent effort toward their objectives (Woods et al., 2022).

Self-set goals are said to work more effectively when combined with self-reward strategies. This would include, for example, making use of to-do lists (a self-cuing strategy) with treating oneself to a favourite meal as a reward for completing a difficult task (Cranmer et al., 2019).

In a study conducted by Kalra et al. (2021), they discovered that self-efficacy was positively related to behavioral self-leadership, but those with technical knowledge had a weaker relationship between self-efficacy and behavioral self-leadership than those with low technical knowledge. They go on to say that self-efficacy is a deeply rooted personality attribute and thus mostly invariant (Kalra et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is also included in the idea of self-regulation as it serves as a critical mechanism for understanding the transition of thoughts into actions (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015).

Natural reward self-leadership strategies

Singh et al. (2018) summarized natural reward strategies as those which involve turning a task into a more positive experience. There are three natural reward strategies that can be used: firstly, choosing a nice environment or setting for carrying out the task; secondly, altering the task or process so that it is more fun to carry out; and thirdly, emphasizing the enjoyable elements of the activity and focusing less on the least desirable components of the task (Singh et al., 2018). By using these strategies, individuals can increase their motivation and enjoyment of a task, making it easier to achieve their goals.

The focus of natural reward strategies is on intrinsic rewards, which motivate people to carry out tasks for their own sake rather than for an external benefit. These elicit emotions that result in a positive outlook (Harari et al., 2021; Manz, 2015).

Harari et al. (2021) referred to natural reward self-leadership as the ways in which individuals use social support and feedback to enhance their motivation and performance. This includes seeking feedback from others, surrounding oneself with supportive individuals, and modeling successful behavior from others.

Natural-reward strategies are also referred to as self-reward strategies in other literature. Its meaning in some contexts extends to small and abstract rewards to

oneself such as celebrating oneself after completing certain tasks or going out for dinner after completing a project (Knotts et al., 2022). Stewart et al. (2019) later added that that these intrinsic rewards are important in self-leading oneself and particularly that individuals who are more likely to self-lead are those who choose jobs with embedded self-rewards or who fill their job with motivating tasks.

The usage of natural reward strategies is considered to boost an employee's use of behavior-focused strategies, as well as their ability to innovate (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2018).

In the literature, self-punishment was also mentioned when discussing self-reward or natural reward strategies. Self-punishment mechanisms would include when an employee would be more critical of themselves if they do not meet a set goal. However, both self-reward and goal attainment can reinforce the attainment of goals and can motivate an individual to spend more time in investigating and applying more creative processes to problem solving (Lin, 2017).

This study will seek to understand, how these three self-leadership strategies are employed and which of these strategies employees primarily make use of when working from home.

The section to follow will provide an overview of the theory that will underpin this research project.

2.4 SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Social cognitive theory (SCT) serves as the foundation for self-leadership theory (Stewart et al., 2019).

According to SCT, an individual is able to control their behaviour, particularly when that activity is guided by an individual's internal norms and personal responses to such behaviour (Alnakhli et al., 2020).

According to Bandura (2001) humans have distinct capabilities namely: self-regulation, self-reflection, forethought, vicarious learning and symbolising. Bandura's social cognitive theory emphasizes that individuals have a sense of awareness or control over their actions which has an impact on their lives and goals set. Individuals are then able to track their progress towards their objectives and adjust their strategies when necessary.

Self-reflection capability

Bandura (2001) defined self-reflective capability as the ability to introspect and self-evaluate such that it creates a feedback loop to self in order to guide one's behaviour. This involves holding up one's thoughts, actions and behaviours against set objectives and goals and reflecting on that. Through this process an individual is able to highlight areas that require improvement and can thus create plans to improve or change one's performance. This self-reflective capability is crucial at enabling self-regulation which is another SCT capability.

Self-regulation capability

Self-regulation refers to the process of systematically directing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions toward achieving one's goals (Schunk et al., 2020). Where motivational processes are necessary for setting one's objectives, self-regulation is necessary to enable those goals to be reached and for task completion.

Forethought capability

The forethought capability is defined as the ability to anticipate the future and to set goals and processes that can enable you to achieve those desirable goals (Harari et al., 2021)

Vicarious learning capability

Vicarious learning involves observing others, how they perform and any consequences to their actions (Harari et al., 2021).

Symbolising capability

Symbolising is the act of creating cognitive representations or models to help guide one's actions or decisions. This is a way that individuals process experiences and make sense of their environment (Bandura, 2001).

SCT capabilities relation to self-leadership strategies

A meta-analysis conducted by Harari et al. (2021), mapped out these SCT capabilities to the self-leadership strategies. The SCT capabilities of self-regulation and self-reflection were mapped to the behavioural self-leadership strategies. Symbolising and vicarious learning SCT capabilities were mapped to cognitive self-leadership strategies whilst forethought as an SCT capability was mapped to natural reward strategies.

A depiction of this mapping is indicated in the Figure 1 below:

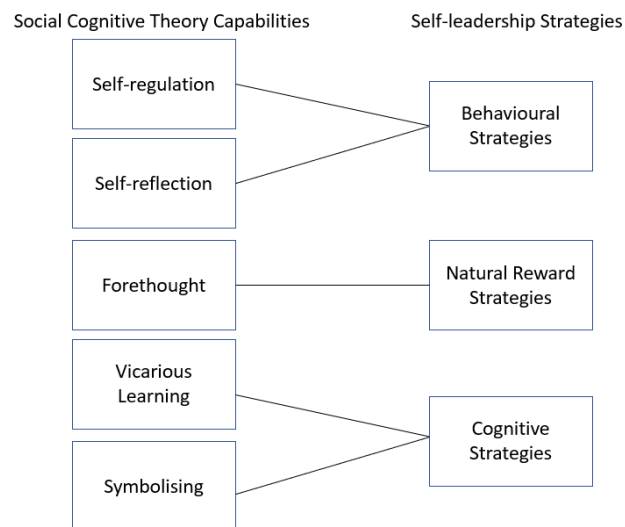


Figure 1: SCT capabilities mapped to Self-leadership strategies

2.5 WORKING FROM HOME

The COVID-19 pandemic came with disruption to economies, organisations and individuals' lives. It also resulted in challenges to the way things were done, this included the traditional ways of working where employees were required to travel to their respective brick and mortar offices to fulfill their job obligations. Due to the lockdowns that many governments around the world had to implement in order to stop the spread of the disease, and with this came the solution to the problem where organisations permitted people to work from home in order to allow business to continue to operate for economic purposes.

Working from home is not a new concept, despite its acceleration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its occurrence dates back to the 1980s, and literature has since looked into the characteristics of work from home as an alternative work arrangement in organisations including its prevalence, trend, determinants and effects (Ge et al., 2023).

At both the individual and organizational levels, working from home has several benefits, including greater work autonomy which yields increased job satisfaction. Individuals can also display increased productivity and enjoy the flexibility it provides which enhances work-life balance. Financial benefits can also result for both the individual and organisation in some circumstances (Ge et al., 2023).

In contrast, the integration of work from home poses various hurdles and inconsistencies that pertain to team dynamics and cooperation, technological and infrastructural requirements, unclear work-life boundaries, security concerns, and financial implications, which can affect both entities and individuals involved (Ge et al., 2023). Waizenegger et al. (2020) states that is essential to explore and understand how employees are maintaining “business as usual” despite the change in working environment to working from home.

Drawing as well on the theoretical concept of “work design”, which refers to the nature and configuration of tasks, activities, connections, and obligations (Parker & Grote, 2022). It has been argued that the idea of work design is applicable to other contemporary work changes (including working from home), such as the current digital era (e.g. Parker & Grote, (2022) ; Wang et al., (2020). This is because working virtually represents a different organisation of one's tasks than when working in an office. As such the way in which individuals are adapting to this new context of work and the ways in which they are self-leading in an environment that requires a different organization of one's tasks becomes a question or area of further exploration.

Challenges and opportunities from work from home

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, many employees were forced to work from home, many of them were unprepared for this unexpected adjustment. As such working from home came with several challenges employees had to overcome, however it also presented these employees with opportunities. These will be discussed below:

One of the first noticeable challenges that came with working from home was that employees who worked from home experienced increased workloads and a poor work-life balance. This was brought on by longer workdays and the demand that staff members be "always online" and quick to respond to requests for work (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). This sentiment was also shared by Felstead and Henseke (2017) who stated that adding to the challenge of work-life balance, some authors found that while remote work boosts organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being, it also increases work intensity and difficulty in switching off.

A study by Allen et al. (2021) which included 155 remote workers, found that segmentation preference and having a dedicated home office space with fewer household members improved work-nonwork balance. This highlights the increased

challenge that individuals with large families such as those with kids and other responsibilities, face increased pressure on their work-life balance. Work from home however remains seen as a family-friendly option despite the challenges it presents in striking that balance between the home and work life (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

The concept work-life balance has been central to conversations around work from home. Work-life balance is typically thought of as an individual-level term that equates harmony with the absence of conflict or incompatibility between employees' roles in their families and their professional lives (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). In another study conducted on the work-life balance of employees working from home, they found that work from home, although many perceive it as adding to work-life balance, that it in fact triggered increased work-related fatigue, thus worsening this perceived work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020). With the transition to working from home, this circumstance has set the stage for the role of boundary management as the lines between work and home life became blurred (Allen et al., 2021).

Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) found additional challenges workers had to overcome with remote work were: work intensification, space limitations, professional isolation, and increased housework and care responsibilities. Remote work led to excessive workloads, low work-life balance, and increased stress due to the constant online presence and the usage of ICTs has also contributed to decreased productivity because of emotions of loneliness and professional isolation.

Part-time remote workers on home days manage task scheduling independently, allowing greater flexibility and autonomy in daily routines and individual work processes, thereby leading themselves (Müller & Niessen, 2019a). However, this autonomy can also contribute to giving in to distractions thereby impacting ones' ability to establish a set routine for themselves.

Research has revealed that some managers struggle with trusting whether employees are working when they do not see them (Parker et al., 2020). What often results is that they create an environment where team members have to be available all the time, however this in turn leads to employees overworking and results in added stress in a remote working environment (Parker et al., 2020).

In a study done by Wang et al. (2020) they found that in order to manage remote work effectively, organizations should establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, improve communication channels, set clear expectations and goals,

foster social connections, and provide resources and support. Establishing specific working hours and creating a dedicated workspace can reduce work-home interference. Regular check-ins, virtual meetings, and project management software can help overcome ineffective communication. Regular feedback and regular progress reviews can keep remote workers motivated. Offering resources like time management training and mental health support can enhance remote worker performance and well-being.

An opportunity that work from home can present some employees is an enhanced work-life balance, as the elimination of time to commute to work freed up time for other non-work activities, whilst for others it lead to intensification of work where that freed-up time is taken up by additional working hours (Kelliher et al., 2019). Furthermore, Kelliher et al. (2019) added that some remote workers may exert a lot more effort into ensuring they are visible in a remote work environment to compensate for not being physically present which can impede on their work-life balance.

Van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) found a decrease in the team's and the individual's performance when individual co-workers work from home as there were challenges with co-ordination, co-operation and monitoring. These authors also highlighted that the factors that contribute to this decrease in performance are: the lack of immediate availability of co-workers which can hinder the critical exchange of information; social disconnection; decreased support due to it being more difficult for co-workers to know a co-worker needs support; Increased effort required in reaching out to fellow colleagues; the lack of physical face time making it difficult in relationship forming and the lack of managerial control.

Interestingly in another study on the characteristics and outcomes of work from home, they found the factors impacting work from home outcomes the most were reduced communication with colleagues, the trust and support of supervisors and finding a suitable place in the home to work (Nakrošienė et al., 2019).

For new employees, they experience a loss in environmental affordances (the possibilities of action that individuals have within their environment) when working from home. As such, are said to experience decreased confidence in asking questions concerning their work as easily as in the office when one could just walk to a fellow colleague (Waizenegger et al., 2020). They also expressed challenges in

the virtual channels mitigating this due to the inability to know true availability and not wanting to bother colleagues by asking too many questions.

During the pandemic, virtual meetings faced debates about "Zoom fatigue," security, privacy, and innovation obstacles. The most significant drawback was the lack of informal social interactions, affecting well-being due to limited nonverbal cues (Standaert et al., 2022).

A study done on the decisions made by individuals to work from home or the office found workload as one of the main stressors that would influence individuals' decisions on whether to work from home or at the office. This was due to the fact that employees felt they are faced with a lot of extra, urgent or unexpected task demands and the demand to participate in excessive or unexpected virtual meetings (Shao et al., 2021). The transition to work from home has led to an increase in workload expectations, as a result, this increase in workload has been associated with physical issues in employees, also due to the extended hours spent at a workstation (Xiao et al., 2021).

2.6 SELF-LEADERSHIP AND WORKING FROM HOME

In literature, there is a limited number of studies with a focus on the self-leadership strategies employed by employees when working from home. Some studies that have focused on work from home included its relationship to: team collaboration (Waizenegger et al., 2020), firm resilience (Ge et al., 2023), strategies adopted by families WFH (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022), employees' well-being and job attitudes (Yang et al., 2023), remote leadership (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2021) and employee performance and productivity (Deole et al., 2023.)

Although some studies had elements that would make reference to employee self-influence and motivation, none have been with an intent focus on self-leadership whilst working from home.

Some of the literature has focused on leaders' roles in remote work. Antonacopoulou and Georgiadou (2021) argue that leaders must embody qualities such as empathy, transparency, and flexibility in order to navigate the challenges of remote work. They suggest that this requires leaders to engage in ongoing self-reflection and learning, and to prioritize their own well-being in order to lead their teams effectively. Overall, "leading on leadership" is a call to action for leaders to not only focus on leading their teams, but also on developing their own leadership capabilities in order to meet the

evolving demands of the workplace (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2021). One could argue that leaders themselves are employing self-leadership strategies too in these environments in order to lead teams.

These gaps further support the need for a study with a focus on self-leadership strategies used when working from home at an employee level.

Self-discipline is crucial for remote workers to achieve effectiveness and well-being. It helps mitigate interruptions, resist temptations, and reduce work-home interference and procrastination. Higher self-discipline allows better time management, setting boundaries, and maintaining focus. It also modifies the relationship between virtual work characteristics and challenges, as disciplined individuals utilize social support to reduce loneliness. Overall, self-discipline is essential for remote workers to manage work-home interference, reduce procrastination, and effectively utilize social support (Wang et al., 2020).

Wang et al. (2020) suggested future research should consider people's experiences at home versus the office, particularly in examining people's virtual work characteristics when working remotely and their work characteristics when working at home.

Self-leadership tactics can be quite effective in raising engagement levels in the context of the evolving workplace, where workers are increasingly expected to work independently. This is especially important now that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced a change to more independent working conditions (Malaeb et al., 2022).

In a study by Müller and Niessen (2019a), they discovered that part-time remote workers used self-reward, goal setting, and visualisations of successful performance more when working from home than when working in the office. Autonomy mediated the relationship between these variables (job location, self-reward, self-goal setting, and visualisations).

The way in which one would structure their day can be different when working from the office versus when working from home. Traditional work environments often provide some kind of temporal and physical framework that structures and organises an employee's daily routine due to the fixed working hours, management supervision, lunch breaks and the physical separation between ones' work and private life needs. As such when individuals operate outside their companies' office premises, they lose this time framework and structure (Müller & Niessen, 2019a).

Self-leadership enables individuals to be proactive about setting their own goals and through a process of personal responsibility, find ways to track daily what they are doing in order to reach those goals (Browning, 2018). Furthermore, self-leadership encourages leading by example, enhancing goal setting and self-awareness, crucial for personal and professional success (Browning, 2018).

2.7 CONCLUSION

The literature review sought to understand the latest research on self-leadership and its strategies as well as working from home.

In order to do this, it was important to first understand the evolution of self-leadership and where it currently stands. Furthermore, an in-depth understanding of the three self-leadership strategies namely behavioural, cognitive and natural reward strategies were unpacked, to understand them and to specifically understand how they play out for employees in organization.

Working from home was also unpacked to understand its history, and role in today's evolving work climate. It was important to delve into the challenges and opportunities work from home presented individuals as this would lay the foundation for the research questions which seek to understand how individuals have adapted their self-leadership whilst working from home and what strategies they have employed and this would require an understanding first of the factors and dynamics of this work environment.

The Social Cognitive Theory underpins this study and its implications were discussed and married to the self-leadership strategies as informed by theory.

This all led to the development of the research questions, as outlined in chapter 3 below.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to provide further clarity and understanding on the research questions as informed by literature. Self-leadership as a concept that has been in existence since the 1980s, however has been mostly focused on defining self-leadership and its strategies. And although recent research had begun exploring self-leadership and its relationship to work outcomes such as performance, the majority of the studies have focused on determining where relationships exist.

Considering the literature review above and as stated by Kalra et al. (2021), future research should test a holistic model in the context of sales, using all three self-leadership strategies. Future researchers should further examine these impacts in various settings (contexts), particularly when salespeople collaborate with one another or handle extremely demanding clients.

This provides opportunities for a research project that not only looks at self-leadership holistically, and in depth by assessing and understanding all three self-leadership strategies. This research project provides an opportunity to assess this in the context of working from home, which has become a part of the working environment of the future which requires comprehensive understanding. This research project aims to add to the body of knowledge in these areas.

Therefore, the study will seek to address the following research questions:

- **Research question 1:** What are the challenges and opportunities of employees who work from home?
- **Research question 2:** How have employees adapted their self-leadership strategies in a work from home environment?

The intended outcomes to be gained from these two research questions will be discussed below:

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the challenges and opportunities of employees who work from home?

Based on literature, working from home presents individuals with some challenges to overcome and opportunities to leverage on. Wang et al. (2020) highlighted that some of the recent studies on remote work, such as theirs, were conducted under

the pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such individuals had added pressure of worrying about the pandemic, the disturbances from family were more intense together with the financial and social pressures, making for an “extraordinary context”.

Suggestions for future research state that future studies should continue to compare individual’s experiences of working from home and at work, by looking into people’s traits related to virtual work versus at the office work in order to truly comprehend individuals holistic work experiences (Wang et al., 2020).

Many other authors shared the sentiment in their studies on working from home, that: work from home is a concept that merits continuous attention by those who read or write on it (Felstead & Henseke, 2017); WFH studies post pandemic will add value to the body of work (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

As such it was important for the researcher to gain understanding of the current WFH challenges and opportunities faced by self-leaders, to provide a deeper understanding of research question 2.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How have employees adapted their self-leadership strategies in a work from home environment?

In a study conducted by Adisa et al. (2023) they found, out of the sample of employees they had interviewed that had been working from home since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, that while some had adjusted to this new way of work, some employees, including those who previously worked remotely, struggled to adapt to remote work and maintain routines.

Furthermore, the pandemic has led to a complex adaptation to remote working, resulting in increased stress, anxiety, and job insecurity. Employees are forced to work extra hours online, leading to online presenteeism. Fear of job loss further intensifies the issue. Converting homes into dedicated workspaces is challenging, and social and personal resources are lost, causing negative behavioral consequences (Adisa et al., 2023).

Behavioral reactions people make in the face of uncertainty, particularly in organizational contexts, are known as adaptive performance. It entails innovative problem-solving, navigating unpredictability in the workplace, picking up new skills,

and managing stress at work. In order to maintain or enhance adaptive performance in situations of rapid change and unpredictability at work, professionals need to acquire self-regulatory capacity (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2019).

Therefore, this research question sought to understand the ways in which individuals adapted the way they have self-lead whilst working from home in adapting to the challenges and opportunities that working from home brought.

As such, while research question 1 aimed to understand the context in terms of the challenges and opportunities that self-leading individuals faced when working from home, this research question was aimed at understanding the self-leadership strategies primarily employed in a work from home context and how these were adapted to suit this new working environment. This includes, understanding the nuances compared to when working from the office where they might have existed.

CHAPTER 4: CHOICE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to provide insight into the research design to be adopted by discussing the research philosophy, approach, methodological choice, purpose, strategy, time horizon as well as techniques and procedures.

4.2 PHILOSOPHY

The philosophical underpinning of this study was interpretivist. The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the self-leadership strategies employed as well how these strategies have been adapted in a work from home environment. As such an interpretivist approach was deemed as the most appropriate. Sanders and Lewis (2018) assert that for fields such as organisational behaviour and human resource the interpretivist approach is most relevant. Therefore, the research design was qualitative, in order to understand the nuances provided by remote working when it comes to how individuals self-lead.

4.3 APPROACH

The concept of self-leadership has been studied since the 1980s (Megheirkouni, 2018). There have been sufficient studies that have explored the causal relationships between various self-leadership constructs. More specifically, it has been proven that self-leadership is a key driver on work outcomes such as performance (Megheirkouni, 2018). However, studies that attempt to provide in depth understanding and further explanations to the relationship between constructs are limited or sparse.

As such the approach to this study was inductive to add the current body of knowledge on this paradoxical concept.

4.4 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

The study used a single data collection technique due to the time constraints for this research project. As such, this was a mono-method qualitative study.

4.5 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Considering that the self-leadership concept as well as its strategies, have been clearly defined over the years since its introduction into literature in the 1980s, the purpose of this research design was exploratory rather than explanatory. This was due to the desire to gain new insights also considering the context of this study, which has brought in a new area that requires further understanding.

4.6 STRATEGY

The study was centred in the context of working from home (remote working) and sought to understand the self-leadership strategies employed in this context. As such, the researcher argues that this study was suited to a phenomenology strategy. Neubauer et al. (2019) defines phenomenology seeks to understand a particular experience from those who experienced it. The phenomenon in this case would be the working from home environment. The increase in employees working from home since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought in a new challenge to organisations and thus warranted increased understanding of how individuals operate in this “new” way of working, which is set to stay in the future.

As such through this research, a greater understanding of the self-leadership strategies employed and how these have complemented each other in relation to performance was best explored through this approach. Furthermore, only individuals that were working from home were sampled in support of this strategy.

4.7 TIME HORIZON

The time frame required to fulfil this research placed a requirement to collect data at a point in time. This makes this a cross-sectional research design which Sanders and Lewis (2018) described as a “snapshot” of a time period.

4.8 TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

The technique used to collect data, which is suited to qualitative studies were semi-structured interviews. This type of interviewing style is used to gather data that seeks to understand the “what” and the “how” of phenomena and concepts (Saunders et.al, 2009). This method is aligned with the purpose of understanding the “what”, which in this case is the self-leadership strategies employed by individuals working from home. It will also seek to understanding the “how”, which in this study is understanding how individuals have adapted their self-leadership whilst working from home.

4.9 POPULATION

The population for this study was all individuals in South Africa that have been working from home at the time of the study. To further refine the population, due to the researchers access to individuals in the banking industry as a bank employee themselves, the target population was individuals working in the South African Banking industry, who had been working from home full time at the time of the study.

The finance industry according to Stats SA, in the first quarter of 2023, is the third largest employer in South Africa, accounting for 15.6% of the industries contributing towards gross domestic product (GDP) (Stats SA, 2023). In 2020, the banking sector had to adjust to the change the COVID-19 pandemic brought about by allowing employees to work from home (Broadband, 2020). Many of those employees are still working from home in 2023 or are working in a hybrid format where they are able to work from home for parts of the week.

In 2020, it was predicted by businesses that 33% of their staff would still be working from home in three years' time (Businesstech, 2020). In a report published by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of employees in the 4 major banks in South Africa (Absa, Nedbank, Standard bank and First Rand) totalled 165 046 (PWC, 2019). Using these facts as a base, one can predict that currently in 2023 there is potentially still a third (54465) of employees still working from home and into the foreseeable future.

Marques-Quinteiro et al. (2019) suggested that future research may examine how to apply the study's findings to other professional fields, such banking, sales, IT, or consulting, in order to promote self-leadership, adaptable performance, and job satisfaction among employees in these settings.

As such this is the reason for the choice of population to be the banking sector, as there is opportunity to obtain rich insights, with a large population to sample from.

4.10 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis was individuals, in the banking sector (across the 5 major commercial banks), working from home at the time of the study. More specifically, individuals in middle management that work in specialist roles, who are managers or leaders. These are the employees that often have to work by themselves without needing to be managed.

These specialist roles included:

- Product managers,
- Strategy managers,
- Business development managers,
- Customer value management specialists.

4.11 SAMPLING METHOD AND SIZE

Etikan and Bala (2017) describes quota non-probability sampling as a sampling method which is convenient for the researcher. As such, the researcher made use of their networks to identify individuals in the South African banking industry, as such quota non-probability sampling was used.

The researcher sought to spread the sample across the various banks in the South African financial services industry, aiming to target 5 individuals per bank across the 4 major banks in SA, making the total target market 20. The final sample reached was 14 individuals spread across several banks. The selection considered the following elements:

- Individuals age,
- Gender,
- Role,
- Period working from home, and
- Level in the organisation.

A final important consideration was to include individuals that went through the transition from being office based to working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and are still working from home.

Pratt (2009) mentions that it is often expected for one's sampling method to change as the study progresses. In order to reach a wider audience across the various banks, the researcher also made use of the snowball sampling method, as Saunders and Lewis (2018) describe snowball sampling as most suitable when it is difficult to identify or access members of a population.

4.12 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The detail of the 14 participants that took part in this study are presented in Table 1 below. Unique identifiers were allocated to each participant to ensure anonymity for their protection. Furthermore, pseudonyms have been allocated to each organisation (bank) that participants belonged to so as to not expose any organisation and the researcher to potential reputational damage risk due to the views shared herein. The participants roles have been included to reflect the specialist nature of their roles, seeing as the researcher sought a sample of professionals that for the most part operate as specialist rather than as managers or supervisors of other employees.

A combination of quota non-probability sampling and snowball sampling was used, to reach the participants in order to even out the views from participants across various banking organisations, genders and roles. Tenure

As such in summary: there were seven males and seven females; 6 interviewees from Bank Red, 4 Interviewees from Bank Blue, 2 Interviewees from Bank Green, 2 Interviewees from Bank Purple; interviewees were spread across various specialist roles.

Table 1: Description of Participants

Participant ID	Title	Organisation	Gender	Age	WFH Period
P1	Product Manager	Bank Green	Male	40	3 yrs
P2	Retail Business Development Manager	Bank Red	Female	41	3 yrs
P3	Debt Finance Specialist	Bank Blue	Male	37	3 yrs
P4	Sales Manager	Bank Purple	Male	37	3 yrs
P5	Restaurant Business Development Manager	Bank Red	Male	39	3 yrs
P6	Credit Analyst	Bank Green	Male	34	3 yrs
P7	Funding and Liquidity Risk manager	Bank Red	Female	34	3 yrs
P8	Relationship Manager	Bank Blue	Female	32	3 yrs
P9	Product Specialist	Bank Blue	Female	33	3 yrs
P10	Renewable Energy Specialist	Bank Red	Female	28	3 yrs
P11	Wholesale Business Development Manager	Bank Red	Male	47	3 yrs
P12	Automotive Business Development Manager	Bank Red	Male	41	3 yrs
P13	Trade and Commodity Finance Specialist	Bank Blue	Female	34	3 yrs
P14	Sales Consultant	Bank Purple	Female	37	3 yrs

4.13 SUITABILITY OF SAMPLE

It was important for the study to include individuals that are currently working from home, who previously had been fully office bound, commuting to an office building daily. This criterion was important so as to ensure the quality in the data received, to be from individuals who had to make that transition to working from home. These are individuals that were thrust into working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore were unprepared for that transition and had to adapt quickly to the change. They also had to have been working from home since 2020 up to the date of the interview in 2023.

Below, in Figure 2 is a depiction of the time the sample group have been working from home, which all verified was since March 2020 at the onset of the first lockdown in South Africa due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All data collected from participants during interviews have therefore been included in the study. No participants were excluded due to non-suitability.

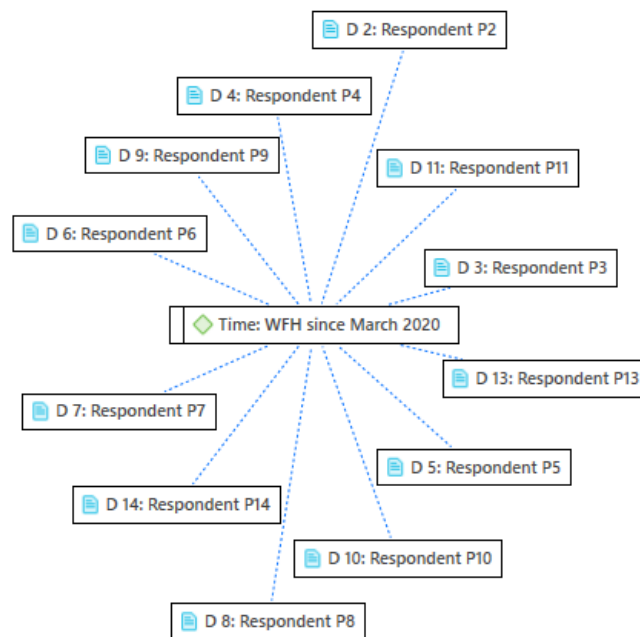


Figure 2: Participants WFH Period

4.14 MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

Interview guides were used to collect data. Saunders and Lewis (2018) mentioned that an interview guide needs to be developed in preparation for the semi-structured interviews, by listing the topics to be discussed to guide the conversation.

The interview guide shared in Appendix 1 was developed from the theory and research questions in order to fulfil the research objective. Considering the aim to understand the various self-leadership strategies, the questions were framed around the research objectives, to elicit insight into the 3 categories of self-leadership strategies namely the behavioural, cognitive and self-reward and into how individuals have adapted these strategies in a working from home context.

The interview guide included questions that allowed for the conversation to flow with the interviewee and may not have been asked in the same way or order with each participant. Kallio et.al. (2016) asserts that although semi-structured interviews can yield rich insights into the study phenomenon, in the development of the interview guide, careful consideration should be taken to not collect unnecessary information as this is considered to be ethically dubious. As such, the researcher made careful consideration of this into the development of the research guide as well as during the interview process to guide the conversation to flow with the intent of gaining insights purely relevant for the study at hand.

In order to increase the credibility and the ability for the questions to effectively obtain data required for the study, the interview guides were piloted prior to carrying out the full study. Piloting enables the researcher to identify potential problems with the questions, the time it takes to gain responses required which can inform the interview length, as well as providing the researcher an opportunity to amend questions where required prior to data collection (Saunders & Lewis. 2018).

The pilot revealed that the intended insights were elicited from the interview guide prepared by the researcher as well assisted in improving the researchers' interviewing skills. As such data gathering continued successfully post the piloting phase.

4.15 DATA GATHERING PROCESS

Interviews were identified as the most suitable form of data collection method for this study as they seek to understand how individuals have adapted their self-leadership strategies in the new environment of remote working Pratt (2009). These insights can

only be gained through interrogation and probing as it seeks to understand rather than to merely test whether a relationship exists between two constructs.

The participants were contacted and 1-hour interviews were scheduled at a time most suitable to the participant. Prior to this, consent forms were sent to the participants allowing them the opportunity to consent to their participation in the interview process as advised by Saunders and Lewis (2018).

Doyle et.al (2019) asserts that electronic and telephone interview approaches are gaining more traction, due to their increased flexibility, lower costs, and convenience provided for participants and the researcher. Additionally, they could aid in achieving maximum variety sampling or look at events from a local, regional, or global perspectives (Doyle et.al, 2019). All interviews took place via Microsoft teams (a software that has been widely used for virtual meetings since more individuals started working from home in 2020) as the sample included individuals that are all still working from home and therefore it was more convenient and most suitable for all participants to conduct the interviews virtually.

Saunders and Lewis (2018) advised that consideration be taken into how the interviews will be recorded. As such, the researcher will made use of the record and transcribing functionality on Microsoft Teams for the interviews conducted electronically.

All data collected to be saved on Google share-drive to ensure the data remains accessible for the 10-year required period of storage.

Qualitative research involves process-driven, emergent, and evolutionary data collection, requiring reflection and analysis throughout the project (Saldana, 2014). As such, the researcher took on this approach in order to adjust the approach when it was not working as planned.

This approach was particularly applied, as the interviews continued where the researcher discovered the need to first solicit the context from which an individual was responding to. For example, it was important to first understand the challenges individuals faced whilst working from home before one could gain an understanding of the way they have adapted and the self-leading strategies they have used.

Respondents were asked to respond from their personal experience and experience as a leader of self, rather than as a leader of a team. It was discovered during the

data gathering phase that some individuals had now been promoted from being a specialist that also has individuals they are supervising. As such it was important to highlight the perspective from which interviewees had to respond from as the interview process progressed.

Interviewees were asked to clarify their responses where vague or unclear responses were given, with some responses stated back to the interviewee to clarify their intended meaning. This is a way of improving the quality in the data collected, by verifying and seeking clarifying of questions (Roulston, 2010).

4.16 DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH

Once the data was collected and the interview sessions recorded and transcribed via Microsoft teams, a further process was undertaken to ensure accuracy of the transcription conducted by the software. This process included listening to the recordings and editing the transcribed text where the software has incorrectly transcribed the data. The transcripts were then anonymised, through a process of removing individuals names from the transcripts prior to uploading on Atlas.ti for coding.

This analysis tool (Atlas.ti) is intended to assist researchers in managing, organizing, and analyzing substantial amounts of qualitative data, including text documents, audio and video recordings of interviews, focus groups and surveys. It aids qualitative research projects by making it easier to explore and find patterns, themes, and correlations within qualitative data (ATLAS.ti, n.d).

Saldana (2014) mentions coding the data as the first step to qualitative data analysis. As such a process coding approach was adopted. Therefore, the process the researcher undertook, with the assistance of the analysis tool included: Coding the text narrative by exploring the meanings in the narrative provided by interviewees and categorising key messages into themes and then breaking these further into sub-categories. This was an iterative process, which evolved as the coding process was underway with each new document coded. Where some codes were similar, they were merged, others deleted where they were no longer relevant and others renamed as understanding improved. In total 337 unique codes were generated, which were then categorized into groups and then summarised into themes. The code book is included in Appendix 2.

Assarroudi et al. (2018) advice that the categories ought to be developed further and further analysed by counting the frequency of various sub-categories before getting to the final themes and trends identified in the data. Saldana (2014) states that an analytic strategy for analyzing codes is to classify them into similar clusters, with each code sharing a category label or a category name. This approach is required due to the abstract nature of some of the self-leadership strategies and will allow for a holistic approach and interpretation.

Once categorisation was concluded, interrelationships between categories was explored. However, as Saldana (2014) states examining the interactions and interactions between our patterns and categories can only be credibly established through a more systematic analysis of the data, or in other words, through sound reasoning.

The reasoning process will follow which involves focusing on participants' experiences, not taking the obvious for granted, carefully examining evidence, making reasonable inferences, and logically considering the underlying factors (Saldana, 2014).

An inductive analysis approach was used to document the themes that emerged. Thomas (2003) states that inductive methods are frequently employed in a variety of qualitative data analyses. As such, this is the approach the researcher will take to analyse insights obtained during the data gathering process.

Once the themes that emerged from the data coding process, these themes were analysed through the lens of the research questions in order to craft the message obtained from the new insights. A frequency analysis was conducted in order to count the number of individuals that agreed on certain on similar elements in order to improve the trustworthiness of the insights and conclusions drawn.

The findings will be tested for reliability and validity before reporting on the final insights.

4.17 QUALITY CONTROLS

The initial quality control measure used was piloting the interview guides prior to carrying out the research. The researcher also sought to find ways throughout the research process to test the data for reliability, credibility, dependability and authenticity.

According to Morse et al. (2002) there are various verification strategies that can be employed to ensure both validity and reliability and these include: firstly, ensuring alignment between the research questions and methodology; having an appropriate sample; simultaneously gathering and evaluating data; being theoretically minded throughout the research process. The researcher maintained this process through constantly revisiting the research questions throughout the research process. Interviewees were not led in their questioning during interviews in order for the insights to be obtained to be solely that from the interviewees personal experience. The interviewer had to also ensure that the individuals being interviewed had a clear understanding of the questions asked and provided clarity where necessary.

The researcher also ensured that the participants were most suitable during the interview process to ensure quality of the data collected was maintained. Furthermore, to improve validity, a transactional approach was used which Cho and Trent (2006) which includes member checking and triangulation where the interviewer states statements back to the interviewee to check accuracy in understanding.

Noble and Smith (2015) adds that the researcher should be aware of their personal biases that might influence the research outcomes. Secondly, they advise that it is crucial to acknowledge biases in the sampling process and that a researcher should consistently reflect on the methods used, ensuring in-depth and relevant data collection and analysis. Thirdly, Noble and Smith (2015) advises meticulous record-keeping practices should be maintained to establish a clear decision trail and guarantee transparency and consistency in data interpretations. The researcher acknowledges their bias as an employee that fits the sample criteria. As such this may have impacted the manner in which the data was analysed and presented.

Furthermore, engaging with other researchers can assist in gaining diverse views and to further minimise research biases and adding detailed verbatim reports of participants' experiences might offer solid justification for the study's findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Therefore, these are the quality controls that the researcher adopted throughout the research project to improve the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Finally, adopting Hayashi et al. (2019)'s processual operationalization of validity process, which speaks to the similar points raised by other authors on validity, but

adds a final step of a discussion of the results that completes the theorization process by returning to theory in the results discussion section as part of a continuous reflective posture to be maintained throughout the research process. This process also included sharing different perspectives gained from different participants.

4.18 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical clearance was obtained by the researcher from the Gordon Institute of Business Sciences (GIBS) ethics committee. This was done prior to collecting data and only once ethical clearance was obtained, did data collection begin. The ethical clearance approval is presented in Appendix 3.

Furthermore, as per the requirements, consent forms were sent to all participants prior to interviews. These highlighted the participants right to withdraw at any time and providing assurance for their confidentiality and anonymity in the final research report. All consent forms have been securely filed away and to be included in the depository provide by GIBS.

4.19 LIMITATIONS

The study will be limited to individuals that work in the banking sector, similar to the researcher as such certain biases may emerge in the interpretation of the research results. Due to the quota sampling method to be used, the results may be biased towards individuals within the researchers' networks. The researcher sought to overcome this by using the snowball sampling method where participants were asked to refer another potential participant to partake in the study. As such the overall combination of participants had a mixture of those individuals within the researcher's network and others outside of this group.

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) asserts that the timing of when the study is conducted may distort the research findings. Furthermore, larger socioeconomic circumstances and financial developments that may overlap with the study period and should be noted. These were taken into account by the researcher. The data was collected at a point in time (cross-sectional), as such this study only provides insights for that point in time not considering the potential for self-leadership strategies to have changed or continue to change, the longer the period of individuals working from home.

Sanders and Lewis (2018) highlight that the researchers bias is inherent in qualitative research. As such, the researchers own bias may influence the coding and themes

that may emerge from the study due to the researcher meeting the characteristics of the sample. As such the researchers own experiences may come in to play when analysing or interpreting the data.

The data analysis methodology employed by the researchers may be a potential limitation, due to the nature of qualitative, which is often difficult to verify due to the inability to truly replicate a qualitative study (Theofanidis & Fountouki 2018).

The study may not be generalisable to the overall population as the sample size was small.

The researcher recognizes that further unanticipated limitations could've arose during the course of the research project.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present the findings following the data analysis conducted. The preceding chapter provide context to the process taken to reach these key findings. As such what will follow is a presentation of the key themes that emerged concerning the two research questions discussed in Chapter 3.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.2.1 RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the challenges and opportunities of employees who work from home?

In order to get to the key insights of interest for this study, it was important for the researcher to gain an understanding of the context from which participants were responding from. As such in seeking to understand how individuals have adapted their self-leadership to the work from home environment, it was important for the researcher to understand what they had to adapt to prior to getting to how they have adapted. This includes the strategies that they have employed to lead themselves in this environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of the literature review, the concept of working from home was discussed and there are challenges and opportunities that were highlighted in the literature and therefore this highlighted the importance of presenting these insights from the participants to frame the remainder of the discussion below. During the piloting of the interview guides, the importance of including the challenges and opportunities individuals experienced with working from home was further highlighted as participants often lead with these before delving into the ways in which they have attempted to lead themselves around these elements.

5.2.1.1 CHALLENGES OF WORKING FROM HOME

The researcher obtained an overwhelming response from participants on the challenges with working from home. Table 2 below highlights the challenges experienced. These will be discussed further below.

Table 2: Working from Home Challenges

Challenge	Frequency of mentions
Overworking	10
Relationship building	6
Susceptible to distractions	6
Navigating non-verbal cues in virtual meetings	5
Increased workload	4
Lack of boundaries by colleagues	4
Inability to gauge peoples ways of work	4
Power outages	4
Preserving feel of home	3
No breaks	3
Wifi/Connectivity	3
Colleagues not readily available for support	3
Being desk bound all day	1
Collaborating with others	1
Finding suitable place to work	1
Getting time from people to teach	1
Increased diary bookings	1
Increased screen time	1
Leading a team virtually	1
Multitasking	1
Navigating self-management	1
Personal emotional neglect	1

Overworking

The majority of the participants mentioned overworking as one of their most prevalent challenge whilst working from home. They found the work from home environment to be driving a behaviour of constant working usually with limited breaks and because they feel settled at home, this made them more susceptible to working during the day and the night. As Participant 6 mentions:

“Yeah, it's that's a difficult one hey, because you're doing so much, you don't even realize.”

Many of the participants also mentioned that due to their drive, to find themselves in an environment that does not force them to stop working, made them continue to work, some of whom to their detriment as highlighted by Participant 10:

“I was just working extreme hours. I mean, I didn't have weekends. I was just sort of working all the time and it wasn't great for me.”

Relationship building

Relationship building was another challenge that came out strongly in the analysis. Due to being away from the office and colleagues, many participants found it challenging to build and maintain relationships. They found that it was easier to do this in a casual way when working in the office and this became hard and required added effort to foster relationships and build networks in a work from home environment. Participant 7 mentioned:

“That connection within the team is lost somehow and it requires extra effort to get everybody together because no one, all people also don't like meetings.”

Within the relationship building challenge, participants also highlighted how increasingly more difficult this was as a new to role or new to organisation employee. Some of the participants changed roles whilst working from work and continued to work from home in the new capacities and highlighted how relationship building and networking became increasingly more difficult for them. As stated by Participant 4:

“I think the challenges for me when I was in a new organization is the networking aspect. Just having to engage with people with, building rapport and institutional knowledge and obviously like your stakeholders within the organization. You know if you have to accomplish things through others and you don't know them, it becomes a little bit difficult initially to get that going.”

Many expressed the advantage with working in the office as being able to leverage off these relationships by asking for help when encountering challenges or seeking guidance. The work from home environment made this more difficult for some participants due to the loss in relationship.

Susceptible to distractions

Participants also found that they were more susceptible to distractions whilst working from home and therefore had to work to avoid this. This was especially prominent in virtual meetings, where participants highlighted how easy it is to merely switch off and lose engagement during virtual meetings. Participant 7 mentioned:

“What goes with that is also the distraction. Like I've heard from a couple of people who say that they lose that concentration span with the virtual

meetings. A person ends up just being on the phone during a meeting and they're checking something else on the phone as no one can see them”

Navigating non-verbal cues in virtual meetings

Seeing as the majority of the engagements with working from home are done through virtual meetings, the element of navigating the non-verbal cues remotely particularly in meetings, made it difficult to gain the true sense of the sentiments around what anyone would be sharing. Although initially when most individuals started working from home, it used to be a requirement to switch on cameras, however this has increasingly been done away with, making it difficult to read the room, also from the perspective of managing office politics. Participant 12 highlighted this:

“It's that nonverbal body language part of communication that people also look out for, so that becomes limited in a very structured Teams meeting you know and some people, they're still not comfortable with switching on their cameras.”

Increased workload

A key feature of working from home has also been increased workload. Many participants highlighted how this environment is a lot more output focussed when compared to a work from office environment where more time was spent on unproductive work such as catching up with colleagues. Many found that the workload was more when working from home, and this was also driven by the overworking behaviour highlighted above. Because individuals were working day and night, it was assumed that they had increased capacity for more work, as such it would continue to pile up. Participant 1 one highlighted the severity of this challenge:

“Sometimes you have three meetings going on at the same time with three different devices and the timelines are not changing, but they're throwing more things to you.”

Lack of boundaries by colleagues

Participants highlighted that there has been an increase in work expectations, where colleagues and managers expect work to be done in a short amount of time and that there is a growing culture of urgency in a work from home environment, as such this has set the tone for the lack of boundaries experienced by some which became a major challenge to overcome.

Some of the participants found that colleagues or managers would call at what one would consider to be “non-working hours” more such as very late in the evenings or very early morning calls. Participant 13 highlighted:

“I think a lot of boundaries were crossed. During the early stages I think some executives really did take advantage. There was quite a bit of abuse that I would, I would argue that took place and where. It really did get out of hand.”

Inability to gauge colleagues ways of work

Some of participants felt it was easier to always remain abreast of what was going on in their environment or business unit as well in the organisation as a whole. From this as well was the ability to also gauge everyone’s ways of work to improve their own performance. This is an element that they felt was lost when working from home and posed a challenge to being able to learn from others by observing others’ behaviours to improve one’s own performance. This was highlighted clearly by Participant 10:

“You potentially be more aware of yourself, if you're actually in the office, because you'd have better insight into what other colleagues were doing unlike being at home. I don't even know that much about what my team is doing, or with the bigger team So I don't know how much you're allowed to kind of relate it to your role as well.”

Other challenges

Other work from home challenges mentioned included dealing with power outages and connectivity issues, however many expressed adjusting to this quite early on at the onset of working from home. Others also mentioned that it was challenging in preserving the feel of their home as it had now become an office space, which was a challenge more to their emotional and mental wellbeing. And due to the challenges in building relationships, it also came across from some participants that colleagues were not always readily available to offer support as such this made it difficult to ask for help in this new work from home environment.

5.2.1.2 OPPORTUNITIES OF WORKING FROM HOME

The opportunities of working from home shared by the participant are summarized in Table 3 below and a discussion of the key elements will follow. The researcher

deemed it important to gain insight on the opportunities of working from home as they may sometimes be a double-edged sword that can positively or negatively impact how individuals show-up in the workplace and in the case of this study, how they self-lead.

Table 3: Working from home Opportunities

Opportunity	Frequency of mentions
Achieve work-life balance	10
Flexibility	6
Time for other things	4
Increased ability to improve spirituality	2
Increased engagement with clients	2
Ability to showcase work minus politics	2
Increased engagement with colleagues	1

Achieving work-life balance

Achieving work-life balance was the most mentioned opportunity that the participants felt work from home afforded them. The primary opportunity mentioned here was the ability to spend more time with the family and to be more present in the home even though work still gets carried out. Some participants felt that working from home allowed them to not miss out on the precious time with loved ones which also helped them to perform better at work and to be more present. In the office they would sometimes be there and not be present, whereas now they are able to deal with whatever needs attending to on a personal front such as tending to a sick parent, running urgent errands or juggling school a lot more freely and can return right back to work. As stated by Participant 11:

“So, I think the most simplest thing for me is work-life balance and that’s something that we always strive for as individuals, as humans.”

Many felt they had far greater autonomy and control over their day and the ability to switch activities around to suit their lifestyle. The work-life balance was also a good booster for others mental wellbeing, as many are more comfortable in a home environment rather than being in an office environment where one needs to put up pretences or play office politics.

Flexibility

To aid the work-life balance mentioned above, it is achieved because of the flexibility many participants felt work from home afforded them. In this context, flexibility meant

the ability to move activities around where that did not exist in a work from office environment. For the most part, participants enjoyed the flexibility of being able to run errands during the day, where in the past, when working in the office, they would have had to take leave. This has also allowed the weekends to be for rest which often would be used up by time allocated to errands. Participant 13 highlighted in their response how this flexibility has played out for them but them still being able to maintain productivity:

“Take your laptop and go to Home Affairs and you’re there on your laptop working, you’re available, you’ve blocked out your background and you’re getting things done”

Additional time for other things

The one advantage some participants highlighted about working from home is the absence of travel to and from work. This came with many benefits for some participants, one of which included the opportunity to make use of that additional time gained back for other pursuits or activities. For some of the participants they mentioned that this allowed them time in the morning to plan their day and settle into the workday. For others it afforded them the opportunity to pursue other interests such as being able to start a business and have the time to allocate their time freely between that and work. Participant 4 highlighted this in their interview:

“It’s time, right? It gives you ample time to where you are stuck in traffic or traveling. You get that time back to better prepare for your day in the convenience of your own home.”

Other opportunities

Other opportunities of working from home highlighted by the participants included the ability to reach more customers through virtual platforms without having to travel to customers. This was a key benefit especially for clients living in other provinces.

Seeing as the nature of work from home is more output based, other participants highlighted that this afforded them the opportunity to showcase their work outside of having to play office politics as their work was able to shine over other colleagues who wouldn’t work so hard but had the advantage of being able to work their way around the office by using their charm.

5.2.1.3 DYNAMICS OF WORKING FROM HOME

The researcher also wanted to highlight the dynamics highlighted in the data by the participants. Dynamics are different from challenges and opportunities as they provide a view of the “personality” of working from home from the participants perspectives which these employees also had to overcome and adjust to in their self-leading journeys.

Table 4 below shows a summary of the key dynamics highlighted in the data.

Table 4: Working from home Dynamics

WFH Dynamics	Frequency of mentions
Always switched on	7
Loneliness	5
Output driven	4
Increased transparency	4
Inundated with meetings	4

Always switched on culture

Working from home came with the inability to switch off from work seeing as the personal home space that was usually associated with rest and was a sacred space, had now turned into a work office as well. Because of this, many participants struggled switching off from work and found it hard to detach, seeing as the barriers that were often placed by the structure offered with going to the office, were no longer there.

This is also part of the reason some individuals overworked as mentioned above and took minimal breaks and how it was a challenge for some to preserve the feel of their homes.

There was also an expectation to remain visible and to look like you are busy with work, even when one is not. As such, even though one would enjoy the flexibility and the balance offered by working from home, for many it meant constantly being wired mentally on work even in times when one was justified or needed to be resting such as after working hours and over the weekends. As mentioned by Participant 3:

“Yeah, you are a slave. You know you like you always on the ground, always conscious of, you know, that ringtone from teams.”

Loneliness

With being away from colleagues, many participants described the isolation as lonely. It was lonely from the perspective of losing out on the social interaction but also from the perspective of not having colleagues to assist with work challenges, or to engage freely on anything that may be going on in their organisations. It required added effort to reach out to people, some of whom wouldn't be readily available as such individuals had to deal with a lot on their own.

This was even more pronounced for those participants who are single with no children, as they had to spend days and nights in the confines of their homes for both work and leisure. Participant 13 mentioned this clearly:

"It was very challenging because working from home was very isolating. There's a lot of structure that comes with being able to do certain things with your colleagues. You know, you get in the morning and then there's the morning coffee that you get with your colleagues. Then it's just part of your routine. It's part of priming your mind in a certain way. And now you don't get to do that. So now you have to find your own way of priming your own mind."

Output driven

The view from Respondent 2 depicts another dynamic of work from home as being more output driven:

"It's more output driven. Compared to when we're in the office because it's about the output that you give out at the end of the day doesn't matter how you how, how you manage your time and your schedule."

Many participants expressed views on how working from the office was less productive when compared to working from home and that the work from home environment focussed a lot more on the actual work one would deliver. Some participants mentioned how factors such as one's personality played little role in this environment and then many were often caught out as they could not hide in a work from home environment as it is already assumed that people are not working. As such, participants expressed having to make a concerted effort to show their work, hence the change in focus to be more output-oriented.

Increased transparency

With the focus on more output and an “always switched on, always available culture”, some participants spoke of the increase in transparency in remote working. Participants shared how they had to become more transparent about what they were working on and the need to provide feedback as others hold you accountable. The participants also shared increased transparency on expected deliverables and many felt under a microscope in this environment. Respondent 6 shared their views on this as follows:

“So like you realize there's a there's a film microscope on you, especially when you working from home to, say, from a productivity point of view. What are you doing? Everybody will look for you to be accountable.”

Inundated with meetings

An expectation that some participants mentioned was the expectation to always be available, as such many of the participants highlighted how the work from home environment came with an overwhelming number of meetings which also added to the screen time and other challenges such as overworking highlighted above. Seeing as there is no physical interaction to engage on, even casually at the coffee station or someone's desk like when the individuals were in the office, this resulted in every single engagement happening virtually in the form of a meeting which would take over the day and lead to double bookings in some respects. Participants also share how meetings were used to track if one was working as mentioned by Participant 5:

“Your diary is now inundated with meeting request because people are trying to figure out your productivity and all of those things.”

5.2.2 RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How have employees adapted their self-leadership strategies in a work from home environment?

From the results, the researcher found many ways in which employees adapted to working from home and more specifically how they adapted the way they self-lead. Each participant had their own unique combination of ways in which they self-lead in this environment. The key themes that emerged fell in the following 5 categories: Behavioural elements, self-management elements, mental elements, wellbeing

elements and general adaptation practises. These will be discussed below in greater detail.

5.2.2.1 BEHAVIOURAL ELEMENTS

The research findings revealed and found four main behavioural activities or areas that participants mentioned as areas they had to adapt the way they self-lead in. These areas were changes in their routine, how they manage their tasks, how they manage their time and managing boundaries. Table 5 below highlights the number of participants that spoke to each of these elements. A detailed discussion of each factor will follow below.

Table 5: Behavioural Elements Adapted whilst WFH

Behavioural Elements	Frequency of mentions
Routine	14
Boundary Management	13
Task Management	11
Time- management	8

Routine

In the results, it was found that one of the earliest things participants had to adjust was to establish their own routine whilst working from home, which would enable them to continue to be productive and to perform whilst working from home. All 14 participants made mention of this factor and participants had their own way of setting up their own routine.

Seven participants mentioned the best way they have adapted how they conduct themselves whilst working from home is to emulate a work from office day. This means working within the general 9am – 5pm working hours. These participants mentioned the discipline required to maintain this structure, as the work from home life offers a lot of resistance to this. As mentioned by Participant 4:

“You're washing as if you're going to work. You're simulating a work environment. And that that emanates from being discipline”

To establish a routine, 7 participants agreed on establishing a structured routine to ones work schedule. Irrespective of whether that falls within the working hours as the previous group mentioned, but that a set structure to each day's work enabled them to remain productive whilst working from home. This involved a great amount of

planning and creating daily, weekly and monthly to-do lists around deliverables. Participant 7 made mention of this point:

“So for me personally and I've I write down what I need to do, first of all, so I plan my day, I plan my week.”

For some participants this expanded to creating an integrated schedule for both the personal and work life. For example, one participant mentioned having to go and check up on a sick parent at their home, routine tasks such as this in their day would be integrated into their planning and scheduling, to the extent of blocking out the time for that in their work diary in order for their planned integrated structure to flow.

Boundary management

Thirteen of the participants agreed on the importance of establishing boundaries whilst working from home as a key adaptation action of self-leading oneself. A key factor of going about this, highlighted by six participants was establishing boundaries with family members, by communicating how they may not be interrupted when at their workstation or working room.

In order to manage the lack of boundaries observed from colleagues, the most significant boundary around this included having a hard stop at the close of business. Other factors included not taking calls from colleagues at any time, as those could also get the day to run away from them. Another firm boundary mentioned by some participants was to ensure they do not work on weekends, which is something they were susceptible to a lot more in a work from home environment. Some of the sentiments shared around boundary management as follows:

Participant 5: “But yeah, as time progressed then I got used to it. I started putting time. Well, yeah. Well, I had a hard stop at 5:00 o'clock because I find myself working up until 8.”

Participant 2: “I'll say I had to have boundaries of how we communicate with my kids, especially when I'm engaged in my work environment because I have to draw the line, to actually mark my boundary and territory to say this is my workspace. If you find Mommy in the office, please do not interrupt.”

Task Management

Eleven of the participants spoke to making changes to how they manage their tasks and how they lead themselves around this. The views around this were varied among

the participants. Some of the participants felt that although having structure to one's deliverables or day, in a work from home environment it was important to keep the schedule fluid in order to make room for urgent requests and calls. They made mention of the skill of continuously re-prioritising tasks. As stated by Participant 2:

“So, you almost have to play it out. Of like managing in a fluid manner while not being rigid in your structure to accommodate for a sudden changes and curveballs in the day to day operations.”

Seeing as a work from home dynamic is that of increased workload and inundation of calls and meetings, another factor that came around managing tasks was the ability to push-back on non-priority work and that of not taking on more than one can handle.

Time Management

From a time-management perspective, the participants mentioned several ways they have managed their time. Half of the participants that spoke to time management, explained that they blocked out time in their diaries for focus work. For example. Participant 13 mentioned:

“Time blocking, because another thing with work from home, people would then just randomly rope people into meetings with no consideration of the fact that you're doing deep cerebral work or what are you doing? So, I had to be very, very strict about the time blocking. Very strict about what every almost every hour is dedicated for”.

5.2.2.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

In analysing the characteristics displayed by the participants as they self-lead, the results revealed several professional competencies that participants advised they had to develop or adapt whilst working from home. Table 6 below reflects the various elements that the participants highlighted as the key areas where they had to adapt the way they have self-led. A detailed description of the findings under each of these elements will be discussed below.

Table 6: Professional Competencies Adapted whilst WFH

Professional Competencies	Frequency of mentions
Personal Development	13
Work Ethic	11
Employee Motivation	11
Employee Attitude	9
Communication	8
Stakeholder Management	5

Personal Development

The majority of the participants agreed that the increased sense of responsibility that comes with working from home, was an area of personal development. They felt that they developed as employees and that set the precedence for them to develop in other areas or areas they observed of weakness for them in this working context. As shared by Participant 2:

“I’ll say it has augmented my self-leadership in a way because I’m responsible for deliverables without anyone looking at me and not being micromanaged.”

Of the participants that spoke to personal development, 6 of them agreed that working from home improved their productivity, that it increased their capacity to do and to handle more work which is an area of personal development. As mentioned by participant 8:

“My production was like nobody. And the clients as well. They find you go extra mile for them because it was a hard time for our clients as well at that time.”

Other areas that participants mentioned they developed was that they for the first time were setting clear career and personal life goals for themselves. They found alternatives to improve their knowledge of themselves and learned to build a personal brand in a work from home context.

Work Ethic

The sample also shared insights into their work ethic and its role in how they have adapted how they self-lead whilst working from home. In seeking to maintain reliability and responsibility, 7 of the participants highlighted that their way of working included prioritising urgent work. That although the work from home environment may be overwhelming and already presents a culture of urgency for everything, the

participants still highlighted that they had to always ensure that they prioritise urgent work and remain fluid in this regard. Other participants highlighted that, they have a “do what I need to do” work ethic and that has driven them in a work from home environment when it would be easy to not work because no one is watching. Some views are shared on this below from Participant 11 and 13 are:

Participant 11: “And then that's one of the things that you need to take as a point of priority is I prioritize what's important, what needs to be done immediately.”

Participant 13: “Rain, sunshine, sickness, health. Easy, not easy. I have to work because they they're almost like the oil in the cogs of these different engines that I'm running. If I don't put that oil, cogs are not gonna run very well. So that has been integral to me.”

Some elements that some participants highlighted was the discipline of doing difficult tasks first, being proactive about work and not waiting for manager assistance, being customer centric and going the extra mile to produce quality work.

Employee Motivation

The results also revealed ways in which the participants motivate themselves or factors that they found motivation from in order to perform and remain productive. The key motivating factor was the act of ticking of items off their to do list. The participants found this to be encouraging and a lot more encouraging when working from home where they feel they have more control over themselves and over their work. Also considering the increased planning from some participants working from home, they mentioned obtaining a “kick” out of completing deliverables a lot more. As stated by Participant 10:

“I get quite a kick out of taking things off the To Do List, so that's my reward now.”

For others it was feedback, they used the feedback to improve their performance and they used this as a reflection tool since they are not able to gauge their performance against others as easily when being isolated from everyone because of work from home.

Employee Attitude

The sample displayed varied attitudes and these were mentioned by 9 participants, which reflected the way they approach life and their work. The most prominent finding under employee attitude, where 5 participants agreed on, was an attitude of continuous improvement. These individuals mentioned that this type of attitude was key to growing in a work from home environment. Some of the participants mentioned making use of the additional time they felt working from home presented them to find ways to develop themselves in order to continuously improve. From the researchers perspective this type of attitude seemed more innate rather than driven by working from home, however seems to have become more helpful and easy to call out when working from home. Reflections from Participant 11 stated:

“WFH sort of heightened focus, so you would see that you become more focused and you're able to see things that you wouldn't be able to see, and to a certain extent revisit your work. It gives you the opportunity to say that listen, maybe I need to take a second view or 3rd view and then you realize maybe there's certain things you need to add and improve”.

Communication

Communication is another factor that came out strongly in the results as having been adapted whilst working from home. The key areas where participants highlighted they had to improve their communication was in their communication with their colleagues, families and stakeholders.

In communicating with colleagues, and trying to mitigate the isolation experience, deteriorating relationships with colleagues, 4 of the 8 participants that spoke about communication mentioned that they had to put in extra effort in reaching out to colleagues and in improving communication even for casual conversations to allow them to later leverage off these relationships for additional help or in improving one's performance.

Increased transparency in communication with stakeholders was mentioned by 4 participants, that previously when working in the office it was not as robust as it has had to be when working from home. The communication with stakeholders also included that constant feedback and communication with line manager for increasing visibility.

Lastly, participants highlighted how they also improved communication with their families particularly on working hours. Some highlighted that in the beginning of working from home it was poor and had increasingly improved in order to manage harmony in those relationships seeing the strain that work from home placed on all parties. Some of these views are shared below:

Participant 4: “So put clear, clear communications. It becomes required to say I'm transparent with my wife. This is what looks like in the next couple of hours. We're busy with this. There's an increase in work requirements and that.”

Participant 12: “I think one is communication, one with your team, your line about how you prioritize your work, how you get your work done.”

Participant 10: “So I'm just trying to chat to people more. I think even within my team I didn't just trying to have more open conversations.”

Stakeholder Management

Outside of communication with stakeholders, the findings also revealed specific actions that spoke to stakeholder management. The main insight that participants mentioned was that they managed the perceptions around work from home by being more intentional on increasing their visibility. As shared by Participant 9:

“I would be intentional about some of the people that I would engage with cause I know they engage with her(manager) and they would let her know that I am visible in the environment, that stuff. So, you absolutely have a point to prove to others as well. Because now you have to be visible.”

5.2.2.3 SELF- ASSESSMENT ELEMENTS

In self-leading and adapting their strategies around work from home, participants revealed the ways they self-asses. Table 7 below shows the frequency of participants that mentioned their self-reflection techniques when working from home.

Table 7: Self-Assessment Elements Adapted whilst WFH

Self-Assessment Elements	Frequency of mentions
Self-assessment	9

Self-assessment

Of the 9 participants, 4 of them revealed checking-in with themselves regularly on where they are to assess their performance in this work environment and expressed a need for this more when working from home. The other ways that participants revealed was tracking their long and short-term goals regularly. This also tied in and was complementary to the planning many participants shared they do when working from home. As stated by Participant 7:

“I look back at a project that I did well on this and that also keeps me going, that you know you're going in the right direction. So taking that time out to reflect and also give myself feedback to say you are doing well.”

5.4.2.4 WELLBEING ELEMENTS

The results also revealed wellbeing and wellness factors that contribute to their mental and physical wellbeing as well as their capacity for effective stress and emotional management. Table 8 below, highlights the number of mentions from participants on these various factors and a discussion on each of them will follow below:

Table 8: Wellbeing Elements Adapted whilst WFH

Wellbeing Elements	Frequency of mentions
Mental health	13
Stress management	12
Physical health	6
Emotional regulation	4
Overall wellbeing	4

Mental health

Concerning mental health, the results revealed, amongst other mental factors, the factor with most participants being agreement was the act of physically switching off the laptop and packing up at the end of the day as a good thing for their mental health when working from home. Participants revealed how work from home strips one with this very fact and they recognised its impact on their mental capacity and how it contributes to the “always switched on” dynamic of work from home. As such they found that when they physically switched off their laptops, and some to the extent of packing it away into a bag and locking it away, together with the clearing of one’s home desk or office, this took away the mental load that comes with working from

home and allowed them to show up fresh each and everyday. Participant 7 sentiment below highlight this:

“But I do knock off, you know, and after I knock off, I actually do pack my laptop into my bag and put it away in the cupboard. So, I've implemented those things just for my mind to know that we have knocked off, so I can't just walk away from the laptop because I'm still going to see it and I'll still open it. So, I have to close it, switch off, put it in the bag, put it away.”

Stress management

There was a significant amount of ways that participants managed their stress as part of self-leading whilst working from home. The most prominent ways observed from the data were: Talking to manager, reaching out to colleagues and talking to family members. It was interesting to observe that despite the many other ways mentioned such as going for therapy, exercising, family moments with family, praying amongst others, the factors that the participants agreed on involved merely communicating. Be it with a family member, a line manager or fellow colleague. These sentiments are captured in the quote below from the participants:

Participant 8: “Because of the frustration that time even my manager knows I will call and say hi. You know all those things and everything, but that helps because after the call, I feel relieved and you never know what that person will say to you.”

Participant 2: I'm one person who will reach out. I'll never drown alone. I will touch base with my network if I think something is bothering me and ask for solutions from across the team and also knowing the capabilities and strength of the other team members, I can easily tap into the other team members. So, I'll say open communication for me is one of the great attributes that I'll say helps my stress level in check. If something is stressing me, I'll simply pick up your call and say, hang on. Look at this. I'm struggling with this.”

A surprising finding from the results was that some participants agreed on using recreational alcohol consumption during the day whilst working from home in order to reduce stress which is something they wouldn't have ordinarily been able to do at the office.

Emotional regulation

The results also revealed that participants had various ways of regulating their emotions which contributes to their self-leading and how they've adapted that in working from home. The most significant agreed on element from the findings, was managing feelings of overwhelm. Many participants had previously shared how working from home comes with increased workload, being inundated with meetings and calls, and other factors that can get the work or day to get away from you. As such participants mentioned managing these feelings of overwhelm and this was done through various ways, for some it was stopping to do lists, where that as stated in the results is something others used to provide structure to their day. Other ways used to manage overwhelm was avoiding doing work last minute, as well as being aware of negative emotion triggers. As highlighted by Participant 13:

“So, the journaling is about 3 mental space, minimizing thoughts that are in a loop in my head, putting them on paper.”

5.2.2.5 GENERAL ADAPTATION ELEMENTS

In general, there were other ways the results revealed participant's adapted their self-leading strategies when working from home. These, the researcher has labelled as practises which will be discussed in detail below, together with environmental factors that a significant number of participants agreed on. Table 9 below, reflects the frequency of mentions for each factor.

Table 9: General Adaption whilst WFH

General Adaptation Practises	Frequency of mentions
Practises	11
Environment	11
Support structure	3
Technology use	2

Practises

There were three key practises that participants used as adaptation strategies when working from home. These were: Taking regular walks outside in the garden for movement and to clear the mind. The participants highlighted that they didn't find how valuable the regular walk with colleagues to meetings, or around the building contributed to grounding and enabling them to refocus.

Another significant practise, with agreement between 6 participants, was the use of spirituality for grounding and focus. These participants shared how working from home enabled them to grow spiritually, have the ability to schedule this into their diary and which has contributed to their success when working from home compared to the office. This also contributed to their wellbeing overall.

Lastly, participants shared they engaged in positive self-talk for emotional upliftment and that considering that there is isolation when working from home, where one is away from colleagues who may offer encouragement, they often practised talking to themselves positively to maintain a positive mindset.

These sentiments are highlighted in the below text from participants:

Participant 2: "I'll say pull yourself together. Get your job done. That kind of thing. And then I just carry on I guess."

Participant 2: "Therefore, my spirituality, if I managed to an entire chapter in the Bible and I'm able to pray and feel the presence of God, that's an achievement to me because it impacts on my contribution to the organisation. When they see (Name of P2), they are able to get results because she is grounded. She's the whole person who is functional in terms of her spirituality, in terms of her health, in terms of her family setup and the work life balance."

Environment

Th results revealed that the working environment, by setting up a dedicated workstation in their homes was important to leading oneself effectively when working from home. Seeing as many employees were thrust into working from home, they highlighted how creating that space enabled them to be productive, to be able to create boundaries that enable them to work efficiently. They expressed recognising how counterproductive it was to attempt to work in areas in the home such as the couch and high traffic areas such as the living room. As such, setting up that dedicated workstation and for some a room that was turned into an office played a role in being able to lead themselves effectively in this environment. Participant 5 views highlight this:

"Even the space that I worked in. It too became very important because I would just sit on the couch and start working. And then it wasn't, and I don't think it was productive. I think that also caused or contributed to the first six

months being weird and just not knowing what to do because I think even the environments was not a work environments... You know, so I created a space in a room. Started having a desk there. Office chair. I created an office in my house. Then once I step into that office started feeling like an office environment again.”

Other adaptation elements

Other adaptation elements, with a few mentions from participants, included creating a support structure for oneself when working from home. This was especially prevalent for those who were living alone and therefore spending the days working from home in isolation. They highlighted being intentional around reaching out to friends, connecting to the neighbourhood social clubs as a way to gain additional social interactions during the day.

Another elements, with the least amount of mentions was the increased use and proficiency that respondents felt they gained when WFH. Participants mentioned the value found in this added skill, which would not have been gained if one had continued working from the office.

5.2.3 CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS

To get to the findings of this research question, the researcher analysed each of the key themes and related them to each of the self-leadership strategies. There are three main self-leadership strategies namely: behavioural, cognitive and natural reward strategies. Each of the strategies have various strategy types or ways that relate to each main category. Therefore, the main themes from the findings were likened to each of self-leadership strategies and then to the main self-leadership strategies. Table 10 provides a breakdown of this and a discussion of the key findings will be discussed below:

Table 10: Analysis of main themes to SL strategies

Main Themes Analysis			
Behavioural Elements	Frequency	Self-leadership Strategy Used	Main SL Strategy
Routine	14	Self-goal setting; Self-observation	Behavioural
Boundary Management	13	Self-cuieng	Behavioural
Task Management	11	Self-goal setting	Behavioural
Time- management	8	Self goal-setting	Behavioural
Professional Competencies	Frequency	Self-leadership Strategy Used	Main SL Strategy
Personal Development	13	Self-goal setting; Thinking patterns	Behavioural; Cognitive
Employee Motivation	11	Self-observation	Behavioural
Work Ethic	11	Thinking patterns	Cognitive
Employee Attitude	9	Thinking patterns	Cognitive
Communication	8	Self-regulation; Self-cuieng; Natural reward	Behavioural
Stakeholder Management	5	Seeking feedback	Natural-reward
Self-assessment Elements	Frequency	Self-leadership Strategy Used	Main SL Strategy
Self-assessment	9	Self- reflection; Self-awareness	Cognitive
Wellbeing Elements	Frequency	Self-leadership Strategy Used	Main SL Strategy
Mental health	13	Self-talk; Self-cuieng	Behavioural; Cognitive
Stress management	12	Seeking feedback through communication; self-talk	Self-regulation; Natural reward; cognitive
Physical health	6	Self-goal setting	Behavioural
Emotional regulation	4	Self talk; Thinking patterns	Cognitive
Adaptation Practises	Frequency	Self-leadership Strategy Used	Main SL Strategy
Practises	11	Mental imagery; Self-talk;	Cognitive
Environment	11	Self-cuieng	Behavioural

The results revealed that the primary self-leadership strategies employed by individuals whilst WFH were the behavioural self-leadership strategies and the cognitive self-leadership strategies. The natural reward strategies, that involve seeking feedback from others, surrounding oneself with positive people and modelling successful behaviour from others were the least employed.

Of the behavioural self-leadership strategies, the key main strategies employed were: Self goal-setting, self-observation and self-cueing. The self-reward and self-punishment sub-categories of the behavioural strategies were least utilized whilst working from home.

Of the cognitive self-leadership strategies, self-talk, thinking patterns, self-awareness and self-reflection were the most employed strategies. The ones least used by the participants, were the mental imagery and visualization strategies from the cognitive self-leadership strategies category.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This purpose of this chapter is to discuss and compare the results that have been presented in Chapter 5 to the literature review documented in Chapter 2. It will also serve to answer and provide insight into the research problem identified in Chapter 1. Chapter 4 highlighted the process taken to arrive at the findings. This chapter will collate and provide a summarised, detailed understanding to the research outcomes of this study.

In approaching this chapter, the researcher considered the findings for research question 1 and made an analysis of the areas where the findings confirmed or contradicted the body of research as discussed in the literature review. Furthermore, the researcher mapped out the key themes that emerged from the research findings to the self-leadership strategies as seen in Table 10 shared under Chapter 5. These have been used to get to the final discussion points to be covered in this chapter for the discussion of results for research question 2.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the challenges and opportunities of employees who work from home?

One of the first questions asked to participants, following the question of how long they have been working from home was to gain an understanding of the challenges and opportunities they felt working from home presented them. These results together with how they related to what was found in the literature will be discussed below:

6.2.1 CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WHO WFH

Overworking

The research findings highlighted several challenges experienced by the participants whilst working from home. The challenge with the highest number of participants in agreement was being susceptible to overworking. This was driven by being in isolation, as such ending up not taking any breaks and working continuously even outside of working hours. This was confirmed by Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) that described that working from home has brought about longer workdays as it demands for employees to always be available and to be quick to responding to requests.

Another author asserted that working from home, because of this presents a challenge to the work-life balance of employees (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). However, when looking at the research findings of this study, many participants found that working from home presented them with an increased ability to achieve work-life balance. Achieving work-life balance was the factor that participants mentioned as the greatest opportunity of working from home and many expressed great appreciation of that despite having the many challenges that come with working from home. The participants highlighted how they have had to find ways to work around these challenges. Out of the research results there was only one participant that expressed a deterioration of their work-life balance, which provides an opposing view to that expressed by (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

Another author who shared the sentiments on work-life balance deteriorating, stated that WFH presents employees with increased “conflicts” to their work to life balance and that employees experienced greater work-related fatigue, which made worse the perceived work to life balance Palumbo (2020). However, looking at the time of the study, it was at the height of the COVID 19 pandemic which can be describing the early months of working from home by many, which came with added pressure of dealing with all the other factors the pandemic brought about such as concerns with one’s health, the financial pressures and concerns over family members. As such with this context in mind, can bring understanding to the findings shared. However, in this study, although some participants did describe the early months of working from home as expressed by Palumbo (2020), the aspect of a deteriorating work-life balance due to working from home was only expressed by one participant.

Kelliher et al. (2019) also added that although there is additional time gained when working from home, due to not having to commute to work, that additional time becomes taken up by additional working. The findings of this study also confirmed this experience.

Relationship Building

The other significant challenge identified was building relationships whilst working from home and networking which plays a role in improving one’s performance. The results revealed difficulty in connecting with others as it was found to have been a lot easier to do this when working from the office and the findings revealed a need to put in extra effort in reaching out to others to form those relationships with fellow

colleagues. Research found in the literature confirms this. A study done by Van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) found that individuals' performance tends to decrease when working from home and it is driven by several factors including the lack of immediate availability of co-workers, lack of support, the loss in social connection and the extra effort required in forming relationships with co-workers which tends to deter others.

This study also found this challenge of relationships increasingly more challenging for individuals that were new to an organisation or a role within the same organisation as they were unable to form, let alone leverage on relationships whilst attempting to integrate into a new organisation and therefore had to find ways around this challenge. The literature agrees with this, expressing the difficulty experienced particularly by new employees in easily reaching out to fellow colleagues concerning their work tasks and that virtual channels have not really mitigated this as individuals will usually avoid having to send too many frequent messages even if it questions around their work (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Susceptibility to distractions

The research findings also reflected that working from home made participants more susceptible to distractions particularly in virtual meetings. Müller & Niessen (2019a) confirmed this, stating that working from home and the autonomy gained from it, contribute towards giving in to distractions. Furthermore, Standaert et al. (2022) added that some of the factors that influence engagement in virtual meetings include the number of virtual meetings, "zoom fatigue", security and privacy issues as well as the lack of informal social interactions. As such this explained some of the findings from this study where participants expressed being distracted in meetings as the requirement for videos to be on increasingly reduced as working from home continued over the years and also due to being inundated with meetings when working from home, it explains the disengagement due to "Zoom fatigue".

Navigating non-verbal cues in virtual meetings

Navigating non-verbal cues in virtual meetings was another challenge that came out from this study as a challenge whilst working from home. This was seen as a challenge due the inability to read the room, which plays a huge role in managing perceptions, office politics and gaining an understanding of individuals true feelings and ideas.

The research revealed that the lack of social interactions affected the wellbeing of employees, due to the inability to read non-verbal cues (Standaert et al., 2022). De Klerk et al. (2021) added that the loss of non-verbal communication and social cues negatively impacted social interaction, and that this has been due to not using webcams during meetings and the inability to pick up on people's body language and other non-verbal cues which people are reliant on for communication. The findings of this study are in agreement with this.

Increased workload

Research results highlighted how WFH, due to it being so output driven and also the fact that individuals need to manage perceptions of working even though they are remote, led to increased workload which just keeps piling on. Another reason for this was because participants felt that time in the office is spent on unproductive activities such as the social conversations with colleagues, which wastes time. This is why the results show that many participants felt their productivity increased, however this creates the perception of having additional capacity for work, as such the workload keeps on increasing.

Shao et al. (2021) found that workers expressed that that they were required to take part in an excessive number of unforeseen or urgent virtual meetings in addition to a lot of extra, urgent, or unanticipated task needs when WFH. While another author added that the shift to work from home has raised expectations for workload, and as a result, this rise in effort has been linked to physical problems in people because of spending longer hours at a workstation (Xiao et al., 2021). This is aligned with the research results of this study, even though in this study, an insignificant number of participants did not express its impact on their physical wellbeing, but merely highlighted its impact on their overall wellbeing and ability to switch off from work and fuelled the pursuit to maintain balance between work and personal life commitments.

Lack of boundaries

As more people work from home, the distinction between work and home life has become hazier, which has created a need for boundary management (Allen et al., 2021). In this study, the results show an agreement amongst the participants on the lack of boundaries by colleagues and managers where contact would be made outside of working hours as well increased expectations to complete tasks within really tight timelines. This was seen as a major challenge to overcome and the

research seems to agree with this by expressing and highlighting the need for boundary management when WFH. This sentiment is also shared by Wang et al. (2020) who stated that employees need to establish clear boundaries between themselves and colleagues in order to manage remote work effectively. This also opens up the opportunity to improve communication channels with colleagues which is often challenged in remote working.

Inability to gauge colleagues' ways of work

Coworkers who work from home raise serious concerns about professional isolation. Because working remotely allows people to cut ties with coworkers in the workplace, isolation may result. This may result in a culture within the company that is less cohesive and makes it more challenging to create common standards and experiences (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). In this study, the participants expressed this point as an inability to get a sense of other colleagues' ways of work as a way to improve one's own performance.

6.2.2 OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WHO WFH

Achieving work-life balance

The research results found that achieving work-life balance was the most significant opportunity that participants felt working from home presented them. This allowed them the opportunity to manage their lives holistically in a way that is suitable to their lifestyle and preferred routine. As seen in the literature review, work-life balance is said to have been central to research work done around WFH. Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) shared that many employees that worked from home experienced poor work-life balance especially those with large families even though other authors such as Felstead and Henseke, (2017) stated how WFH is still considered as the family-friendly option despite the challenges. This can explain the views shared by the participants in this study, who shared a great appreciation for being able to spend more time with their families and to be more hands on and present in the home which has in turn had a positive impact on their general wellbeing.

Flexibility

Working from home, according to the results of this study, brought about increased flexibility and the participants of this study saw this as a significant opportunity which had an influence on many outcomes such as work-life balance as discussed above,

routine and schedule planning, and just the general autonomy to move activities around and maintain that fluidity in one's day to day operations. The literature agrees with this as it states that's independent task scheduling management by remote workers provides more freedom and flexibility for daily schedules and personal work processes, enabling individuals to take charge of their own work (Müller & Niessen, 2019b).

Time for other things

The findings also revealed that participants felt that an opportunity working from home presented them was additional time to do other activities. The views here ranged from having additional time to settle into the day in the mornings whilst for others it meant having additional time for other personal pursuits such as running a business. The literature however seems to disagree with this finding, highlighting, in a study done by Kelliher et al. (2019) which found that the additional time gained from not needing to commute to work, resulted instead in additional time spent working.

It is apparent that it all boils down to how individuals choose to conduct their daily affairs and how they manage the challenges and opportunities presented to them by work from home. This will thus be covered in the section to follow where the researcher will unpack the ways in which individuals have self-lead around these challenges and opportunities and how that relates to what was found in the literature.

6.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How have employees adapted their self-leadership strategies in a work from home environment?

The research participants were asked several questions to gain insight into how they have self-lead and thus adapted those strategies to suit the working from home environment with the challenges and opportunities it presented them. The resulting themes that emerged from this were discussed in Chapter 5 and in the section below will be discussed and assessed against what was found in the literature to answer research question 2.

The insights will be structured around each of the 3 main self-leadership strategies and more specifically the sub-self-leadership strategies and a conclusion of these insights will be provided in the end.

6.3.1 HOW EMPLOYEES ADAPTED THEIR BEHAVIOURAL SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES WHEN WFH

The behavioural self-leadership strategies as discussed in Chapter 2 of the literature review include the following strategies: self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment and self-cueing. Individuals use behavioral strategies, or activities, to inspire and guide themselves toward their goals (Harari et al., 2021). The research results revealed the following under each of these elements:

Self-observation

Self-observation speaks to tracking one's progress and performance and doing actions that can raise your awareness of this (Kalra et al., 2021). In the results, setting up a routine was one of the significant ways that participants shared as one of the earliest and most important things that they realized they had to set up for themselves. The assessment showed agreement on this among all 14 of the participants that took part in this study. This factor, however, played out in different ways for different people. Where some would emulate a normal work from office day by working within business hours, others merely ensured that they structured their work schedule irrespective of it falling within business hours or not.

The establishment of routine was critical for participants to adjust to the unstructured nature of work from home which presents them with challenges of being susceptible to distractions and overworking. Another group of participants shared creating routine and a schedule around their life holistically, including both work and personal tasks, that way that enabled to know what to expect from each day, whilst also trying to remain fluid around the interruptions and urgent meeting requests that come with WFH. Van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2021) in literature asserted that the idea behind self-observation is that it helps people become more aware of how they operate and helps them understand it better and thus to be able to change it for the better.

In attempting to adapt to the WFH challenges, participants observed the need for a set routine around their work schedules which could or could not include scheduling their personal life and from this they are able to track how they are performing and meeting goals they have set for themselves thereby displaying this strategy of self-observation.

Another aspect, which also speaks to the self-leadership strategy of self-observation is employee motivation. The insights on this revealed that participants found motivation from ticking off items from their to-do lists that would have been created during the planning process. Many expressed getting a thrill from this particularly when working from home, as they have relied on them a lot more to use for tracking their own performance and that this act would motivate them to keep the momentum and gave them a sense of accomplishment. Woods et al. (2023) expressed that self-leadership strategies combine one's efforts towards achieving goals and psychological resources to achieve success. The participants of this study seemed to have manifested what the research is saying, by combining their action of setting up schedule and routine with the psychological element of gaining motivation from ticking off the to-do lists as a way to self-lead.

Self-goal setting

Self-goal setting as a behavioral self-leadership strategy includes the individuals managing themselves by using personal goals (Stewart et al., 2010). The setting up of a routine as mentioned above is a part of self-goal setting as it the discipline that provides structure and thus assists individuals to remain productive when WFH, which was a key finding of this study.

Eleven participants discussed changing their task management strategies in a work from home environment. They emphasized the importance of keeping schedules fluid to accommodate urgent requests and calls. They also emphasized the skill of continuously re-prioritizing tasks. The dynamic of work from home demands increased workload, push-back on non-priority work, and not taking on more than one can handle.

Participants discussed time-management strategies, with half blocking out time for focus work in their diaries. They were strict about dedicating every hour to deep cerebral work, as random meetings could disrupt their focus. In the literature, Wang et al. (2021) expressed that offering resources such as time management training could enhance WFH employees' performance and overall wellbeing. This highlights the significance of time-management on individuals self-leading capabilities when WFH. The findings of this study also found that to be key.

The majority of participants viewed increased responsibility as a personal development aspect of WFH. They felt this increased responsibility boosted their

self-leadership and productivity. Six participants agreed that WFH improved their ability to handle more work, enhancing their productivity. Other personal development areas included setting clear career and personal life goals, improving self-knowledge, and building a personal brand in a WFH context. Antonacopoulou and Georgiadou (2021) stated that the evolving demands of the workplace requires for leaders to focus on developing their leadership capabilities in order to self-lead. This assertion is in line with what the participants of this study shared.

Self-reward and Self-punishment

The behavioural strategies of self-reward and self-punishment were not highly employed by the participants of this study. Self-reward entails setting up incentive schemes for oneself whilst self-punishment involves feeling bad about failing which helps control unwanted habits (Kalra et al., 2021). Some participants had mentioned not thinking to reward themselves as motivation or for tasks completed be it in small or large ways.

Self-cuieng

Self-cuieng includes setting physical reminders to complete work or the removal of barriers to work (Kalra et al., 2021). One of the key ways the participants in this study exemplified self-cuieng was through creating-to-do lists for one self during planning and task management.

Another way where self-cuieng was seen in this study was through the establishment of boundaries, seen as a “removal of a barrier to work”. Thirteen participants agreed on the importance of establishing boundaries while working from home as a key adaptation to self-leading. Six participants highlighted establishing boundaries with family members to prevent interruptions. To manage colleagues' lack of boundaries, participants set hard stops at the end of business, avoided taking calls, and avoided working on weekends. Some participants shared sentiments about boundary management, such as setting time limits and communicating with children. By establishing boundaries, participants were able to better manage their work environment and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Literature agrees with this, emphasising the role for boundary management as key in managing the transition to WFH and in ensuring the lines between work and personal life are not blurred (Allen et al., 2021). This was further emphasised in the literature by other authors who stated that organisations have a role to play in

establishing the boundaries between work and personal life for their employees and to improve communication channels (Wang et al., 2020).

In addition, the study found that physically switching off laptops and packing them up at the end of the day is beneficial for mental health during work-from-home. Participants acknowledged the impact of working from home on their mental capacity and the "always switched on" dynamic. They found that physically switching off laptops and packing them away, along with clearing their home desk or office, reduced the mental load and allowed them to appear fresh each day. This was another way of removing a barrier to work mentally, as not switching from work tended to cause challenges to participants productivity in the long run as they expressed how physically and mentally exhausting not switching off from work was for them, as such, they found a way to mitigate this for themselves by physically switching off laptops and packing up their workstations.

In the literature it was found that some managers struggle with trusting whether employees are working and this often translates to an environment where team members feel the pressure to always be available, thus making it difficult for them to switch off from work (Parker et al., 2020). This was reflected in the results of this study as such a mitigation against that was the act of packing away as one would when working from the office.

Lastly, the study found that setting up a dedicated workstation in one's home is crucial for effective leadership during work from home. This space allows for productivity and boundaries, reducing the need to work in high-traffic areas like the couch or living room. Some participants found that even the workspace they worked in was important, as it contributed to their productivity and sense of belonging. Creating an office environment in one's home helped them feel more comfortable and productive. Müller & Niessen (2019a) stated that working from home differs from traditional work environments, which provide a temporal and physical framework for daily routines like fixed hours, supervision, lunch breaks, and separation between work and private life needs. The findings from this study agreed with this. Allen et al. (2021) added that having a dedicated working environment improved work-non-work balance, thereby improving productivity.

Self-regulation – SCT

In the literature, from the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which underpins this study that behaviours of self-regulation were mapped to the behavioural self-leadership strategies (Harari et al., 2021). In the study, participants showed behaviours of self-regulation through communication as well as emotional regulation.

The study highlights the importance of improved communication in working from home. Participants identified areas for improvement in communication with colleagues, families, and stakeholders. They noted the need to put in extra effort to reach out to colleagues and improve casual conversations to leverage relationships for help or performance improvement. Increased transparency in communication with stakeholders was also noted, with constant feedback and line manager communication for visibility. Communication with families, particularly during working hours, was also improved to manage harmony and cope with the strain of working from home. Mitigating against the isolation and strained social and communication channels between co-workers and stakeholders WFH, participants self-regulated by adjusting their behaviour in order to enable their success. As self-regulation involves directing thoughts, feelings, and actions towards achieving goals, enabling goal attainment and task completion, while motivational processes are essential for setting objectives (Schunk et al., 2020).

The study found that participants regulate their emotions to self-lead and adapt to work from home situations. The most significant aspect was managing feelings of overwhelm, which can be managed through various methods such as stopping to do lists, avoiding last-minute work, and being aware of negative emotion triggers. Journaling was also mentioned as a method for minimizing thoughts in the head.

Kalra et al. (2021) found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and behavioral self-leadership, with technical knowledge having a weaker relationship. Self-efficacy was stated as a deeply rooted personality attribute and crucial for self-regulation. The findings revealed many participants staking not struggling with remaining positive and constantly trying to find ways to remain productive, and the recognition of the overwhelm surrounding working from home, allowed them to act in the way that was necessary for them to meet deliverables and overcome fears (self-efficacy) and through emotional regulation.

6.3.2 HOW EMPLOYEES ADAPTED THEIR COGNITIVE SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES WHEN WFH

The cognitive self-leadership strategies describe the mental techniques people employ to control their feelings and ideas and include: positive self-talk, mental imagery, visualization, thinking patterns, self-awareness and reflection (Harari et al., 2021). A discussion of how these were employed by the participants in this study, against what was found in the literature in Chapter 2 will follow below:

Self-talk

Self-talk from the literature relates to diluting or muting any negative thoughts to effectively change and form new habitual thinking patterns (Alnakhli et al., 2020).

There were several ways that the participants in this study attempted to reach and thereby influence any negative thought patterns. Participants used three adaptation strategies when working from home (WFH): regular garden walks, spirituality, and positive self-talk. Regular walks helped them clear their minds and ground themselves, while spirituality allowed them to grow and maintain their wellbeing. Positive self-talk helped them maintain a positive mindset, especially in isolation. Participants found that their spirituality positively impacted their contribution to the organization and their overall well-being. These practices contributed to their success and overall well-being, highlighting the importance of balancing work, spirituality, and family life. Singh et al. (2022) also added that spirituality also plays a major role in self-leadership by supporting positive health outcomes such as self-awareness, inner calm and improved management of stress.

Stress management tools, as a form of finding a way to delete negative thoughts was another way of influencing positive self-talk. Participants in this study found that managing stress while working from home involved talking to their manager, colleagues, and family members. Open communication was found to be a key factor in reducing stress levels. Participants felt relieved after the call, knowing that their manager would know about their situation. They also found that they could tap into their network and ask for solutions from other team members. Some participants also reported using recreational alcohol consumption during the day to reduce stress, which they wouldn't typically do at the office. After engaging in these activities, they would be able to psych themselves up through self-talk and positive re-enforcement.

The literature agrees with this, stating that getting to grips with one's stress and thinking patterns, can translate to a better internal motivation and focus on one's goals (Singh et al., 2022).

The literature found that engaging in positive self-talk and constructive thought patterns may decrease procrastination (Wang et al., 2021). Whilst the research findings of this study found that participants engaged in self-talk, there was very little insight into how that impacts procrastination. In fact, procrastination was hardly mentioned during interviews and did not come out strongly as a theme.

Mental Imagery and Visualisations

In this study, participants engaged minimally with the cognitive strategy of mental imagery and visualisations. The only area where this was manifested was through the strategy of self-talk as mentioned in the section above. In talking to oneself, they would mention statements like "you have done this before, you know what you are and can do it again", which relates to them using past success to imagine themselves being successful in the future even when faced with challenges arising from work from home.

Participants also made use of communication with others as a tool to influence mental imagery, such as speaking to family members or managers when stressed or stuck and being able to use others' mental imagery of them to get themselves to that place.

Panagopoulos and Ogilvie (2015) stated that people who use constructive mental imagery see themselves achieving goals before carrying out the necessary tasks to achieve them. From this study, this idea of an imagined outcome did not come out strongly from the research findings, instead there was a clear focus on getting the work done and meeting the significant number of deliverables to be met when working from home, seeing as there is a great culture of continuous working.

Thinking patterns

Wang et al. (2021) stated that constructive thinking patterns are key for self-leading individuals. The study found that employees in a work from home environment tend to have an attitude of continuous improvement, which is crucial for personal growth. This attitude, which is more innate than driven by work, is easier to develop during work from home. Participants found that work from home allows them to have heightened focus, revisit work, and consider different perspectives, leading to improvements and growth. This is in agreement with what the literature is saying.

The sample also discussed their work ethic and self-leadership during work from home. Seven participants prioritized urgent work to maintain reliability and responsibility. Despite the overwhelming environment, they remained fluid in prioritizing urgent tasks. Some participants had a "do what I need to do" work ethic, prioritizing important tasks and maintaining a "do what you need to do" mentality. Other key elements included discipline, being proactive, customer-centric, and going the extra mile to produce quality work.

In the initial months of working from home, participants highlighted challenges with really leveraging that autonomy gained with work from home, however at the time of the study, 3 years into working from home, they expressed a far greater sense of responsibility, which also explains the thinking patterns discussed above. As stated by Inceoglu et al. (2018) that self-leadership mediates the positive relationship between leadership empowerment and psychological empowerment, indicating that increased autonomy given to staff members by managers enhances self-leadership capacity, thereby increasing psychological empowerment.

The majority of participants viewed increased responsibility as a personal development aspect of working from home. They felt this increased responsibility boosted their self-leadership and productivity. Six participants agreed that working from home improved their ability to handle more work, enhancing their productivity. Other personal development areas included setting clear career and personal life goals, improving self-knowledge, and building a personal brand in a work from home context.

Participants also mentioned in addition to the emotional regulation aspects discussed above under behavioural self-leadership strategies is that they find ways to minimise any thoughts that may be in a loop in their heads to adjust their thinking patterns to being more positive.

Self-awareness and Self-reflection

Four out of nine participants regularly assess their performance in their work environment, expressing a need for this more during work from home. They also track long and short-term goals, complementing their planning. Reflecting on successful projects keeps them going in the right direction. Browning (2018) stated that self-leadership encourages proactive goal setting and personal responsibility,

enabling individuals to track their daily actions to achieve their objectives. The self-leading participants of this study reflected this insight in the research findings.

6.3.3 HOW EMPLOYEES ADAPTED THEIR NATURAL REWARD SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES WHEN WFH

The natural reward strategies include seeking feedback from others, surrounding one-self with positive people and modelling successful behaviour from others. These elements have been discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 and will be discussed in conjunction with the findings from this study below:

Seeking feedback from others

Communication as highlighted above was used by the participants as a tool to obtain feedback from others, whilst also trying to establish relationships and connections with co-workers. Increased transparency in communication with stakeholders was also noted, with constant feedback and line manager communication for visibility.

The study revealed that participants managed stakeholder perceptions around work from home by intentionally increasing their visibility. They engaged with managers to demonstrate their visibility, highlighting the importance of being visible in the workplace. As such it was also a way of obtaining feedback from managers on a consistent basis in turn.

In managing their stress, participants also shared reaching out and not drowning alone when stuck, which as well would provide them feedback to better themselves and improve performance.

Harari et al. (2021) highlighted obtaining feedback to enhance one's motivation and performance as a natural reward strategy in self-leading as an individual. The insights from this study reflect the use of this strategy in adapting to WFH.

Surrounding with positive people

This element (surrounding oneself with positive people) of the natural reward strategies had little mention from the participants in this study. This could be due to the isolation and loneliness expressed by the participants that they experienced WFH. Although they made efforts to reach out to colleagues concerning work and for social connection, there was little evidence of intentionally surrounding oneself with positive people as a self-leading strategy.

Modeling successful behaviour from others

Modelling the successful behaviour from others was difficult and highlighted as a challenge to overcome by the participants in this study who highlighted that WFH made it difficult to gauge other individuals' ways of work as a way to try to improve one's own performance. As such, there were no examples of this self-leadership strategy employed. The barriers of connection, relationship building and isolation of WFH made it difficult for individuals to consistently observe others and how they are adjusting and adapting to this way of work. The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) highlights, vicarious learning which involves looking at how others work, perform and the consequences to their actions as a way to learn (Harari et al., 2021). Little evidence of this was seen in this study.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to discuss the insights that emerged from this study in light with what was found in the literature in Chapter 2. The two research questions aimed to gain an understand of the context to which self-leading employees find themselves in with working from home and how this has shaped the way employees have adapted their self-leadership strategies to a working from home environment and which were the prominent or primary self-leading strategies that were utilised.

In answering research question 1, the research findings found overworking, relationship building, being susceptible to challenges and navigating non-verbal cues in a virtual environment as key challenges when working from home. The lack of boundaries and increased workload also emerged as key challenges.

On the opportunities from work from home, achieving work-life balance was the most significant opportunity highlighted by participants. And expressed that although working from home presents individuals with stressors to this work-life balance achievement, it is still the most appreciated feature of working from home which allows them to better manage their lives holistically, improve their careers and explore other pursuits such as entrepreneurship. Increased flexibility was another opportunity highlighted by participants.

In answering research question 2, the study explored the strategies employed by participants under the 3 main strategies of self-leadership namely: behavioural, cognitive and natural reward strategies.

The study examined the adoption of behavioural self-leadership strategies during work from home by 14 participants. Key aspects include self-observation, self-goal setting, increased responsibility, self-cueing, setting physical reminders, establishing boundaries, and setting up a dedicated workstation. Participants drew on self-observation through setting up of a routine and work schedule which varied amongst participants in terms of execution as others only created routine around their work only whilst others created structure around their personal and work life. This influenced the second strategy of self-goal setting which included establishing personal development areas, setting clear career and personal life goals, improving self-knowledge, and building a personal brand.

The self-cueing strategy also involved setting physical reminders to complete work such as to-do lists and removing barriers to work by establishing a dedicated workstation and physically clearing that workstation at the end of the day to reduce the mental load of being “always switched on” when working from home. Participants also highlighted improvement in communication and emotional regulation, such as increasing transparency and reaching out to colleagues to improve social connections to be able to leverage on those at a later stage. Recognizing overwhelm during working from home was key in emotional regulation for participants by allowing them to act effectively to meet deliverables and overcome fears.

In summary, of the behavioural self-leading strategies, the strategies drawn upon the most by participants were self-observation, self-cueing and self-goal setting strategies. The self-reward and self-punishment behavioural strategies being the least employed.

The study also explored the adoption of cognitive self-leadership strategies during work from home, including positive self-talk, mental imagery, visualization, thinking patterns, self-awareness, and reflection. Participants used regular garden walks, spirituality, and positive self-talk to maintain wellbeing. Stress management tools, open communication, and constructive thinking patterns such having an attitude of continuous improvement were found to be key for self-leading individuals. The study also discussed participants' work ethic, with some prioritizing urgent work and others just showing the discipline of doing what they need to do. Three years into working from home, participants expressed increased sense of responsibility, boosting self-leadership and productivity. Regular performance reflections were found to encourage proactive goal setting and personal responsibility.

In summary, self-talk, strategies around thinking patterns and self-reflection were amongst the most employed cognitive strategies whilst mental imagery and visualisations were underutilised when working from home.

Lastly, the study explored how individuals adapted their natural reward self-leadership strategies during work from home by seeking feedback from others, surrounding themselves with positive people, and modelling successful behaviour from others. Participants used communication to seek feedback and establish relationships with co-workers, increasing transparency and visibility to manage stakeholder perceptions. They also shared strategies for managing stress, such as reaching out and not drowning alone when stuck also as a way to seek feedback. Surrounding oneself with positive people was not mentioned, possibly due to isolation and loneliness experienced during WFH. Modelling successful behaviour from others was challenging, as working from home made it difficult to gauge others' ways of work and improve one's own performance. The study found little evidence of vicarious learning.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the researcher argued that there was a need to gain insight into the self-leadership strategies of employees who work from home. Many employees were thrust into WFH and the autonomy and increased responsibility over their time (Deole et al., 2023). However, Müller and Niessen (2019a) argued that employees are their own leaders and therefore self-lead in most situations including highly controlled situations.

This study therefore aimed to gain insight into the self-leadership strategies of employees WFH. The previous literature on self-leadership has primarily focussed on defining self-leadership despite it having been in existence since the 1980s, research on self-leadership is still in its infancy and has not matured, requiring further research Knotts et al. (2022).

This study relied on the narratives of employees from the banking sector, who are managers or leaders that have been working from home since March 2020 to detail their experiences working from home and how they have in turn adapted their self-leadership whilst working from home.

The main objectives of this study were therefore to firstly gain an understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by employees who work from home and secondly to understand how these employees had adapted their self-leadership whilst working from home in response to these challenges and opportunities.

This study has fulfilled the objectives it set out, by contributing to the body of knowledge on self-leadership and working from home.

The remainder of this chapter will therefore offer a conclusion on the key findings to answer the two main research questions. It will outline the areas that this study has contributed towards literature and the practical implications for management. The chapter will close on with a discussion on the limitations and recommendations for future research.

7.2 SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

This section serves to outline the conclusions and key themes uncovered under each research question.

7.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WHO WORK FROM HOME?

What we knew from the literature was that working from home has existed as an alternative way of working before the COVID-19 pandemic (Ge et al., 2023). Work from home offers increased job satisfaction, productivity, flexibility, and financial benefits for both individuals and organizations, enhancing work-life balance and overall productivity (Ge et al., 2023). Work from home presents challenges such as increased workloads and poor work-life balance due to longer workdays and constant online presence (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). While remote work boosts organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being, it also increases work intensity and difficulty in switching off (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

Furthermore, although work-life balance has been central to work from home studies and a key advantage for employees, their work-life balance is impacted by increased work-related fatigue, requiring boundary management due to blurred lines between work and home life, as per a study (Palumbo, 2020). Another author also added that the primary limitation is the absence of informal social interactions, which can significantly impact well-being due to the absence of nonverbal cues (Standaert et al., 2022).

Although a substantial amount of research existed on working from home challenges and opportunities, it was important to gain insights from on this for the fulfilment of this research project. Recent studies were conducted with employees also being under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic (Wang et al., 2020). As such, other authors added that work from home studies post pandemic will add to the body of work (Waizenegger et al., 2020). Future studies were suggested to continue to reflect on the experiences of individuals working from home versus working from the office (Wang et al., 2020).

The research highlights several challenges faced by self-leading individuals working from home, including overworking, relationship building, distractions, increased workload, and maintaining work-life balance. Overworking leads to prolonged workdays and increased workload, while relationship building is easier in the office. Distractions, particularly in virtual meetings, can lead to disengagement and lack of social interaction. Increased workload is another challenge, as working from home is output-driven and requires managing perceptions of working. The blurred distinction between work and home life necessitates boundary management, as there is a lack

of clear boundaries between colleagues and managers. Remote workers also faced concerns about professional isolation, which can lead to a less cohesive company culture and difficulty in creating common standards and experiences.

The research highlights the importance of work-life balance in remote work, as it allows employees to manage their lives according to their preferred routine. Despite challenges, working from home is considered a family-friendly option, as it allows employees to spend more time with their families and be more present at home. Increased flexibility is another significant advantage, as it allows for better routine planning and autonomy in daily operations. Additionally, working from home provides additional time for other activities, such as personal pursuits or running a business. However, some studies argue that the additional time gained from not needing to commute to work results in more time spent working. The success of working from home depends on how individuals manage these challenges and opportunities.

A summary of the key findings is highlighted in Figure 3 below:

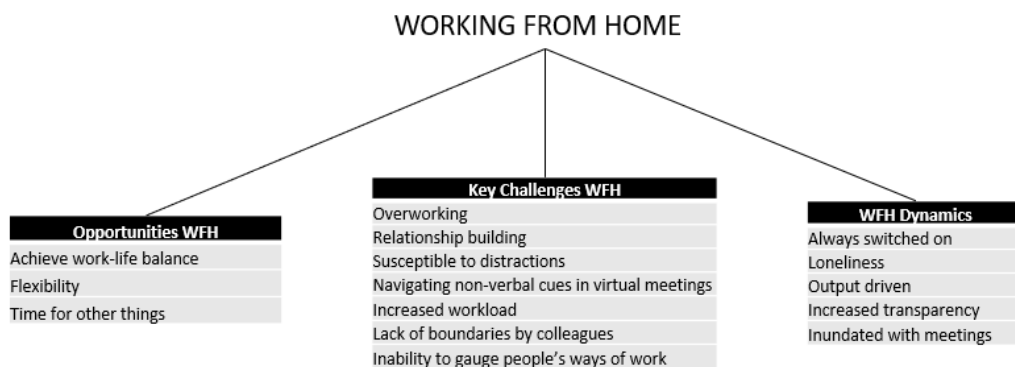


Figure 3: WFH Challenges, Opportunities and Dynamics

7.2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW HAVE EMPLOYEES ADAPTED THEIR SELF-LEADERSHIP IN A WORK FROM HOME ENVIRONMENT?

What we knew from the literature was that although widely available, the literature on self-leadership is fragmented. Owing to its complexity, the literature has evolved throughout the years from defining and comprehending self-leadership to explaining its existence. Müller and Niessen (2017b) believed that future research should focus

more on alternative methods of measuring self-leadership (especially on a daily basis) in order to completely yet simply measure self-leadership.

What was missing from the literature was that some of the literature also focussed on studying one of the self-leadership strategies and their relationship to work outcomes. Singh et al. (2017) pointed out that focusing on only one area of self-leadership strategies could be restrictive and that future research should focus on all areas of self-leadership methods in order to further integrate these constructs into literature.

According to Waizenegger et al. (2020), it's critical to investigate and comprehend the ways in which staff members are carrying out "business as usual" in spite of the shift to a work-from-home environment. This was corroborated by Kalra et al. (2021), who also mentioned that a more thorough examination of the self-leadership techniques should be conducted in the future by studying them all at once. This is what informed the focus of this study, by studying the self-leadership strategies holistically in the context of working from home.

What was found in this study in when seeking insights on behavioral self-leadership strategies. Key aspects included self-observation, self-goal setting, increased responsibility, self-cueing, setting physical reminders, establishing boundaries, and setting up a dedicated workstation. Participants found these strategies to be most effective, while self-reward and self-punishment strategies were least employed. Cognitive self-leadership strategies, such as positive self-talk, thinking patterns such as a "can do" attitude, self-reflection, were also employed. The participants made use of several stress management tools that included open communication, and constructive thinking patterns of wanting to continuously learn and improve, were key for self-leading individuals.

Three years into WFH, participants expressed an increased sense of responsibility of self, boosting their self-leadership and productivity. The study found that self-talk, thinking patterns, and self-reflection were among the most employed cognitive strategies. Participants also adapted their natural reward self-leadership strategies primarily through seeking feedback. The natural reward strategies of surrounding oneself with positive people and modelling successful behavior from others were the least employed.

7.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDY

This study builds on the current body of work on self-leadership and work from home literature. Wang et al. (2020) asserted that future research on work from home should consider the experiences of employees working from home and more specifically by gaining insights into employee's characteristics when working from home. This study makes this contribution by understanding how employees conduct themselves, lead themselves in remote working.

Knotts et al. (2022) reflected in a meta-analysis on self-leadership that the body of knowledge is scattered and that the importance of self-leadership requires further clarity. This study contributes to this gap in the literature by providing insights into self-leadership's importance in today's work environment that has an increased prevalence of remote working.

There is a limited number of studies that focus on self-leadership when working from home. Work from home studies have been studied in relation to team collaboration, firm resilience, the strategies by families working from home, employee's wellbeing and job attitude and to performance (Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou, 2021; Deole et al., 2023; Ge et al., 2023; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Waizenegger et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2023). This study contributes by providing knowledge on the self-leadership strategies wholistically in light of the construct of working from home.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

The findings of this study carry some practical implications for management. Parker et al. (2020) expressed that managers struggled with trusting employees to work in a working from home context. This study contributes by highlighting the various ways in which employees have adapted to working from home in attempts to remain productive and to continue to perform, as such can contribute towards providing leaders with knowledge that can improve their trust on employees in remote working.

The self-leadership strategies are in existence to support individuals in enhancing their performance (Sjöblom et.al 2022). This benefits organisations, if they are able to understand and encourage the development of employees self-leading capabilities both when working in the office and more so when working from home under no supervision. Manz (2015) also emphasised this point by stating that organizations that get this can, identify more effective and appropriate methods of motivating their

workforce. This can also include enabling or empowering supervisors to effectively lead staff members remotely.

In summary, self-leadership is crucial for organizational success, especially in remote work environments (Stewart et al., 2019). Understanding employees' strategies can help organizations encourage and empower them to lead remotely. Self-leadership training can boost productivity and happiness in changing workplaces (Manz, 2015; Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2018). Employees who lack self-leading capabilities are less motivated and less likely to enhance customer experiences (Su et al., 2022). Therefore, investing in self-leadership skills can improve productivity, motivation, adaptability, and communication, leading to better outcomes and success in remote work environments. Self-leadership can also impact the leader-follower relationship positively, as individuals with strong self-leadership require less supervision, freeing up time for leaders to focus on strategic responsibilities (Oc et al., 2023).

7.5 LIMITATIONS

This section will discuss the limitations to be aware of.

The study was cross-sectional, as such the insights gained are as at the given time the study was conducted. Theofanidis and Fountouki, (2018) argue that the study's timing may distort its findings, considering larger socioeconomic and financial developments. The data was collected cross-sectionally, not considering potential changes in self-leadership strategies when WFH over time.

A researchers bias is inherent in qualitative research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researchers bias may have influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data when creating codes and themes due to them meeting the sample criteria. Their experiences may have come into play as well when interviewing participants due to their reactions to certain narratives.

The sample size was small as such the findings may not be generalizable to the entire population. The study was also focussed on employees in the banking sector in Johannesburg South Africa, as such may not be generalizable to employees in other industries due to any nuances that may impact how those employees self-lead when WFH.

Participants were selected from the researcher's network and although snowball sampling was also used, sampling bias may have occurred also impacting generalizability.

7.6 RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should consider including comparison of self-leadership with hybrid employees versus full time remote workers. Seeing as this study focussed primarily on employees working from home, many organisations are moving more employees towards a hybrid working format. A comparative study would add value by assessing whether there are shifts or changes in the way individuals self-lead when the hybrid element is considered.

Further quantitative relationships can be explored between constructs, such as exploring the relationship between certain work from home challenges or opportunities and the resultant self-leadership strategy used.

Other research can explore, which self-leadership strategies can be developed or trained, contributing towards organisations role in developing some self-leadership capabilities. This can explore identifiers of these characteristics, which can inform training programs designed.

Future research can also consider conducting a similar study with a larger sample. There were many codes generated some of which had an insignificant number of mentions by participants. In increasing the sample size, some of those elements may emerge stronger as themes for consideration.

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APENDICES

APENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structured interview guide

Research Questions

RQ1: How do individuals adapt their self-leadership strategies in a remote working environment?

Interview questions

RQ2: What are the primary self-leadership strategies employed by individuals working from home?

General Interview questions

1. How long have you been working from home?
2. What has your experience been like working from home, tell me about the shift from being office based to now, working from home?

Questions based on RQ1: How they adapt their strategies in remote working setting

1. How have you adapted the way you lead yourself to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by working from home?
2. How do you maintain discipline, focus, and accountability in your work routine while working from home?
3. What are some strategies you use to strike a balance between work and personal life whilst working from home?
4. What strategies do you use to overcome obstacles while working remotely?

Questions based on first research question: What strategies are employed

Behavior-Focused Strategies:

1. Can you describe the specific behaviors or actions you employ to stay productive while working from home?
2. How do you manage your work schedule and prioritize tasks to ensure maximum efficiency when working remotely?
3. Do you have any strategies for creating a structured work routine or setting clear goals for yourself while working from home?

Cognitive-Focused Strategies:

1. How do you maintain a positive mindset while working remotely? Are there any specific mental strategies you use?
2. How do you manage stress in a home-based working setting?
3. Do you engage in the practice of self-reflection to enhance your performance when working from home?
4. Do you engage in the practice of self-awareness to enhance your performance when working from home?

Self-Reward Strategies:

1. Do you celebrate or reward yourself for meeting goals or completing tasks in a remote work environment?
2. Are there any specific ways in which you incentivize yourself to stay focused and achieve desired outcomes while working from home?

APENDIX 2: CODE BOOK

Sub code	Code	Code Groups
Attitude	Aim to overcome challenges	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Always show up despite WFH	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Attitude: Individual success contributes to team success	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Be a self-starter	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Continuous improvement	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Do what needs to be done	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Incremental activity leads to exponential growth	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Keep going despite negative feelings	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Remaining ethical and true to duty to company	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Speak for yourself to show work done	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Views challenges as opportunities	Employee Attitude
Attitude	Work comes before everything else	Employee Attitude
Boundary set	Colleagues informed when and when not available	Boundaries
Boundary set	Don't answer calls at anytime	Boundaries
Boundary set	Family may not interrupt when at workstation	Boundaries
Boundary set	Hard stop at COB	Boundaries
Boundary set	No meetings before a set time in the morning	Boundaries
Boundary set	No work on weekends	Boundaries
Boundary set	Separate work area to other WFH family member	Boundaries
Communication	Communicate in open and closed forums	Communication
Communication	Leverage One on one engagements with colleagues	Communication
Communication	Maintain contact with stakeholders	Communication
Communication	Over communicate	Communication
Communication	Put extra effort to speak to colleagues	Communication
Communication	Transparency on deliverables with stakeholders	Communication
Communication	Transparency with family on work hours	Communication
Day Management	Create to do lists	Routine
Day Management	No to do lists	Routine
Emotional regulation	Avoid starting work last minute	Emotional Regulation
Emotional regulation	Aware of negative emotion triggers	Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation	Face emotions and cry	Emotional Regulation
Emotional regulation	Manage feelings of overwhelm	Emotional Regulation
Emotional regulation	Stop to do lists to avoid feeling overwhelmed	Emotional Regulation
Environment	Avoid distractions	Environment
Environment	Keep home environment peaceful	Environment
Environment	Set up dedicated workstation/room	Environment
Leadership issue	Inability to be hands on as a leader	WFH Challenges
Leadership issue	Micromanaging	WFH Challenges
Mental	Critical of self	Wellbeing
Mental	Dedicated workstation provides mental breakaway	Wellbeing
Mental	Do mental check-ins with self	Wellbeing
Mental	Exercise as tool for mental refreshment	Wellbeing
Mental	Feel empowered to manage life overall	Wellbeing
Mental	Inability to introspect due to busy schedule	Wellbeing
Mental	Making time to see family and friend	Wellbeing
Mental	No struggle staying positive	Wellbeing
Mental	Packing away allows mind to switch off	Wellbeing
Mental	Reduced anxiety allowing one to focus on work	Wellbeing
Mental	Self-aware when work is impacting health	Wellbeing
Mental	Self-aware about stress triggers	Wellbeing
Mental	Self-aware on causes for loss of focus	Wellbeing
Mental	Self-motivate	Wellbeing
Motivation	Acquiring new knowledge and skills	Performance Motivators
Motivation	An inner point to prove to self	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Autonomy/Control drives performance	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Complete work that has been started	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Driven by remuneration	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Look forward to spending time with family at end of day	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Looking forward to family time at end of day	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Meeting deliverables/Performance	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Motivated by challenges	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Ticking off tasks from to-do list	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Use feedback to improve performance	Performance Motivators
Motivation	Visualising obtaining dream assets	Performance Motivators

Personal development	Ask for more work to grow	Personal Development
Personal development	Build own personal brand	Personal Development
Personal development	Built rapport with stakeholders	Personal Development
Personal development	Continuously improve academically	Personal Development
Personal development	Finding ways to grow in knowledge of self	Personal Development
Personal development	Forced to come out of comfort zone (shell)	Personal Development
Personal development	Having accountability partners	Personal Development
Personal development	Improved productivity	Personal Development
Personal development	Improvement in prioritising tasks	Personal Development
Personal development	Increased autonomy	Personal Development
Personal development	Increased sense of responsibility of self	Personal Development
Personal development	Interest in subjects unrelated to own work	Personal Development
Personal development	Learning from past mistakes	Personal Development
Personal development	Read books to sharpen intellect	Personal Development
Personal development	Seeking feedback from others	Personal Development
Personal development	Self accountability	Personal Development
Personal development	Setting clear goals for career	Personal Development
Personal development	Setting clear goals for personal life	Personal Development
Personal development	Use experience to inform task prioritisation	Personal Development
Perspective	Corporates not caring about overworked workers	Reflections
Perspective	We need to authentic leaders in WFH	Reflections
Perspective	WFH makes life wholesome	Reflections
Physical health	Exercise regularly	Wellbeing
Physical health	Manage physical energy throughout day	Wellbeing
Physical health	Reduced movement	Wellbeing
Positive sentiment	Fulfilment	
Practise	Bath as a distressing ritual	Adaptation
Practise	Check in with self on performance	Adaptation
Practise	Daily affirmations	Adaptation
Practise	Diary of all things grateful for	Adaptation
Practise	Exercise to refresh mind and body	Adaptation
Practise	Improve knowledge on current affairs	Adaptation

Practise	Jog at end of the day to signal COB	Adaptation
Practise	Journalling	Adaptation
Practise	Positive self talk for emotional upliftment	Adaptation
Practise	Read books	Adaptation
Practise	Spending time outdoors	Adaptation
Practise	Take breaks when mentally saturated	Adaptation
Practise	Use spirituality for grounding and focus	Adaptation
Practise	Walk outside and take in environment	Adaptation
Practise	Watch documentaries	Adaptation
Psychological	Deteriorating mental health	Wellbeing
Psychological	Neglect of self whilst showing up more for family and friends	Wellbeing
Reflection	Feeling like CEO of own life	Reflections
Reflection	Having met people physically makes asking for help easier	Reflections
Reflection	Increased awareness of corporate politics	Reflections
Reflection	Juggling work and school requires self management	Reflections
Reflection	Need to consistently celebrate small wins	Reflections
Reflection	Need to find ways to onboard individuals in remote work environments	Reflections
Reflection	Reflect on challenging tasks for improvement	Reflections
Reflection	Seeing the corporate culture negatively	Reflections
Reflection	WFH is a requirement for future roles	Reflections
Reflection	WFH opening eyes to a bigger better world for self	Reflections
Reward	Celebrate self	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Cup of coffee at milestones	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Do not celebrate work accomplishments	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Don't feel need to reward self for work	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Incentivise self	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Limited time to celebrate or reward self	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Peace obtained from complete tasks	Employee Self-Reward
Reward	Taking leave for rest	Employee Self-Reward
Routine	Chop and change between work and personal throughout day	Routine
Routine	Emulate a WFO day	Routine
Routine	No structure to day	Routine
Routine	No structure to work schedule	Routine
Routine	No work life balance achieved	Routine
Routine	Physically switch off laptop/pack away	Routine
Routine	Spending time with family to shut down end of day	Routine
Routine	Stick to similar routine weekly	Routine
Routine	Structure work schedule	Routine

Routine	Utilise evenings or early mornings to catch up	Routine
Routine	Utilise some evenings for work	Routine
Schedule	Create own work schedule	Task Management
Schedule	Create schedule for work and personal life together	Task Management
Schedule	Keep to schedule daily	Task Management
Schedule	Keep work schedule fluid	Task Management
Self-assessment	Check-in with self on performance	Self-Assessment
Self-assessment	Measure growth/goals met frequently	Self-Assessment
Self-assessment	Reflect on how each day went	Self-Assessment
Self-assessment	Self-awareness	Self-Assessment
Self-assessment	Speak to family member to reflect on performance	Self-Assessment
Self-assessment	Track long- and short-term progress	Self-Assessment
Sentiment	Colleagues abuse of WFH perceptions	Reflections
Sentiment	Colleagues taking advantage if always available	Reflections
Sentiment	Don't want to return to office	Reflections
Sentiment	Leaders cannot micromanage anymore	Reflections
Sentiment	Leadership taking advantage of WFH situation	Reflections
Sentiment	Love for remote working	Reflections
Sentiment	Management not caring on colleagues overworking	Reflections
Stakeholder management	Deepen connections with colleagues on office days	Stakeholder Management
Stakeholder management	Manage perceptions through visibility	Stakeholder Management
Stakeholder management	Remain available despite work schedule	Stakeholder Management
Stakeholder management	Show your work	Stakeholder Management
Stress management	Cooking for family end of day	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Family moments during day	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Get sufficient sleep	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Improved work life balance	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	No stress relieving mechanism	Stress Management Tools

Stress management	Overeating/Snacking a lot	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Prayer	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Reach out to colleagues for help	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Recreational drinking	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Regular exercise	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Spending time with family and friends	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Talk to family member	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Talk to manager	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Therapy	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	Walk away from work to take a breather	Stress Management Tools
Stress management	WFH reduced stress	Stress Management Tools
Support structure	Create support structure with neighbours and friends	Adaptation
Support structure	Help at home	Adaptation
Task management	Break down task into small chunks	Task Management
Task management	Complete one task at a time	Task Management
Task management	Not taking on more that you can handle	Task Management
Task management	Push back on nonpriority work	Task Management
Task management	Self-motivation	Task Management
Task management	Using Kanbans	Task Management
Task management	Utilise team check-ins to inform focus direction	Task Management
Technology use	Software's and tools used to track workflow	Adaptation

Technology use	Strategic communication planning with colleagues	Adaptation
Time	WFH since March 2020	WFH Period
Time management	Avoid doing personal things during day	Time Management
Time management	Block out diary for focus work	Time Management
Time management	Doing only what is necessary to free up time for other interests	Time Management
Time management	Make time to exercise	Time Management
Time management	Manage time during breaks	Time Management
Time management	Replace travel to work time with gym	Time Management
Time management	Sacrifice personal time for work	Time Management
Wellbeing	Deteriorating work life balance	Wellbeing
Wellbeing	Don't realise when over extending self	Wellbeing
Wellbeing	No time for rest	Wellbeing
Wellbeing	Wellbeing not impacted by office politics	Wellbeing
Wellbeing	Work over leisure	Wellbeing
WFH Advantage	Ability to improve family financially	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Ability to take care of sick parents	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Can deliver high quality work in less time	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Family better off	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Freedom	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Health better off	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Increased sense of control	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Learnt new tech skills	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	No need to pretend or put on facade	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	No travel	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Spending time with family	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Time for Spiritual growth	WFH Advantage
WFH Advantage	Unwind process at end of day is immediate	WFH Advantage
WFH Challenge	Being desk bound all day	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Being new in a role or organisation	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Building relationships with colleagues	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Collaborating with others	WFH Challenges

WFH Challenge	Colleagues not readily available for support	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Finding suitable place to work	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Getting time from people to teach as new employee	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Inability to gauge people's ways of work remotely	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Increased diary bookings	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Increased screen time	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Increasing workload	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Lack of boundaries by colleagues	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Leading a team virtually	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Multitasking	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Navigating nonverbal cues in virtual meetings	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Navigating self management	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	No breaks	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Overworking	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Power outages	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Preserving the feel of the home	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	Susceptible to distractions	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	WFH Challenge: Emotional neglect due to multitasking	WFH Challenges
WFH Challenge	WIFI/Network Connectivity	WFH Challenges
WFH Dynamic	Always switched on	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Difficult to set boundaries on working hours	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Feeling watched all the time	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Increased accountability from coworkers	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Increased micromanagement	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Increased physical exhaustion	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Increased transparency	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Inundated with meetings	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Isolation leading to overemphasis of own contribution	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Loneliness	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	More output driven	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	People more accepting of personal life interferences	WFH Dynamics
WFH Dynamic	Weekly team check-ins	WFH Dynamics
WFH Expectations	Everything can be done in a day	WFH Expectations
WFH Expectations	Showing up for all booked meetings	WFH Expectations
WFH Expectations	Treat everything with urgency	WFH Expectations
WFH Opportunity	Achieve Work Life Balance	WFH Opportunities
WFH Opportunity	Flexibility	WFH Opportunities
WFH Opportunity	Increased ability to improve spirituality	WFH Opportunities
WFH Opportunity	Increased engagement with clients through virtual	WFH Opportunities

WFH Opportunity	Increased engagement with colleagues	WFH Opportunities
WFH Opportunity	Showcase work minus work politics	WFH Opportunities
WFH Opportunity	Time for other things	WFH Opportunities
WFH Perceptions	Open diary means available	WFH Perceptions
WFO Advantage	Drive to work was therapeutic	WFO Advantages
WFO Advantage	Easier to set knocking off time boundary	WFO Advantages
WFO Advantage	Easy to ask for help	WFO Advantages
WFO Advantage	Provides structure to day routine	WFO Advantages
WFO Advantage	Strong relationships to leverage from	WFO Advantages
WFO Challenge	Dealing with people	WFO Challenges
WFO Disadvantage	More time spent on unproductive activities	WFO Disadvantage
WFO Perception	Keep busy for the sake of being busy	WFH Perceptions
Work ethic	Clear mailbox daily	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Customer centricity	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Do difficult tasks first	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Do what you need to do	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Finding purpose in your work	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Go the extra mile to produce quality work	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Prioritise urgent work	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Proactive and not wait for manager	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Set uninterrupted focus time	Work Ethic
Work ethic	Use evenings for focus work	Work Ethic

APENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

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From: Masters Research <MastersResearch@gibs.co.za>
Sent: Monday, 07 August 2023 13:28
To: 27181139@mygibs.co.za
Cc: Masters Research
Subject: Ethical Clearance Approved
Attachments: EthicalClearanceReport.pdf

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear [REDACTED]

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.