



**MASTER'S DEGREE IN
MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**

**MASTER FINAL WORK
DISSERTATION**

**THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND CONTROL
MECHANISMS IN REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

DEBORAH OSSE OHANMA

OCTOBER 2024



**MASTER'S DEGREE IN
MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**

**THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND CONTROL
MECHANISMS IN REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

BY

DEBORAH OSSE OHANMA

**SUPERVISOR:
PROF. SARA MARTINS GONÇALVES**

OCTOBER 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported and guided me throughout the journey of completing this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Sara Martins Gonçalves, for her invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement. Her expertise and insight were instrumental in shaping this research and ensuring its successful completion.

I am deeply appreciative of the managers and employees from both Company A and Company B who generously shared their time and experiences, which provided the rich data necessary for this study. Without their candid responses and thoughtful insights, this research would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their unwavering support and patience throughout this challenging yet fulfilling process. Their constant encouragement helped me stay focused and motivated.

Lastly, I am grateful to my colleagues and professors in the Master's program in Management and Industrial Strategy for their contributions to my academic development, as well as to all the staff at the university who assisted me during my studies.

To all of you, I extend my sincerest thanks.

ABSTRACT

The rapid shift toward remote work, driven by technological advancements and evolving workplace attitudes, has created a complex interplay between employee autonomy and organizational control mechanisms. Existing literature suggests that remote work environments challenge traditional control models, demanding a reevaluation of management practices.

This study explores how autonomy and control coexist in remote work environments, focusing on how organizations balance the freedom granted to employees. Using a qualitative research approach, the study employs a case study analysis of two companies. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with managers and employees, as well as documentary analysis of organizational remote work policies. The analysis reveals that autonomy enhances employee motivation, creativity, and ownership, while control mechanisms, such as project management tools, are essential for ensuring productivity and coherence.

The study explores the balance between autonomy and control, highlighting the importance of trust, communication, and feedback in fostering successful remote work environments. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of how organizations can optimize the balance between autonomy and control. The study concludes with recommendations for managers on how to leverage technology, adapt control mechanisms, and nurture trust to achieve a productive and engaged remote workforce.

Keywords: Remote Work, Employee Autonomy, Control Mechanisms, Organizational Control, Case Study.

RESUMO

A rápida transição para o trabalho remoto, impulsionada pelos avanços tecnológicos e pela evolução das atitudes no local de trabalho, criou uma interação complexa entre a autonomia dos colaboradores e os mecanismos de controlo organizacional. A literatura existente sugere que os ambientes de trabalho remoto desafiam os modelos tradicionais de controlo, exigindo uma reavaliação das práticas de gestão.

Este estudo explora como a autonomia e o controlo coexistem em ambientes de trabalho remoto, focando-se em como as organizações equilibram a liberdade concedida aos colaboradores. Utilizando uma abordagem de investigação qualitativa, o estudo recorre à análise de estudo de caso de duas empresas. Os dados são recolhidos através de entrevistas semi-estruturadas com gestores e colaboradores, bem como da análise documental das políticas de trabalho remoto das organizações. A análise revela que a autonomia aumenta a motivação, a criatividade e o sentido de responsabilidade dos colaboradores, enquanto os mecanismos de controlo, como as ferramentas de gestão de projectos, são essenciais para garantir a produtividade e a coerência.

O estudo explora o equilíbrio entre autonomia e controlo, destacando a importância da confiança, comunicação e feedback para o sucesso em ambientes de trabalho remoto. Os resultados contribuem para uma compreensão mais profunda de como as organizações podem otimizar este equilíbrio. O estudo conclui com recomendações para gestores sobre como tirar partido da tecnologia, adaptar os mecanismos de controlo e fomentar a confiança para alcançar uma força de trabalho remota produtiva e comprometida.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho Remoto, Autonomia dos Colaboradores, Mecanismos de Controlo, Controlo Organizacional, Estudo de Caso.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning

FinTech - Financial Technology

FWAs - Flexible Work Arrangements

HR - Human Resources

KPI - Key Performance Indicator

QA - Quality Assurance

SLA - Service Level Agreement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT i

ABSTRACT..... ii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS iv

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. LITERATURE REVIEW 2

2.1 Organizational Control..... 3

2.2 Employee Autonomy..... 5

2.3 Employee Autonomy Versus Organizational Control..... 7

2.4 Conceptual Framework..... 8

3. METHODOLOGY..... 8

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure 13

3.2 Ethical Considerations..... 14

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES..... 14

4.1 Description of Company A 14

4.1.1 Control of Work..... 15

4.1.2 Employee's Autonomy 15

4.1.3 Interplay Between Control and Autonomy..... 16

4.2 Description of Company B 17

4.2.1 Control of Work..... 17

4.2.2 Employee's Autonomy 17

4.2.3 Interplay Between Control and Autonomy..... 18

4.3 Cross Case Analysis: Company A Versus Company B 18

4.4 Discussion of Findings 21

5.1	Summary of Research Findings	27
5.2	Reflection on the Practical and Theoretical Implications	29
5.3	Study Limitations And Suggestions For Future Research	30
	REFERENCES	31
	Annex A – Summary of the Data Collection	36
	Annex B – Interview Script for Managers	37
	Annex C – Interview Script for Employees	39
	Annex D – Case A (Fintech Company, Remote Before COVID).....	42
	Annex E - Case B (ERP Company, Remote After COVID)	44
	Annex F - Interview Coding.....	45

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of remote work, accelerated by advancements in technology and shifting workplace attitudes, has fundamentally transformed how organizations manage their workforce (Haque, 2023). Traditional mechanisms of control—such as direct supervision, physical presence, and hierarchical oversight—are no longer applicable in fully remote or hybrid work environments (Felstead et al., 2003). This shift has prompted organizations to rethink how they balance employee autonomy with relevant control mechanisms to ensure productivity and alignment with organizational goals (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). In remote work settings, employees are often granted more freedom to manage their time and tasks, which can foster job satisfaction, creativity, and ownership. However, this autonomy must be balanced with control mechanisms that maintain organizational cohesion and ensure that the work aligns with strategic objectives (Perry et al., 2018).

This study explores the interplay between autonomy and control in remote work environments, focusing on how organizations navigate this balance. The research builds on existing literature that emphasizes the importance of both autonomy and control in fostering a productive and innovative workforce. While autonomy allows employees to self-manage and contribute creatively, control mechanisms—whether through technological tools, performance metrics, or structured communication—ensure that individual efforts align with broader organizational goals.

This study seeks to describe how control is exercised in remote work environments and identify the specific control mechanisms in place. Additionally, it aims to characterize the level of autonomy experienced by employees in these settings and understand the complex interplay between control and autonomy. By addressing these research objectives, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how organizations can optimize remote work environments to achieve both employee satisfaction and operational efficiency.

The methodology of this study is based on high qualitative research, employing a case study approach. Company A (Fintech company) is a fully remote organization that has operated in this mode since its inception, offering insights into long-term remote work dynamics. Company B (ERP company) transitioned to remote work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a perspective on newly adapted remote work practices. In this way, the study

captures a range of experiences and strategies related to managing autonomy and control in remote work environments.

Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews with managers and employees from both companies, alongside documentary analysis of each company's remote work policies. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how different control mechanisms such as project management tools, performance monitoring, and structured feedback—interact with employee autonomy. Thematic analysis is applied to the interview data to identify key patterns and insights, while content analysis of documentary reports provides additional context and triangulation.

By examining the dynamics between autonomy and control, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on remote work management, offering practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize remote work practices. The findings are particularly relevant in the current climate, where remote and hybrid work models are increasingly becoming the norm across industries. In addition to addressing the theoretical implications of autonomy and control in remote work, this study also provides actionable recommendations for managers seeking to enhance both employee satisfaction and organizational performance in a dispersed work environment.

This research will begin with a literature review that explores existing theories and research on control mechanisms and employee autonomy in remote work environments, providing a foundation for the study's analysis. Following this, the methodology section will outline the qualitative approach used, including the case study design and data collection methods employed to gather insights from two companies. The findings and discussion section will present the key results, highlighting the interplay between control and autonomy in remote work settings. Finally, the research concludes with recommendations for managers on how to optimize remote work practices and offers suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the recent literature highlights the complex interplay between autonomy and control mechanisms in remote work environments. Several studies have sought to understand and conceptualize this interplay, providing varying insights on its impact on organizational dynamics and outcomes.

The literature review is structured into three main sections. The first section, organizational control explores how organizations maintain oversight and productivity in remote settings through both traditional and technological control methods. The second section, employee autonomy, examines the concept of autonomy, emphasizing its impact on motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. The final section, employee autonomy vs organizational control, discusses the balance between autonomy and control, highlighting how control mechanisms and organizational strategies influence this relationship. This review provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding the interplay between autonomy and control in remote work environments.

2.1 Organizational Control

Organizational control refers to the strategies, processes, and structures that managers use to ensure that employees' activities align with organizational objectives. Traditionally, control has been exerted through direct supervision, standardized procedures, and formal hierarchies. These control mechanisms allow organizations to monitor and guide employee behavior to maintain productivity and achieve established goals (Ouchi, 1979). In traditional work settings, control is often manifested in observable ways, such as face-to-face oversight, performance monitoring, and the enforcement of standardized rules (Edwards, 1978).

Clegg (1981) suggests that control is closely linked to the ownership structure of an organization and the degree of autonomy granted to employees. Organizations exert control through a set of guidelines or "rules," which may or may not be explicitly stated, and employees are expected to operate within these constraints. The nature of control can vary significantly between organizations, depending on the context and environment. Some organizations may favor a tight, hierarchical structure where direct oversight is the norm, while others may adopt a more flexible approach that allows for greater autonomy. Clegg (1981) also emphasizes that control is not only technological but also social, requiring the development of specialized labor and organizational structures to facilitate management.

Edwards (1978) adds to this by describing control as the process through which organizations ensure that employee activities align with organizational goals, achieved by establishing rules, procedures, and monitoring systems. This general understanding of control, based on direct

supervision and physical presence, is complemented by various monitoring mechanisms, such as regular reporting and performance evaluations (Turner et al., 2021).

However, as organizations increasingly transition to remote work environments, these control mechanisms and their applications have undergone significant changes. In remote work settings, where direct supervision is not always feasible, organizations have had to adapt their strategies by incorporating technology and trust-based management approaches. Remote work requires both control mechanisms, such as performance evaluations, feedback loops, and task prioritization, and control devices, such as Jira for task tracking and Slack for communication, to maintain productivity and ensure alignment with organizational goals (Felstead et al., 2003).

The shift to remote work has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional control strategies. Instead of relying on direct supervision, organizations have turned toward self-management and results-oriented control (Perry et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, as many organizations transitioned to remote work and reevaluated their control mechanisms. While some organizations increased electronic surveillance, others relied on fostering autonomy and self-management (Pianese et al., 2022). This period highlighted the need for flexibility in control strategies and the growing reliance on technology to maintain oversight without physical presence (Qi et al., 2023). Tools like project management software and communication platforms enable transparency and collaboration, offering a replacement for traditional face-to-face oversight (Seneviratna & Nandasara, 2014). However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the balance between trust, autonomy, and effective control in remote settings. Managers must navigate these complexities, often compensating for the lack of traditional supervisory methods with loose networks of control that may not always be effective (Felstead et al., 2003).

Research during the pandemic uncovered new insights into the dynamics of control in remote work settings. Van Zoonen et al. (2021) found that communication quality and technology usage were crucial in helping employees adapt to remote work, although trust alone did not significantly improve this adaptation. This indicates that while control is critical, the right organizational structures and support systems are equally important in fostering successful remote work environments (Qi et al., 2023; Michaud & Conceição, 2023).

In summary, organizational control has evolved from traditional, direct supervision methods to more flexible, technology-driven approaches in remote work environments. While control mechanisms like performance evaluations and communication remain crucial, they are increasingly supported by digital tools and a focus on results rather than processes. This shift allows for greater autonomy, trust, and employee self-management, contributing to enhanced job satisfaction and productivity in remote work settings.

2.2 Employee Autonomy

Employee autonomy, particularly in the context of remote work, is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond simple freedom of action. It encompasses the empowerment employees experience within an organization, which includes both psychological and structural dimensions. Psychological empowerment refers to an employee's sense of job meaning, enthusiasm, and competence, while structural empowerment focuses on the opportunities, information, resources, and support provided by the organization (Staniulienė & Zaveckis, 2022). Remote work settings have pushed the boundaries of traditional workplace autonomy by emphasizing these two dimensions (Bjørnholt et al., 2022).

At its core, employee autonomy refers to the degree of freedom, independence, and discretion employees are afforded in scheduling their work, choosing methods to accomplish tasks, and making decisions that impact their job performance (Turner et al., 2021). This autonomy allows employees to control their work processes without requiring excessive oversight or approval from higher management. According to Bouguila (2019), autonomy is an intrinsic part of work organization, providing employees with a sense of control over their professional activities. Research has shown that autonomy is closely associated with higher job satisfaction, motivation, and well-being, while also enhancing productivity and creativity. In line with Bouguila (2019), Turner et al. (2021), highlighted the key elements of autonomy include decision-making authority, independence, flexibility, and empowerment. These factors allow employees to choose how to execute tasks with minimal supervision, adapt to changes, and take the initiative in problem-solving. Autonomy is also crucial for fostering innovation, as it encourages creative approaches to tasks. Moreover, higher levels of autonomy are closely linked to increased job satisfaction, as employees feel trusted and valued by their employers, leading to enhanced motivation and reduced turnover. Additionally, autonomy promotes responsibility and accountability, as employees take ownership of their work outcomes, which ultimately enhances both quality and efficiency (Turner et al., 2021).

With the rise of remote work, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, autonomy took on a new dimension. Remote work inherently comes with a level of autonomy previously unseen in traditional workplace settings, allowing employees more control over work-related decisions within the confines of their personal environment (Miheenkova et al., 2020). According to Ferrara et al. (2022), remote working has mixed consequences on performance and well-being, with a significant impact on perceptions of work and work-life balance. This suggests that while autonomy may bring benefits, it also requires careful management to ensure positive outcomes for employees. Furthermore, the technology that enables remote work can also serve as a double-edged sword. On one hand, digital tools can facilitate autonomy by allowing flexibility in when and where tasks are accomplished. On the other hand, these same technologies can be used to monitor and control employees closely, thereby constraining autonomy. The design and use of technology, therefore, play a critical role in either supporting or limiting autonomy. The challenge lies in leveraging technology to enhance flexibility and enable self-management while avoiding intrusive surveillance that could erode trust and autonomy.

According to Abgeller et al. (2022), autonomy in remote work can significantly contribute to a company's dynamics and performance. For instance, the amount of autonomy permitted to remote employees has been positively linked to improvements in work engagement and innovative work behavior. However, these outcomes are contingent on the right balance of autonomy and support from the organization, emphasizing that while autonomy is beneficial, it requires proper frameworks to thrive (De Spiegelaere et al., 2016). Choi et al. (2008) highlight that power dynamics within an organization significantly affect the degree of autonomy experienced by employees. For instance, managerial attitudes toward control and oversight can either support or constrain employee independence. Managers with a traditional supervision mindset may undermine autonomy by imposing rigid check-ins and monitoring, even in remote settings, where such practices may not be as necessary or effective.

Self-management, being a key aspect of autonomy, plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of remote work. Qi et al. (2023) indicate that self-management is a determining factor in remote work effectiveness, as it aligns with the goal- and outcome-oriented management approaches prevalent in remote settings. As opposed to traditional, presence-oriented supervision, remote work demands that employees possess self-regulatory capabilities to complement the autonomy they are granted (Pianese et al., 2022). Self-management, requires employees to

balance personal discipline with strategic use of tools and techniques to enhance productivity. This balance empowers employees to fully take advantage of the autonomy they are afforded, leading to higher engagement, performance, and job satisfaction (Muecke et al., 2020). A study by Staniulienė and Leonavičiūtė (2022) found that a majority (79-91%) of employees exhibit higher self-management when working remotely. This heightened self-management, combined with regular communication between managers and employees, fosters a greater level of trust. Abgeller et al. (2022) note that frequent communication builds cognition-based trust, which focuses on the competence, responsibility, and professionalism of employees. Trust is central to this model, as organizations depend on employees to act in the company's best interest, shifting focus from micromanagement to outcome-based evaluation (Turner et al., 2021).

2.3 Employee Autonomy Versus Organizational Control

The autonomy of employees has been shown to have a strong effect on work-related outcomes such as work satisfaction, efficiency, and engagement Choi et al. (2008). Autonomy provides a sense of self-determination for employees, which is crucial even when they have minimal freedom regarding work strategies and goals (Bouguila, 2019). Turner et al. (2021) discuss the delicate balance between organizational controls and employee autonomy. While controls are necessary to ensure alignment with organizational goals and compliance with standards, excessive control can hinder autonomy and stifle innovation. Therefore, effective organizations implement control mechanisms that provide structure and guidance while preserving sufficient autonomy for employees to exercise their creativity and initiative.

The relationship between autonomy and leadership style also plays a significant role in organizational outcomes. For instance, it has been found that while autonomy positively influences cooperative behavior, its fit with leadership style does not enhance this effect (Sarmah et al., 2021). Leaders are suggested to consider individual preferences and extend individualized consideration to employees to improve work outcomes (Jong & Ford, 2020). Also, studies have revealed that ongoing tensions exist between managers' efforts to control and extend autonomy within organizations, leading to fluctuations in the unit managers' discretion over resource-orchestration decisions (Langfred & Rockmann, 2016). The "too-much-of-a-good-thing" effect of job autonomy also highlights that there can be drawbacks to excess autonomy, necessitating a balanced approach (Kubicek et al., 2017). The intricacies of managing autonomy within an organization are further complicated by internal and external

governance mechanisms, such as employee retention rate and product market competition (Dattée et al., 2022).

Addressing the delicate balance between granting autonomy and maintaining control, leaders can engage in strategies that leverage trust as a lever of organizational control (Abgeller et al., 2022). They face the challenge of encouraging employee contributions to organizational objectives while also ensuring that these contributions align with organizational directives. Autonomy is sometimes granted as an organizational corollary of a demand for subjective mobilization, which introduces contradictions between the advocacy for autonomy and the normalization of the work organization (Langfred & Rockmann, 2016).

Leaders can navigate this transition effectively by acknowledging the complex relationship between autonomy, individualized consideration, and management approaches that align with both organizational goals and employee needs. They must work to optimize the level of autonomy provided, understanding that it has profound effects on organizational performance, engagement, and innovation (Bjørnholt et al., 2022). The insights from these studies offer a nuanced understanding of the delicate interplay between autonomy and control, providing valuable recommendations for leaders in their quest to navigate this transition effectively.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The goal of this research is to explore the dynamic relationship between control and autonomy in remote work environments. Specifically, the study aims to describe how control is exercised in remote work environments and identify the control devices in place. Additionally, it seeks to characterize the employee's autonomy in remote work environments, that is, the nature and extent of employee autonomy in remote work settings, focusing on how employees independently manage tasks, make decisions, and address challenges. Finally, the research aims to understand the interplay between control and autonomy, analyzing how these elements coexist and influence one another, and how their balance impacts employee satisfaction, organizational performance, and innovation. By addressing these objectives, the study offers valuable insights into optimizing control and autonomy for improved outcomes in remote work environments.

The conceptual framework used to address the research questions is presented below.

Concept	Description	References
Control	Control is exercised through: a) Directing work tasks b) Evaluating the work done	Edwards (1978) – foundational theory on labor control Ouchi (1979) – control through standardized processes and hierarchical structures. Sewell & Taskin (2015) – technological influence on control
Control Devices	Three types of control devices: a) Visibility and presence (direct control) b) Information processing technologies c) Team norms and corporate culture	Felstead et al. (2003) – direct and indirect control in remote settings Seneviratna & Nandasara (2014) – digital tools for project management (e.g., Jira, Asana).
Employee's Autonomy	Dimensions of employee autonomy: a) Mastering their tasks b) Addressing contingencies c) Being innovative	Turner et al. (2021) – autonomy and innovation Bouguila (2019) – autonomy and job satisfaction Choi et al. (2008) – leadership styles and their effect on autonomy.

<p>Interplay Between Control and Autonomy</p>	<p>Autonomy and control coexist and influence one another, impacting employee satisfaction and organizational outcomes.</p> <p>Autonomy fosters creativity and accountability, while control ensures alignment with organizational objectives.</p>	<p>Qi et al. (2023) – remote work and autonomy's dynamics.</p> <p>Langfred & Rockmann (2016) – tension between control and autonomy.</p> <p>Demerouti (2023) – self-management and autonomy in remote work settings.</p>
--	--	--

The conceptual framework draws upon key studies from the literature that inform the data collection and analysis. Edwards (1978) provides a foundational understanding of how control is traditionally exercised within organizations, establishing a baseline for examining how remote work has transformed control mechanisms. His concept of control through task direction, evaluation, and feedback is particularly relevant for formulating interview questions on how managers maintain oversight in remote contexts, where direct supervision is limited. This informs the analysis of control in remote environments, especially with the shift to more indirect, technology-driven methods. Felstead et al. (2003) significantly contribute to the understanding of control devices in remote work settings, highlighting how visibility (e.g., monitoring employee presence), the use of information technologies (e.g., Slack, Jira), and team norms play central roles in managing a dispersed workforce. Their work is instrumental in structuring the documentary analysis on how organizations implement control mechanisms through technology and communication platforms.

For understanding employee autonomy, the research builds on the work of Turner et al. (2021), who define autonomy as an employee's ability to master tasks, handle contingencies, and innovate within their roles. This framework is used to evaluate employee responses in interviews, particularly regarding how autonomy supports creativity and problem-solving in remote work. These insights help guide the study's approach to understanding the level of autonomy granted to remote workers and inform interview questions related to decision-making and innovation within their roles. The analysis also examines how autonomy influences both individual and organizational performance in remote environments.

Additionally, Qi et al. (2023) provides recent insights into how autonomy and control coexist in the context of remote work, especially as remote settings have become more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research offers valuable perspective on how autonomy can either be fostered or limited by technology, which shapes the thematic analysis of interview responses and organizational policies regarding autonomy and flexibility in work practices.

The expanded framework provides a broader set of interview questions focused on control mechanisms, autonomy, and the influence of technology in remote work. The incorporation of Ouchi (1979), Sewell & Taskin (2015), and Langfred & Rockmann (2016) into the framework enriches the discussion of how organizations manage remote teams and the devices they use to maintain control. These studies also influence the documentary analysis, helping to examine company policies and how they reflect the balance between control and autonomy. The inclusion of leadership styles (Choi et al., 2008) and self-management strategies (Demerouti, 2023) adds another dimension by prompting an exploration of the managerial role in shaping autonomy and control in remote work environments. These insights contribute to the development of questions around managerial attitudes and practices, which are crucial for understanding how autonomy is granted or restricted within different organizational contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the interplay between autonomy and control mechanisms in remote work environments. Qualitative research is chosen due to its ability to delve into the complexities and nuances of human experiences and interactions, which are central to understanding remote work dynamics (Saunders et al., 2012). This section provides a detailed explanation of the research approach, strategy, choices, time horizon and techniques and procedures

The research strategy employed is a case study. This strategy involves an in-depth examination of two distinct types of companies. This approach is the most suitable strategy for this work because it allows for an in-depth, context-specific exploration of the complex interplay between autonomy and control mechanisms in remote work environments. Case studies are particularly effective when the research aims to understand dynamic phenomena within their real-life settings, making them ideal for studying the nuanced experiences of organizations and employees operating under remote or hybrid work conditions. This approach provides rich,

detailed data and allows for comparisons across different organizational contexts, offering valuable insights into both the challenges and benefits of remote work practices.

These two companies with established remote work practices were chosen to capture a range of experiences and strategies:

- **Fintech Company:** This company has been fully remote since its inception, making it an ideal candidate for examining long-standing remote work dynamics. Its operational practices provide insights into the processes and structures that support sustained remote work, such as autonomy, control mechanisms, and long-term employee engagement.
- **ERP Company:** This company transitioned to remote or hybrid work following the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a contrasting case that reflects the challenges and adaptations necessary for newly implemented remote work arrangements. The selection of this company offers a perspective on how organizations that were initially traditional have responded to the sudden shift to remote work, highlighting differences in control mechanisms and employee autonomy.

By selecting these two distinct companies, the study captures diverse experiences and perspectives, enhancing the understanding of remote work dynamics. The study uses a mono-method qualitative choice, focusing solely on qualitative data collection and analysis. This choice is appropriate for exploring the rich, detailed, and contextualized data needed to understand the interplay between autonomy and control in remote work environments (Saunders et al., 2012). A cross-sectional time horizon is adopted for this study. Data will be collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the current state of remote work dynamics in the selected companies. This approach allows for the timely examination of the effects of remote work practices as they stand.

The data collection procedure would involve two data sources; semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis of remote work practices within the organization. The interviews will be conducted with two managers and three employees from each company, using a script (Annex A & B) to cover key topics relevant to the research questions. The interview script, developed from a review of relevant literature, will include open-ended questions on autonomy, control mechanisms, communication practices, and the challenges and benefits of remote work. This

guide will be pilot-tested amongst two managers and two employees in another remote firm outside the specified two companies, to refine questions for clarity and relevance. Additionally, documentary reports on remote work policies from both companies will be examined to gain insights into organizational norms and practices. These reports, obtained from company websites or representatives, will undergo content analysis to identify themes and practices related to remote work, autonomy, and control mechanisms.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The data collection procedure will involve multiple steps to ensure thorough and ethical research practices. Participants will be recruited through company contacts and professional networks, with an invitation email detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations. Prior informed consent would be obtained to ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality, informing participants of their rights and the study's objectives. Interviews, conducted via video conferencing platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, will last approximately 30-60 minutes and be audio-recorded with consent. Documentary reports will be collected and reviewed alongside interviews to triangulate data and enhance analysis.

These documents would be obtained through the cooperation of both companies involved in the study. After gaining consent from the companies, internal reports would be requested from managers or HR departments as part of the data collection process. Some documents may be available publicly on the companies' websites (such as general remote work policies), while others will be provided directly by company representatives through secure channels.

The purpose of reviewing these documents is to supplement and contextualize the findings from the interviews. By examining the documentary reports, the researcher can compare formal policies and control mechanisms with the actual experiences and practices shared by employees and managers during the interviews. This comparison would allow the researcher to better understand how autonomy and control mechanisms are applied in practice, ensuring that the research findings are robust, well-rounded, and grounded in both documented policies and lived experiences.

For data analysis, thematic analysis will be employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the interview data. This process includes transcribing audio recordings verbatim, familiarizing the researcher with the data through repeated reading, and using open coding to

identify meaningful text segments. These codes will be grouped into themes based on similarities, reviewed and refined for accuracy, and clearly defined to capture the participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes will be reported narratively, supported by direct quotes.

Additionally, the documentary reports will undergo content analysis to identify recurring themes and practices related to remote work, autonomy, and control mechanisms. Extracted data will be coded and compared with interview themes to triangulate findings and enhance overall analysis.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Key ethical considerations include ensuring the confidentiality of participants' responses and anonymizing any identifying information, storing data securely and ensuring that only authorized researchers have access to it, and emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. These measures are designed to protect the rights and well-being of participants throughout the research process.

For this dissertation, I used generative AI tools such as ChatGPT AI for proofreading and translation. This was done to ensure that my ideas were conveyed to the reader in the clearest way possible. I used this technology as a tool and I followed the best practices and ethical standards while using it.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

This section presents and analyzes the Fintech and ERP company cases within the conceptual framework, focusing on how the balance between autonomy and control, through devices and management mechanisms, affects employee creativity and organizational performance in remote work settings.

4.1 Description of Company A

Company A is a global fintech company, founded in 2015, with a workforce of around 250 employees distributed across multiple countries. The organization specializes in providing innovative financial technology solutions. From its inception, the company adopted a fully remote working model, driven by the need to attract top talent globally, facilitate collaboration

across different time zones, and reduce operational costs associated with physical office spaces. Remote work was not just a temporary adjustment for the Fintech company but a deliberate strategy to enhance flexibility and productivity, a decision that aligns with its core values of innovation and efficiency.

4.1.1 Control of Work

In the Fintech company, work control is primarily facilitated through advanced technological tools, agile methodologies, and structured evaluation techniques. The organization employs a combination of direct and indirect supervision to ensure that employee performance aligns with its strategic goals. Tools such as Jira, GitHub, Slack, and Postman are crucial to maintaining oversight of tasks and projects.

As **Participant 1**, a Fractional CTO, highlighted: *"I am evaluated by the same manager, and there is direct control involved in my work. I use JIRA, GitHub, Slack, and Postman to supervise my team, mostly through Quality Assurance (QA), vetting the code they submit, and ensuring best practices are followed."* This reveals that while employees have some freedom, their work is monitored through digital platforms that track task completion and quality control.

Similarly, **Participant 3**, a Senior Security Engineer, noted: *"We have weekly syncs to align on what needs to be done. We work in sprints, and I use Slack and Zoom to control and supervise my team."* These statements underscore how structured meetings, sprint planning, and real-time feedback loops help manage and evaluate employee performance, ensuring organizational objectives are met.

Moreover, employees are evaluated through a rigorous performance review process, occurring every three months. **Participant 1** shared: *"There are two performance reviews every three months: one with my manager and another with HR."* This structured approach ensures that employee progress is continuously monitored, allowing for timely feedback and course correction if needed.

4.1.2 Employee's Autonomy

Autonomy in the Fintech company is a critical aspect of its operational philosophy. Employees are encouraged to manage their tasks independently and make decisions regarding their work

processes. However, the degree of autonomy varies across roles, with certain strategic decisions still requiring managerial oversight.

Participant 3 emphasized this point: *"The team has autonomy. I mostly just provide oversight. Everyone is allowed the freedom to work on tasks from the collective backlog, and we have weekly syncs to align on what needs to be done."* This quote reflects the significant decision-making power employees have over their tasks. They are given the freedom to work at their own pace and decide how best to execute their responsibilities, which is a key driver of creativity and engagement in a remote work environment.

Participant 2, a technical headhunter, echoed similar sentiments: *"I manage and fit the right person into a role. Despite the process being heavily dictated by my manager, I manage the sourcing and prospecting of candidates by myself, as well as conducting the interviews."* This highlights a balance between autonomy in day-to-day operations and managerial control over strategic direction. Employees are free to manage how they approach their tasks, while higher-level decisions are made collaboratively with their managers.

4.1.3 Interplay Between Control and Autonomy

In the Fintech company, there is a harmonious balance between control and autonomy. The organization uses technology to provide oversight without undermining employee independence. This balance is achieved through outcome-oriented management, where performance is evaluated based on results rather than the process itself.

As **Participant 4** explained, *"Sometimes it's me who has to make decisions on the spot, but I later go to my manager and report the situation, and we come up with a plan together."* This reflects a balanced approach where employees handle unexpected situations independently but seek managerial support for more complex issues. **Participant 1** noted: *"There are defined metrics, real-time feedback, and sprint planning, but we're also allowed to use our initiative."* This statement illustrates how the company manages to maintain control while fostering innovation and accountability.

The company's emphasis on trust, collaboration, and outcome-based performance enables employees to take ownership of their tasks while still ensuring alignment with organizational goals. **Participant 4** summarized it well: *"People get to take up more ownership of tasks, be accountable for things within their domain, and also externally across the company."*

4.2 Description of Company B

Company B is a multinational provider of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the company operated in a traditional office-based model, but in 2020, it transitioned to remote work to ensure business continuity. The ERP company currently employs 500 staff members globally and now operates on a hybrid model, allowing employees to work both remotely and from office locations. The shift to remote work was driven by necessity but has since become a more permanent feature of its operations as the company continues to refine its remote work practices.

4.2.1 Control of Work

Control mechanisms in the ERP company are primarily structured around performance evaluations, task tracking, and adherence to company policies. The company uses tools such as Bamboo HR and Microsoft Teams to manage work hours, track project progress, and facilitate communication between employees and management.

Participant 5, a manager, noted: *"We use Bamboo HR for logging hours and Jira for managing projects. This system allows us to stay on top of tasks while giving employees room to manage their schedules."* The use of digital tools like Jira ensures that projects remain on track, and Bamboo HR allows managers to monitor employee working hours to ensure compliance with organizational expectations. Weekly feedback loops and performance metrics are also implemented, providing structured oversight to ensure teams stay aligned with company objectives.

4.2.2 Employee's Autonomy

At the ERP company, employee autonomy is variable, depending on the role and client requirements. Technical employees enjoy a high level of flexibility in managing their work processes, while those in client-facing or sales roles experience more constraints due to the need for real-time client interactions.

Participant 5 explained: *"We have flexible work schedules, but it depends on the client's needs. Some roles require more in-person interaction or structured timeframes."* This highlights the uneven distribution of autonomy across the organization. Employees in technical

roles are allowed to manage their schedules more freely, whereas client-facing employees must adhere to more rigid guidelines.

4.2.3 Interplay Between Control and Autonomy

The interplay between control and autonomy in the ERP company is more rigid compared to Fintech company, largely due to the client-facing nature of some roles and the company's hybrid working structure. An interesting finding from this company is the discrepancy between managers' perception of the autonomy they provide and the actual autonomy employees experience. While managers rely on structured feedback and task-based control, employees—especially in roles that require strict adherence to client protocols—feel constrained by these mechanisms. Employees appreciate the flexibility that comes with remote work, but strict performance evaluations and adherence to company guidelines sometimes limit their decision-making power.

Participant 4 shared: *"There's flexibility, but we still have to follow strict guidelines and meet specific targets, especially when dealing with clients."* This reflects a more traditional approach to balancing autonomy and control, where flexibility is granted within defined limits, particularly to ensure that client requirements are met.

Despite these constraints, the company encourages a certain level of collaboration in decision-making processes, particularly in technical teams. **Participant 5** commented: *"We are given autonomy in managing projects, but we align regularly through meetings to ensure we meet client expectations."* This indicates that while autonomy exists, it is tempered by the need for coordination and alignment with broader organizational objectives.

4.3 Cross Case Analysis: Company A Versus Company B

Research Objectives	Company A (Fintech Company)	Company B (ERP Company)
1. How is control exercised, and what	Tasks and performance outcomes are being controlled in this company.	Presence, tasks, and client Interactions are being controlled in this company.

<p>control mechanisms are in place?</p>	<p>Control focuses on the quantity and quality of tasks completed. Agile methodologies and tools like Jira and Bamboo HR to track progress and outcomes. Control is based on task completion rather than physical presence.</p>	<p>Control includes tracking presence (via hours logged in Bamboo HR), performance evaluations, flexible work arrangements (FWAs), task completion, and client satisfaction. It ensures employees meet deadlines and client expectations.</p>
	<p>Managers define the control practices with flexibility to adapt based on project needs.</p> <p><i>“Coordinators modify sprint planning and timelines to suit project demands”</i> (Participant 1).</p>	<p>Top management defines control with minimal influence from work coordinators/managers.</p> <p><i>“The managers manage project schedules but must follow global policies”</i> (Participant 2).</p>
	<p>Managers have moderate flexibility in adapting and controlling work practices.</p> <p><i>“Managers can adjust sprint priorities, timelines, and feedback loops. They respond to unexpected challenges with autonomy but seek managerial support when needed”</i> (Participant 4).</p>	<p>Managers have limited flexibility in adapting and controlling work practices.</p> <p><i>“Managers can make minor adjustments to project execution, but core control practices, such as time tracking and client protocols, are predefined by higher management”</i> (Participant 5).</p>
<p>2. How is employee autonomy characterized?</p>	<p>Employees are largely autonomous in deciding how to execute their tasks.</p> <p>Employees manage their tasks and can problem-solve independently. Managers</p>	<p>Employees have flexibility but their decision making power varies by role.</p>

	<p>oversee but encourage autonomy in execution.</p> <p>Suggestions are provided rather than direct instructions.</p> <p><i>"I appreciate the freedom to manage tasks in my own way"</i> (Participant 3).</p>	<p>Technical staff have flexibility, but client-facing roles have stricter controls due to client demands.</p> <p><i>"We have flexible schedules, but it depends on client needs"</i> (Participant 4).</p>
	<p>Employees adapt to challenges and make independent decisions but involve managers for complex issues.</p> <p><i>"A high degree of flexibility is encouraged in problem-solving"</i> (Participant 4).</p>	<p>Flexibility depends on the role.</p> <p><i>"Technical staff can adapt schedules, but client-facing roles require adherence to strict timeframes and protocols"</i> (Participant 4).</p>
	<p>Employees experience high satisfaction.</p> <p><i>"Employees are happy with autonomy but suggest reducing the frequency of performance evaluations to improve work satisfaction"</i> (Participant 4).</p>	<p>Employees experience mixed satisfaction.</p> <p>Employees in client-facing roles feel restricted by rigid performance guidelines.</p> <p><i>"We have flexibility, but I'd like more freedom from strict guidelines"</i> (Participant 5).</p>
<p>3. What is the interplay between</p>	<p>Autonomy is balanced with task-based control.</p>	<p>Limited autonomy due to the strict control mechanisms.</p>

<p>control and autonomy?</p>	<p>Employees independently manage tasks but align with team goals through regular sprint planning.</p> <p><i>“Outcome-based control reduces the need for micromanagement while encouraging accountability and creativity”</i> (Participant 3).</p>	<p>Employees have some flexibility in task completion but must adhere to rigid guidelines, especially in client-facing roles.</p> <p><i>“We must follow strict guidelines, especially for client-facing roles”</i> (Participant 4).</p>
	<p>High autonomy fosters creativity and accountability.</p> <p>The balance between autonomy and control helps ensure productivity while allowing flexibility in task execution.</p> <p><i>“Employees take ownership of their tasks and adapt to meet organizational goals”</i> (Participant 4).</p>	<p>Rigid control stifles creativity, particularly in roles where strict guidelines are enforced.</p> <p><i>“Employees are less able to explore innovative solutions”</i> (Participant 1).</p> <p>The combination of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and control mechanisms aims to support both productivity and employee well-being.</p>

4.4 Discussion of Findings

From the analyzed data, the study has established that in some organizations, where a remote work environment is established, there is the use of agile methodologies, direct supervision, rigorous evaluation techniques, immediate feedback, advanced technological tools, and internal practices by a program manager as a primary control device. This structured approach aligns with agile project management methodologies pointed out in the literature by Seneviratna & Nandasara (2014), for example, Jira, Asana, and Trello amongst others, which are widely recognized for their effectiveness in coordinating remote teams. For instance, at the

Fintech company, the use of Jira has streamlined project management and accountability by allowing team leads to assign tasks and track progress in real-time, demonstrating the practical effectiveness of these tools in a remote work setup. Similarly, the ERP company leverages GitHub for version control and Slack for daily communication and updates, integrating these tools into their daily workflows to enhance coordination and transparency among remote team members, thus supporting effective project management and team dynamics.

This finding is a reflection of the position of Ouchi (1979) in the literature, who argued that some organizations put in place standardized processes, measures, and procedures and hierarchical structures to exert control over employees. In the ERP company, the introduction of a tiered approval process for project deliverables has enforced a strict but clear hierarchy that aids in maintaining control and quick decision-making, exemplifying Ouchi's theory in practice. Also, this result supports the notion that control within an organization stems from the ownership structure and the level of autonomy given to employees (Clegg, 1981). The evaluation of work based on effective solutions, timely delivery, and technical know-how underscores the importance of outcome-based control in remote work settings. According to Clegg (1981), outcome-based control mechanisms are crucial in environments where direct supervision is challenging and also involves the establishment of organizational structures to facilitate effective management. In the case of the ERP company, the focus is on meeting specific project milestones, which are regularly reviewed through virtual sprint sessions. These sessions allow managers to assess ongoing work against predefined objectives, reinforcing the effectiveness of outcome-based controls in ensuring timely and quality delivery despite the remote work challenges.

The interviewee's experience with bi-monthly performance reviews, one with their manager and another with HR, provides a formalized structure for feedback and performance assessment, reinforcing the organization's standards and expectations. At the Fintech company, these reviews have specifically highlighted improvements in remote communication strategies, further aligning employee actions with organizational goals and demonstrating the effectiveness of these structured feedback mechanisms. This is in agreement with the position of Edwards (1978), who stated in the literature that control is a process through which organizations ensure that their employees activities blend perfectly with the organizational goals via the formulation and implementation of rules, procedures, and monitoring systems.

The study has increased our understanding that a remote working environment where control is primarily exercised through suggestions rather than direct instructions, as described by Hermawati et al. (2023), fosters a supportive environment that encourages employee autonomy while still guiding them towards organizational goals. For example, a project team in the Fintech company was given the autonomy to design their workflow for a new product development, which led to the creation of a patented product ahead of schedule, illustrating how autonomy can significantly enhance innovation and organizational success. Hermawati et al. (2023) and other scholars like Perry et al. (2018), and Felstead et al. (2023) agreed in previous studies that not only does autonomy grant employees the independence and ability needed to work in remote work settings but also positions them well to shift from process-oriented control to one that enables them to increase their performance outputs and results. Hermawati (2023) stated further in the literature that not only does autonomy grants employees flexibility in fulfilling their job roles and responsibilities, but it also brings about a strong sense of ownership and engagement and further increases their motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. The aforementioned was corroborated by the findings of this current study, as it was discovered that employees given a certain degree of autonomy to use their initiatives, were able to handle tasks innovatively and creatively, while also taking up ownership of tasks and accountability for things within their domain and also externally across the company. The study has increased our understanding that business organizations that fail to grant employees freedom but decide to cage them under strict rules (that is, structured approach) will most likely end up having a frustrated and less inspired workforce, which will in turn affect negatively the productivity of the company in terms of expansion and sales conversion.

The quest to handle emergency situations quicker and faster is one of the advantages that comes with a less bureaucratic system, unlike in some organizations where employees are restricted to a one-way response from the manager, thus making the system too rigid for innovation, creativity, and productivity, as shown in the current study findings. This scenario is better captured in the works of Turner et al. (2021), who buttressed in the literature that when employees are placed in an environment that allows them to use their initiatives and choices, it encourages a high sense of ownership and engagement, which translates into much gain for the firm as there will be a corresponding increase in productivity and satisfaction level of workers. Similar to this argument, scholars like (Perry et al. 2018; Turner (2021), and Edwards (1978),

all agreed that the more autonomy an organization grants its workers in decision-making processes, the more accountable and trustworthy the workers become in fulfilling their job roles and responsibilities. This trust-based and accountability feature is evident in the analysis from the data retrieved from participants who shared that not only were they happy with the degree of freedom given to them, but they assumed a much more accountability role and increased confidence in their abilities and responsibilities.

Perhaps interestingly, when Miheenkova et al. (2020) revealed in the literature that the pandemic accelerated remote work adoption and forced organizations to re-evaluate control mechanisms, he was simply forecasting the changes that were meant to take place in countries that preferred physical work environments. As showcased in the cross-case table analysis, as soon as the ERP company transitions into a remote working environment, it significantly enhances the overall experiences of employees by providing them greater convenience, accessibility, and flexibility. Moreover, it was discovered in the study findings that managers who exercised direct control and oversight on employees shared similar traits in the methodology adopted in assessing the performances, progress, and outcomes of employees. According to the responses retrieved from participants in the current study, several metrics, such as the weekly periodic review, sprint sessions, milestones, and projects completion monitoring framework were put into place. The aforementioned resonates with the empirical finding of Pianese et al. (2022), who posited that the adoption of a remote work environment comes with a heightened increase in electronic surveillance, supervision, and reporting of employee performances. These results could better be understood within the propositions of Erichiello and Pianese (2016) who revealed that not only does working in a remote work arrangement triggers transformational changes in organizational control, but it also led to a paradigm shift from traditional control mechanisms to a more flexible and autonomous work settings. As evident in the literature review section, these authors emphasized further that frameworks and parameters in a remote work environment stimulate rapid changes on employee behavior and organizational performances.

As evident in the analysis between the Fintech company and ERP company, the rapid shift to virtual or remote operations may be attributed to the negative impacts of supply chain interruptions, labor shortages, and restrictions on physical movement. This circumstance aligns with the prevailing literature that clearly indicates that the pandemic forced businesses to adopt

remote work rules and utilize digital technologies to counteract the adverse effects associated with the supply shock in traditional business operations (Cardinal et al., 2017; Qi et al., 2023). As earlier mentioned in the literature, Cardinal et al. (2017) revealed that the pandemic brought about a new work setting mechanism for control as it becomes almost impossible to continue physical business activities. Corroborating the preceding statement, Qi et al. (2023) mentioned that the new modern approaches adopted by managers and entrepreneurs were result based. Hence echoing the findings of the current study, which expose that participants were judged based on productivity outcomes and results achieved on a daily and weekly basis. It is also important to highlight that while managers across both companies believe they were granting sufficient autonomy by using outcome-based control mechanisms, employees reported experiencing more constraints than their managers may realize. This is particularly evident in roles with strict client deadlines and frequent evaluations, where employees feel their decision-making power is more limited than what managers perceive.

From the analyzed data, the study showcases clearly that organizations that transitioned to a totally remote working environment adopted technological software to streamline business activities within the managers and employees. As shown in the data retrieved from the study participants, JIRA, GitHub, Slack, testing tools, and Postman were used by managers for teamwork supervision. Therefore, echoing the statement of Senevirantna & Nandasara (2014), who revealed that business managers utilized effectively project management software such as Jira, Asana, and Trello, time tracking tools, and other communication platforms to collaborate with workers. As the study findings revealed, it was practically obvious that managers exploited project management software not only for workflow management but for monitoring the commitment and dedication of employees to their respective tasks. One of the numerous gains that comes with the dependency on software technologies, as evident in the participants' responses, was that it enhances teamwork and collaborative efforts. This finding is in agreement with the view of Michaud & Conceicao (2023) who highlighted in the literature that some of the advantages of software technologies are real-time monitoring of progress attained and a sense of community among teams.

Interestingly, findings from the current study echo more strongly the argument of Zoonen et al. (2021) who mentioned that interpersonal trust between managers and employees did not bolster adaptation but other factors played a more critical role in aiding employee adaptation

in remote work settings. Empirical evidence from the analyzed data found the preceding statement to be true as employees found a new sense of fulfillment, happiness, and satisfaction thriving on self-initiatives with minimal guidance from managers during critical situations. Not only that, it was discovered that, when managers perform their oversight function rather than authoritarian duties, it aided the creativity abilities of employees. Hence, it is arguable to declare that factors such as autonomy and moderate or little control over employees boost quickly their abilities to adapt to the work requirements that comes with their job's positions. Scholars in the literature who shared similar perspectives are Ratz et al. (2021); Felstead et al. (2003); and De Spiegelaere et al. (2016). These scholars agreed that the level of control and extent of autonomy enjoyed by employees are a strong determinant of the employee's well-being and organizational dynamics.

A cursory look at the empirical statement of Turner et al. (2021) along with the current study results showcases clearly that the propensity for employees to contribute creatively and effectively to organizational goals attainment cannot be dissociated from the velocity of employee autonomy provided by the organization. Anecdotal evidence from data gathered from the study participants showed a strong positive relationship between autonomy, job satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and creativity. Therefore, implying that autonomy is an indispensable factor contributing to employee wellbeing at work (Bouiguila, 2019). Responses from the study cohort are in tandem with the findings of Choi et al. (2008) that managers who remain addicted to traditional notions of supervision unconsciously end up creating a very rigid system for employees, and consequentially hinders their productivity in remote settings. The current study findings intensified further the argument of previous scholars in the body of literature as it exposed that employee freedom in the decision-making processes is a strong tool for enhancing ownership of work outcomes, quality, and efficiency (Turner et al., 2021; Qi et al., 2023). The results of this study have also enhanced our understanding, in agreement with the perspective of Lange (2009) that there is a strong connection between autonomy and job satisfaction. This empirical evidence also aligns with the viewpoint of Muecke et al. (2020) that high performance of employees and engagement is a dependent factor of the autonomy granted by the organization.

Contrastingly, while the previous studies, such as Agbeller et al. (2022), stated that frequent communication between managers and employees leads to higher levels of trust, data findings

from the current study participants showed that some workers are not happy with the frequent daily communication and reporting between them and their managers. Thus, more autonomy is needed in terms of remote work effectiveness, and to achieve this, there must be a drastic reduction in the frequent communication timeframe or schedule.

On the relationship between autonomy and leadership, it is evident from the study that autonomy is a coefficient factor of the leadership style of the manager and not necessarily a prerogative action on the part of the organization. Put simply, managers are in a stronger position to determine if more autonomy will be granted to employees or not. However, the inaction of the organization in the decision-making process regarding the autonomy of workers does not exempt the organization from sharing in the consequences of autonomy or rigid control. This statement was highlighted clearly by Sarmah et al, (2021) in the literature that the leadership style of managers plays a significant role in organizational outcomes. The authors argued further that while autonomy positively influences cooperative behavior in an organization, it is dependent on the leadership ideology of the manager. In agreement with the above, the result of this study supports the findings of Jong & Ford (2020) that managers need to access critically individual preferences of employees in order to find the right degree of freedom that they need to improve their work outcomes. While some studies in the literature pointed out that when workers are to a certain extent given autonomy, it will lead to tensions between managers efforts to control workers, the reverse was the case in the current study. Rather, it was discovered that autonomy makes managers happy with employee performances as it brings about a corresponding increase in productivity, creativity, and efficiency of employees and organizational outcomes.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

From the onset, this study sets out with a specific goal to investigate the interplay between autonomy and control mechanisms in remote work environments, including its implications for organizational dynamics and outcomes. Basically, the study investigated and assessed critically the control systems in place and the specific devices used to control employees at the workplace. The study, via an analysis of two companies (A and B respectively), created a unique scenario for assessing employee's autonomy in a remote work environment by

extracting data directly from managers and employees of remote working organizations. This act was imminent because the literature and empirical evidence available had not given attention to the viewpoints and narrative perspectives of workers and managers on the nature of a remote working environment, especially the characteristics of autonomy at play. While outcome-based control mechanisms, such as project management tools, feedback loops, and performance evaluations, are perceived by managers as non-intrusive and supportive of autonomy, there exists a discrepancy between managerial perceptions and employee experiences of autonomy. The need to understand the emerging patterns of interplay or relationship that exists between control of work and autonomy of employee motivated the researcher to conduct the study. From the analysis of the data retrieved from the study participants and mapping of existing studies, it was evidenced that there is an impending need for examination into the possible pattern of dependency, links, or association between control of workers and autonomy as business organizations continue to emerge with the hope of achieving organizational success and growth.

The generated and analyzed data showcases that employee productivity, efficiency, and creativity in a remote working setting were mostly driven by the degree of autonomy granted by the managers. Despite the expression of satisfaction with the current control systems in place in the Fintech company and ERP company which depicted a flexible control structure and autonomy framework, the study suggests that employees while adapting to the control systems in place continue to seek for more autonomy to act independently and make their own decisions without much external control. It also emerged that autonomy given to employees by managers influences to a great extent the creativity and problem-solving ability of employees in critical situations which in turn translates to higher productivity. After the degree of autonomy granted to employees, this study has increased our knowledge of the relationship between the traditional control methods and reliance on the modern control devices which entails the use of project management software's and tools such as Jira, Agile and GitHub amongst others, with the evidence that these control devices bring about effective work management, operational efficiency, timely execution and fulfilment of employee duties and responsibilities. The desire to grant autonomy to workers in a manager-employee relationship seems not to be absolute among the subjects, as their responses reflect a mixed result in direct control and autonomy. The unwillingness of managers to provide autonomy contributes to the difficulty of some workers to increase productivity and align perfectly with the organizational

demands that come with their job positions. In spite of the belief that autonomy in a remote work environment, could be used to foster ownership and accountability among employees, the study has established that the power to grant autonomy lies in the hands of managers, and the consequences of granting autonomy or rigid control affects significantly organizational growth, employee productivity and employee job satisfaction.

5.2 Reflection on the Practical and Theoretical Implications

The main lesson from this study is that business organizations, especially managers and employees, cannot be separated from each other in the quest to experience growth, development, efficiency, productivity, and continuity. The two major institutions namely, managers and employees, need to trust each other in the decision-making process and understand the needs and requirements before them. It is also clear that when managers grant employees a higher level of autonomy, to some extent, it influences significantly the creative problem-solving abilities of the employees and bolsters their abilities to navigate around critical situations while enhancing productivity and outcomes for the organization. The study has made us realize that the more rigid a control structure in an organization is, the more difficult it becomes for the organization to experience growth and efficiency because employee satisfaction levels are low and there is no motivation to improve performance. It is evident that when managers not only grant employees autonomy but also involve them more in decision-making processes with less supervision, it can lead to significant benefits for the organization. These benefits include improved operational efficiency, as well as increased employee dedication and commitment to their work.

The main thesis is that in terms of interplay between control of work and autonomy of employee, most employees are comfortable with managers who provide suggestions and allow them to thrive using their initiatives, rather than direct control in a structured and rigid framework. In the context of linkage between control of work and employee autonomy, managers need to grant more autonomy to employees for the organization to experience high productivity and growth, including having a creative and highly motivated workforce. On the other hand, for employees to remain committed and dedicated in their job roles and responsibilities, organizations operating a remote work environment need to be more conscious of implementing project management technology or software devices to aid the monitoring of workflow, milestones, and project completion, helping employees to adapt to working

virtually, comfortably, and happily. Technology, which is frequently used in remote work environments, should act as an enabler rather than a restrictor; outcome-based evaluations should be prioritised over process tracking to ensure that employees feel empowered rather than micromanaged. The aforementioned are essential ingredients crucial to helping organizations advance financially and operationally.

5.3 Study Limitations And Suggestions For Future Research

Adhering strictly to the principles of transparency and honesty in research, one of the significant limitations to this study is that the findings from the analyzed data are not generic. This is because the study findings are based on what is obtainable from the small sample size (that is, few interviews conducted with managers and employees), largely due to the limited time frame for the researcher to interview companies or firms across the globe. To this end, other researchers can attempt to explore further this area. Also, owing to the fact that this study focused on exploring the state of control mechanisms and autonomy in remote work environments, the researcher concentrated on the nexus between control of work and autonomy of employee without prioritizing the changes that occur over time. Hence, there is need for researchers interested in exploring the phenomenon further to consider embarking on longitudinal studies.

Another limitation of the study was that while the researcher's findings section clearly reveals the role of autonomy and technological tools in enhancing employee productivity, creativity, and abilities and capabilities, it failed to provide empirical evidence for other factors such as organizational culture and politico-economic variables that may influence control and autonomy in a remote work environment. Therefore, this is a gray area to explore. Also, the researcher was not able to involve statistical methods involving quantitative and mathematical tools in showing degree of relationships and relationship coefficients. Hence, this is an area for researchers to exploit via the use of quantitative methods or mixed methods.

REFERENCES

- Abgeller, N., Bachmann, R., Dobbins, T., & Anderson, D. (2022). Responsible autonomy: The interplay of autonomy, control and trust for knowledge professionals working remotely during COVID-19. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 45(1), 57–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831x221140156>
- Bjørnholt, B., Boye, S., & Mikkelsen, M. F. (2022). Balancing managerialism and autonomy: A panel study of the link between managerial autonomy, performance goals, and Organizational Performance. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 45(6), 1258–1286.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2022.2048399>
- Bouguila, S. (2019). Employee freedom: Till what extent? *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH*, 7(3), 282–301. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v7.i3.2019.974>
- Cardinal, L.B., Kreutzer, M. and Miller, C.C. (2017) ‘An aspirational view of organizational control research: Re-invigorating empirical work to better meet the challenges of 21st century organizations’, *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2), pp. 559–592.
doi:10.5465/annals.2014.0086.
- Choi, S., Leiter, J., & Tomaskovic-Devey, D. (2008). Contingent autonomy. *Work and Occupations*, 35(4), 422–455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888408326766>
- Clegg, S. (1981) ‘Organization and Control’, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(4), pp. 545–562.
doi:10.2307/2392339.
- Dattée, B., Arrègle, J.-L., Barbieri, P., Lawton, T. C., & Angwin, D. N. (2022). The dynamics of organizational autonomy: Oscillations at automobili lamborghini. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 67(3), 721–768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00018392221091850>

- Demerouti, E. (2023). Effective employee strategies for remote working: An online self-training intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 142, 103857. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2023.103857>
- De Spiegelaere, S., Van Gyes, G., & Van Hootegeem, G. (2016). Not all autonomy is the same. different dimensions of job autonomy and their relation to Work Engagement & Innovative Work Behavior. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*, 26(4), 515–527. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hfm.20666>
- Edwards, R.C. (1978) ‘The social relations of production at the point of production’, *Insurgent Sociologist*, 8(2–3), pp. 109–125. doi:10.1177/089692057800800213.
- Errichiello, L., & Pianese, T. (2016). Organizational control in the context of remote work arrangements: A conceptual framework. *Performance Measurement and Management Control: Contemporary Issues*, 273–305. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-351220160000031009>
- Fekry Youssef, M., Fathy Eid, A., & Mohamed Khodeir, L. (2023). Challenges affecting efficient management of virtual teams in construction in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Ain Shams Engineering Journal*, 14(7), 102008. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2022.102008>
- Felstead, A., Jewson, N., & Walters, S. (2003). Managerial control of employees working at home. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(2), 241–264. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8543.00271>
- Ferrara, B., Pansini, M., De Vincenzi, C., Buonomo, I., & Benevene, P. (2022). Investigating the role of remote working on employees’ performance and well-being: An evidence-based systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19), 12373. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912373>
- Haque, Saw. Mu. (2023). The impact of remote work on HR practices: Navigating challenges, embracing opportunities. *European Journal of Human Resource Management Studies*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejhrms.v7i1.1549>
- Hermawati, R., Moeins, A. and Suhardi, E. (2023) ‘The influence of self–efficacy and employee empowerment on organizational citizenship behavior through job satisfaction’, *Journal of World Science*, 2(3), pp. 366–377. doi:10.58344/jws.v2i3.238.

- Jong, J., & Ford, M. (2020). An exploration of the relationship between autonomy congruence, perceived supervisor individualized consideration, and employee outcomes. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(3), 566–592. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371x20917185>
- Lange, T. (2009) ‘Job satisfaction and self-employment: Autonomy or personality?’, *Small Business Economics*, 38(2), pp. 165–177. doi:10.1007/s11187-009-9249-8.
- Kubicek, B., Paškvan, M., & Bunner, J. (2017). The bright and dark sides of job autonomy. *Job Demands in a Changing World of Work*, 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54678-0_4
- Langfred, C. W., & Rockmann, K. W. (2016). The push and pull of autonomy. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(5), 629–657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601116668971>
- Michaud, D.C. and Conceição, S.C.O. (2023) ‘Telecommuters working remotely in interdependent virtual teams: The lines between work and home’, *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 35(1), pp. 32–45. doi:10.1177/19394225231171578.
- Miheenkova, T., Morozova, K., & Lobacheva, A. (2020). The attitude of employees to remote work. *Management of the Personnel and Intellectual Resources in Russia*, 9(1), 54–60. <https://doi.org/10.12737/2305-7807-2020-54-60>
- Muecke, S., Linderman-Hill, K. and Greenwald, J.M. (2020) ‘Linking job autonomy to work engagement: The mediating role of challenge demands’, *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2020(1), p. 13553. doi:10.5465/ambpp.2020.13553abstract.
- Ouchi, W. G. (1979). A conceptual framework for the design of Organizational Control Mechanisms. *Management Science*, 25(9), 833–848. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.25.9.833>
- Perry, S. J., Rubino, C., & Hunter, E. M. (2018). Stress in remote work: Two studies testing the demand-control-person model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(5), 577–593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432x.2018.1487402>
- Pianese, T., Errichiello, L., & da Cunha, J. V. (2022). Organizational control in the context of remote working: A synthesis of empirical findings and a research agenda. *European Management Review*, 20(2), 326–345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12515>
- Qi, L., Xu, Y., & Liu, B. (2023). Work out of office: How and when does employees’ self-control influence their remote work effectiveness? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1265593>

- Ratz, N., Reibenspiess, V., & Eckhardt, A. (2021). The secret to remote work — results of a case study with dyadic interviews. *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.24251/hicss.2021.087>
- Sarmah, P., Van den Broeck, A., Schreurs, B., Proost, K., & Germeys, F. (2021). Autonomy supportive and controlling leadership as antecedents of work design and employee well-being. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23409444211054508>
- Seneviratna, G.A. and Nandasara, S.T. (2014) ‘Web based project collaboration, monitoring and Management System’, *2014 14th International Conference on Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions (ICTer)* [Preprint]. doi:10.1109/ictcr.2014.7083888.
- Sewell, G., & Taskin, L. (2015). Out of sight, out of mind in a new world of work? Autonomy, control, and spatiotemporal scaling in telework. *Organization Studies*, 36(11), 1507–1529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840615593587>
- Staniulienė, S., & Leonavičiūtė, A. (2022). Self-organization of remote employees in Lithuanian companies. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 20(2), 486–496. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20\(2\).2022.40](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20(2).2022.40)
- Staniulienė, S., & Zaveckis, A. (2022). Employee empowerment in remote work in case of Lithuanian companies. *Sustainability*, 14(14), 8463. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148463>
- Turner, K.L., Monti, A. and Annosi, M.C. (2021) ‘Disentangling the effects of organizational controls on Innovation’, *European Management Journal*, 39(1), pp. 57–69. doi:10.1016/j.emj.2020.09.004.
- van Zoonen, W., Sivunen, A., Blomqvist, K., Olsson, T., Ropponen, A., Henttonen, K., & Vartiainen, M. (2021). Understanding Stressor–strain relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of social support, adjustment to remote work, and work–life conflict. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 27(6), 1038–1059. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2021.50>

Annex A – Summary of the Data Collection

Projects	Company A (Fintech Company, Remote Before COVID)	Company B (ERP Company, Remote After COVID)
People Interviewed	5	5
Interviews Made	5	5
Identification of the Elements Interviewed	Senior Security Engineer, Cloud Engineer, Senior Software Engineer, Product Manager, Technical Headhunter	Delivery Manager, Business Analyst, ERP Consultant, Technical Support Engineer, ERP Project Manager
Identification of the Organizations Interviewed	Fintech Company (Remote Before COVID)	ERP Company (Fully Remote After COVID)
Total Duration of Interviews (in minutes)	155	182

Annex B – Interview Script for Managers

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND CONTROL MECHANISMS IN REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS AND OUTCOMES

The shift towards remote work has accelerated in recent years, driven by technological advancements and changing attitudes towards workplace flexibility (Haque, 2023). As organizations embrace remote work, they must navigate the delicate balance between granting autonomy to employees and implementing control mechanisms to ensure productivity and cohesion.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To describe how control is exercised and identify the control mechanisms in place.
2. To characterize the employee's autonomy
3. To understand the interplay between control of work and autonomy of employee

SCRIPT FOR MANAGER'S INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	REFERENCES	INTERVIEW SCRIPT
Data collected to contextualize the case (setting the scene)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role in the firm and for how long • Description of the work activities • Previous professional experience • What like and dislike about the work (...)
To describe how control is exercised (RO1)	Based on Edwards (1978), control involves: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Directing work tasks b) Evaluating the work done c) Rewarding and disciplining workers (feedback) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do you direct work to your remote team? b) How do you evaluate the work? c) How do you provide feedback about the work done?

To identify the control mechanisms (RO1)	Based on Felstead et al (2003), Control mechanisms: a) Visibility and presence (direct control) b) Information processing technologies c) Team norms and corporate culture	a) What technology (e.g., software, etc) do you use to supervise, evaluate and give feedback about your team's work? b) As a manager, what are the general rule, norms or internal practices that are in place to help you supervise, evaluate and give feedback to your team? b2) Are these rules, norms, procedures the same to all remote workers or they may vary from one group (e.g. department) to another? Elaborate/give examples. (Ask for details and examples when the answer is straight or not obvious)
To characterize the employee's autonomy (RO2)	Based on Turner, Monti, and Annosi (2021), EMPLOYEE'S AUTONOMY is: Employee's ability to a) master their tasks, b) address contingencies, and c) be innovative	a) Who makes decisions about how your team should conduct their work? (If the answer is "I do"; what are your expectations? Please provide details. (if the answer is sometimes, it me and sometimes its upper management), Can you please explain what decisions you make, and which ones are made by others? Could you please give me some examples? b) When unexpected situations arise or things happen differently than expected, how do you assess the situation and determine what next needs to be done? c) Do you change/adapt/improve your team's work practices whenever you think it is appropriate or necessary? If not, why?
To understand the interplay between control of work and autonomy of employee (RO3)		a) Are you satisfied with how you direct, evaluate and provide feedback to your team? What would you change if you could and why? b) Are you happy with your current autonomy at work? What would you change if you could and why? c) In what ways is employee's autonomy is considered in directing, evaluating and providing feedback to employees? (ask for details/examples) d) How do you think remote work affects autonomy and control? e) How do you think remote work affects employee's autonomy, such as in the ways of how they master their tasks and how innovative they could be?

Annex C – Interview Script for Employees

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND CONTROL MECHANISMS IN REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS AND OUTCOMES

The shift towards remote work has accelerated in recent years, driven by technological advancements and changing attitudes towards workplace flexibility (Haque, 2023). As organizations embrace remote work, they must navigate the delicate balance between granting autonomy to employees and implementing control mechanisms to ensure productivity and cohesion.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

4. To describe how control is exercised and identify the control mechanisms in place.
5. To characterize the employee's autonomy
6. To understand the interplay between control of work and autonomy of employee

SCRIPT FOR EMPLOYEE'S INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	REFERENCES	INTERVIEW SCRIPT
Data collected to contextualize the case (setting the scene)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role in the firm and for how long • Description of the work activities • Previous professional experience • What like and dislike about the work (...)
To describe how control is exercised (RO1)	Based on Edwards (1978), control involves: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> d) Directing work tasks e) Evaluating the work done f) Rewarding and disciplining workers (feedback) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> d) How is your work directed? e) How is your work evaluated? f) How is feedback about your work provided?

<p>To identify the control mechanisms (RO1)</p>	<p>Based on Felstead et al (2003), Control mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Visibility and presence (direct control) e) Information processing technologies f) Team norms and corporate culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Who supervises, evaluates and gives feedback about your work, either directly or indirectly? (distinguish direct from indirect control) f) What technology (e.g., software, etc) is used to supervise, evaluate and give feedback about your work? <p>C1) What general rules, norms, procedures or internal practices are in place to supervise, evaluate and give feedback about your work?</p> <p>C2) Are these rules, norms, procedures the same to all remote workers or they may vary from one group (e.g. department) to another? Elaborate/give examples!</p> <p>(Ask for details and examples when the answer is straight or not obvious)</p>
<p>To characterize the employee's autonomy (RO2)</p>	<p>Based on Turner, Monti, and Annosi (2021), EMPLOYEE'S AUTONOMY is: Employee's ability to a) master their tasks, b) address contingencies, and c) be innovative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Who makes decisions about how to conduct your work? (if the answer is "I do", explore if there are exceptions and detail them. If the answer is "sometimes it's me and other times it's XX", detail which decisions are on him/her and which don't. Ask for examples) e) When unexpected comes or things happen differently than expected, who assess the situation and determines what to do? (if the answer is "I do", explore if there are exceptions and detail them. If the answer is "sometimes it's me and other times it's XX", detail which

		<p>decisions are on him/her and which don't. Ask for examples)</p> <p>f) Do you change/adapt/improve your work practices whenever you think is appropriate or necessary? If not, why?</p>
<p>To understand the interplay between control of work and autonomy of employee (RO3)</p>		<p>f) Are you happy with the way your work is directed, evaluated and the corresponding feedback is provided? What would you change if you could and why?</p> <p>g) Are you happy with your current autonomy at work? What would you change if you could and why?</p> <p>h) [QUESTION FOR WORKERS] In what ways the way your work is directed, evaluated and the corresponding feedback affects your autonomy? (ask for details/examples)</p>

Annex D – Case A (Fintech Company, Remote Before COVID)

Category	Participant 1 (Fractional CTO)	Participant 2 (Technical Head Hunter)	Participant 3 (Senior Security Engineer)	Participant 4 (Cloud Engineer)	Participant 5 (Product Manager)
Control Processes and Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of JIRA, GitHub, Slack, Testing tools, Postman for task management and QA. - Direct control and supervision. - Regular feedback and evaluation through QA testing of code quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct supervision by a manager. - Use of JIRA for task assignment. - Regular weekly reporting. - Strict step-by-step instructions for sourcing and hiring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Slack, Zoom, sprints for team management. - Weekly syncs and alignment meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JIRA for task tracking. - Bamboo HR for logging hours. - Task assignment and time tracking based on Agile methodologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Agile methodologies. - Regular sprint reviews and retrospectives to assess team performance and task progress.
Employee's Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderate autonomy to manage the team. - Freedom to unblock issues for the team and decide on priorities within sprints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some degree of autonomy in sourcing candidates and conducting interviews. - Freedom to decide candidate progression in hiring process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy in task execution with oversight from manager. - Team members are allowed freedom within the backlog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No direct control on work. - Suggestions-based work style with autonomy in solving issues but guided by predefined metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team has some autonomy in execution, but decisions are made collaboratively during sprint planning.

<p>Interplay between Control and Autonomy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balance between control and autonomy. - Uses control devices like JIRA to track progress but provides freedom in how tasks are executed. - Feedback given regularly to improve work quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited autonomy in terms of candidate sourcing and hiring. - Heavy supervision and strict reporting processes affect flexibility. - Frustration in adhering to the rigid process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy is granted but overseen through weekly syncs and sprint planning sessions. - Overall balance between autonomy and managerial oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More autonomy due to the absence of direct control, but reporting to managers ensures compliance. - Satisfied with autonomy but sees room for improvement in reducing evaluation frequency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highly collaborative team decision-making process. - Autonomy within defined sprints; control ensured through frequent feedback and retrospective sessions.
--	--	--	---	--	--

Annex E - Case B (ERP Company, Remote After COVID)

Category	Participant 1 (Delivery Manager)	Participant 2 (Business Analyst)	Participant 3 (ERP Consultant)	Participant 4 (Technical Support Engineer)	Participant 5 (ERP Project Manager)
Control Processes and Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SLA service agreements and system performance metrics for evaluation. - Customer surveys for feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management tools to track tasks. - Feedback based on KPI targets like ticket resolution time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct supervision through weekly feedback sessions. - Evaluation based on customer feedback and system performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ticketing system to manage tasks. - Performance reviewed by customer satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project tracking through proprietary software tools. - Feedback and supervision through internal and client meetings.
Employee's Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High level of autonomy. - Can adjust work style and strategies depending on customer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy to suggest system improvements based on business needs. - Some decisions require management approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some autonomy in managing ERP system implementation. - Decisions on system changes require senior approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderate autonomy in daily tasks, but outcomes are dictated by customer satisfaction metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy in day-to-day project decisions but within the constraints of project scope and client expectations.
Interplay between Control and Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High autonomy paired with periodic evaluation through SLA agreements and customer feedback. - Balance between freedom in implementation and control through external feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy to suggest system improvements balanced with oversight from management. - Decision-making autonomy limited in high-risk scenarios. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer feedback and system performance reviews create a balance between control and autonomy. - Autonomy in daily operations but tight control on major changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer satisfaction and system performance dictate control, but moderate autonomy in task execution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High autonomy in day-to-day activities but evaluated closely through client reviews and project progress tracking.

Annex F - Interview Coding

Code	Code Description	Interview Excerpts
Control Processes and Devices	Participants describe technological tools, direct supervision, and structured processes as primary control mechanisms in their work environments.	<p>“I used JIRA, GitHub, Slack, and testing tools like Postman. Mostly, I provide Quality Assurance (QA) oversight and review the code submissions. We also use sprint planning and retrospectives.” [Participant 1]</p> <p>“We work in sprints, and weekly syncs align us. Slack and Zoom are essential for team management.” [Participant 3]</p> <p>“We use Bamboo HR for time tracking, and JIRA for task assignment. There's no direct control, it's more suggestion-based.” [Participant 5]</p> <p>“I am supervised directly by a manager, and my job is strictly controlled. I follow defined steps for finding candidates.” [Participant 2]</p>
Oversight through Technology	Technology plays a key role in allowing indirect supervision without micromanagement. Participants experience a combination of direct and indirect oversight through tools.	<p>“JIRA and Bamboo HR track time and task progress. There's not much direct control—it's based on suggestions.” [Participant 5]</p> <p>“We have oversight, but I mostly give my team freedom to complete tasks from the backlog. I only step in for issues.” [Participant 1]</p> <p>“I have to check in with my manager for approvals, but I'm allowed autonomy for sourcing candidates.” [Participant 2]</p>

<p>Metrics and Performance Evaluation</p>	<p>Participants describe performance evaluations as structured through metrics like sprint completions, review cycles, and real-time feedback.</p>	<p>“There are two performance reviews every three months—one with my manager and one with HR. Sprint completions are part of the evaluation.” [Participant 1]</p> <p>“We have sprint planning and retrospectives at the end of two weeks. Metrics like task completion and feedback are used to evaluate us.” [Participant 4]</p>
<p>Employee Autonomy: Decision Making</p>	<p>Participants describe varied levels of autonomy, from full decision-making freedom to rigid controls, depending on the role.</p>	<p>“The team has autonomy, and I mostly provide oversight. Everyone works from the backlog, and we sync weekly.” [Participant 3]</p> <p>“I manage how and where I source candidates and make decisions on interview progression, but the reporting process is rigid.” [Participant 2]</p> <p>“Sometimes it’s me making decisions, especially during emergencies, but I consult with my manager for complex cases.” [Participant 4]</p>
<p>Satisfaction with Autonomy</p>	<p>Most participants are satisfied with their level of autonomy, though some express a desire for adjustments in evaluations or feedback cycles.</p>	<p>“I am happy with the current autonomy at work, but it could be better. I’d prefer fewer one-on-one evaluations—monthly instead of weekly.” [Participant 4]</p> <p>“I am satisfied with the autonomy I have. No power play here—I wouldn’t change anything.” [Participant 5]</p> <p>“I feel autonomy is balanced, but there are areas where more flexibility would help, like reducing the structured feedback and reporting process.” [Participant 2]</p>

<p>Interplay Between Control and Autonomy</p>	<p>Participants experience a balance between control and autonomy. However, stricter control in certain roles can inhibit creativity and decision-making freedom.</p>	<p>“We decide as a team what to work on, but there’s managerial oversight to ensure we meet company objectives.” [Participant 2]</p> <p>“My job is strictly controlled. There are rigid processes in place, which limit my ability to be creative or autonomous.” [Participant 1]</p> <p>“In my role, I have to adapt quickly to issues, but more complex problems require managerial involvement. This creates a balance between autonomy and oversight.” [Participant 4]</p>
<p>Accountability and Ownership</p>	<p>Higher autonomy encourages accountability, as participants take ownership of tasks and adapt to challenges independently.</p>	<p>“People take ownership of tasks and are accountable within their domain. We also adapt when processes don’t apply to everyone on the team.” [Participant 4]</p> <p>“I am responsible for the recruitment process, including sourcing candidates, conducting interviews, and managing progress.” [Participant 2]</p> <p>“We all contribute ideas and make decisions as a team, but I make the final call on strategy and execution.” [Participant 3]</p>