MASTERS IN CORPORATE SCIENCE

MASTERS FINAL WORK

DISSERTATION

REMOTE MANAGEMENT: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP UNDER WORK-FROM-HOME ENVIRONMENT

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KENG SENG LEONG

SUPERVISOR: PROF. JORGE FILIPE DA SILVA GOMES

Jury:

President: PEDRO LUIS PEREIRA VERGA MATOS

Supervisor: JORGE FILIPE DA SILVA GOMES

Members: PAULO ALEXANDRE GUEDES LOPES HENRIQUES

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ABSTRACT

The development and adoption of remote work was accelerated by Covid-19 pandemic, and it became an alternative to traditional working mode. However, many leadership studies mainly focused on traditional work settings and lack of exploration in applicability in remote work environment.

This study explores how to effectively lead under the work from home environment and what strategies leaders can adopt to excel in remote work settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 participants across a diverse industries background. The participants comprised 5 employees and 1 manager, all of whom have at least 2 years of remote work experience.

The findings show that (1) managers have to shift from micromanagement to empowerment leadership in order to build trust through granting autonomy to employees. (2) Structured communication helps to reduce misunderstanding and increase efficiency of collaboration. (3) Performance evaluation should focus on outcomes rather than work hours. (4) Enhance team belonging and social bonds through online or offline activities can reduce the sense of isolation due to remote work.

The conclusion of this study is that a result-oriented and empowerment approach improves employees' motivation and performance. In addition, through reducing ineffective meetings and organizing activities, enhancing employees' cohesion and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Leadership, Remote work, WFH, Telecommuting

RESUMO

O desenvolvimento e a adoção do trabalho remoto foram acelerados pela pandemia de Covid-19, o trabalho remoto tornou-se uma alternativa ao modo de trabalho tradicional. No entanto, muitos estudos sobre liderança concentram-se principalmente em ambientes de trabalho presenciais, falta de exploração de aplicabilidade em contextos de trabalho remoto.

Este estudo investiga como liderar de forma eficaz em ambiente de trabalho remoto e as estratégias que os líderes podem adotar para sobressair-se em ambientes de trabalho remoto. As entrevistas semiestruturadas foram realizadas com seis participantes de diversos setores. Os entrevistados incluíram cinco colaboradores e um gestor, todos com pelo menos dois anos de experiência em trabalho remoto.

Os resultados revelam que (1)os gestores têm de passar de uma abordagem de micromanagement para uma liderança de empowerment, a fim de constituir confiança por dar autonomia aos trabalhadores.(2) a comunicação estruturada ajuda a reduzir equívocos e a aumentar a eficiência da colaboração. (3) a avaliação de desempenho deve centrar-se em resultados e não em horas de trabalho. (4) o reforço do sentimento de pertença e os laços sociais através de atividades online ou presenciais pode diminuir o sentimento de isolamento associada ao trabalho remoto.

A conclusão deste estudo é que uma abordagem orientada para resultados e empowerment melhora a motivação e o desempenho dos colaboradores. Além disso, ao reduzir reuniões ineficazes e organizar atividades, promove-se a coesão e o sentimento de pertença dos trabalhadores.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Work from home (WFH) has become an alternative to traditional office-based work due to the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic, leading many organizations to adopt remote work arrangements to their employees during pandemic as well to this day. Although the pandemic has made remote work more popular, in fact, the concept has existed for decades, and it was introduced in 1979 to reduce commuting time. The pandemic as the turning point not only accelerated the development of remote work but also brought out several transformations for organizations on their communications, collaborations and managements in remote work setting. Thus, remote work has evolved into an important part of modern working practices today.

In the context of modern working practice, remote work has various benefits for both employees and organizations, as it is generally believed to reduce commuting time, enhance employee performance, increase job satisfaction, improve work-life balance, offer flexible work schedule, lower office-related expenses, and so on. Despite its advantages, remote work can also bring negative impacts both physical and psychological levels, for instance, unappropriated leadership approach may reduce employee performance in remote work setting, employees are required to adapt the remote setting due to the pandemic, often encountering different situations, such as less interaction with colleagues, distractions from family members, and other disruptions (Galanti et al., 2021). Therefore, while remote work as an emerging work model offers many benefits to both organizations and employees, a suitable strategy is still required that mitigates its negative impacts, thereby ensuring success in remote work.

Scholars and industry practitioners have initiated and developed many leadership strategies aiming to address problems and manage effectively. However, these strategies are often tailored to traditional workplaces and may not be fully applicable to remote work settings. The strategies effective in office settings may fall short in addressing challenges unique to remote work, such as remote work capacity, psychological well-being, and communication barriers (Kaul et al., 2020; Dirani et al., 2020). Moreover, research on leadership in the context of remote work remains limited, leaving a significant gap in understanding how leadership practices should adapt to this emerging work model.

These challenges emphasize the importance and the urge to explore leadership approaches that can work effectively under the remote work settings.

This master's thesis aims to explore how to effectively lead under the work from home environment, and what strategies leaders can adopt to excel in remote work settings. By addressing these aims, revealing particular traditional leadership could be applied to the remote work environment and strategies that help to improve organizations and employee's performance. The rest of the thesis is organized into 4 sections. In the first section, a literature review will be presented, offering the concept of work from home, leadership and e-leadership and their influences. The following section is related to qualitative methodology, giving a brief description of the interview process. In the third section, the findings will be deeply discussed. Finally, it offers a brief conclusion, future direction for further studies and practical strategies for managers as well as the limitations.

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2.1. Definition of Working from home (WFH)

At the beginning of 2021, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic triggered a work model transformation all over the world. Many organizations gradually adopted remote work arrangements to continue working and avoid risks of being infected. Remote work has become popular since then and people prioritize remote work when they look for a job. Although the concept of WFH has been explored from various perspectives, its definition remains ambiguous and open to interpretation. Some researchers use WFH interchangeably with terms such as remote work or telecommuting, describing it as a work arrangement where employees are not required to commute to a central office (Bellmann and Hübler, 2020; Bao et al., 2022). Similarly, Olson (1983) defined a similar concept that working from home as a flexible work arrangement in which employees perform their tasks outside the traditional organizational space and time boundaries. Others distinguish WFH from working from anywhere (WFA), where WFA provides employees with greater flexibility regarding time and location (Choudhury et al., 2020).

Haddon and Brynin's research (2005) emphasized that remote work is a multidimensional concept that includes four key elements: technology, location, contract arrangements, and time. Echoing on their ideas, Bick et al (2023) further explained that based on employees' choices regarding the more suitable technology, work location, work hours, and work from home can be categorized into fully remote and hybrid modes. It is undeniable that the distinctions between WFA and working remotely may result in concerns such as taxation issues and time zone alignment. However, these are the minor parts of the leadership we are aiming to improve. Despite the discrepancies among different definitions, all interpretations highlight the characteristic of work from home – flexibility, enabling individual employee to balance their work and personal lives while meeting both individual and organizational needs under the assistance of new technology. In this paper, I intend to use WFH as a more general term to describe such features, focusing on the challenges caused by the transition from traditional work setting to a remote working environment.

The shift in work settings has not only changed the locations where employees carried out their tasks but also exerted both positive and negative influences on various aspects of work and life. On the positive side, employees can engage in self-leadership

by autonomously setting goals, thereby enhancing work efficiency and engagement (Galanti et al., 2021). Moreover, working from home enables employees not to commute, allowing them to adjust their work hours more readily and flexibly to accommodate their family needs, thus facilitating a balance between work and life (Demerouti et al., 2014). These benefits further enhance employee job satisfaction and improve their mental health, which consequently makes the option of WFH as a preferred criterion when people search for jobs. In the job market, companies offering hybrid work mode are more attractive to applicants in general compared to those requiring onsite work.

On the other hand, workplace isolation is one of the key features of remote work, leading to a reduction in social interactions and, consequently, a decline in engagement and productivity. Moreover, working from home may create a home environment rife with family conflicts and distractions environment, which could make it arduous for employees to concentrate on their work and result in a drop in productivity (Galanti et al., 2021). This seems contradictory to the advantages mentioned earlier; However, as Galanti (2021) explained that workers, particularly those who have no prior experience of WFH, are prone to encountering technological challenges and job stress in a remote work setting, which can leave them feeling demotivated at work. Such situations may get worse when management teams lack leadership skills. Similarly, Spagnoli et al. (2020) suggested that the forced remote work during the pandemic is proven to have negative aspects in resulting technostress-challenges of information overload, job insecurity, intensity of communication and unbalanced communication quality, as well as frequent interruptions at work, all of which contributes employee mental anxiety and fatigue, resulting in lowered productivity and commitment. Thus, a call for smart e-leaders is crucial and urgent during the rapid transition of organizations. These factors collectively affect on employees' engagement and productivity and highlight the need for organizations to adopt leadership strategies that maximize the benefits of working from home while addressing its challenges to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to flexible work arrangements.

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2.2. Leadership

Leaders play a crucial role in various fields, such as governments, communities and organizations. Leadership is generated by leaders which is a process where leaders attempt to guide subordinates to voluntarily engage in achieving goals of organization (Omolayo, 2000). Gradually transitioning from what used to be known as 'command-and-control' towards 'empower-and-track' until nowadays 'connect-and-nurture' (Gandolfi and Stone, 2018), the concept of leadership has evolved from mere power delegation to relationship building, which involves multi-skills in various aspects. To assess a leader, leadership traits, leadership behaviors and styles are key indicators and factors (Bolden, 2004).

As a leader, it requires essential leadership competencies to overcome crisis, understand dynamic circumstances and drive the process forward. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) categorize managerial competencies into four domains: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, business skills, and leadership skills. This model not only highlights the soft skills of leaders but also claims the importance of building and motivating teams to achieve well-planned business goals. While Hogan and Kaiser (2005) credited heavily on leader self-personalities and their impacts on leaderships, Kouzes and Posner (2012) proposed five common leadership practices focusing more on actual leadership tactics: (i) modelling the way, (ii) inspiring a shared vision, (iii) challenging the process, (iv) enabling others to act, and (v) encouraging the heart. These practices mainly affect employees' behavior and performance as well as the organization's structure. For instance, encouraging employees which is able to improve their confidence and their work performance while building an organizational culture. In a similar vein, Shore and Chung (2021) examined four leadership orientations – leader inclusion, exclusion, similariton, and differentiation and emphasized the importance and benefits of inclusive leadership. By valuing employees' feedback and ideas, fulfilling their needs of belonging, empowering employees and promoting a strong relationship with team members, leaders create an inclusive working environment that encourages employees to convey ideas freely and feel safe psychologically, which in return increases the positivity of employee attitudes and their performance. These practices underscore diverse theoretical perspectives on management and highlight the application of distinct leadership

competencies. To effectively address specific organizational contexts and objectives necessitates a strategic and adaptive integration of these practices by leaders to optimize outcomes.

Leadership encompasses not only practical competencies but also includes different styles of leadership. Leadership style can affect organizational commitment, work satisfaction, trust, performance and productivity (Chung-Hsiung Fang et al., 2009; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Based on leader behavior orientations, Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) categorized leadership styles into three groups: goal-oriented, involving, and engaging. The first group highlights a style where leaders are strongly centered on setting tasks and directing employees to attain desired performance. On the contrary, the other two groups emphasize a different style where leaders play a vital role in facilitating and guiding employees in a broader way, with employees being more involved in the management process.

Align with this concept, scholars have developed two predominant styles of leadership—transformational leadership and transactional leadership, which can be categorised based on the prioritization of interests. Transformational leadership style emphasizes followers' needs and developments, encouraging them to transcend their self-interest, thereby increasing the job performance of followers (Khajeh, 2018). This leadership style prioritizes subordinates' interest over organisations' interest. While this leadership style places significant emphasis on the growth and well-being of subordinates, it remains aligned with the overarching objectives of the organization. Bakker et al. (2023) and Trottier et al. (2008) concur with Khajeh, and further pointed out that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation are part of crucial characteristics of transformational leadership impacting employees' performance, job engagement and satisfaction. Ismail et al. (2009) completed previous research by highlighting the mediating role of empowerment positively influences employee performance as it grants more autonomy to employee, allowing employees them to understand customer needs better and respond in a flexible and timely manner.

In contrast, transactional leadership adopts a performance-contingent reward system, where employees get their rewards based on task completion and comply with established performance standards. This leadership style emphasizes structure,

compliance, and efficiency, relying heavily on organizational policies and a structured system of rewards and punishments, thereby enhancing job performance (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Purwanto et al (2020) and Javed & Chaudhry (2012) suggested similar views to previous study, suggesting that transactional leadership motivates employees by satisfying their self-interest based on their contribution to the organization. It positively impacts on job performance, enhances employees' motivation and reduces turnover rates. While the reward system can improve employee performance to a certain level, it has limitations on employee innovation. As leaders adopt exception management, they closely focus on any behavior deviating from established regulations and systems, often taking immediate action to correct errors. This approach may unintentionally limit the creativity of their subordinates (Purwanto et al, 2020; Chaudhry & Javed, 2012). In contrast, transformational leadership leverages team collaboration and empowerment, fostering both employee development and organizational adaptability. While transactional leadership emphasizes compliance and short-term efficiency through structured rewards and clear performance expectations, transformational leadership drives long-term development by fostering adaptability and proactive problem-solving, creating an environment conducive to continuous innovation and growth.

In addition to categorizing leadership based on interests, participation and control serve as another set of categorization criteria. Democratic, autocratic and Laissez-faire are three types of leadership style distinguished by varying levels of participation and control. Basit et al (2017) suggested that democratic leadership enables employees to participate decision-making and share their opinions and perspectives, thereby positively influencing employees' job performance. While job performance is influenced by democratic leadership, it also impacts job satisfaction. Bhatti et al (2012) indicated that democratic leadership increase job satisfaction by creating a safe environment where employees can feel free to share their perspectives and seek support from leaders when encountering problems, which in the end improve employees' sense of belonging and job satisfaction.

In terms of autocratic leadership style, Harms et al. (2018) highlighted that autocratic leaders are dictatorial, disregard subordinates' feedback and opinions, and demand unconditional obedience. As a result, communication becomes one-way, flowing

from leader to subordinate, as followers are expected to comply without question. Basit et al (2017) shared same views as Harms et al and further emphasize that autocratic leadership negatively impact job performance since leader dominates all the decision-making, thereby restricting employees' motivation and creativity. Apart from centralized decision-making as a factor affecting performance, De Hoogh et al. (2015) proposed another factor—psychological safety and highlight that when power struggle is minimal, it positively contributes to a team's sense of psychological security and indirectly improve team performance. Conversely, when power struggle exists within the team, they may have a negative impact on psychological security, leading to a decline in team performance and emphasising the importance of power dynamics.

Compared with democratic and autocratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership represents an extreme approach, where leader usually do not intervene in any decision-making and grant employees completely freedom in this process, thereby resulting in lower levels of employees' motivation (Chaudhry and Javed,2012). This is attributed to the lack of necessary intervention by leaders in the management process. Although laissez-faire leadership may have a negative impact to employees, Basit et al (2017) indicated that under some circumstances, it can also have a positive impact on employee performance. For instance, when employees have a strong personal ability and a clear understanding of their job responsibility, leader fully trust employees' decision and adopt a no-blame policy for any mistakes. Furthermore, Skogstad et al. (2014) suggested that laissez-faire leadership negatively impacts job satisfaction, an effect that accumulates over time due to the leader's prolonged inaction. This highlights another critical factor: when employees lack leadership intervention and support, they may experience a sense of isolation, which can further diminish their engagement and overall job satisfaction.

Charismatic leadership is defined as a leader who inspire and motivate followers though their personal charm and vision, thereby increasing team identify and commitment to foster team innovation (Paulsen et al, 2009). As leaders influence team innovation by promoting cooperative behaviours among members, such as creating a sense of belonging and an atmosphere of cooperation, charismatic leadership plays a vital role. Lepine et al (2016) indicate that charismatic leadership positively influences job performance by

adjusting pressure source – challenge stressors and hindrance stressors. Charismatic leadership plays a moderating role, helping employees reframe challenge stressors as opportunities for growth, thereby enhancing work motivation and performance. While it may not be possible to change employees' perceptions of hindrance stressors, their negative impact on performance can be alleviated by fostering a sense of purpose and resilience. Moreover, DeGroot et al. (2000) pointed out that charismatic leadership enhances performance by strengthening subordinates' commitment and fostering team cohesion, making it more effective in improving the overall team performance rather than the performance of individual subordinates.

In contrast, compared with charismatic leadership, which heavily relies on a leader's ability and personality, bureaucratic leadership influences their subordinates by formulating and implementing strict policies and procedures. This style pays more attention to the standardization and consistency of processes rather than the needs and development of individual employees (Khajeh, 2018 & Ojokuku et al, 2012). Bureaucratic leadership does not depend on the leader's personal influence but rather on a strict adherence to formal rules and structures, requiring employees to strictly follow organizational procedures to exercise their tasks. While this leadership style ensures stability and consistency, Ojokuku et al (2012) indicated that bureaucratic leadership negatively impact organizational performance due to its focuses on procedures and processes, lack of flexibility, indifference to staff, and lack of staff development and motivation. Similarly, Idrus' study (2015) pointed out that organisational commitment can serve as a mediating role to indirectly impact organizational performance under bureaucratic leadership. In a bureaucratic system, increasing employees' organisational commitment may still lead to higher performance. However, greater bureaucratic leadership reduces organisational commitment and does not significantly impact organisational performance, as it focuses more on hierarchical organisation and work instructions by employees are stereotypical, which can lead to resistance.

Compared to transformational leadership, which emphasizes addressing followers' needs to achieve organizational objectives, Servant Leadership similarly prioritizes followers but requires a high level of interaction and specific attributes for leaders to effectively embody this leadership style. Coetzer et al. (2017) identify eight

key characteristics and four core competencies of Servant Leadership that contribute positively to individual, team, and organizational outcomes, particularly in enhancing job satisfaction and performance. The essential characteristics include (1) authenticity, (2) humility, (3) compassion, (4) accountability, (5) courage, (6) altruism, (7) integrity, and (8) listening. Meanwhile, the four fundamental competencies are (1) empowerment, (2) stewardship, (3) building relationships, and (4) a compelling vision. These characteristics reflect the core qualities of servant leaders, fostering trust, enhancing employee satisfaction, and shaping a positive organisational culture. In contrast, the core competencies define how servant leaders' function within an organisation, influencing decision-making, team dynamics, and overall performance improvement. Gandolfi and Stone (2018) concur with same perspective on characteristics, emphasizing that servant leadership is grounded in a leader's commitment to serving others, fostering employee development, and upholding ethical integrity. These qualities ultimately contribute to higher job satisfaction, stronger team performance, and long-term organizational success.

Based on Dulewicz and Higgs' (2005) framework, leadership styles can be categorized into goal-oriented, involving, and engaging leadership. First, goal-oriented Leadership is primarily applicable in relatively stable environments. In this style, leaders are responsible for setting clear directions and playing a dominant role in the decision-making process to ensure the organization achieves its established objectives. This approach is not necessarily authoritarian, but decision-making is typically leader-driven (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). For example, transactional leadership motivates employees through incentives and penalties to ensure that they carry out their tasks according to the rules in return for rewards or to avoid penalties.

Second, involving leadership places greater emphasis on employee participation and joint decision-making. While leaders still provide clear strategic direction, they focus more on involving team members in the decision-making process and discussions regarding how to achieve organizational goals (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). For instance, democratic leadership encourages open communication and teamwork, ensuring that decision-making processes are transparent and that the voices of all members are heard.

Finally, engaging leadership is the leadership style that emphasize supporting employees, and it is often applied in highly dynamic and uncertain environments. The

core of this leadership style lies in development, meaning that leaders support and develop employees' capabilities so they can independently address challenges rather than relying on direct instructions from leaders (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). For example, transformational leadership influences people through vision and motivation, making them more proactive and creative in their thinking to cope with the changing environment.

Table 1 presents a summary of leadership styles with their main characteristics and impacts, offering a structured framework for understanding their practical relevance.

Table 1: Summary of Leadership Styles

Category	Leadership style	Characteristics	Impact
Goal-Oriented	Transactional	1.Performance-contingent reward system 2.Highly rely on policies	1. Job performance 2. Employee motivation 3. Innovation
	Autocratic	1.Centralise decision-making 2.High employees' obedience	1. Job performance 2. Employees' motivation and innovation
	Bureaucratic	1.Formulate and implement strict policies and procedures	1.Organisational performance 2.Organisational commitment
Engaging	Transformational	1.Individual consideration 2.Idealised influence 3.Inspirational motivation 4.Intelleual stimulation	1. Employee performance 2. Job engagement 3. Job satisfaction
	Charismatic	1.Reliance on the leader's personality, capabilities and vision	1. Job performance 2. Job motivation
	Servant	1.Leader focus followers' need 2.Followers' interest above organisations' interest	1. Job satisfaction 2. Job performance
	Laissez-faire	1. Employee decision-making freedom 2. Leader does not intervene any decision-making	1. Employee motivation 2. Job performance 3. Job satisfaction
Involving	Democratic	1.Decentralise decision-making 2.Value subordinates' views and opinions	1. Job performance and satisfaction 2. Employee belongingness

These leadership styles primarily affect employees' satisfaction, performance and group efficacy. However, there is no certainty about the effectiveness of the various leadership styles. Instead of arguing which one is better than the other, it makes more sense to study the differences among them and more importantly, to examine the selection of the leadership style and the workplace context in which where it is operated (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003). Depending on the organization's context, goals, and work environment, the effectiveness of a leadership style can be different. For instance, authoritarian leadership is described as centralizing decision-making and exerting power and control over subordinates without considering their productivity and contribution (Sauer, 2011), is considered unsuitable for effective management in a remote working environment. While authoritarian leadership can be more effective in traditional workplace by centralizing control and direction, it will be greatly diminished in remote work environment where authoritarian leaders may not be able to communicate immediately. In contrast, a transformational leadership style is more effective in remote work as employees are granted a certain level of authority to do their task. Research of Galanti et al (2021) shown that autonomy is positively correlated with increased employee productivity and engagement. Therefore, it is suggested that the appropriate leadership style be adopted and adapt it accordingly in different work environments and scenarios.Work from home (WFH) has become an alternative to traditional office-based work due to the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic, leading many organizations to adopt remote work arrangements to their employees during pandemic as well to this day. Although the pandemic has made remote work more popular, in fact, the concept has existed for decades, and it was introduced in 1979 to reduce commuting time. The pandemic as the turning point not only accelerated the development of remote work but also brought out several transformations for organizations on their communications, collaborations and managements in remote work setting. Thus, remote work has evolved into an important part of modern working practices today.

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2.3. E-leadership

E-Leadership is defined as a social influence process facilitated by advanced information technologies (AITs) to effect changes in attitudes, emotions, cognition, behaviors, and performance at individual, team, or organization level (Avolio et al., 2000). Unlike traditional leadership, which relies on in-person communication, E-Leadership leverages diverse digital channels impact and manage employees, such as social media, email, and collaboration platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams). This shift enhances communication flexibility but also imposes higher technical demands on leaders.

However, Avolio et al. (2014), in reviewing their initial definition of e-leadership, noted that the original definition could benefit from a stronger emphasis on the importance of context. Therefore, the revised definition introduced that e-leadership is embedded in both proximal and distal contexts. Here, the proximal context refers to the environment of direct interaction between leaders and followers, whereas the distal context refers to the wider environment of organizational culture, technological infrastructure, etc. Compared with the original definition, the reviewed one emphasizes the influence factor of context but does not provide specific skills that can be applied in different contexts.

Moreover, Wart et al. (2017) propose another e-leadership definition based on the definition provided by Avolio et al (2014) as it is defined that e-leadership is the effective use and blending of electronic and traditional methods of communication, which implies that e-leadership does not necessarily to use information communication technologies (ICTs) or operate in remote environment. Instead, it highlights the strategic adoption of different ICTs based on different situations.

Furthermore, Wart et al. (2017) further conceptualize e-leadership into six core electronic skills – SEC model: (1) e-communication skills (clarity, accuracy and ease of communication), (2) e-social skills (leader support), (3) e-team building skills (team motivation, team accountability and team member recognition), (4) e-change management skills (change management) , (5) e-technological skills (currency relate to ICTs, combination virtual, basic technological savvy and security), and (6) e-trustworthiness (diversity management, work-life balance and trustworthiness in a virtual

environment). This range of electronic soft and hard skills involves interpersonal, communication and leadership skills, as well as requiring technical knowledge and expertise in ICT tools. Simultaneously, Wart et al.(2018) combine Avolio et al (2014) and their six e-leadership competencies to propose a definition more complicated: "E-leadership is a set of technology-mediated social influencing processes intended to change attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance, which are based on ability to communicate clearly and appropriately, provide adequate social interaction, inspire and manage change, build and hold teams accountable, demonstrate technological know-how related to ICTs, and develop a sense of trust in virtual environments." This definition emphasizes the necessity of e-leadership competencies, enabling leaders to cultivate relevant abilities in a targeted manner.

Torre and Sarti (2020) conclude findings from various articles and suggest that e-leadership focuses on both individual and organization dimensions. It is capable of focusing the details and broad vision, as it is a technology-driven social process that integrates electronic and traditional communication methods, ensuring adaptability while retaining humanization. Moreover, e-leadership remains a part of the broader field of leadership science and practice, which must be subject to continuous review. This implies that there is still no definite definition for electronic leadership.

While leveraging advanced information technology (AIT) and well-developed software systems, managers encounter more challenges than usual when working remotely (Kirchner et al., 2021). Remote managers often report extended workdays filled with additional organizational responsibilities. Informal interactions such as coffee chats and casual conversations in the office are often replaced by an overwhelming number of virtual meetings, leading to monotony and reduced productivity. Moreover, the absence of face-to-face interactions hinders effective communication, increasing the risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The general sets of tactics and practice that are held and executed by managers during normal times require alternatives and adaptations as the situation changes, particularly when organizations face rapid and unpredictable challenges.

To overcome such drawbacks of working remotely, Bartsch et al (2020) examined two different leadership behaviors – enabling leadership behavior (ELB) and managing

leadership behavior (MLB). While the former one is relationship oriented, which emphasizes leader support and employee empowerment, the latter one is task oriented, which highlights leader supervision and team control. They suggested that a leadership approach balance both ELB and MLB can enhance employee performance, especially when facing uncertainties during hard times. Task-oriented leaders who provide clear guidance, delegate autonomy, and offer support as needed can better encourage employees and lead virtual teams through crisis. Such leadership fosters both individual initiative and organizational cohesion.

In 2022, Bagga et al. proposed the effectiveness of transformational leadership in virtual contexts which is in align with the idea of ELB. This proactive leadership style encourages the exchange and flows of ideas between leaders and their subordinates and is positively correlated with organizational culture and change management. Leaders inspire employees with a futuristic approach, demonstrating awareness of individual employee development and providing mentorship to support professional growth. Instead of being trapped with outdated values and traditions, leaders aim to stimulate employee creativity. These qualities are critical for fostering employee engagement and adaptability in virtual team settings, particularly for companies executing globalization and escalating workforce diversity.

These leadership approaches emphasize actively encouraging employees, empowering them to fully engage in self-management and leverage their initiative. They focus on addressing individual needs and supporting personal growth. Simultaneously, it requires leaders to effectively arrange their tasks, manage their time in a remote work setting, and foster efficient communication and collaboration with their employees. In addition, concerns remain regarding the balance of employee autonomy and manager supervision remain. As scholars have explored, both orientations of leadership have positiveness and negativeness on employee performance and organization outcomes--one is not necessarily outperforming the other one, particularly under the remote work settings. For instance, one may propose that when working from home, leaders should trust employees with more empowerment for better productivity and engagement, while others can argue that distance and remoteness require additional management to overcome distractions and lack of self-discipline. To what extent should leaders delegate

powers to their subordinates and what level of control is considered as enough for employees are questions need to be answered.

Associated with the fact of social isolation when working from home, employee mental health has become a growing issue for managers (Sull.et al, 2020). When onsite activities such as coffee chats, team lunch, or afterwork happy hours are missing, arranging online events and group activities for employee social needs are new tasks leaders should contemplate on. Providing emotional and psychological support is an important managerial aspect that requires extras attention and improvement. Similarly, Contreras et al. (2020) mentioned that the distance between team members, increased diversity of teleworking, and lack of effective communication threaten trust building and cohesion in teams. As a result, intercultural competence, interpersonal communication skills, capabilities of establishing strong relationships and connections, and the tactics of liaising among employees are more leveraged when leading virtual teams.

2.4. Research problem

As mentioned above, while research on leadership has been studied well in depth, most of the existing research focuses on its adoption and impact in traditional work environments. In contrast, research on leadership in remote work or hybrid work mode is relatively little. Previous studies have mainly examined leadership effectiveness through indicators such as employee productivity, satisfaction, and engagement (Khajeh, 2018; Coetzer et al., 2018; Skogstad et al., 2014). However, these metrics alone may not offer a comprehensive evaluation. Other important factors, such as employee loyalty and team culture, are often ignored but are equally vital for understanding leadership outcomes in remote contexts.

A further limitation of the existing literature lies in its focus on specific industries occupations, which raises concerns about the generalisability of the findings (Basit et al, 2017; Chung-Hsiung Fang et al., 2004; Ojokuku et al., 2012). Such narrow scopes may not adequately capture the dynamics of more complex or high-skilled professions, thereby limiting the applicability of these insights across diverse sectors. Moreover, much previous research was conducted either during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic or even before the widespread adoption of remote work (Bhatti et al, 2012; Chaudhry & Javed, 2012; Contreras et al., 2020). As organisations and employees have

since gained more experience with remote work practices, earlier findings may no longer accurately reflect the current realities, challenges, and expectations in this domain.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore how leadership can remain effective in remote work environments. It not only helps to identify leadership styles that are more suitable for virtual environments but also promotes the development of innovative leadership models and strategies, enabling better adaptation to the continuous changes in work. Considering these gaps, this study aims to explore how to effectively lead under the work-from-home environment, and what strategies leaders can adopt to excel in remote settings. Though semi-structured interviews conducted with six participants across a range of industries, including five employees and one manager. All participants have experience working remotely both before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a more comprehensive evaluation of how communication practices and leadership effectiveness have evolved over time in remote work contexts. By doing so, the goal of this research is to mitigate existing gaps and provide new direction for future research on leadership in remote work settings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to investigate effective leadership practices in remote work environments. In qualitative research, thematic analysis methodology offers flexibility in terms of data collection methods, research question design, sample size and so on (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This approach was appropriate for this research as it accommodates various data collection methods, for example, purposive sampling, interview and is to conduct an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights, which are critical for understanding the complexities of remote management.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended questions for this dissertation since semi-structured aims to gain participants' perspective regarding their experiences on particular situation (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The interview protocol included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed and in-depth responses from both manager and employees regarding their experiences in remote work settings. The interview protocol consisted of ten core questions, which were consistently presented to all participants. The complete interview guide can be found in the appendix.

Interviews were conducted either virtually or through video conferencing platforms, depending on the participants' availability and preferences. All interviews were held in Chinese due to the participants' proficiency in the language. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately thirty minutes. However, the actual duration varied depending on the depth of participants' responses.

Before initiating the interview process, all participants were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality measures in place to protect their personal information. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the precision and reliability of data collection and subsequent transcription.

3.2 Selection of Participants

To ensure the collection of precise and topic-relevant data, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted which is *'used to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information'* (Kelly, 2010), thereby enhancing the study's ability to capture a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. By focusing on participants with significant exposure to remote work contexts, for example, managers' experiences will provide insights into leadership strategies, decision-making processes, and the challenges of guiding distributed teams, while employees' perspectives will shed light on the effectiveness and impact of these leadership practices on team performance, motivation, and engagement.

This study involved one manager and five employees, all of whom have a certain year of experience in managing or working in remote teams. The participants hold diverse positions across various sectors in Europe, the United States and China, with which can provide valuable insights for this study due to their diverse work backgrounds. Moreover, the participants' work modes were categorized into hybrid and fully remote, further enriching the study by capturing a diverse remote work experience.

The table below presents details of the study participants, including their roles, their sector and their work mode. The abbreviations "M" and "E" are used to represent Manager and Employee.

Table 2: Participant Information

Participant	Role	Sector	Work Mode
M1	Product Manager	Automotive	Hybrid
E1	Junior Pricing Manager	Beauty e-commerce	Hybrid
E2	Software Engineer	Energy Technology	Fully Remote
E3	Data Analyst	Consulting	Fully Remote
E4	Software Engineer	Finance Technology	Hybrid
E5	Machine Learning Engineer	Technology	Hybrid

Note. *M = Manager; E = Employee. In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, codes are used in place of names.*

3.3 Interview Structure

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' work experience in remote work, all interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. Ten pre-designed question were used to ensure consistency of the interview and to help with follow-up analyses of data. Moreover, additional questions were asked based on participants' responses to help to explore deeply and obtain different insights from participants.
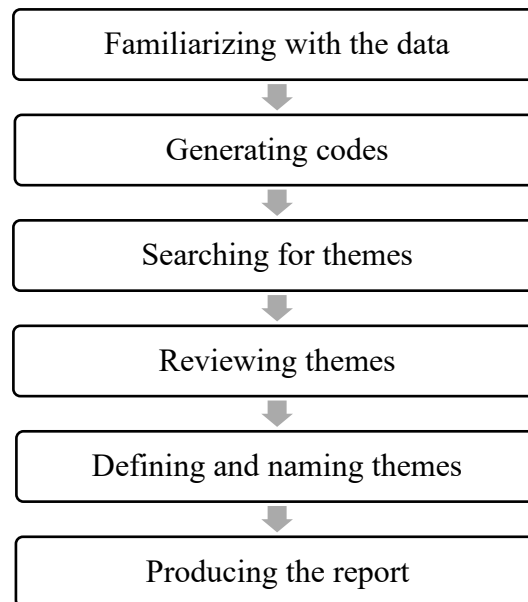
The average of interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, offering sufficient time to think and answer all the questions. The ten pre-designed questions included several aspects, for instance, leadership strategies, communication and team dynamics in context of remote work, attempting to gain a diverse insight, especially the insights to manager and their practices from employees. Overall, all the question aimed to gain a comprehensive answer from interviewees in order to answer this thesis research question, which is how to effectively lead and what strategies managers adopt to excel in remote work settings.

3.4 Findings

In order to present the findings of the interview in different topic, the thematic analysis methodology was conducted. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, the analysis was carried out through six phases: (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) producing the report.

The figure below shows the six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis methodology.

Figure 1: Thematic Analysis Process

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Familiarizing with the data      │
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│          Generating codes            │
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│         Searching for themes         │
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│           Reviewing themes           │
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│      Defining and naming themes      │
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│         Producing the report         │
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During the familiarisation phase, the main objective was to convert spoken data into written transcripts. All interview recordings were transcribed to provide a clear and complete written transcript, facilitating an understanding of interviews' opinions and statements. The transcription process also facilitated the subsequent phase of initial coding, during which meaningful sentences and repeated ideas in the transcripts were highlighted. For example, M1 noted *"I'm the type of manager who mostly cares about results as long as they meet the targets."* and E2 noted *"Our manager doesn't interfere and lets us set our own priorities, only stepping in when something urgent comes up.",* these statements were coded as *"results-based orientation"," manager not interfere",* and *"employee set their own priorities".*

Table 3: Data extract with codes

| Data extract	Coded for
"In remote work, there's often an issue with micromanagement. Sometimes, because they can't see you in the office, it's not just my direct supervisor, it could be someone higher up, like a VP or even more senior. They might feel uncertain about what you're working on, so they resort to some micromanagement. For example, they might send a lot of emails, like on Friday afternoons, just to check if you're actually at your work." (E3)	1.Issue with micromanagement 2.Undermining trust 3.Unhealthy team vibe 4.Stress at work
"I'm the type of manager who mostly cares about results as long as they meet the targets." "As long as employees meet the KPIs, I don't pay much attention to whether they are physically present." (M1)	1.Results-oriented leadership 2.Autonomy-supported leadership 3. In person present is not important
"Our manager doesn't interfere and lets us set our own priorities, only stepping in when something urgent comes up." "I feel quite free. I often choose to do the things I want to do first. It really depends on how each person sets their priorities. His approach gives me more time to actually complete tasks rather than reporting on progress." "Our manager rarely checks on our progress and mostly focuses on the results we deliver." (E2)	1.Empowerment leadership 2.Employee self-management 3.Supporting manager increase employee productivity 4.Manager does not interfere 5.Trust on employee 6. Result driven management
"Communication is a significant challenge in remote work. Without face-to-face interaction, employees often have to schedule meetings to resolve unforeseen issues, which reduces communication efficiency compared to in-person collaboration." (M1)	1.Communication challenge 2.Lack of in person interaction 3.Communication efficiency is important 4.Too much online meeting

Table 4: Data extract with codes (continued from previous page)

"Face-to-face communication is much faster and clearer. Online messages often receive delayed responses, and it's difficult to fully explain complex issues through text." (E1)	1.Prefer face-to-face communication 2.Slow communication online 3.Online messages is inefficient than in person talk
"Face value is important. When you've met someone in person, they tend to be more open and transparent in answering questions. Without that personal bond in remote work, explaining complex issues through messages becomes difficult, and even if you explain clearly, the other person might not fully understand." (E5)	1.Require in person presence 2.Importance of personal bond 3.Remote work cause misunderstanding 4. lack of transparency
"Our company supports work-life balance and even allows us to work from our home country or anywhere in the EU. This helps maintain family connections and personal well-being." (E1)	1. Work-life balance 2. High employee satisfaction 3. Mental health
"We have regular in-person activities, like volunteering or social outings, which employees can choose to join. There are also online chat groups and weekly optional meetings where people can share what they've been doing or post photos from the weekend. The company encourages these activities to promote social connection, although I personally don't participate much." (E3)	1.Team culture and event 2. Social connection 3. In person activities

In the following phase, similar codes were categorized into a theme. For example, the code "*employee set their own priorities*", "*manager does not interfere*" and "*results-based orientation*" as mentioned above, were converted into the theme of *"leadership", "results-based"* and *work autonomy"*

In reviewing and defining and naming phase, all the themes were reviewed to ensure that themes were consistent with the data from interviewees' perspective. As a result, one of the themes was named as Shifting Leadership from Control to Autonomy.

Figure 2: Final thematic map
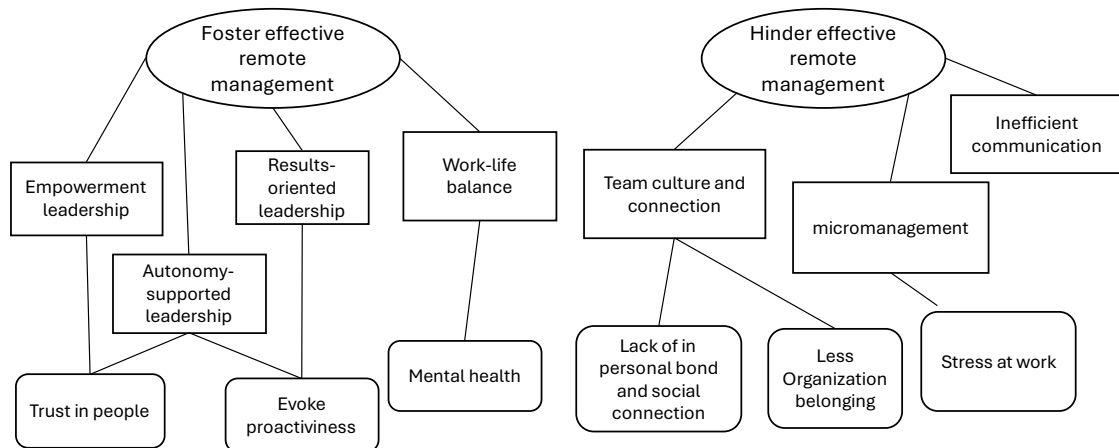
Finally, after these five phases, the findings were written up to answer the research question. Through these six phases of methodology, key themes were identified that reflect participants' experiences and perspectives on how remote work environments affect leadership effectiveness and the strategies leaders adopt in remote settings.

Finding 1: **Shifting Leadership from Control to Autonomy**

The first finding of theme explores leadership should shift to grant employee more autonomy in order to build trust and establish employees' responsibility on their job rather than micro control employee in remote work settings. Participants described the leadership styles of their managers tend to focus the outcomes rather than the process and mentioned that if they need any resources, assistance or something urgent come up, managers will undoubtedly offer support. Thus, the leadership such as transformational leadership and empowerment leadership tend to prefer by employees in remote work settings.

 In addition, one of the participants underscored an aversion to micromanagement in remote working environments as it felt lack of trust from manager and caused stress to employees while working. It also emphasized the importance of trust in remote work environment.

In sum up, leadership tends to grant employee autonomy and build trust not only improve employee satisfaction but also foster employees' self-management skills, showing that empowerment is particularly effective in remote work environments.

Finding 2: **Intentional and Structured Communication**

This second finding of theme explores the intentional communication strategies helps to address the challenges of coordination and reduce ambiguity of communication in remote work environments. Participants consistently emphasized the intentional and structured communication is a crucial role to overcome the inherent challenges of remote work as it helps to offset the limitation of remote work that cannot immediately have a face-to-face communication. It not only maintains the consistency of information but also minimizes the misunderstanding while encountering urgency and task arrangements.

In sum up, an effective communication in remote work is not merely a matter of frequency but depends on intentionality and structure. For example, stand-up meetings and use of synchronous tools are crucial for reducing the restrictions of remote communication. These practices not only enhance task clarity and coordination but also foster interpersonal trust and psychological safety within remote teams as well as less interruption of job from sudden communication.

Finding 3: **Prioritising Productivity Over Presence in Remote Work**

This third finding of theme explores the performance evaluation practice in remote work should focus on outcomes and productivity rather than physical presence or time logged. Participants stated that managers prioritize output and result rather than employee online hours, reflecting managers shift to a result-oriented method instead of supervision all the progress of task, and employee online hours cannot represent the employee performance. In contrast, employee output is more representative of employee performance in remote work. In addition, this approach not only reduced micromanagement but also encouraged employees to take ownership of their work. Overall, shifting performance evaluation towards result rather than online presence, and

using productivity as a core evaluation criterion to enhance fairness and employee motivation, highlighting a results-based evaluation is particularly effective in remote work contexts.

Finding 4: **Fostering Belonging and Social Connection in Remote Teams**

This last finding of theme explores leaders and organisations should proactively invest resources and hold activities to maintain team culture and reinforce employees' sense of belonging and social connection in remote work environment. Participants noted that although remote work offers flexibility on time and geography, it can also lead to increase social isolation and decline team cohesion. Due to lack of hallway chat and face-to-face communication like in traditional work environment, which can have a negative impact on employee engagement and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the problem of interpersonal alienation is easily to be ignored in remote work settings as it is hard to detect in virtual team due to face-to-face emotional exchange. Regular activities not only help to reduce the sense of isolation but also improve the sense of belonging, employee engagement and team cohesion as well.

Table 4 presents an overview of themes with their definitions and core elements.

Table 5: Summary of Findings

Findings	Definitions	Core Elements
Shifting Leadership from Control to Autonomy	Reflects the shift from micromanagement toward granting autonomy to employees and increase responsibility in remote settings.	1.Empowerment 2.Trust 3. Self-management
Intentional and Structured Communication	Refers to the intentional planning and consistency of communication to reduce ambiguity and increase clarity across virtual teams	1.Consistency 2.Synchronous Information Exchange 3.Communication efficiency
Prioritising Productivity Over Presence in Remote Work	Highlights the shift in performance evaluation from monitoring attendance toward focusing on measurable output and task completion.	1.Results-based Evaluation 2.Output Orientation 3.Autonomy in Task Scheduling
Fostering Belonging and Social Connection in Remote Teams	Emphasizes the need to proactively build social bonds and emotional support to offset isolation in remote teams.	1.Social Bonding 2.Team Cohesion 3.Engagement

4. DISCUSSION

In this section, the interview findings are discussed and their implications for leadership in remote work environments across four main aspects.

4.1 Shifting Leadership from Control to Autonomy

In context of remote work, leaders adopt the leadership that tends to grant employees more autonomy on working and a result-oriented approach to lead employees, reflecting while remote work offers the flexibility on job, the needs to trust and grant autonomy is more important to maintain or even improve employee performance. As all interview participants noted that managers are granting authority to their employees, allowing them to determine how to allocate tasks, organize their time, and use resources to meet set objectives. Rather focusing on micromanagement of employees, employees prefer to work in a trusting environment without external stress. This approach is responded the findings of Galanti et al (2021) that autonomy helps to maintain and even improve employee performance and engagement while working remotely.

In addition, in such a dynamic and distal work environment, there are fewer or no opportunities for face-to-face communication as well as face-to-face monitoring in virtual setting. Therefore, a leadership that can build mutual trust and clearly define goal is important to maintaining high performance. This view aligns with Bartsch et al (2020) that a leadership approach balance both ELB and MLB can enhance employee performance, especially when facing uncertain environment.

All above mentioned, the point of granting autonomy, build trust and result-oriented method. These views align with Dulewicz and Higgs's (2005) engaging leadership model, which highlights autonomy and empowerment as critical in dynamic or uncertain contexts such as in remote work setting and transformational organization. Thus, it is shown that a leadership have simultaneously the characteristics of empowerment and result-oriented method been important in remote work environment. Therefore, as a manager who working in a remote work environment, a result-oriented approach should be used to lead employees, granting a certain level of autonomy in their work in order to build a decent relationship of trust. Simultaneously, manager should avoid such as micromanagement method which may reduce trust and increase employee dissatisfaction on their job.

4.2 Intentional and Structured Communication

Effective communication structures are crucial to reduce the challenges brought about in remote work setting. All participants consistently emphasized that formulating a communication framework on purpose, such as schedules meeting, progress reports, and establish a procedure for urgent and routine message. It helps to reduces misunderstandings and aligns employees towards set goals as well as less interruption while working. This finding echoes Wart et al. (2017), who highlighted clarity and accuracy as e-communication competencies in e-leadership. It also supports the point of view of Contreras et al. (2020), who argued that the inherent risk of poor information transmission in remote work makes structured interactions indispensable for maintaining team cohesion and building trust.

In traditional office settings, minor ambiguities are often solved by hallway conversations or ad-hoc meetings. On the contrary, remote work relies on scheduling of ad-hoc meeting to resolve problem, and if other problems are encountered in mean time for instance, colleagues failing to respond on time, poor network connection, the information gap may grow wider, and the team cohesion and trust may be reduced as a result.

Therefore, a well-designed communication procedure can reduce the misunderstandings and exchange information in a way more effectively in remote working environments. For instance, setting response timeframes according to the level of the matter and using instant synchronisation platform. Such clarity not only fosters greater mutual understanding but also grows psychological safety, allowing geographically dispersed teams to collaborate more effectively.

4.3 Prioritising Productivity Over Presence in Remote Work

In remote work environment, performance evaluation shift towards outcome rather than monitoring the length of time spent online. Managers no longer care about the number of hours employee spent online as participants mentioned that managers focus the result instead of the process of outcome as well as the time spent. This approach aligns with the concept of transactional leadership as employees can reallocate their remaining working hours as a reward when they finished their job. The research of T.S.& D.R. (2014) described, transactional leadership focuses on completing tasks and organizational

procedure that can improve employee performance. Moreover, the transactional leadership is categorized as goal-orientated leadership by Dulewicz and Higgs' (2005), which emphasises the importance of setting clear performance goals.

Remote work environment unlike traditional workplace, traditional supervision is neither practical nor effective due to the limitation of distance and space, as it is not possible to supervise employees in real time. Leaders should advocate that the principle of measuring employee performance is to evaluate the completion and output of tasks. In addition, just as transactional leadership leverages a reward system, when the set goals are achieved as scheduled, the remaining time of the task can be used as a reward, for instance, dealing with private matters, allocating time for family, rest or personal development. This redistribution not only maintains employee well-being and work-life balance but also improves employee job satisfaction and performance.

4.4 Fostering Belonging and Social Connection in Remote Teams

Interaction became more crucial in remote work environment unlike in traditional workplace. Participants noted that the feeling of social isolation reduce both engagement and job satisfaction. To address this, activities held like offline activities and regular team meals were considered as particularly effective tools for maintaining social bonds. This finding aligns with the study of Sull et al. (2020), which shows how intentional social strategies can mitigate the disengagement common in remote work settings.

Intentional interactions are particularly necessary in remote work setting due to lack of opportunities for spontaneous communication like in traditional workplace. In traditional offices, casual hallway conversations or chit chats by the desk can both resolve minor workplace concerns and allow to express their emotions between colleagues. In contrast, while employees can chat on online platform or have a face time meeting, it is still hard to satisfy the needs of emotion. Therefore, it is crucial that leaders proactively design routines and activities that provides more opportunities for employees connect each other. It not only reinforces employees' cohesion but also fosters a sense of belonging in team.

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how to effectively lead under the work-from-home environment and what strategies leaders can adopt to excel in remote settings.

This study found that in remote work settings, managers should place their trust in employees and empower them rather than adopt micromanagement. It helps to enhance employees' motivation and be more willing to get involved and take ownership of their work. In addition, managers should focus on outcomes over administration context when setting goals, for instance, the progress of tasks should be tracked by managers rather than the time spent online and at work, thereby improving employees' productivity, fostering employees' work-life balance, and enhancing their job satisfaction.

Furthermore, effective and efficient communication becomes more important since lack of face-to-face communication and instant communication in remote work environments. Managers should arrange regular stand-up meetings, ad-hoc check-ins and frequent meetings to align tasks and exchange information to help employees' communication. Simultaneously, attention should be paid to effectively arrange meetings, with the aim of avoiding repetitive, lengthy and ineffective meetings. At last, managers should pay more attention to team cohesion and employees' belonging. It is recommended to organize regular online and offline activities to enhance social connections.

5.1 Limitations

There may be some possible limitations in this study, the most significant of which is the sample size of the interviews with a small sample size and the ratio of participants from management to employees is approximately 1:5. The small sample size limit the reliability of the findings and the findings and tend to start from employees' point of view. In contrast, the perspectives of managers are relatively deficient, leading in a level of incomplete data.

The second limitation concerns the single cultural background, as all participants in the study are Chinese. The point of view offered by participants may be shaped by Chinese culture, leading to their perspective may be narrowing down and limit the perspective in other cultural contexts. Furthermore, this thesis adopted qualitative

methodology instead of quantitative methodology, thus, it is impossible to quantify the influence of leadership in the work from home environment through statistical analysis.

5.2 Future research Direction

Future research can enhance the representativeness of the results by expanding the sample size, adjusting the ratio of managers to employees to 1:2 or 1:3 and including participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, questionnaires can be added to the qualitative interviews to combine statistical analysis with qualitative insights, thereby providing a more comprehensive exploration of the perspectives and experiences of various groups.

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