

CHAPTER-III

Review of Literature

This chapter aims to offer a detailed and concise review of the research conducted on remote working in connection to amount of effects the dimensions causes on employee's work-life balance and attitude of managers towards workforce management of virtual teams. The objective of this knowledge map is to offer researchers and practitioners an overview of current information, including best practices and key findings. In order to accomplish these goals, researchers have enhanced the narrative literature review by incorporating previous studies and supplemented the search methodology by adhering to the impression of PRISMA guidelines to concurrently produce a comprehensive and thorough analysis of related studies.

Sampling Protocol

In accordance with the narrative review methodology, the researcher selected the keywords, database and criteria for inclusion and exclusion. The process was executed sequentially, adhering to the instructions provided in this section;

Step 1. records were identified using the Scopus database. This database yielded a collection of top-notch papers that accurately represent the most complimenting research on remote working, work-life balance and the functioning of virtual teams under modern leadership up till now.

Step 2 involved doing an extensive search using a comprehensive string of keywords at various levels, as described by Caputo (2013), to ensure the inclusion of the most pertinent papers related to the objectives. The initial level of keywords encompassed the terms "work-life balance" OR "work/ life balance". The second level of investigation incorporated the terms pertaining to the remote or virtual aspect of the connections being studied: "remote work," OR "WFH," OR "e-work". The search parameters were modified once again to conduct new enquiries on gender-specific research in remote work, using the keywords "women" OR "working women" OR "female employees". Regarding the third objective, the initial column comprises the keywords "remote management," "virtual teams," "remote workforce management," OR "e-leadership." The second and third levels

encompassed the keywords "managerial challenges" OR "issues" OR "managing problems" AND "productivity" OR "efficiency". The search was conducted using Boolean operators (AND /OR) to look for information in the article title, abstract and keywords. The search was conducted among peer-reviewed papers written in English, yielding an initial sample of 229 articles.

Step 3. In order to account for the broadness of the search query, the study underwent a manual process of "cleaning" the dataset by carefully reviewing the titles and abstracts of the chosen studies. This allowed the researchers to remove any publications that were not pertinent to the current search. Also, if it was not feasible to determine the significance of the summary, a digital version of the complete text of the document was acquired. The excluded papers can be classified into two primary categories: a significant proportion of the publications do not explore the concept of "virtual management" despite the inclusion of the term "virtual" in the search criteria. This situation primarily arises due to the inclusion of papers that explicitly discussed "global virtual teams" and "project management" in the search results. Other papers were excluded if they only mentioned "virtual team" in the abstract or in passing. A relatively smaller subset of papers focused on studying women in a virtual environment (5 articles). Based on these criteria, a total of 85 papers were excluded due to their lack of open access, relevance in the current area, and duplicity. The final data consisting of 144 papers, which served as the foundation for conducting a narrative literature review, aiming to construct a thorough mapping of the knowledge on the topic.

Step 4. previous researcher concur that the field of remote working has a small yet growing body of literature on the topic that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic (Deole et al., 2023). Therefore, other literatures pertaining to the field was later on included in the current process of reviewing existing articles to make it more solid and resourceful.

3.1 History and Evolution of Remote Work

The shift from traditional office environments to a remote work space has been a significant aspect of certain advanced economies. Notably in Europe and America, where individuals and corporations have largely embraced the remote working practices by performing their office tasks either from home offices or anywhere remotely (i.e., Work From Anywhere). Giving rise to the digital nomadism culture and co working spaces in

current times. These transitions can actually be traced back to 1970s legislation in countries such as the US, where work-from-home policies were implemented in response to the hike in petrol prices resulting from the 1973 OPEC oil embargo, that made commutes more costly (Choudhury, 2023). Later, complimented by the advent of the internet, cloud computing, personal computers/laptops, broadband access, mobile phones and video-telephony. Back then, the research on impacts of flexible work locations began to gain significant attention as stated by Gajendran and Harrison (2007). As a part of which the practice of working from home saw a significant rise in the 2000s (Pennington et al., 2021).

Countries in Europe experienced a swift rise in Remote Work (RW); additionally, from 2012 to 2016 there was a 4% surge in the proportion of remote workers, rising from 39% to 43%, as evidenced by their working hours (Faulds & Raju, 2021; Lott & Abendroth, 2022). Countries like UK, Netherlands and Germany had high rate of remote workers in comparison to other economies, as per the statistics, approximately 31% of the UK population has worked remotely (Statista, 2023). In contrast, the Netherlands had a higher percentage of remote workers (48%), while Germany had 36% (Davies, 2023; Nabben, 2021).

Ever since Nilles (1975) first introduced the notion of "telework", it has become a prominent aspect of the worldwide work environment (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Haddon & Brynin, 2005) and has been associated with multiple findings in the last four decades. Previous research has employed the phrase "distributed work" to refer to arrangements that enable personnel and their duties to be shared across several locations, rather than being confined to a single place of work or physical offices (Collins, 1998). Similarly, the findings of Felstead and Henseke's (2017) analysis of the Labour Force Survey (2015) in the UK indicated that the percentage of individuals working outside of traditional workplaces for minimum of one day in the week amplified from that of 13.3% in 1997 to 17.1% in 2014. Additionally, it was emphasised that workers with high skill levels (14%) and those with middle-level skills (16%) were more inclined to work remotely, in contrast to factory-based workers (about 8%).

The phrase "remote working" have been frequently used from the beginning of the novel coronavirus pandemic, to explain about a work that is mostly done from home as a result of lockdowns or social distancing measures. As a result, it is often used interchangeably

with the acronym WFH and teleworking (Lapshun & Gómez, 2023). Remote working however entails to a wider scope than telecommuting, referring to any type of work that is carried out away from the traditional workspace (Ker et al., 2021; McPhail et al., 2023; Sostero et al., 2020), with the assistance of work applications and cloud services (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011; Holgersen et al., 2021). Telework on the other end is closely connected to the utilisation of ICT equipment and is occasionally regarded as a subset of remote work (Saura et al., 2022) whereas, work from home is the most narrowed concept. Yet, these concepts are frequently used interchangeably and lack internationally recognised standards. The study undertaken thereby employs the phrase remote work (inclusive of work-from-home and telework) as their theoretical characterisation is unclear (Ha, 2022).

3.2 Remote Working - The Process and Outcomes

Multiple researchers have identified contrasting perspectives regarding the impact of remote working on employees. Organizations and their employees experienced both positive and negative effects from remote work. Additionally, Saurombe et al., (2022) have observed a greater preference for remote work among certain individuals compared to others. Similarly, Dubey and Tripathi (2020) conducted a comprehensive examination for about 100,000 tweets by sentiment analysis and found that most of the individuals responded favourably towards remote work practice.

The academic studies on remote working often known as 'teleworking', 'telecommuting', 'distributed work', or 'flexible work arrangements', have been consistently increasing lately. Articles provide a concise definition of remote working as "a flexible work arrangement in which employees work in locations separate from their central offices or production facilities without any direct personal contact with their co-workers but are able to communicate with them using technology" (Stankevičiūtė & Kunsaja, 2022). The advantages of such work practices encompass enhanced efficiency, equilibrium between work and personal life, decreased pollutants, travel time and financial savings.

Based on the resource perspective of telework that emphasises more autonomy, researchers anticipate that employees will exhibit higher levels of work engagement once they are given the opportunity to telework (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2021).

Thereby, telecommuting has the potential to enhance individual job performance. Nevertheless, the availability of access differs among different occupational, social and demographic categories. Hence, it becomes necessary to implement policies that will enhance the availability of remote job opportunities and guarantee fair allocation (Orr & Savage, 2021). Such policies are considered to support better work-life balance of women especially in their career continuation (Bhumika, 2020). As employees who perceived favourable treatment from their organisations felt obligated to reciprocate with good attitudes and improved job performance as per the social exchange theory (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020).

3.3 Work-life Balance in Remote Working

Instantaneous circumstances might shift an organization's original intent (e.g., profit earning, reputation building etc) to the survival of business and employment sustainability, which was witnessed during the prevailing COVID-19 situation around the globe. Therefore, it all started as the game of survival in the era of a universal catastrophe and later on led to different aspects of the work-life cycle of employees (Szulc et al., 2021). Although, literature regarding disruptions in work practices due to natural disasters has been evident even before the advent of the current pandemic crisis. The widespread use of remote work was due to the pandemic altered employees' perceptions and appreciation of their work-life balance. Majority of the participants believed that, the opportunity to work remotely had enhanced their control over work-life balance. Nevertheless, the capacity to maintain work-life balance was also challenged for individuals working from home due to the continuous overlap of professional and personal life. In contrast to prior work settings, numerous employees experienced an increase in their workload, resulting in extended working hours, including weekends and the omission of essential daytime breaks. While there was a theoretical chance to have lengthy breaks during the day, few respondents chose not to take advantage of this opportunity (Pensar & Rousi, 2023). Research further suggested that although perceived control enhanced employee's work-life balance, typical autonomy representations misrepresented the level of control experienced by home-based workers' (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

These intersections of work and life roles have been studied for decades in organisational and management studies, industrial relations, psychology, social work and family studies, leading to a large body of empirical evidences. Multiple terms have been proposed to

define the work-life interface as the study has matured. Work-Life Balance (WLB) is therefore, a well-being condition where people evaluate their competency of balancing work and personal roles according to their values (Casper et al., 2018). The word shows how successfully people balance work, non-work roles, values and objectives. It is the ability to harmonize work, family and personal requirements. Thus, the correct WLB involves controlling the balance in between work and personal operations, psychological satisfaction, reconciling work and family roles and taking time for oneself. WLB does benefit employees and companies unquestionably by improving work happiness, mental health, employee dedication, social life and more (Chaudhuri et al., 2020; Stankevičiūtė & Kunsakaja, 2022). Donnelly and Proctor-Thomson (2015) in their paper explored some relevant experiences of employees and organisation in home-based telework during continuous earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, between September 2010 and January 2012. This research claimed that enhancing work-life balance could be one of the important effects of Home-Based Teleworking (HBTW). Despite such significance, there are limited studies on the topic.

Most work-family literature has examined how work-life policies like remote working and flexitime with shorter working hours affect WLB or balance between work and family. Remote employment has been shown to increase WLB by helping employees balance work and non-work by promoting job autonomy and reducing commute time, saving additional time. With more studies on distant work during the COVID-19 epidemic, WLB in the setting of extensive and extended remote labor is well understood. Studies on work-life balance and home-based work in 2020 examined several aspects and found that work-life duties affected employees' personal lives (Mohanar & Rajarathinam, 2023). A blended approach by Wang et al. (2021) identified that social support, occupational autonomy and self-discipline contributed to remote workers feeling more effective and experiencing better WLB. Similarly, Chu et al. (2021) discovered that operating from home alleviated family time, strengthening parent-children ties. According to their research, WLB was positively affected by workplace resources, including location flexibility and scheduling. It also showed that Job autonomy in remote working predicted WLB and social support from coworkers was beneficial for WLB also support from family and spouses improved WLB at home (Pensar & Rousi, 2023). Moreover, remote workers were reported to be more content with life and individualistic in social terms, which contributed to an overall increase in WLB (Ferreira & Gomes, 2023). Also, access to remote work through

technology helped organizations address work-life balance concerns and retain talented personnel. This work practice was especially efficient for those individuals who had to consider family obligations, deal with health issues, or minimize travel time to provide more time for other pursuits (Grant et al., 2013).

Additionally, increasing trends in corporate welfare has made work-life balance (WLB) a prominent HR management subject, selectively in large organisations that struggle to retain high-performing staff (Riyami et al., 2023). Such companies are therefore becoming interested in work-life balance as a well-being metric due to the proven research outcomes of successful employer-initiated benefits and work-life policies. Flexitime and remote working are one such examples of flexible working arrangements that help balance work and non-work responsibilities.

While the above body of literature has portrayed the advantages and disadvantages of work from home, the convenience of remote work was underutilised until recently. Pensar's study (2023) which sheds light on WLB processes, is the first to qualitatively analyse WLB using Casper et al., (2018)'s framework and apply it to remote work. The study uses the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to examine how resource availability affects employees' affective and cognitive balance. Although virtual culture advances improved work-life balance through remote work, enhancing time management by eliminating commutes and enhanced access to best talent regardless of location. It may also create new surveillance mechanisms, as per different studies. The workforce's involved, also encounter distinct challenges like leading to decreased trust and support from both managers and organisations, affecting employees' perception (Santucci, 2021). Despite that, flexible employment is often portrayed as "technologically feasible, flexible and autonomous, desirable and perhaps even inevitable, family-community friendly and more" (Bryant, 2000). Workers benefit from having command over their work time, allowing them freedom to allocate time for work and non-work activities. Meanwhile this sense of control is not intrinsic to work from home, but it can occasionally be a benefit of this work practice. Employers and employees have lauded remote work for its advantages, such as enhanced work-life equilibrium, heightened autonomy and labor inclusivity. This adaptable system supported employees to fulfil their responsibilities beyond the confinement of their workplaces. Thereby enabling them to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between their professional and personal lives (Rañeses et al., 2022). Several

studies of the past, that found a continuous association between elevated work stress and poor work-life balance proved that individuals who possess a higher perception of autonomy in their work, greater flexibility in their schedules and increased support from their employers are more likely to achieve a superior work-life balance. Especially, for women who have not been indifferent to workplace stressors like work intensity, availability expectations and gender inequality, struggling more with the work-life balance, all while undergoing the so-called gendered social norms (society expectations of how an individual should dress and behave based on their gender) (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019; Klonner et al., 2018). Because, despite witnessing no change in the overall productivity levels in comparison to the in-office productivity, yet females were one of those to report increased productivity while working remotely (Awada et al., 2021). According to research conducted by Kolluru et al. (2021) remote work has opened multiple avenues for working women by enabling flexible working hours. Which, afterwards might lead to an increase in women's participation in the global workforce.

3.4 Remote Working Dimensions Predicting Work-life Balance

3.4.1a Trust

Trust, in simple terms can be described as the voluntary exposure of one party to the acts of another party. Relying on the belief that the other party will undertake increasingly significant tasks on their behalf, without requiring any significant supervision or monitoring (Sedrine et al., 2020). The mindset of being inclined to expose oneself to the acts of another person with the expectation that the other person will perform a specific action, which is significant to the one showing trust, regardless of the fact that they can't be watched or control by the person believing in them is known as trust (Yang & Lin, 2023). In the context of virtual teams, trust is one of the variables that has received the most attention so far. As a point of fact, the authors of a recent multidisciplinary literature analysis on the subject found 124 publications that concentrated on the conceptualisation of trust in Virtual Team (VT). The trust that members of a team have for one another was found to have a beneficial impact on the perceived (or self-rated) effectiveness of virtual team in one of the studies that focused on the relationship between trust and virtual teams performance (Turesky et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further alleviated the complications in this transitioning to digital and remote working, bringing attention to challenges related to trust, role definition, communication and collaboration (Anglani et al., 2023). The concept of trust has been a significant focus of conflict and conflict management research, regarded as a crucial factor for achieving successful collaboration and developing relational capital. This is because, trust was often viewed as a difficult issue for team effectiveness, especially in virtual environments, due to lack of transparency on how interactions worked (Caputo et al., 2022). The permanent implementation of Work from Home (WFH) encountered obstacles such as diminished trust and apprehensions regarding digital security. Despite this, the influence of distance and lack of immediate control was insignificant in case of efficient organisations (Lapshun & Gómez, 2023). Virtual teams were typically seen to establish trust immediately within the context of evolving technologies, making employers offer flexible working alternatives to millennials and Gen-Z candidates on the basis of trust that the tasks will be completed in time and without compromising quality. However, these teams faced vulnerabilities, with a subjective and fleeting nature of trust. Necessitating the resolution for these challenges in the current era of significant disruption and digital revolution (Sedrine et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, a strong correlation existed between trust among members of a team and increased levels of productivity, effectiveness, collaboration and decision-making, also fostering innovation and enhanced morale of the teams. Research clearly illustrated that trust among members of a virtual team was an important factor that contributed to the success of the team. Additionally, the level of trust established between virtual employees and their external supervisors played a vital role in empowering teams for self-management. Hence, in order to foster trust, it was necessary to structure organisations in a manner that granted individuals and teams the highest level of autonomy in decision-making, all while staying aligned with the broader goals of agile organisations (Oakley, 1999). This shift has led employers and employees towards a novel psychological agreement through the work-from-home (WFH) experience, reciprocating flexibility and trust with heightened loyalty and productivity (Smite et al., 2022). Thereby, recent researchers have taken into consideration the multi-dimensional perspective of trust (Mutha & Srivastava, 2021).

3.4.1b Flexibility

Multiple studies have proved that remote work yields numerous advantages for organizations, economies and individuals. The positive aspects included the ability to have flexible working hours, employee independence and the proficiency to achieve a better balance between work and non-work domains (Work-Life Balance) (Kantyka & Maciąg, 2023). Moreover, telework enabled firms to have enhanced access to talent, hence improving their recruiting potential and organisational structure, while increasing their flexibility (Pirzadeh & Lingard, 2021). Additionally, there have been a notable rise in the number of jobs that might be executed remotely within the last twenty years. The working environment has undergone incremental changes. A survey of workers revealed that job seekers place such a high value on flexible work arrangements that they are willing to sacrifice 8% of their salary to work remotely (Orr & Savage, 2021). Overall, working from home has been advantageous for both firms and people so far. This option offered greater adaptability and a superior equilibrium between work and personal life, which although might have been purely subjective (Lapshun & Gómez, 2023).

Workplace flexibility could greatly improve work-life balance by allowing people to manage their time, focus and energy resources, based on their individual needs. Strategies, such as schedule flexibility, flexitime, telecommuting and shift work, could accomplish these objectives. Agile work, often known as smart work, was a prevalent type of flexible work that prioritised these stages and objectives. However, some scholars argued that achieving work-life balance required autonomy, not just time flexibility. Previous studies have frequently examined this correlation (WLB and autonomy) in conjunction with geographical adaptability, indicating that during the pandemic when employees were compelled to remain at home, this correlation was applicable (Boccoli et al., 2022). Hence, few individuals experienced only positive effects on their work-life balance and well-being due to remote working and claimed that the advantages from the arrangements of remote working outweighed, in comparison to previous on-site job modalities. Three crucial resources, namely flexible working, professional autonomy and less commuting, was identified as significant factors for achieving work-life balance. Two additional resources, namely work space and social support underwent significant transformations in the distant setting. Flexibility in scheduling had a positive effect on businesses' performance, employees' job satisfaction and dedication to the company, enhancing their level of

involvement in their work, achieving productivity and job satisfaction (Pensar & Rousi, 2023).

Remote work, also known as working from home (WFH), appeals to a larger pool of highly skilled employees, especially women who are both working professionals and mothers of young children. Women ranked flexibility and work-life balance (WLB) as the primary success factors for this work culture, closely followed by increased morale and overall job satisfaction. Yet, she primarily ranked work flexibility as the most critical factor, pushing it closer to work-life balance (Pillai & Prasad, 2022). Although, research indicated that remote labor yields both advantageous and disadvantageous consequences (Chowhan & Pike, 2022). Earlier experiments have proved that remote work can improve flexibility and achieve a better harmony between job and personal life, given specific circumstances (e.g., feasible work environment, availability of e-working facilities etc). Researchers advocated that, employees favoured flexibility because it afforded them autonomy, empowered them and enhanced their work-life equilibrium. Consequently, this led to a rise in contentment, drive and involvement, ultimately leading to enhanced efficiency and achievement. The findings corroborated the notion that implementing flexible working methods might enhance employee engagement levels (Botha et al., 2023). Providing temporal flexibility could indicate a commitment to accommodating employees' personal requirements, enhancing the appeal of organisations and fostering improved work-life equilibrium (Boccoli et al., 2022).

3.4.2 E- Wellbeing

Well-being encompasses an individual's ideal psychological state, or overall condition necessary for efficient performance (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This topic of employee wellbeing is gaining relevant importance in the field of managerial research (Grant et al., 2007). Studies reviewed by Boccoli et al., (2022) in their article found that researches majorly talked about the negative effects on wellbeing which resulted from forcefully induced work from home due to COVID19, out of which few were due to the feelings of inadequacy for not balancing work and non-work lives properly. These studies mostly showed women participants as the sufferers and overburdened from work and care responsibilities. The works discussing positive effects of work from home on well-being were found to be bare minimum (Ha, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). One of the reasons could be the continuing pandemic affect, because scholars in recent times also claimed that

remote work provided a chance for historically marginalised groups to participate in the job market by reducing the requirement for commuting. These studies cite that men tend to commute longer distances for work, but women often have shorter journeys to their workplaces. As a result, women choose to give up higher-paying jobs in order to have shorter commutes and more freedom. Commuting choices contribute to 21% of the gender wage difference in the US, indicating that eliminating commuter factors could potentially decrease wage inequality (Orr & Savage, 2021).

The balance between professional and household obligations are influenced by both the individual's gender and their stage in family life. Traditionally, women tend to have more family-related obligations than men, regardless of whether they are employed or not. Multiple scholars have shown that women often have career pathways that are not characterized by a linear progression. The causes of these pauses vary among different countries. The perception in India is that there is an unavoidable clash between the demands of work and family roles for women, whereas in the UK, this conflict is seen as preventable. Research has consistently shown that women in the field of information technology often face significant obstacles in their professional progression and growth due to their strong dedication to family responsibilities. However, recent study indicated a shift in traditional gender stereotypes, assigned family roles and obligations within the modern workforce while working from home (Juna et al., 2022). Further, a survey conducted on Lithuania's employees during COVID-19 studied the satisfaction level, determined by gender, age, education, work and telework-related experiences of the controlled groups in virtual working scenarios. It portrayed a similar picture showing women in particular to honour the chance of working remotely in contrast to male employees. In short, she was said to be a millennial (1981-1996) woman, with a higher degree and 4-10 years of experience, working remotely 2 days a week in the management and administration field. The most dissatisfied were men of the baby boomer generations (1946-1964) with university degrees and 20 or more years of experience (Raišienė et al., 2020). Therefore, making work from home more appealing to women.

Studies focusing on women's remote working experiences indicated that flexibility in work schedule concedes working moms to continue their full-time job after childbirth (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). The fact cannot be denied that work and family care responsibilities together tend to interfere in each-others domain. As agreed by most of the

women when studying the 'WIPL' (Work Interference with Personal Life) and 'PLIW' (Personal Life interference with Work), but not necessarily proved to be stressful always, if finely handled (Bhumika, 2020).

This demonstrates the need for gender-centric policies to be decided upon by the organizational managers in order to promote psychological safety within virtual teams. Gender awareness for women shall relate to their presence in contrast to the knowledge awareness for men in the team. Further identifying if the provided IT enables the remote team members to develop the specific type of knowledge awareness required for psychological safety development. Finally introducing rewards for encouraging the online presence of the team members as well as initiating open communication and sharing task-related content (Lim, 2022). This is important because employees working remotely have a continuous fear of being left out i.e., "out of sight, out of mind" (social isolation) (Gifford, 2022) and getting their efforts ignored due to the lack of direct contact with their colleagues or superiors and absence in the office premises (Ipsen et al. 2021; Vaziri et al., 2020).

3.4.3 Effectiveness

"Productivity" includes workplace results such as individuals' outcomes, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), business continuity plans and company performance. Additionally, this encompasses the efforts put forth by workers and organisations to achieve their objectives. It examined the effects of the pandemic's workplace and workforce changes on both individuals and organisations (McPhail et al., 2023). Employee productivity became a critical concern for organizations in recent times because it directly indicated the level of efficiency exhibited by an individual employee or a collective group of employees. Companies that foster a culture of productivity among their employees tend to be more profitable, since better production levels were indicative of a positive work environment. An efficient corporation reaps the benefits of higher profits, lower manufacturing expenses, improved business relationships and customer services. Research has also demonstrated a direct correlation between remote work and employee productivity, revealing a notable 13% improvement in performance and heightened job satisfaction among individuals who work remotely. About 75% of respondents preferred remote work due to its ability to minimise interruptions. Workers were able to achieve productivity by starting their tasks during their peak productivity time of the day and minimising

interruptions from colleagues. Resulting into the primary motivation for firms to adopt remote working to be increased productivity (Rañeses et al., 2022).

Remote workers exhibited heightened productivity and improved equilibrium between work and personal life, especially for working mothers and individuals responsible for caregiving. By eliminating the need to commute and reducing traffic congestion. Firms could experience a decrease in absenteeism and late arrivals, which had a favourable influence on their operations. Remote work allowed for more leisure time. This had the potential to enhance productivity by minimising absences, tardiness and unproductive use of work time (Kantyka & Maciąg, 2023; Kłopotek, 2017). Research also suggested that telework enhanced productivity by reducing time wasted on useless tasks and enabling individuals to concentrate on the essential aspects of their work (Kantyka & Maciąg, 2023). Recent studies have indicated a clear link between working remotely and job satisfaction, with productivity showing a strong correlation to performance and effectiveness. However, productivity was equally contingent upon employees' capacity to fulfil expectations and assess the quality of their output. Remote workers possessed greater autonomy in selecting their work environment and schedule, which might have impacted their levels of productivity (Choudhury et al., 2019; Monteiro et al., 2019). Lapshun and Gómez (2023) in their study stated that Tunk and Kumar (2022) have examined the relationship between employees' inclination to participate in remote work in the future and their current sense of productivity while working from home. The survey findings from 138 participants demonstrated a favourable association between the inclination to work from home in the future and the current level of performance achieved while working from home. Approximately 82% of the respondents indicated that employee engagement was superior in the work-from-home setting in comparison to that of the office. Yet, the impact of remote work on productivity was still insufficient, with conflicting results.

Despite the favourable impact of remote work, subsequent research trials have produced inconsistent results (Abdulrahim & Yousif, 2023). Studies earlier have emphasised that, virtual teams comparatively undergo greater complexities in achieving effectiveness than face-to-face teams. Nevertheless, presence of substantial data also indicated that remote work, as opposed to in-person interactions, could enhance performance. For example, a case study on Chinese call centres comparing work satisfaction and productivity between remote and office employees found a highly significant increase of 13% in employee

performance from WFH practices, leading to high work satisfaction and lower break hours. Despite the fact that choosing WFH doubled the performance gains, two-thirds of the control groups chose to return to the workplace due to concerns about loneliness. Similarly, half of the treatment group, particularly those who performed relatively poorly at home, also chose to return, followed by those who valued social contact more than flexible work hours (Bloom et al., 2015). Meanwhile, recent research indicated a modest but statistically significant positive association between remote working and employee productivity. Additionally, there existed a fairly substantial positive relationship between WLB and employee productivity. Primarily, the distinct variables of organisational commitment, remote working and work-life balance, all had a considerable impact on employee productivity (Balushi et al., 2022).

3.5 Digital Technologies

Advanced information technology has facilitated the collaboration and remote completion of work by virtual teams. This has been in response to the scarcity of human resources and the requirement for organisational adaptability (Zhang et al., 2021) by drawing upon the normalisation process theory (NPT) and its underlying components to be used for understanding the dynamics of implementing, embedding and integrating new technologies and practices into work (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021; Hadjielias et al., 2022). The demand for online remote work from home surged dramatically in 2020-21 as a result of the pandemic (Battisti et al., 2022). Studies highlighted the fact that this health hazard compelled organisations into rapid 'big bang' sudden adoption of online working from home practices. Hence, the literature on remote work was generally fragmented, particularly in the context of digital economy, where on one hand the pandemic has expedited the transition from traditional work space to remote office. Advancements in digital technologies have improved the implementation of this work practice on the other (Mariani et al., 2021; Valenduc & Vendramin, 2016). Digitalisation has emerged as a phenomena that has prompted organisations to embrace transformations. This new period was distinguished by a complex, dynamic environment and a competitive economic marketplace (Alojail & Khan, 2023). Report estimated that those EU countries without potential to perform from home to be more vulnerable to job automation risk, expecting a greater rate of unemployment. The current economic crisis has made an awakening call in the field of adopting digitisation for working, to be ready to operate without physical

proximity in case of another health crisis (Livanos & Ravanos, 2021). Meanwhile, increased digitisation in organisations, transitioning performance of managerial activities through AI and ML techniques to work smarter have resulted in creation of new forms of work and complex employment relationships on the other side (Williamson et al., 2023). The rise in digitisation has no doubt raised many other concerns also, apart from its security issues. The creation of a complex work environment has exposed new challenges compelling the tenacity to learn digital strategies in order to guide the new form of digital workspace (Acemoğlu et al., 2021). India ranked second after Indonesia in the list for technological readiness on an average score of six measures of internet availability, having South Korea and Norway on top. These advanced global economies therefore have adopted flexible working hours to retain skilled workers, because experts foresee home-working to become common and flexible for many workers in the presence of digital connectivity and innovation (Pomeroy, 2020).

3.6 Remote Workforce Management/ Virtual Management

Beyers (1995) in his book revealed the key issue faced in any virtual and telecommuting organisational setup to be management of remote employees situated at different locations far from the reach of their managers. Similarly, a recent survey conducted in 2020 found that 82% of employees in leadership roles expressed concerns about decreased productivity resulting from the sudden transition from traditional office work to telework leading to management of virtual teams (Rañeses et al., 2022).

Organisations heavily rely on managers for creating a conducive work environment and this shift from face to face to online communication has eventually impacted managerial skills and duties. Making research crucial in order to enhance managerial skills, especially when the traditional modes of communicating with the teams have evolved significantly (Ramserran & Haddud, 2018). Studies have been initiated in various advanced economies since the term ‘tele-work’ was first introduced (1973). Prior to being named differently, holding the same meaning. Citing the need for changing the top management’s attitude towards application of traditional management theories on virtual organisational setup (Mihhailova, 2009). Modern management methods being skill-technology biased driving the use of both computer and demand for talented personnel. Tabrizi et al., (2019) in their report argued on the need for an evolved setting in the current organisational culture prior

to adoption of any algorithmic tools and digital technology. Failing to do so due to the inability of top-level leaders in either focusing on their business strategy, or understanding employee's fear of job polarisation prior to any sort of novel investments, shall have resulted into more annihilation (damage) than revolution. Hence, researchers have conducted intriguing research on team management at both managerial and organizational levels (Maduka et al., 2018). However, previous research and development has only focused on internal and technological issues in the management of virtual teams (Potter et al., 2000).

No doubt, the existence of virtual teams have been a part of organizations from the past; the only difference it held was that the managers were considered project managers of GVT's (known as global virtual teams) (see eg., Alon et al., 2023; Gallego et al., 2021; Gheni et al., 2019; Ramserran & Haddud, 2018; Sénquiz-Díaz & Ortiz-Soto, 2019; Weyers & Wong, 2021) across different cultures and time zones. Rather than being in practice for the entire managerial workforce as a normal alternate work form in comparison to face-to-face management (Harvey et al., 2004; Whitehead, 2001). The pandemic has led to the growth of remote working in organizations due to its operational efficiencies. This in turn has accelerated the topics of leadership in virtual teams with a changed organizational culture, by highlighting the importance of trust and effective conflict management in the remote teams (Turesky et al., 2020). Managers of the virtual teams were hence required to perform multiple leadership tasks collectively, communicate timely, act as a mentor and share a high level of understanding with the team members (Vuchkovski et al., 2023). Studies undertaken try to indicate about the challenges managers tend to face in brunt of the crisis, further indicating them how to act and overcome the situation. Poulsen and Ipsen, revealed that managers if focused on the basic needs like working conditions and belongingness of employees by using dialogue, it led to sustainable management practices (Poulsen & Ipsen, 2017). Remote working has its limitations and boundaries of operations, especially when there is a distance between managers and their employees leading to frustration and isolation due to the communication gap. Therefore, results from the Global WFH survey reported that team work and management trust were key aspects of effective WFH practices. However, very few managers and mentoring professionals were satisfied in coordinating people remotely (Lister, 2020).

Research previously also indicated an association between leadership styles and employee engagement (Petrou et al., 2018). A few of these dominant styles being transformational (Dhulla, 2014), empowering and inspirational leadership in virtual teams (Mutha & Srivastava, 2021). Concluding that “if you are proactive, u focus on preparing, if you are reactive you end up focusing on repairing” (Bhargava, 2020). Hence, the attitude of managers towards the modern management practices in the new normal era cannot be overlooked.

3.7 Remote Working/Management (Trends & Developments)

The sudden mutation to remote work (RW) in the wake of COVID-19 epidemic, the development and widespread use of different digital platforms, along with individuals' ability to effectively handle their professional and personal lives have influenced employees' perceptions of the present and future work environment. Investigations conducted on the psychological and behavioural aspects of WFH, as well as the influence of COVID-19, concluded that WFH would be considered a genuine choice in the post-pandemic arena (Lapshun & Gómez, 2023). Surveys indicated that people across numerous industries were choosing to work from home even after the culmination of the COVID-19 outbreak. According to the 2020 Statistics Canada poll, 80% of newly employed individuals who work remotely expressed a preference for working from home for half of their working hours. While 15% expressed a wish to work exclusively from home. Akioka and Caban (2020) found that a significant number of research administrators in the US expressed a desire to maintain telework or a combination of remote and in-person work even after the epidemic concludes. Making it crucial to investigate the aspirations of Canadian research administration experts for the future work environment. However, as reported in a UK newspaper, “The Guardian”, many employers viewed remote work as a temporary solution until normal business operations could resume. Yet, some organisations recognised the advantages of remote work and contemplated implementing permanent policies that allowed employees to choose to work from home (Sharma, 2023). The research conducted by Smite et al. (2022) in the wake of the post-pandemic period, found that the majority of them wanted to continue working from home practices. Similarly, the findings of investigations carried out on 1389 people in Washington State, United States of America indicated that there was a consensus among respondents that WFH will have a bright future (Kong et al., 2022).

In spite of this, there could be a variety of arrangements, each with a varied amount of days spent in the office and there are a variety of perspectives on the future of WFH. Working from home (WFH) as a temporary measure is expected to be permanently implemented by numerous employers. The employees who had worked from home before to the pandemic were more likely to feel that the full-time work from home arrangement had a good impact. This resulted into a minimum of in-office days, but employees who have not had prior experience working from home before to the epidemic preferred being in the office for two to three days each week according to Jain et al. (2022). Although this work arrangement had evolved, there was still a lack of substantial published empirical evidence on the effects of these changes on the personal aspects of employees to justify long-term policy decisions. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to create and evaluate conceptual frameworks. This may offer empirical information on the potential effects of permanent WFH arrangements on employees' personal spheres (Riyami et al., 2023).

3.8 Understanding the Literature

Mentioned studies talk about different terms used to define remote working culture and evolution of this pandemic gifted work culture as an integral part of many organisations round the world. Due to the amount of benefits it has to offer in every sphere of life, be it professional or personal. Right from the organisational level to the individual level benefits, including managers as well.

There has been a plethora of studies recently, after the pandemic hit the world hard. The work type that somewhere existed in the name of teleworking or telecommuting, primarily came into practice in the form of work from home (WFH). Initially to curb the spread of the disease and now transitioning to different forms like; distance work, remote work, work from anywhere and many more. Studies contributing in the field of remote working found trust, flexibility, effectiveness/productivity and wellbeing to be the most critical dimensions for understanding the effects of this changed work dynamics. All these areas were seen to be the focus points of past scholars in order to cater to the needs of employee wellbeing and organisational success during remote working. Major studies have been seen to look into the trust variable in remote working and remote management practices. Citing it as one of the vital factors to be considered while working with virtual teams in order to succeed with this newly rising work form that has tend to transition the face of an entire work landscape followed since historical periods within four walls of the office.

Moreover, trust and flexibility were found to be functioning in supporting roles i.e., trust from supervisors played an important role in granting flexible hours making it go hand in hand during remote working.

The gender centric studies in relation to women in remote working talks about the wellbeing of women professionals and the challenges women have been facing while caring to the needs of their family and workplace at the same time. It's evident that remote working is not free of challenges totally and was not at all regarded as a feasible work practice in the form of work from home during the covid era. Due to many reasons like; stress of losing the jobs, presence of school going children at home, absence of house-helper. Most importantly the increased care burden of older ones, younger ones and the kitchen combined with their professional work responsibilities made it worst. However, this was not the case in every country and every research. Which means culture and family mindset highly affected the success of this work practice, because in the later studies, as the COVID came to an ease, women were seen to be looking forward for this work culture.

Researchers have undertaken studies at the managerial and organizational level, with a focus on management of global virtual teams (GVT's) by project managers, the outcomes of remote working on business houses and their perceptions towards future offerings of remote working opportunities to their employees. As far as the literature is witnessed, many have talked about; the introduction of information technologies for remote working, the implications of digitisation and the results of this heavy reliance on technologies on management as well as employees of the virtual teams. The existing works referred, highlights an interesting finding that the authors working in the field of remote working are present in quite a diverse state around the world. It is impressive to see the reach of this work culture which has been growing leaps and bounds bringing in new and interesting areas for continuous research, also in developing countries like India. Yet, not much is seen in the context of ground level managerial challenges that arise due to introduction of such new innovative teams. Which have led to rising needs of the employees to be catered by the managers along with fulfilling the organisational demands and serving as a facilitator between the employees and the organisation. Making managers/ supervisors overburdened with the responsibilities of changing work scenarios and exposure to new management techniques.

3.9 Statement of Problem

Despite the wide scope, studies on remote working is limited to the employees of advanced and high income countries mostly and to a specific moment (i.e., the pandemic time frame). Whereas few international studies are witnessed to depict the antecedents of remote working, but not fully recognising the future vision of this new working transition at the moment. Specially, for those who have been deprived of paid work facilities (Szulc et al., 2021). Although the challenges for work/life balance in the course of covid 19 pandemic and its effect on different genders have been identified so far (Bhumika, 2020). The researchers found the key issue in remote working to be the management of employees located remotely from their managers/ supervisors (Alge et al., 2004; Pianese et al., 2022). Though very few but there has been some understanding on how supervisors and managers can harness the advantage of computer mediated tools for promoting their subordinate's engagement in work collaboration (Yang & Lin, 2023). But there's no such evidence so far, on how the managers need to be updated and trained skilfully for appropriately functioning in its leadership status and handle the challenges arising through this new form of management and enhance their virtual experiences (Bickle et al., 2019). As prior research has only looked into the implication of rapid AI integration on business communication from the scholarly and teaching perspective (Getchell et al., 2022) and other available studies tend to lean towards virtual HR management topics, concerning only HR managers of any company. But little attention has been paid to the experiences of leaders (people's manger) who are in charge of virtual team management (Depoo & Hermida, 2024; Misra et al., 2023). The academic writings still have little to say on topics such as how to best handle training, development and advancement opportunities for remote workers or how to constructively look into practical, psychological (attitude) and managerial aspects in leading remote teams (Popovici & Popovici, 2020).

3.10 Research Gap

As the long-term sustainability of remote working and Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA's) are evolving. Previous findings may need revisiting because past studies have narrowed its reach by not including managerial participants, gender, job position, educational background and age (Juna et al., 2022; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Therefore, the current study tries to cater to the following gaps;

1. There is a lack of post pandemic studies on the effect of remote working practices, with no sole focus on the impact of remote working on women employees (Stankevičiūtė & Kunskaia, 2022). Also not considering the benefits it can reap towards women employment in the long run.
2. There is much information found for offline teams in comparison to online, thus creating a gap to be attended.
3. The modus operandi and perspective of managers have not been considered for rating the work experience of new WFH/remote working setup. Studies also do not include variables from the point of view of the managers about the effect of team-building challenges on their productivity, which in turn is just an important assignment (Ramserran & Haddud, 2018).
4. There still exists a gap in the field of virtual management including people's managers during the normal market scenario while adapting to the innovative technologies like AI to function on a daily basis (Bhargava, 2020).
5. Finally, there is a deficiency of integrating mixed method techniques of data analysis, which hinders the ability to provide a thorough and explanatory depiction of the phenomena being studied.

The significant transition to remote working throughout the Covid-19 outbreak presented an exceptional chance to investigate these phenomena (Kantyka & Maciąg, 2023). However, present studies lacked an all-round impact of remote working and remote management on both the managerial and non-managerial categories of employees at the same time. Also ignoring the benefit of an online remote work culture in attributing to the sustainability of women at work by providing agile work arrangements. Hence, studying the effect of remote working on the work-life balance of women employees, along-with the attitude of women managers towards adoption of remote work/management practices may still be regarded as the need of the hour.