



Remote working and employee engagement: A qualitative study of British workers during the pandemic

Journal:	<i>Information Technology & People</i>
Manuscript ID	ITP-12-2020-0850.R1
Manuscript Type:	Article
Keywords:	Virtual community < Study setting, Virtual team < Study setting, Interpretivist research < Theoretical perspective, Organization < Level of analysis, Work performance < Individual attribute < Unit attribute, Qualitative method < Method, Interview < Data

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Remote working and employee engagement: A qualitative study of British workers during the pandemic

Abstract

Purpose – Through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study explores how remote working inhibits employee engagement. We offer a fresh perspective on the most salient work- and nonwork-related risk factors that make remote working particularly challenging in the context of Covid-19.

Design/methodology/approach – We use data from semi-structured interviews with thirty two employees working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown. Based on our interpretivist philosophical approach, we offer new insights on how employees can optimize work- and nonwork-related experiences when working remotely.

Findings – We show that the sudden transition from in-person to online modes of working during the pandemic brought about work intensification, online presenteeism, employment insecurity, and poor adaptation to new ways of working from home. These stress factors are capable of depleting vital social and personal resources, thereby impacting negatively on employee engagement levels.

Practical Implications – Employers, leaders, and human resource teams should be more thoughtful about the risks and challenges employees face when working from home. They must ensure employees are properly equipped with the relevant resources and support to perform their jobs more effectively.

Originality/value – While previous research has focused on the benefits of remote working, the current study explores how it might be detrimental for employee engagement during a pandemic. The study provides new evidence on the most salient risks and challenges faced by remote workers, and how the unique Covid-19 context has made them more pronounced.

Keywords: Remote working, employee engagement, COR theory, working from home, Covid-19, virtual working.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is unlike anything we have ever experienced in recent times. It has had devastating effects on people's mental health and well-being, and caused serious problems for families and communities around the world (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Many people have lost their jobs and source of income; others, particularly those in developed economies, have been furloughed or forced to rely on government support (Gursoy and Chi, 2020). The pandemic has also taken a huge toll on the global economy (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Song and Zhou, 2020). We are seeing a steady decline in revenue generation as organizations continue to reduce costs, cut staff benefits, and invest less on human capital expenditure (Bryce et al., 2020). These socioeconomic challenges were brought about by national lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, and other social distancing measures introduced to curb the spread of the virus. While such restrictions have been successful at minimizing person-to-person transmission of the disease, many workers were forced to make the abrupt shift to remote working. As these changes could have far-reaching consequences for both individuals and organizations, questions remain as to whether or not remote working is actually beneficial to employee engagement.

Research has shown that remote working has benefits for most employees. It offers the flexibility for people to work from anywhere, at any time. Employees are able to make savings on travel costs, spend less time commuting, and strike the right balance between their work- and family-related duties (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Felstead and Henseke, 2017). Notwithstanding, there are several limitations of remote working, including poor communication among teams, more distractions, reduced work motivation, lack of in-person collaboration, possible data security problems, and the difficulty of monitoring performance (Golden and Gajendran, 2019; Vander Elst et al., 2017). These issues represent real problems for many employees and ultimately their employers. In particular, employees' work

1
2
3 engagement could suffer due to reduced opportunities for workplace participation and
4
5 conflicting work- and nonwork-related demands. Yet, there is a lack of qualitative evidence
6
7 on whether remote working inhibits employee engagement, and if so how. As the Covid-19
8
9 crisis continues to wreak havoc, and the permanence of remote working becomes more and
10
11 more apparent, we need to better understand employees' lived experiences and develop new
12
13 strategies for mitigating any adverse effects on their work engagement levels.
14
15

16
17 Using an interpretivist philosophical approach, the current research advances
18
19 knowledge on whether the widespread implementation of remote working amid the Covid-19
20
21 pandemic has worsened employee engagement levels. As a multidimensional construct with
22
23 both psychological and behavioural components, employee engagement reflects a person's
24
25 sense of passion, drive and enthusiasm for work (Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). It is a job-
26
27 related characteristic induced by workers' positive affective state, energy and psychological
28
29 attachment towards the job (Biggs et al., 2014; Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Schaufeli and
30
31 Bakker, 2010). Extant research has often distinguished employee engagement from other
32
33 related constructs such as workaholism (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010), job satisfaction
34
35 (Christian et al., 2011), affective commitment, job involvement (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2013),
36
37 and psychological empowerment (Lambert, 2011). These studies highlight the conceptual
38
39 differences with 'employee disengagement', considered one of the most debilitating factors
40
41 for organizational performance. In fact, a disengaged employee is less dedicated, withdrawn
42
43 from his/her role, and more reluctant to physically, emotionally and cognitively execute
44
45 work-related tasks more effectively. Given the unique context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the
46
47 current study improves the conceptual and practical yield of future work in this research area
48
49
50
51
52

53
54 We draw on insights from Conservation of Resources theory (COR: Hobfoll, 1989;
55
56 Hobfoll, 2001). As a stress-based theoretical framework, COR theory highlights the
57
58 systematic nature of human experiences and behaviour following the need to acquire and
59
60

1
2
3 conserve valuable resources for survival. The primary assumption is that individuals are more
4 likely to consume key resources as a response to stressful or demanding events. Because
5 resource loss is disproportionately more salient than the resource gain, those experiencing
6 stressful events may struggle to build and sustain reservoirs of vital resources, leading
7 ultimately to poor attitudes and behaviours (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). The COR model is
8 broad in scope, heuristic in nature, and therefore critical for exploring how different work-
9 and nonwork-related risk factors can be detrimental to employee engagement levels. We
10 apply this theory towards a better understanding of remote workers' lived experiences during
11 the Covid-19 pandemic. We develop our arguments in the context of Britain's national
12 lockdown that forced millions of people to work from home and maintain little or no social
13 interactions with others from outside their households.

14
15 The article is structured as follows. The first section outlines the conceptual basis of
16 employee engagement, followed by a discussion of the study's theoretical background.
17 Thereafter, we describe our interpretivist research methodology and outline the findings of
18 our empirical inquiry. In the penultimate section, we present the discussion and
19 interpretations of our findings, including the most salient implications for theory and practice.
20 We conclude by acknowledging the study's limitations and outlining some recommendations
21 for future research.

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 **Conceptualising employee engagement**

46 Over the past years, the concept of employee engagement has gained prominence in
47 management research, partly due to its critical role in promoting positive individual and
48 organizational outcomes (Bailey, 2016; Harter et al., 2002; May et al., 2004; Saks and
49 Gruman, 2014). Though widely studied, the meaning of employee engagement is often
50 debated among academics and practitioners. Among academics, one of the most widely used
51 definitions of employee engagement is "a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). From
4
5 this, employee engagement is seen not only as individuals’ positive disposition towards the
6
7 job, but also their levels of passion, enthusiasm, and willingness to perform above and
8
9 beyond their employer’s expectations. Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) further argued there is
10
11 more to employee engagement than simply being committed and satisfied with one’s job. An
12
13 engaged worker is someone who cares about improving the overall quality of his/her job, and
14
15 therefore eager to execute assigned tasks in ways that make a difference to organizational
16
17 success. In other words, when employee engagement levels are high, there is a potential
18
19 increase in work dedication, work involvement, and greater identification with organizational
20
21 values (Harter et al., 2002; May et al., 2004; Saks and Gruman, 2014).
22
23
24
25

26 Among practitioners, employee engagement is typically measured by assessing
27
28 largescale individual- and organisational-level data through workplace attitudinal surveys
29
30 (Bailey, 2016). The Gallup survey, for example, is one of the most widely used practitioner
31
32 instruments for measuring employee engagement (Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker,
33
34 2010). It comprises twelve key questions assessing different workplace resources (e.g., sense
35
36 of support, voice and empowerment) that enable employees to invest their time, energy and
37
38 attention towards performing their jobs better (Bailey, 2016; Rayton et al., 2012). Practitioner
39
40 measures of engagement are often contrasted with academic definitions, as the latter is more
41
42 concerned with individuals’ propensity to express themselves physically, cognitively, and
43
44 emotionally during role performances (Bailey, 2016; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). In this
45
46 vein, employee engagement is said to improve when there are adequate amounts of social
47
48 (e.g., co-worker support, joint decision-making, and friendship) and personal resources (self-
49
50 efficacy, and optimism) to foster positive work- and nonwork-related experiences
51
52 (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). In the absence of these resources, however, employee
53
54 engagement levels are likely to depreciate (Kahn, 1992; Schaufeli et al., 2002).
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 In the current study, we focus on the academic definition of employee engagement,
4 given its widespread application across different work- and nonwork-related contexts (Bailey,
5 2016; May et al., 2004; Ogbonnaya and Babalola, 2020; Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli and
6 Bakker, 2010). The academic definition is particularly relevant to us as our research seeks to
7 identify the most salient work- and nonwork-related risk factors that make remote working
8 during the Covid-19 pandemic more demanding and detrimental to work engagement. We
9 therefore recognize that employee engagement can be measured from either a quantitative or
10 qualitative perspective, provided emphasis is placed on the corresponding attitudinal and
11 behavioural outcomes. A notable qualitative assessment of employee engagement, relevant to
12 the current study, is Kahn's (1990) definition: "the simultaneous employment and expression
13 of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work, personal
14 presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active full performances" (p. 700).
15 Accordingly, employee engagement represents a motivational expression of key personal
16 characteristics that make employees' job role more challenging, creative and meaningful.

17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The literature has also outlined key determinants of employee engagement. According to Saks (2006), employee engagement is influenced by various job characteristics that enable employees to exercise discretionary effort at work. These job characteristics, including sense of autonomy, task identity, skill variety and task significance, inspire employees to make the most of effective use of their skills towards improving the overall quality of what they do at work (Saks, 2006). In other words, employees are more likely engaged if key aspects of their jobs or assigned tasks are perceived to be significant, useful, and worthwhile (Chaudhary, 2019). Other studies have associated various forms of support, including organisational, supervisory, collegial, and familial support, with higher levels of employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Bakker et al., 2011; Ogbonnaya and Babalola, 2020; Rich et al., 2010). Perceived organizational support, for example, is an indication that the employer is concerned

1
2
3 about employee wellbeing, values their efforts, and treats them both fairly and respectfully
4
5 (Ogbonnaya and Babalola, 2020; Saks, 2006). This type of support promotes employees'
6
7 sense of obligation to reciprocate via positive actions directed towards improving
8
9 organizational performance (Harter et al., 2002; May et al., 2004). Similarly, perceived levels
10
11 of support from a co-worker, friend, or member of a person's immediate household (e.g.,
12
13 spouse) are said to be important determinants of employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2011;
14
15 Freaney and Fellenz, 2013; Rich et al., 2010).
16
17
18
19

20 **Employee engagement and remote working during a pandemic**

21
22 Having defined employee engagement and discussed some of its key determinants,
23
24 the following section explores how remote working inhibits employee engagement. For many
25
26 workers, working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown was associated with social
27
28 isolation, long working hours, and conflicting work-family demands. These stress-related
29
30 factors generate psychological strain and place considerable demands on people's mental
31
32 health and wellbeing. COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002) is an important theoretical framework for
33
34 contextualizing the attitudinal and behavioural impacts of work- and nonwork-related stress
35
36 factors. The fundamental premise is that individuals strive to retain, foster, and preserve
37
38 valuable resources or anything perceived as being helpful in attaining desirable outcomes.
39
40 Among these valuable resources are material (e.g., money, status, shelter, or physical
41
42 environment), social (e.g., interpersonal support and mutual respect), and personal (e.g.,
43
44 positive self-regard and optimism) factors that improve well-being and promote a sense of
45
46 meaning in life (Hobfoll et al., 2003). Although investing in these resources allow people to
47
48 gain further resources, a significant loss of resources generates psychological strain and
49
50 creates a downward spiral of resource loss. As a consequence, individuals may enter into a
51
52 type of defensive mode to preserve whatever resources they have left (Halbesleben et al.,
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 2014; Hobfoll, 2002). When this happens, individuals are more likely to report dysfunctional
4
5 outcomes such as poor levels of work engagement.
6
7

8 Going by COR theory, we argue that working from home during the unique and
9
10 unprecedented context of the Covid-19 pandemic is capable of depleting valuable social and
11
12 personal resources, thereby compromising a person's ability to thrive and achieve desired
13
14 outcomes. In the work context, social and personal resources entail having a sense of purpose
15
16 and meaning in one's job, being able to build and nurture positive interpersonal
17
18 collaborations with co-workers, feeling personally responsible for specific work-related tasks
19
20 and outcomes, and having a network of individuals that a person can consult with for
21
22 assistance in times of need. These resources enable individuals to gain new resources, bolster
23
24 existing resource reservoirs, and ultimately achieve greater performance improvements
25
26 (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Van Veldhoven et al., 2020). However, these social and personal
27
28 resources are finite, which implies they can be lost or depleted during when exposed to
29
30 distressful events (e.g., a global public health crisis). For many employees, the resource-
31
32 depleting effects of remote working emanate from a wide variety of factors, including poor
33
34 interpersonal interactions, feelings of professional isolation, and having less frequent touch
35
36 points with your colleagues or supervisors (Cooper and Kurland, 2002). Indeed, these stress
37
38 factors present major risks and challenges for remote workers because they influence
39
40 employees' perceptions that their efforts and opinions are not valued by their colleagues and
41
42 the organization (Collins et al., 2016; Morganson et al., 2010). If managed poorly, these
43
44 stress factors could ultimately inhibit employee engagement.
45
46
47
48
49

50
51 COR theorists have also recognized conflicting work-family demands as a major
52
53 stress factor among remote workers; not least because they are capable of depleting vital
54
55 social and personal resources and impacting negatively on work engagement levels. Work-
56
57 home conflict is a type of inter-role stress factor whereby the role demands stemming from
58
59
60

1
2
3 the work domain are incompatible with role demands stemming from the family domain
4 (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Wood et al., 2020) . From a COR theory perspective, work-to-
5
6 home conflict could arise when the completion of work-related tasks is impeded by domestic
7
8 chores (e.g., cooking and cleaning), child-care responsibilities, and the distraction from
9
10 family members (Van Veldhoven et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2020). Work-to-home conflict
11
12 may also arise from poor access to digital technologies, small working spaces at home, and
13
14 distracting noises within a person's household or from the neighbours next door. These
15
16 factors crease psychological tension that are capable of depleting finite social and personal
17
18 resources, thereby impacting negatively on work engagement (Rothbard, 2001).
19
20
21
22
23

24 To summarize, Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory has long been an important theoretical
25
26 frame for understanding the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of work- and nonwork-
27
28 related stressors. It offers a useful theoretical lens for exploring how remote working in the
29
30 context of Covid-19 represents a serious threat to the loss of valuable social and personal
31
32 resources, thereby inhibiting work engagement levels. Because the availability and
33
34 development of social and personal resources are critical for positive work experiences, they
35
36 enable individuals to execute tasks more effectively (Albrecht et al., 2018; Xanthopoulou et
37
38 al., 2007). However, when working remotely or away from centralized offices, particularly
39
40 during a pandemic, employees are faced with work- and nonwork-related stressors that
41
42 redefine the social context of work. Under such conditions, individual experience greater
43
44 psychological strain and tension, which ultimately reduces their levels of work engagement.
45
46
47
48

49 **Insert Figure 1 about here**

50 **Methodology**

51
52
53 Our study is based on an interpretivist philosophical approach designed to explore
54
55 participants' subjective experiences of remote working in the context of Covid-19.
56
57 Interpretivism allows researchers to observe, collate, and deduce information by drawing
58
59 inferences from occurring patterns during an event (Saunders et al., 2016). There are two
60

1
2
3 reasons for adopting this qualitative research approach in the current study: i) it enables a
4 deeper exploration into the subjective knowledge and choices associated with a particular
5 lived experience (Cassell, 2009); and ii) it complements previous studies on remote working
6 and employee engagement, the majority of which have employed quantitative methods that
7 tend to overlook the various decision-making nuances within human experiences. Our choice
8 of an interpretivist philosophical framework is further reinforced by the need to generate
9 findings that reflect a range of personal behaviours, emotions, and feelings attached to
10 working from home during a global pandemic.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20

21 We employed a snowballing technique to recruit participants from the initial
22 participants who were recruited at the beginning of our research. Our recruitment strategy
23 was further strengthened by a purposive sampling technique aimed at ensuring our selected
24 sample was representative of the study population (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The
25 eligibility criteria for our research were that participants must include male and female
26 respondents who were resident in the UK and working from home as a result of the Covid-19
27 lockdown and stay-at-home orders. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews
28 where participants voluntarily discussed their work- and nonwork-related experiences in the
29 context of Covid-19. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and
30 guaranteed our research presents no risks to physical or psychological harm. All the
31 participants signed the consent forms before the commencement of the interviews.
32 Anonymity and confidentiality were further strengthened by ascribing pseudonyms to conceal
33 participants' real names. A total of thirty-two employees agreed to participate in the study.
34 The participants come from different sectors and occupations, including UK higher
35 education, accounting and finance, sales, marketing and project management (see
36 demographic details in Table 1).
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57

58 **Insert Table 1 here**
59
60

1
2
3 The semi-structured interviews took place between July and September 2020, with a
4 duration of thirty and forty-five minutes. The interviews focused primarily on how
5 participants' work engagement levels had been affected adversely since they were forced to
6 work from home due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Specifically, participants were
7 asked to reflect on and discuss the following issues: i) their personal understanding of the
8 concept of work engagement; ii) how working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic has
9 affected their work engagement levels; iii) what aspects of their work- and nonwork-related
10 experiences has changed due to the Covid-19 stay-at-home orders; and iv) what kinds of
11 resources were available to mitigate any adverse effects of working from home during the
12 Covid-19 lockdown. In strict adherence to the UK government's social distancing
13 restrictions, all interviews were conducted using a variety of digitally-assisted technologies
14 (specifically, Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams). Prior to the interviews, each participant
15 received an email explaining the research questions, the reasons for conducting the study, as
16 well as our methodological strategy. This introductory email helped in establishing initial
17 rapport with the participants and ensuring they share the same common view of the research
18 process (Farooq and De Villiers, 2017). Our approach also helped in creating a comfortable
19 environment that enabled participants to speak openly and freely during the interviews. We
20 were able to schedule the interviews more appropriately, in line with the personal preferences
21 of both the research team and participants.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46 The interview data were analysed by the research team to transcribe qualitative
47 information, assign preliminary codes, identify recurring themes, and verify reliability and
48 validity of results. Our approach is consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide
49 to performing and applying thematic analysis. Our approach is consistent with Braun and
50 Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to performing and applying thematic analysis. Thus, rather
51 than applying preconceived codes to the data, an open-coding process was employed to
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 assess recurring information as they emerged throughout the data. Relevant information from
4 the data were analysed systematically until the point of data saturation. This is the point
5 where further coding was deemed no longer feasible as no new themes could emerge from
6 subsequent evaluation of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). To
7 generate deeper insights from the data, we compared emerging the qualitative themes against
8 participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and marital status); thus,
9 embedding our findings within a more practical context. As a further reliability check, a
10 research assistant was invited to re-assess the interview transcripts and verify our research
11 themes independently. These independent codes were then compared to our original research
12 themes and found to be consistent without any research biases or discrepancies.
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

27 **Results**

28
29 Four key themes emerged from our analysis, namely: i) work intensification and
30 employee engagement; ii) online presenteeism and employee engagement; iii) employment
31 insecurity and employee engagement; and iv) poor adaptation to new ways of working from
32 home. These themes reflect the different kinds of work and nonwork stress factors that inhibit
33 work engagement levels among those working from home. The varied nature of our findings
34 provides clear evidence on how remote working in the context of Covid-19 could be
35 debilitating for employees' capacity to perform their jobs well.
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44

45 ***Work intensification and employee engagement***

46
47 All participants reported that their workloads had intensified since the Covid-19
48 lockdown and stay-at-home orders forced them to work from home. They were required to
49 take on more tasks, despite having to manage extra family-related duties (e.g., home
50 schooling and childcare responsibilities) and cope with the sudden transition to remote
51 working. These changes increased the amount of effort that participants had to invest in their
52 jobs, which ultimately reduced their work engagement levels. Participants also reported that
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 time pressure had increased, particularly between March and June of 2020 when the first UK
4 national lockdown was introduced. For example, Daniella, a lecturer in the UK Higher
5 Education, explained how the national lockdown reduced her levels of work engagement:
6
7
8

9
10 The lockdown was not pleasant, especially the first one, which was a total
11 lockdown. Everyone was at home, and it was really difficult to be fully
12 engaged with work as my kids were around me all the time...they were
13 literally all over me. My workload was doubled because some colleagues
14 had been made redundant and I had to take up extra teaching and
15 administrative duties...household work was also all in my face...It was
16 crazy – my work engagement was not even half of what it used to be. I
17 think the second lockdown was better (Daniella, University Lecturer).
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

26 Another prototype of this theme came from Cristiana, a Sales Manager. She commented on
27 the sudden demands posed by home schooling her children during the pandemic. Cristiana
28 described this as a period of ‘fragmented engagement’ as many parents experienced
29 conflicting work, family, and child-care demands. She commented:
30
31
32
33

34
35 It was very difficult to be fully engaged with work activities with everyone
36 sequestered at home. I had to attend to work activities (which became more
37 intense), I had to attend to household chores, and I had to help the children
38 with their online schooling...it was a period of fragmented engagement.
39 Sometimes, I would be on my laptop working, one child would ask for help
40 with schoolwork and another would ask for food or something. It was
41 physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing – really difficult to
42 concentrate and be engaged. The second lockdown was a little better
43 because the kids were in school (Cristiana, Sales Manager).
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 Echoing Cristiana’s experience, another participant described how remote working during the
53 Covid-19 lockdown impacted negatively on her mental health and well-being. Her comments
54 are consistent with COR theory’s key proposition that exposure to a stressful situation
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 reduces valuable resources, thereby disrupting a person's ability to cope or self-regulate
4
5 (Halbesleben et al., 2014).. She commented:
6
7

8 I experienced a drastic increase in telephone calls, emails, online meetings,
9 and training...at some point, I was on the verge of breaking down. It really
10 affected my health and engagement...the tasks were enormous, and I
11 sometimes felt less motivated to work (Jolly, Accountant).
12
13
14
15

16 Among the most salient reasons for increased work intensification was greater staff shortages
17 due to job loss and redundancies. The Covid-19 lockdown and stay-at-home orders meant
18 that several employees were laid off, as those who remained employed were forced to take on
19 more job responsibilities. This issue, coupled with extra family-related responsibilities (e.g.,
20 home schooling), led to poor levels of work engagement among the majority of study
21 participants. In all, our findings are consistent with Chanana and Sangeeta's (2020) argument
22 that the prevalence of work intensification had increased during the pandemic.
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

33 ***Online presenteeism and employee engagement*** 34

35 The Covid-19 outbreak is often described as the world's largest experiment of virtual
36 working; not least because millions of workers around the world were forced to spend
37 extended periods of time on digital platforms (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft teams, and Skype).
38 Although virtual working has benefits for most workers, it could be detrimental for those who
39 did not work virtually prior to the pandemic. Many workers experienced 'online
40 presenteeism' (i.e., a situation where employees feel under pressure to always be available
41 online and responding to work-related tasks) during the Covid-19 lockdown. This type of
42 work-related experience has negative consequences, including longer working hours, never-
43 ending virtual meetings, and constant pressure to check/respond to work-related emails or
44 messages outside of working hours. Moreover, some participants felt compelled to stay
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 visible online just to demonstrate they were not shirking their work responsibilities while
4
5 working from home. One participant commented:

6
7
8 I am always glued to my laptop – from as early as 7am until very late in the
9
10 night. Many times, this is later than 7pm, because after the official working
11
12 hours, I still need to work on my research. I used to work virtually before
13
14 the pandemic but not this much. Covid-19 has moved everything
15
16 online...that has drastically increased my virtual presence and has reduced
17
18 my engagement because of tiredness and humdrum as a result of being
19
20 glued to the computer all day (Juliet, University Lecturer).

21
22 Although online presenteeism reduced Juliet's work drive and performance, Monica
23
24 dissatisfaction resulted more from her employer's tendency to constantly monitor her online
25
26 presence:

27
28 COVID-19 has created new virtual workplace...I am logged in and locked
29
30 online for at least twelve hours – sometimes fourteen – every day.
31
32 Otherwise, it will look as if I am not working. My manager once called me
33
34 on my mobile phone to ask where I was because I was not visible online. I
35
36 felt monitored and hounded and that really hit my engagement and vigour
37
38 to work hard (Monica, Cyber Analyst).

39
40 Other participants commented on how online presenteeism during the Covid-19 was
41
42 exacerbated by mistrust and poor interactions with co-workers, as well as difficulty creating
43
44 fruitful work-related collaborations online. This argument is consistent with previous
45
46 research that suggests poor interpersonal relations are capable of depleting valuable social
47
48 and personal resources could (Jiang and Probst, 2017) and impairing a person's capacity to
49
50 function optimally (Hu et al., 2017). In support, James, a University Lecturer, commented:

51
52
53 The virtual workplace has replaced my traditional office...now, work is no
54
55 longer fun. For me, this kind of virtual working is not normal. Virtual
56
57 meetings, virtual teaching, virtual collaborations, virtual training sessions,
58
59 online student support, online supervision...it's crazy. It's like I'm in a
60

1
2
3 bubble, and it has negatively affected everything...my life, my family, my
4 health, and my engagement with my work (James, University Lecturer).
5
6
7

8 Andrew, a financial analyst, further described how being constantly present online made his
9 work experience more demanding, challenging, and disengaging:
10
11

12 The experience was unique. At first, I loved it, because I was not used to
13 virtual working...it has since gone sour when my job demands and
14 workload have increased as a result of the pandemic, and I am also being
15 monitored...so I had to stay logged on at all times. That demotivated me
16 and affected my work engagement (Andrew, financial analyst).
17
18
19
20
21

22 ***Employment insecurity and employee engagement***

23

24 Employment insecurity also emerged as an important determinant of poor work
25 engagement levels among study participants. Due to the huge socioeconomic toll of the
26 pandemic, many employers took some form of cost-cutting actions aimed at decreasing staff
27 benefits, reducing business operations, restructuring employees' jobs, and making some
28 employees redundant. As a consequence, many workers experienced greater uncertainty
29 regarding their employment conditions. More specifically, employees felt anxious about the
30 prospects of being unemployed, which adversely affected their work engagement levels. Joel
31 (an administrative officer) described the situation as unpleasant and uncertain:
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

42 It's such an unpleasant and uncertain time that I wouldn't like to ever
43 experience again. Hardly will any minute pass without my thinking of
44 losing my job, because we have been informed that two people will be
45 made redundant in my unit. Unfortunately, due process (which stretched
46 this period to a period of three months) has to be taken. I was also
47 enveloped in the fear that I could contract COVID-19 and die...a few
48 people that I know contracted it and die. I would say my engagement
49 dropped to less than two out of twenty during this time...very difficult time
50 (Joel, Admin officer).
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Joel's experience was closely matched with the experiences of others who commented on
4 how the fear of being made redundant impacted negatively on their mental health and well-
5 being. They consequently lost their drive, passion, and enthusiasm for work. For example,
6
7
8 Laura, a HR specialist, described how working from home during the pandemic was a period
9
10 of uncertainty for herself and her colleagues:
11
12

13
14
15 It was a very terrible and tense period. No one except key workers (I mean
16 doctors and nurses) have job security. My engagement is momentarily
17 broken by the fear of losing my job...one minute I am engaged, the next
18 minute I am disengaged, and this continued for more than three months
19
20
21 (Laura, HR specialist).
22
23

24
25 While many participants decried the fear of being unemployed, others noted that the UK
26 government's furlough scheme helped in reducing some of the mental health repercussions of
27 employment insecurity. For others, however, the experience of psychological distress
28 appeared to have increased despite government support:
29
30
31
32

33
34 The pressure was massively unbearable. You hear about people dying in
35 hundreds on the television every day (I stopped watching television at some
36 point) and no one is immune to contracting the virus. I became really down
37 when I lost a colleague and my neighbour to Covid-19 within two weeks.
38
39 My engagement, which was already at its lowest point, totally switched off
40
41
42 (Rebecca, Project Manager).
43
44
45

46
47 Rebecca's account reflects COR theory's key tenet that the fear of losing vital resources (in
48 this case, employment and source of income) may actually carry greater importance than the
49 actual loss of such resources (Bilgin, 2012; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Nelson (2019), another
50
51 COR theorist, further explained that feeling insecure about one's employment status could be
52
53 detrimental to mental health and well-being, with serious repercussions for work engagement.
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Poor adaptation to new ways of working from home

Our contemporary understanding of the work environment has changed since the Covid-19 crisis prompted a sudden shift to how and where work was conducted. Although some employees were able to adjust effectively, others (including those who had worked remotely prior to the pandemic) found it harder to adapt or maintain good routines while working from home. In fact, many employees struggled to convert their homes into dedicated and conducive working spaces. One participant explained:

The sudden switch of the home to work environment was weird, and I really struggled to adapt. Because it is home, and it can only be home, turning it to a work environment was difficult for me...it affected everything – my concentration, my engagement, and my productivity (Dora, Auditor).

Akin (a Business Analyst) also commented on how he was forced to turn a spare room into an office space, yet the main issues of work- and family-related conflict remained:

When the lockdown happened in March, I tried to convert one of the rooms in my home to a makeshift office, but it didn't work. Aside from the steady disturbance from the children, my mind just refused to completely switch the environment to that of an office. Consequently, my level of productivity and engagement deteriorated (Akin, Business Analyst).

Other participants experienced a situation whereby their minds could not accept the sudden reconfiguration of their homes into a dedicated working space. This issue emerged as a major source of psychological distress on workers' well-being and quality of life. Participants also discussed the adverse consequences for their work engagement levels, for example:

My mind just would not reconstruct the home as a work environment. It was like learning how to be left-handed in old age – very difficult. It really affected my engagement and productivity (Shade, University Lecturer).

1
2
3 In addition, Mohammad described how the space available in his home was clearly too small
4
5 to accommodate both familial and work activities. His account resonates with the experiences
6
7 of other participants:
8
9

10 I live in a two bedroom apartment with my children and my wife. The space
11 is just not conducive for working, with me, my wife, and the children
12 around. It badly affected my productivity throughout the first lockdown, but
13 it's a bit better during the second lockdown. The environment cannot be the
14 same as the work environment, because it's home (Mohammed, customer
15 service attendant).
16
17
18
19
20
21

22 In line with COR theory, a person's home offers a wide variety of family-related resources
23 (e.g., spousal intimacy, parenting support, family cohesion, and friendship) that enable
24 optimal functioning (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012). However, when
25 individuals are forced convert their homes into a dedicated working spaces, they lose
26 significant amounts of social and personal resources, leading to profound negative attitudinal
27 and behavioural consequences.
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 **Discussion**

37
38 The purpose of our study was to explore how remote working in the context of Covid-
39 19 inhibits employee engagement. Drawing on insights from COR theory, our results
40 revealed that the sudden transition from in-person to online modes of working increased work
41 intensification, online presenteeism, employment insecurity, and poor adaptation to new ways
42 of working from home. Exposure to these stress factor were particularly threatening to
43 participants' social and personal resources, which resulted in psychological strain and poor
44 levels of work engagement. These findings offer a fresh perspective on the most salient work-
45 and nonwork-related risk factors that make remote working especially demanding.
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Theoretical and practical implications

Our research has direct implications for COR theory's key principle that stress-related events are more likely to create a loss spiral where initial depletion of social and personal resources creates further losses in valuable resources (Hobfoll, 2001; Halbesleben et al., 2014). Because resources are functional in achieving desired goals and stimulating personal growth, learning, and development, loss spirals weaken people's ability to function optimally. We identified remote working as a stress-related factor capable of depleting vital social and personal resources, thereby inhibiting work engagement levels. In fact, the sudden shift to online modes of working due to the Covid-19 lockdown and stay-at-home orders increased the amount of time, energy and efforts that individuals were forced to invest during the working day. Work intensification came primarily from staff shortages, redundancies, and other cost-cutting actions employed by management to mitigate the economic and financial consequences of the pandemic. Consequently, many employees worked longer hours and undertook more tasks in order to get work done. This situation was more distressing for those with greater family-related responsibilities, including routine domestic chores (e.g., cooking and cleaning) and home schooling for their children. As Van Veldhoven et al. (2020) and other COR theorists (Halbesleben et al., 2014) have observed, intensified workloads and longer working hours are critical components of the stress appraisal process. It is argued that conflicting work and family demands can overwhelm available resource reservoirs, and ultimately impair the accomplishment of desirable goals, including work engagement (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2020; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012).

Working remotely and communicating in real-time through digital platforms added a variety of complications to people's daily routines. For many employees, virtual working has benefits in terms of the freedom to work anywhere at any time; nevertheless, our analysis identified 'online presenteeism' as a possible downside of working remotely during the

1
2
3 pandemic. With 24-hour access to the internet and digital platforms on their laptops and
4
5 mobile phones, many study participants felt compelled to stay visible online, so as to prove
6
7 their worth by working extra hours, demonstrate greater job dedication, or convince their
8
9 employers that they were not shirking their duties while working from home. Online
10
11 presenteeism was also associated with heightened levels of stress and anxiety, which not only
12
13 impacted participants' mental health but also their performance and drive for work. In
14
15 addition to online presenteeism, many participants felt worried about the prospects of being
16
17 losing their jobs. They experienced greater levels of employment insecurity, which further
18
19 compelled them to work too hard and for longer periods than usual. In many ways, therefore,
20
21 our findings suggest that remote working fosters the means to reach a set of goals within a
22
23 job; however, it could also reduce work engagement levels during a pandemic.
24
25
26
27

28
29 Furthermore, our research revealed that the pandemic forced individuals to reimagine
30
31 their work roles and adapt to new ways of creating safe, productive, and enjoyable job-related
32
33 experiences. Their traditional understanding of the 'work environment'—what it meant or
34
35 represented—had changed as their homes became the new work environment during the
36
37 pandemic. For many workers, it was really challenging to convert their homes into a
38
39 dedicated working space. Other workers reported technology-related problems (e.g., poor
40
41 internet connections) and difficulty keeping their workstations clean, organized and free from
42
43 interruptions. These issues impacted negatively on workers performance and levels of work
44
45 engagement. Clearly, the challenges posed by remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic
46
47 are real, complex, and a puzzle for both individual and organizational post-pandemic
48
49 recovery. Further research is therefore required to understand the role of remote work
50
51 characteristics in shaping positive individual and organizational outcomes.
52
53
54
55

56
57 From a practical standpoint, organizations and human resource teams must consider
58
59 the likely impacts of remote working on employees' work-related attitudes and behaviours.
60

1
2
3 Before the Covid-19 crisis, remote working was not extensively used in many organizations.
4
5 The prevalence varied strongly across sectors, industries and occupations, with a higher
6
7 uptake among the information and communications technology organizations. For other
8
9 sectors, such as wholesale and retail, transportation, accommodation and food services, arts,
10
11 entertainment, and recreation companies, remote working appeared to be a “luxury for the
12
13 privileged few (Wang et al., 2021). Nevertheless, as digital technologies continue to advance
14
15 in both efficacy and capability, remote working will play an extra-ordinary role in shaping
16
17 the quality of work. Employers must recognize these changes and consider what kinds of job
18
19 roles are more (or less) suitable for remote working. They must also understand that remote
20
21 working poses serious challenges for employees’ well-being, and ultimately their work
22
23 engagement levels. When delegating work, it is crucial to consider whether employees are
24
25 properly equipped with the right resources and technologies, and if not, make reasonable
26
27 adjustments to support them and enable them adapt more effectively to remote working.
28
29
30
31
32

33 **Limitations and future research**

34
35 While the current study has provided valuable insights on how remote working during
36
37 the Covid-19 pandemic inhibits employee engagement, it is not without its limitations. One
38
39 limitation concerns the possible generalisability of research findings. Given our relatively
40
41 small sample size of thirty-two participants, our findings (though rich in qualitative insights)
42
43 are not entirely representative of the population of those working from home. Therefore,
44
45 future research may adopt a large-scale quantitative design involving a more representative
46
47 sample size that complements our findings. Future studies may also obtain data from
48
49 particular sectors and industries to examine the generalisability of COR theory and evaluate
50
51 employees’ shared perceptions of work engagement.
52
53
54
55

56 Another possible limitation of our study is the use of virtual platforms (e.g. Skype,
57
58 Zoom, and Microsoft Teams) as a medium for conducting the interviews. Such platforms
59
60

1
2
3 raise possible concerns around research ethics, non-verbal cues, and researcher–participant
4 bias that could be avoided during face-to-face interviews. Nevertheless, existing Covid-19
5 lockdown and social distancing restrictions prevented us from conducting face-to-face
6 interviews. Moreover, as suggested by Lo Iacono et al. (2016), the use of virtual platforms for
7 qualitative research has benefits, including cost reduction and ability to reach a wider
8 population regardless of time and location.
9

16 **Conclusion**

17
18
19 The Covid-19 crisis created a unique context where several workers were forced to
20 make a sudden shift from traditional work to remote working amid strict lockdown and social
21 distancing restrictions. The current study has shown that remote working in the Covid-19
22 context inhibited employee engagement due to a wide variety of factors such as work
23 intensification, online presenteeism, employment insecurity, and difficulty adapting to new
24 ways of working from home. The study therefore offers new insights on how individuals can
25 best optimize their work-related experiences when working remotely amid a unique context.
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34

35 **Reference**

- 36
37 Albrecht, S., Breidahl, E. and Marty, A. (2018), “Organizational resources, organizational
38 engagement climate, and employee engagement”. *Career Development International*,
39 Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 67-85.
40
41
42
43
44 Anitha, J. (2014), “Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee
45 performance”. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*,
46 Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 308-323.
47
48
49
50
51 Bailey, C. (2016). Employee engagement: do practitioners care what academics have to say–
52 And should they? *Human Resource Management Review*, 100589.
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Bakker, A. B., Albrecht, S. L. and Leiter, M. P. (2011), “Key questions regarding work
4 engagement”. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 20,
5
6 No. 1, pp. 4–28.
7
8
9
10 Biggs, A., Brough, P. and Barbour, J.P. (2014), “Strategic alignment with organizational
11 priorities and work engagement: A multi-wave analysis”. *Journal of Organizational*
12
13 *Behaviour*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 301–317.
14
15
16
17 Bilgin, B. (2012), “Losses loom more likely than gains: Propensity to imagine losses
18 increases their subjective probability”. *Organizational Behaviour and Human*
19
20 *Decision Processes*, Vol. 118, No. 2, pp. 203-215.
21
22
23
24 Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), “Using thematic analysis in psychology”. *Qualitative*
25
26 *Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 77-101.
27
28
29 Bryce, C., Ring, P., Ashby, S. and Wardman, J. K. (2020), “Resilience in the face of
30 uncertainty: early lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic”. *Journal of Risk Research*,
31
32 Vol. 23, No. 7-8, pp. 880-887.
33
34
35
36 Chanana, N. and Sangeeta, U. (2020), “Employee engagement practices during COVID-19
37 lockdown”. *Journal of Public Affairs*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2508>. [Accessed
38
39 20th April 2021].
40
41
42
43 Chaudhary, R. (2019), “Corporate social responsibility perceptions and employee
44 engagement: role of psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability”.
45
46 *Corporate Governance*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 631-647.
47
48
49
50 Christian, M. S., Garza, A. S. and Slaughter, J. E. (2011), “Work engagement: A quantitative
51 review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance”. *Personnel*
52
53 *Psychology*, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 89–136.
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Collins, A. M., Hislop, D. and Cartwright, S. (2016), "Social support in the workplace
4 between teleworkers, office-based colleagues and supervisors". *New Technology,*
5
6 *Work and Employment*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 161-175.
7
8
9
10 Cooper, C. D. and Kurland, N. B. (2002), "Telecommuting, professional isolation, and
11 employee development in public and private organizations", *Journal of*
12
13 *Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 511–532
14
15
16
17 Creswell, J. W. and Creswell, J. D. (2018), "*Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and*
18
19 *Mixed Methods Approaches*". Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
20
21
22 De Menezes, L. M. and Kelliher, C. (2011), "Flexible working and performance: A
23 systematic review of the evidence for a business case". *International Journal of*
24
25 *Management Reviews*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 452-474.
26
27
28
29 Donthu, N. and Gustafsson, A. (2020), "Effects of COVID-19 on business and research".
30
31 *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 117, pp. 284-289.
32
33
34 Eldor, L. and Vigoda-Gadot, E. (2017), "The nature of employee engagement: rethinking the
35 employee–organization relationship". *The International Journal of Human Resource*
36
37 *Management*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 526-552.
38
39
40
41 Farooq, M. B. and De Villiers, C. (2017), "Telephonic qualitative research interviews: When
42 to consider them and how to do them". *Meditari Accountancy Research*, Vol. 25, No.
43
44 2, pp. 291 - 316.
45
46
47
48 Felstead, A. and Henseke, G. (2017), "Assessing the growth of remote working and its
49 consequences for effort, well-being and work-life balance". *New Technology, Work,*
50
51 *& Employment*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 195-212.
52
53
54
55 Freeney, Y. and Fellenz, M. R. (2013), "Work engagement, job design and the role of the
56 social context at work: Exploring antecedents from a relational perspective". *Human*
57
58 *Relations*, Vol. 66, No. 11, pp. 1427-1445.
59
60

- 1
2
3 Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (2017), "Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for
4 qualitative research". London: Routledge.
5
6
7
8 Golden, T. D. and Gajendran, R. S. (2019), "Unpacking the role of a telecommuter's job in
9 their performance: Examining job complexity, problem solving, interdependence, and
10 social support". *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 34, pp. 55–69
11
12
13
14 Greenhaus, J. H. and Beutell, N. J. (1985), "Sources of conflict between work and family
15 roles". *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 76-88.
16
17
18
19
20 Gursoy, D. and Chi, C.G. (2020), "Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on hospitality industry:
21 review of the current situations and a research agenda". *Journal of Hospitality*
22 *Marketing & Management*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 527-529.
23
24
25
26
27 Halbesleben, J. R., Neveu, J. P., Paustian-Underdahl, S. C. and Westman, M. (2014),
28 "Getting to the "COR" understanding the role of resources in conservation of
29 resources theory". *Journal of management*, Vol. 40, No. 5, pp. 1334-1364.
30
31
32
33
34 Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L. and Hayes, T. L. (2002), "Business-unit-level relationship
35 between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A
36 meta-analysis". *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 87, No. 2, pp. 268–279.
37
38
39
40
41 Hobfoll, S. E. (1989), "Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress".
42 *American Psychology*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 513–524.
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2001), "The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress
process: advancing conservation of resources theory". *Applied Psychology: An
International Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 337–370.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2011), "Conservation of resource caravans and engaged settings". *Journal of
Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, Vol. 84, No. 1, pp. 116–122.

- 1
2
3 Hobfoll, S. E., Johnson, R. J., Ennis, N. and Jackson, A. P. (2003), "Resource Loss, Resource
4 Gain, and Emotional Outcomes Among Inner City Women". *Journal of Personality*
5 *and Social Psychology*, Vol. 84, No. 3, pp. 632–643.
6
7
8
9
10 Jiang, L. and Probst, T. M. (2017), "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer: Country-and
11 state-level income inequality moderates the job insecurity-burnout relationship".
12 *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 102, No 4, pp. 672-681
13
14
15
16
17 Kahn, W. A. (1990), "Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement
18 at work". *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 692–724.
19
20
21
22 Kahn, W. A. (1992), "To be fully there: Psychological presence at work". *Human Relations*,
23 Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 321–349.
24
25
26 Kelly, C. M., Rofcanin, Y., Las Heras, M., Ogbonnaya, C., Marescaux, E. and Bosch, M. J.
27 (2020), "Seeking an "i-deal" balance: Schedule-flexibility i-deals as mediating
28 mechanisms between supervisor emotional support and employee work and home
29 performance". *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 118, 103369.
30
31
32
33
34
35 Lambert, L. S. (2011), "Promised and delivered inducements and contributions: An
36 integrated view of psychological contract appraisal". *Journal of Applied Psychology*,
37 Vol. 96, No. 4, pp. 695–712.
38
39
40
41
42 Lo Iacono, V., Symonds, P. and Brown, D. H. K. (2016), "Skype as a Tool for Qualitative
43 Research Interviews". *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 103-117.
44
45
46
47 May, D. R., Gilson, R. L. and Harter, L. M. (2004), "The psychological conditions of
48 meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at
49 work". *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 77, No. 1, pp.
50 11–37.
51
52
53
54
55
56 Morganson, V.J., D.A. Major, K.L. Oborn, J.M. Verive and M.P. Heelan (2010), "Comparing
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Telework Locations and Traditional Work Arrangements: Differences in Work-Life
4 Balance Support, Job Satisfaction, and Inclusion”, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*
5
6 Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 578–595.
7
8
9
10 Nelson, B. (2019), “Supportive Managers Relieve Job Insecurity, Boost Engagement.
11 Gallup”. Available at [https://www.gallup.com/workplace/265835/supportive-](https://www.gallup.com/workplace/265835/supportive-managers-relieve-job-insecurity-increase-engagement.aspx)
12 [managers-relieve-job-insecurity-increase-engagement.aspx](https://www.gallup.com/workplace/265835/supportive-managers-relieve-job-insecurity-increase-engagement.aspx). [Accessed 28th November
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20 Odle-Dusseau, H. N., Britt, T. W. and Greene-Shortridge, T. M. (2012), “Organizational
21 work–family resources as predictors of job performance and attitudes: The process of
22 work–family conflict and enrichment”. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*,
23
24 Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 28-40
25
26
27
28
29 Ogbonnaya, C. and Babalola, M. T. (2020), “A closer look at how managerial support can
30 help improve patient experience: Insights from the UK’s National Health Service”.
31
32
33
34
35
36 Rich, B. L., Lepine, J. A. and Crawford, E. R. (2010), “Job engagement: antecedents and
37 effects on job performance”. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp.
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Saks, A. M. and Gruman, J. A. (2014). “What do we really know about employee engagement?” *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 155-182.
- Saks, A.M. (2006), “Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement”. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 7, pp. 600-619.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016), “Research Methods for Business Students”. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

- 1
2
3 Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H. and
4
5 Jinks, C. (2018), "Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization
6
7 and operationalization". *Quality & quantity*, Vol. 52, No. 4, pp. 1893-1907.
8
9
- 10 Schaufeli, W. B. and Bakker, A. B. (2010), "Defining and measuring work engagement:
11
12 Bringing clarity to the concept". In A. B. Bakker & M. P. Leiter (Eds.), *Work*
13
14 *engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research* (pp. 10–24). New York,
15
16 NY: Psychology Press.
17
18
- 19 Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-romá, V. and Bakker, A. B. (2002), "The
20
21 measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic
22
23 approach". *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 3, No. pp. 71–92.
24
25
- 26 Schaufeli, W.B. and Taris, T.W. (2014), "A critical review of the job demands resources
27
28 model: implications for improving work and health", in Bauer, G.F. and Hämmig., O.
29
30 (Eds), *Bridging Occupational, Organizational and Public Health: A Transdisciplinary*
31
32 *Approach*, Springer Science, Dordrecht, pp. 43-68.
33
34
- 35 Song, L. and Zhou, Y. (2020), "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on the Global
36
37 Economy: What Does It Take to Turn Crisis into Opportunity?" *China & World*
38
39 *Economy*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. -25.
40
41
- 42 Vander Elst, T., Verhoogen, R., Sercu, M., Van den Broeck, A., Baillien, E. and Godderis, L.
43
44 (2017), "Not extent of telecommuting, but job characteristics as proximal predictors
45
46 of work-related well-being". *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*,
47
48 Vol. 59, No. 10, pp. 180-186.
49
50
- 51 Van Veldhoven, M., Van den Broeck, A., Daniels, K., Bakker, A. B., Tavares, S. M. and
52
53 Ogbonnaya, C. (2020). Challenging the universality of job resources: Why, when, and
54
55 for whom are they beneficial? *Applied Psychology*, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 5-29.
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Vigoda-Gadot, E., Eldor, L. and Schohat, L. M. (2013), “Engage them to public service:
4
5 Conceptualization and empirical examination of employee engagement in public
6
7 administration”. *The American Review of Public Administration*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp.
8
9 518–538.
10
11
- 12 Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J. and Parker, S. K. (2021), “Achieving effective remote working
13
14 during the COVID-19 pandemic: A work design perspective”. *Applied psychology*,
15
16 Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 16-59.
17
18
- 19 Wood, S., Daniels, K. and Ogbonnaya, C. (2020). “Use of work–nonwork supports and
20
21 employee well-being: the mediating roles of job demands, job control, supportive
22
23 management and work–nonwork conflict”. *The International Journal of Human*
24
25 *Resource Management*, Vol. 31, No. 14, pp. 1793-1824.
26
27
- 28 Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E. and Schaufeli, W. B. (2007), “The role of
29
30 personal resources in the job demands-resources model”. *International Journal of*
31
32 *Stress Management*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 121-141.
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Marital status	Number of children	Occupation	Years of experience
Tim	43	Male	Married	2	Marketing executive	9
Akin	39	Male	Married	3	Business analyst	8
Bill	30	Male	Single	2	Marketing executive	7
Jolly	27	Female	Married	1	Accountant	4
James	47	Male	Married	3	University lecturer	10
Megan	29	Female	Married	3	Finance officer	5
Monica	33	Female	Single	2	Cyber analyst	7
Paul	31	Male	Married	2	Administrator	7
Daniella	36	Female	Married	3	University lecturer	5
Angela	33	Female	Single	1	Council officer	8
John	35	Male	Married	3	HR specialist	7
Perry	46	Female	Single	2	School manager	9
Michael	34	Male	Married	2	Accountant	7
Cristina	37	Female	Married	2	Sales manager	6
Jones	37	Male	Single	3	Client service officer	5
Laura	45	Female	Married	4	HR specialist	12
Andrew	42	Male	Married	2	Financial analyst	10
Jim	35	Male	Married	1	Lawyer	9
Shade	36	Female	Single	1	University lecturer	5
Joy	28	Female	Single	1	Admin officer	3
David	31	Male	Married	2	Lawyer	4
Rebecca	43	Female	Single	2	Project manager	8
Flora	27	Female	Single	1	Marketing officer	3
Faran	29	Male	Married	2	Administrator	5
Linda	42	Female	Married	4	HR specialist	7
Robert	44	Male	Married	2	School manager	8
Georgina	38	Female	Single	2	Sales/marketing officer	7
Dora	43	Female	Single	1	Auditor	10
Maria	25	Female	Single	0	Admin officer	3
Juliet	47	Female	Single	0	University lecturer	5
Joel	33	Male	Single	1	Admin officer	8
Mohammad	29	Male	Married	2	Customer service attendant	4