

BALANCING ACT: SELF-LEADERSHIP AND THE HOME WORK ENVIRONMENT IN REMOTE WORK

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Abstract. This study explores the relationship between self-leadership and the home-based work environment in the context of remote work. It examines how remote workers balance the duality of home as both a living and working space. Using an exploratory diary method, remote employees documented their weekly experiences – covering well-being, work habits, and features of their physical and virtual workspaces. The findings reveal the complex dynamics of working from home: while employees value its flexibility and comfort, they also face challenges such as poor ergonomics, digital fatigue, and social isolation. Self-leadership emerged as a key resource in managing these difficulties and sustaining a productive and balanced remote work experience. Drawing on Heider’s Balance Theory, the study presents an integrated model showing how self-leadership, perceptions of remote work, and the home work environment interact to shape outcomes. The research underscores the importance of developing self-leadership skills and offering organizational support to enhance remote work effectiveness and employee well-being.

Keywords: self-leadership, working from home, work environment, remote workers, balance theory, Heider

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1. Introduction

The dynamics of working from home (WFH), self-leadership, and the work environment have gained increasing academic attention in light of significant changes in contemporary work practices. Flexible work arrangements have recently grown in popularity. Dan Price, CEO of Gravity Payments, offered a provocative view on workplace flexibility, stating, “Do whatever you want. As a CEO, what do I care? If you get your work done, that’s all that matters” (Price 2022). However, remote work is not without its challenges.

Unicorn Bolt made the decision to bring its staff back to the office in the autumn of 2024. In a letter to employees, CEO and founder Martin Villig outlined the rationale behind the move, emphasizing the benefits of working in an office environment. He highlighted increased performance, enhanced collaboration, stronger team relationships, better information sharing, more effective idea generation, and improved mental well-being as key advantages. (Kübarsepp 2024)

The shift to remote work has highlighted critical issues, such as reduced social interaction, limited informal communication, and other factors that impact employee well-being, job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Recently, Galanti et al. (2021) discovered a positive correlation between self-leadership and productivity in remote work, although it is noted that studies in this area remain limited. Research by Tautz, Schübbe, and Felfe (2022) indicates that leaders often feel less responsibility for remote employees, underscoring the growing importance of self-leadership skills. Halford (2005) also notes that remote work transfers some responsibilities traditionally held by management to employees, necessitating clear boundary-setting. Sullivan (2000) highlights that women, in particular, are less likely to have a dedicated workspace at home, further complicating their remote work experience.

While some studies have examined the role of self-control and self-leadership in remote work settings, there is still a limited understanding of how these traits interact with the work environment in the context of remote work. In particular, the cognitive ambiguity associated with WFH has not been sufficiently addressed. This paper aims to fill that gap by examining the balance between remote employees’ sentiments toward WFH, perceptions of their self-leadership skills, and the attributions they make regarding their specific work environments.

Our research focuses exclusively on employees working remotely from their homes, excluding other remote settings like cafés, public spaces, or client premises. The study homes in on distinct self-leadership skills and strategies. Against this backdrop, we pose the following research question: How do employees working from home balance their sentiments toward WFH, their self-leadership skills, and work environment characteristics?

Employees may perceive both positive and negative effects of their home working environment on performance. While working at an employer’s premises often allows employees to attribute environmental challenges to their employer, WFH introduces different mechanisms for achieving balance. One critical issue is how workers adjust

their perceptions of self-leadership mastery to overcome potential obstacles in their home environment. This dynamic can be examined through the lens of Heider's Balance Theory (Heider and Simmel 1944).

This study adopts a pioneering approach to investigating self-leadership within remote work environments, using Heider's Balance Theory as a guiding framework. By integrating psychological self-regulation with the physical configuration of workspaces, we provide novel insights into how these factors collectively influence perceived work performance and satisfaction in a home setting. Our research introduces a distinctive conceptual framework contributing to the remote work discourse.

The paper is structured as follows: First, we discuss the theoretical foundation underpinning our study. Next, we explore the home-based work environment and its role in shaping employees' attitudes and self-leadership. We then present empirical findings regarding the relationship between the work environment and self-leadership. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of our study's theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Heider's Balance Theory

Balance Theory (Heider and Simmel 1944, Heider 1958) suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain harmony among their cognitions – attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of relationships. Imbalanced relationships between these elements create psychological discomfort, motivating individuals to take action to restore balance. The theory specifically explains triadic relationships between three elements: a person (P), another person or object (O), and an idea or environment (X). Balance is achieved when the product of the sentiment relations (positive or negative) among these three elements is positive. For example, relationships are balanced if all sentiments are positive or if two are negative and one is positive.

This aligns with the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), which describes the psychological tension that arises from inconsistencies in attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Individuals experiencing dissonance are motivated to restore alignment by changing their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Crandall et al. (2007) expanded the application of Heider's theory to explain various phenomena in social psychology. In particular, the concept of 'self-enhancing' attributions is relevant in this study context. Individuals tend to attribute negative outcomes either internally (to themselves), which can lower self-esteem, or externally (to others or the environment), as a defensive strategy to maintain positive self-perception.

We apply Heider's Balance Theory to explore the triangular relationship among three key elements in the context of remote work. First, self-leadership skills (P) reflect the individual's ability to manage and motivate themselves effectively. Secondly, attitudes toward working from home (O) show personal preferences and judgments about remote work as a mode of employment. Lastly, work environment

(X) – the physical and social environment in which remote work occurs, such as home office setup, organizational support, or technological tools.

Attitudes are personal judgments that determine an individual’s favorability or unfavorability toward certain objects or ideas (Thurstone 1931, Eagly and Chaiken 1993, Hogg and Vaughan 2005, Crano and Prislin 2006). In this context, working from home serves as the object of judgment. While attitudes do not directly dictate behavior, they play a critical role in shaping it by influencing what individuals perceive, prioritize, and act upon.

Personal experiences, successes, or failures shape attitudes toward remote work and are subject to change over time. This process parallels the concept of perceptual framing (Sparrow 2000), where individuals adjust their perceptions to align with situational factors. For example, an individual may initially feel ill-equipped to manage remote work but, over time, develop self-leadership skills that transform their perceptions and create a more balanced experience. Figure 1 illustrates four possible states of balance between the three elements (P, O, X)

Note: ‘+’ indicates possible positive and ‘-’ indicates possible negative relationship between the factors; ‘SL’ – self-leadership skills; ‘WE’ – work environment; ‘WfH’ – working from home three elements where POX designates a scenario in which perception of self-leadership skills (P) interact with a distinctive work environment (X), forming attitudes toward working from home (O).

If an employee’s attitude toward working from home (O) is positive, and they rate their self-leadership skills (P) highly, they are more likely to perceive their work environment (X) positively, achieving a balanced state. However, an imbalance arises when one or more elements conflict. For instance, a positive attitude toward remote work (O) combined with low self-leadership skills (P) might lead to dissatisfaction with the work environment (X). This discomfort motivates individuals to improve their self-leadership skills, adjust their work environment expectations, or reconsider their attitude toward working from home.

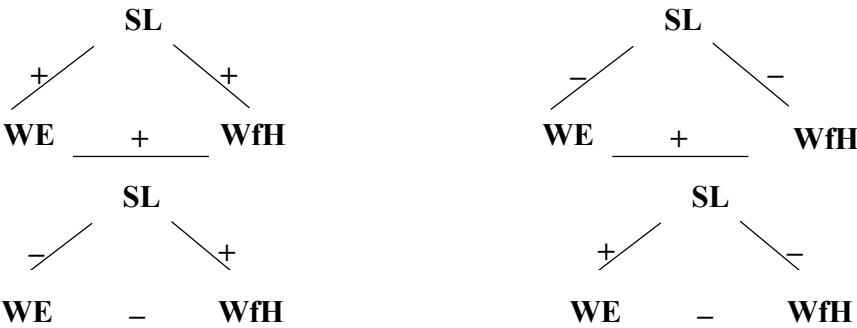


Figure 1. Hypothetical triangular pattern between attitude towards WfHe, self-leadership skills and work environment (the idea follows Heider’s Balance Theory (Heider and Simmel 1944)).

2.2. Work environment at home

The work environment can be categorized into three dimensions: the physical, technological, and social environments (Palvalin et al. 2017). The physical environment encompasses ergonomic features and workspace design, while the technological environment includes hardware, software, and information and communication technology (ICT). The social environment involves organizational routines, habits, management practices, and autonomy. These dimensions significantly influence employees' ability to adapt to remote work.

Carillo et al. (2020) noted that the suitability of home workspaces was a key factor in how employees adapt to remote work. Poorly designed workstations, inappropriate furniture, and non-ergonomic equipment increased the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), particularly affecting the neck, upper limbs, and lower back (Cruz-Ausejo et al. 2022). Additional issues, such as inadequate lighting and prolonged sitting, contributed to physical discomfort, eye strain, and headaches. Engaging in regular physical activity and taking active breaks were effective in mitigating these risks. However, sedentary teleworkers experienced higher physical pain and discomfort without proper ergonomic arrangements. (Cruz-Ausejo et al. 2022, Davis et al. 2020)

The technological environment is integral to remote work, as it relies heavily on ICT for communication and performance. While efficient hardware and real-time tools enhance productivity, they also introduce stressors like technostress, connectivity issues, and frequent interruptions (Harris et al. 2022, Eurofound 2020). The concept of 'technostress creators,' including techno-overload, techno-invasion, and techno-uncertainty, highlights the cognitive demands associated with navigating advanced systems and constant connectivity (Pirkkalainen et al. 2019). Employees with insufficient ICT proficiency are particularly vulnerable, facing increased stress and reduced job satisfaction. These challenges were exacerbated during the pandemic, as many employees lacked the necessary resources and preparedness for remote work.

These challenges are particularly pronounced in the unique social context of WfH, where employees may experience a lack of social support from peers and leaders, further amplifying the strain. Social isolation, reduced peer interaction, and limited communication with supervisors disrupt the ability to collaborate and share knowledge, ultimately impacting confidence and decision-making (Golden et al. 2008, Bloom et al. 2015). Perceived organizational support and family interactions can mitigate these effects, strengthening self-control and remote work efficacy (Qi et al. 2023). Balancing autonomy in the social environment requires clearly defined policies, structured routines, and proactive support systems (Eurofound 2020, Aksoy et al. 2022). Interestingly, some teleworkers demonstrate lower turnover intentions despite feelings of isolation, likely due to the flexibility telework offers and constraints associated with alternative employment options (Golden et al. 2008).

Self-leadership is essential for navigating the complexities of working from home. Remote workers must develop strategies to manage work-family boundaries, as highlighted by Karnowski and White (2002). Boundary management depends on

role identity centrality, with individuals prioritizing work, family, or both in various ways (Kossek et al. 2012). While work-centric individuals focus on professional obligations, family-centric individuals prioritize home life, and dual-centric individuals require balanced approaches. Crosbie and Moore (2004) emphasized the challenges in setting boundaries, noting that blurred lines between work and personal life often lead to stress, loneliness, and reduced social interaction. Developing effective self-leadership skills to regulate boundary crossings and maintain work-life harmony is critical to mitigating these challenges (Aczel et al. 2021, Ahrentzen 1990).

This synthesis of the work environment's physical, technological, and social dimensions provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of WfH, emphasizing the importance of ergonomic design, technological proficiency, social support, and self-leadership.

2.3. Self-leadership and the perceived balance within the work environment

Self-leadership is a process in which individuals exert self-influence over their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to engage in activities they genuinely wish to perform, rather than merely those they feel obligated to complete (Manz 1986, Costantini and Weintraub 2022). It involves independently taking responsibility for decisions, setting personal goals, practicing self-instruction, and assessing performance based on established criteria (Manz and Sims 1980, Manz 1986). Self-leadership strategies include optimizing the work context, enhancing task performance processes, and managing thought patterns (Manz 1986, Manz and Sims 1980). Houghton and Neck (2002) describe self-leadership as a combination of behavioral and cognitive self-evaluation to improve performance through behavior-focused strategies, natural rewards, and constructive thought patterns.

Behavior-focused strategies involve observing and identifying behaviors that can be modified or eliminated to enhance motivation and performance. For instance, self-assessment tools like to-do lists or planners help individuals develop productive habits. Natural reward strategies make tasks inherently fulfilling by incorporating personal preferences, such as playing music or adding decorative elements to the workspace. Constructive thought patterns, meanwhile, focus on challenging negative thoughts and fostering positive mental imagery (Houghton et al. 2012, Harari et al. 2021).

The Self-Control and Self-Management Skills (SCMSk) model, proposed by Mezo (2008), further refines the concept of self-leadership. This model encompasses self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing processes, empowering individuals to regulate their behaviors, emotions, and thoughts while fostering autonomy and effectiveness. Employees can achieve greater self-efficacy and productivity by monitoring actions, thoughts, and emotions and comparing them against internal standards. Research by Qi, Xu, and Liu (2023) highlights that self-control significantly enhances employees' self-efficacy in remote work settings, improving their overall effectiveness. Self-reinforcement and positive attitudes

are particularly vital in shaping how individuals manage their work environments, especially in contexts reliant on information and communication technology (ICT). Managing ICT-related challenges, particularly technostress, is a critical aspect of self-leadership.

According to Pirkkalainen (2019), employees rely on reactive and proactive coping strategies to navigate technostress. Reactive approaches, such as venting frustrations or distancing from stressful IT situations, may provide immediate relief but are less effective in sustaining long-term productivity. Proactive strategies, on the other hand, such as skill development (mastery) and reframing stressful situations positively (positive reinterpretation), foster resilience and help maintain IT-enabled productivity over time. Self-evaluation is particularly vital in reflecting on actions and adjusting attitudes, especially in professional contexts. Combining these approaches enhances the ability to cope with technostress, with the success of reactive measures often depending on proactive behaviors, such as perceived IT control and a positive attitude toward technology.

Similarly, self-reinforcement is critical in shaping positive attitudes toward the work environment, which is especially important in remote work settings. Sparrow (2000) found that many teleworkers perceive that their commitment is questioned by their organizations, prompting them either to enhance their self-management skills or to constantly prove their capabilities, even to themselves. These dynamics underscore the significance of self-leadership strategies in navigating the challenges of remote work.

Self-awareness and self-regulation are key to managing remote work environments' unique challenges and opportunities. This aligns with the Balance theory (Heider and Simmel 1944), which suggests individuals prefer balanced states over unbalanced ones (Chiang et al. 2020, Widgery and Tubbs 1997). A preference for balanced states often leads to higher levels of self-monitoring as individuals strive to maintain equilibrium within themselves. In remote work, employees evaluate and balance their self-leadership with two critical domains: their physical work environment and their home as a personal living space.

Maintaining a balance between these domains can positively influence attitudes toward remote work. Individuals with effective self-leadership and self-management strategies in work and home settings are likelier to foster positive attitudes toward working from home. This suggests that self-leadership enhances individual performance and supports well-being and productivity in remote work environments. We hypothesize that individuals who achieve a balanced self-leadership perception and effectively manage work and home settings will exhibit greater satisfaction and effectiveness in remote work contexts.

3. Method and sample

3.1. Study site and sample

The research was conducted in 2022 at a global business services firm with branches in Estonia and Finland. The company offered flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to choose whether to work from home, from the office, or to combine both options. The study involved ten specialists – men and women of diverse ages, nationalities, and professions – working remotely using ICT tools. These participants were connected through shared professional touchpoints and aligned divisional objectives. Sociodemographic characteristics were not analyzed, as the sample size and study duration were insufficient for drawing conclusions based on these variables. The participants' primary responsibilities included data entry and analysis. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, with no monetary or other incentives provided. Informed consent was obtained, and all data was anonymized and restricted to the research team. Notably, the participants' identities were not disclosed to their leaders.

3.2. Method and research process

An exploratory diary study method was employed, utilizing six Likert-scale and open-ended questions (Mezo 2008, Palvalin 2017, Houghton et al. 2012) to evaluate weekly work, employee well-being, and sentiments related to their work environment, such as internet quality and other workplace characteristics. Although participants were not explicitly asked to report positive or negative emotions, sentiments were identified during the data analysis based on their diary entries. The study was conducted over four weeks, starting on January 21, 2022. Participants received weekly instructions via email. Of the 40 expected responses, 35 were submitted, yielding an 87% response rate.

3.3. Data analysis

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, thematic analysis was used to structure and identify patterns in the open-ended responses. Data were deductively categorized into two primary themes – self-leadership and work environments – with eight related subcategories for each. Inductive analysis was also applied to categorize responses further, aligning them with these themes (see Figure 2). Sentiment analysis was conducted without directing participants towards specific emotional responses; instead, sentiments were inferred from the diary entries and coded as positive, negative, or mixed. Data coding, sentiment analysis, and thematic mapping were performed using MS Excel.

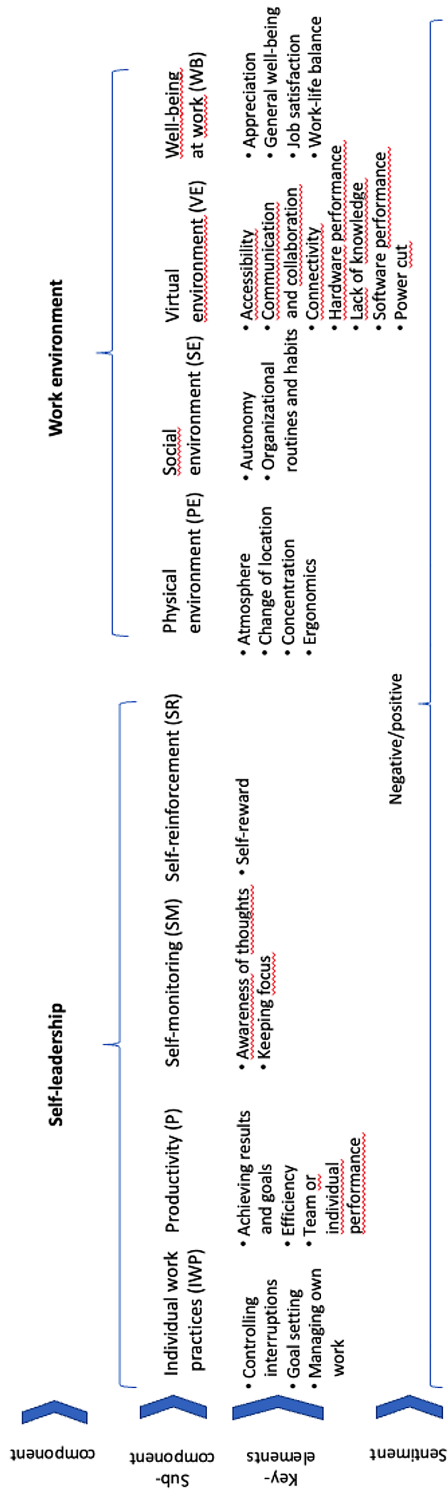


Figure 2. Classification of data based on Mezo (2008), Palvalin (2017), and collected data.

4. Findings

Employees rated their working week positively, with scores ranging from 7.8 to 8.7 out of 10. However, satisfaction varied due to busy periods and ad-hoc disruptions. Diary entries provided a deeper insight into factors influencing these ratings, with quotes illustrating key categories. Respondents also reflected on well-being and working practices, identifying nine key elements of self-leadership. Analysis of 101 responses revealed predominantly positive perceptions, with limited exceptions, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Components of self-leadership

Sub-component	Key element	Count of positive sentiment	Count of negative sentiment	Count of entries
IWP	Controlling interruptions	0	3	53
	Goal setting	20	6	
	Managing own work	14	10	
P	Achieving results and goals	12	2	26
	Efficiency	1	3	
	Team or individual performance	4	4	
SM	Awareness of thoughts	3	0	16
	Keeping focus	12	2	
SR	Self-reward	6	0	6

Note: IWP – individual work practices; P – productivity; SM- self monitoring; SR- self-reinforcement.

Employees reported effectively setting goals and aligning with ‘individual working practices’ (IWP). However, the Scrum method faced criticism for its prescriptive nature, contrasting with IWP’s emphasis on autonomy. Effective time management and adaptability were praised for reducing stress, with examples including creating to-do lists, prioritizing tasks, and focusing on high-impact activities. Negative feedback often related to excessive meetings delaying task completion, as one respondent noted, “*The non-meeting hours could have been dedicated to my planned work or learning but were filled with all ad hoc calls.*”

The theme of ‘Productivity’ appeared 26 times, focusing on goal achievement, efficiency, and performance evaluations. Positive feedback reflected satisfaction with accomplishments and manageable stress, while inefficiencies were tied to unnecessary meetings and ad-hoc disruptions.

Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement were less frequently mentioned but generally perceived positively. External factors, such as poor home office setups, were cited as challenges to maintaining focus. One participant shared, “*The working*

environment is poor at home. No proper desk, chair, monitor, bad seating position, noisy neighbors, personal distractions. It's exhausting and hard to focus." Self-reinforcement included mental rewards, such as positive affirmations, or material treats, like enjoying ice cream during breaks, with some adopting practices like 'meeting-free Fridays' to optimize their workweek.

Finally, 146 references were made to the home office environment, with most highlighting challenges rather than benefits, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Components of work environment

Sub-component	Key element	Count of positive sentiment	Count of negative sentiment	Count of entries
PE	Atmosphere	11	1	62
	Change of location	1	9	
	Concentration	9	0	
	Ergonomics of workplace	6	29	
SoE	Autonomy	6	3	24
	Organizational routines and habits	0	15	
VE	Accessibility	0	1	30
	Communication and collaboration	6	4	
	Connectivity	1	5	
	Hardware performance	0	5	
	Lack of knowledge	0	1	
	Software performance	1	4	
	Power cut	0	2	
WB	Appreciation	0	1	30
	General well-being	1	8	
	Job satisfaction	1	0	
	Work-life balance	7	12	

Note: PE – physical environment; SoE – social environment; VE – virtual environment; WB – well-being at work.

Participants shared mixed sentiments about their home work environment. While some appreciated the peaceful atmosphere and natural views that enhanced concentration, others missed the productivity of a traditional office. Sixty percent

of respondents had dedicated workspaces, though conditions varied widely. One participant noted, *"I do not have my own workspace. I usually sit at the kitchen table. If I need a more silent place, I can use one of our bedrooms."* Ergonomic issues, such as poor furniture and resulting discomfort, were common. External distractions, like family noise and frequent relocations within the home to ensure privacy, further hindered productivity. One respondent reflected, *"I went to the office one day mid-week, and it felt much better than the home office. I was more productive and could catch up with colleagues face-to-face."*

Regarding the social environment, autonomy and flexibility were highly valued, enabling respondents to organize tasks and even manage personal errands during breaks. However, excessive meetings and a lack of informal interactions contributed to feelings of isolation and inefficiency. One participant remarked, *"The social contacts have decreased as everybody is just attending calls from home – no more ad hoc discussions during weekdays."* Organizational gaps, such as difficulty accessing information when colleagues were unavailable, highlighted challenges in virtual routines.

Discussions about the virtual environment (VE) focused on technology and connectivity. While respondents expressed frustration with internet issues during frequent meetings, they appreciated collaborative tools like MS Teams, which generally supported effective communication and teamwork.

The study also explored 'Well-being at Work' (WB), including work-life balance, general well-being, job satisfaction, and appreciation. Work-life balance was a key concern, with extended hours and overlapping work-family demands causing physical and mental strain. One participant shared, *"I experience overworking from being 100% working from home. Difficulty organizing lunch breaks when mixing family life and irregular meeting times."* However, some noted benefits, such as time saved from commuting, allowing for leisure activities.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study, based on in-depth diary entries, offer a nuanced view of the daily work experiences of remote employees. Bakker et al. (2023) and Halford (2005) emphasize self-leadership's vital role in work-from-home (WfH) settings, where self-driven motivation and goal setting are crucial without traditional supervision. This study highlights significant challenges remote workers face within their work environments at home, particularly in terms of ergonomics, technology, and social interaction. Consistent with the findings of Cruz-Ausejo et al. (2022) and Harris et al. (2022), participants reported physical discomfort from inadequate furniture and cognitive stress from frequent interruptions and connectivity issues. These challenges extend beyond physical discomfort, impacting on workers' psychological well-being and productivity.

Using Heider's Balance Theory as a framework, the study reveals how participants balanced negative aspects of their work environment (X) with positive attitudes

toward working from home (O) through self-leadership strategies (P). The findings underscore the relevance of cognitive dissonance within remote work environments, as employees experiencing imbalances often engage in adaptive behaviors, such as self-monitoring and goal setting, to restore equilibrium. This suggests that organizations could benefit from supporting employees with structured interventions, such as self-leadership training programs, to address such imbalances proactively. For instance, while some struggled with distractions and poor ergonomics, others employed self-monitoring and boundary-setting strategies to mitigate these issues. This interplay underscores the crucial role of self-leadership in achieving balance within remote work contexts.

The findings demonstrate the pivotal role of self-leadership in managing the complexities of remote work. Participants reported various strategies, including goal setting, prioritization, and self-reinforcement, as effective tools for navigating their work tasks. These behaviors align with the self-leadership framework proposed by Manz (1986) and Houghton and Neck (2002), emphasizing both behavioral and cognitive self-regulation. However, the data suggest that some participants may overestimate their self-leadership skills, attributing perceived work-life balance to personal preferences for WfH while potentially underrecognizing structural challenges. This finding calls for further research to explore how self-leadership perceptions align with actual performance outcomes, offering deeper insights into the role of self-leadership in remote work.

These findings highlight the intricate balance remote employees strive to achieve. Figure 3 illustrates the interplay between self-leadership, WfH attitudes, and the work environment forms the foundation for achieving this balance. This framework emphasizes the dual role of personal agency and organizational support in fostering effective remote work environments. Heider's Balance Theory explains how individuals strive for cognitive harmony by aligning their attitudes, behaviors, and environmental perceptions. In this study, participants often balanced negative aspects of their work environment with the flexibility and convenience of WfH. For example, while ergonomic and social challenges were common, participants highlighted the value of autonomy and comfort in their home settings.

Figure 3 illustrates the dynamic interplay among self-leadership (P), WfH attitudes (O), and the work environment (X), emphasizing the balance remote workers strive to achieve. Integrating personal and professional spaces blurs traditional boundaries, reinforcing the need for heightened self-regulation and awareness. These findings challenge traditional notions of workplace separation, as Hatch (2018) outlined, and highlight the unique demands of WfH settings. The model aligns with the findings that employees' perceptions of their work environments and self-leadership skills directly influence their attitudes toward WfH. For example, those who successfully manage the duality of home spaces often report higher satisfaction and productivity, as reflected in the study's thematic analysis. This extended triangular model integrates Heider's Balance Theory with the dual roles of the home as space for both living and working, illustrating how these roles intersect and create challenges requiring self-leadership strategies for effective management.

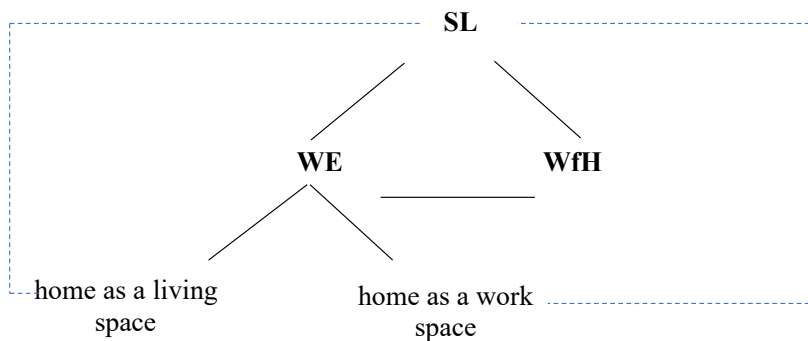


Figure 3. Extended hypothetical triangular pattern between attitude towards self-leadership skills (P), WfH (O) and work environment (X).

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study applies Heider's Balance Theory to modern remote work contexts, emphasizing the interdependence of self-leadership, WfH attitudes, and the work environment. The findings challenge conventional workplace dynamics by revealing how personal spaces are enablers and constraints in remote work. Moreover, the integration of ergonomic, technological, and social dimensions into remote work models offers a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced by remote workers.

While self-leadership strategies address individual challenges, they must be complemented by organizational support to create a conducive work environment. This dual perspective aligns with research by Qi et al. (2023) and Palvalin et al. (2017), advocating for a balance between individual agency and external support systems. For example, employees with limited access to ergonomic setups or reliable technology may struggle to implement self-leadership strategies effectively. This emphasizes the need for organizational interventions to complement individual efforts.

5.2. Practical implications

The study offers actionable insights for organizations aiming to improve remote work outcomes. First, organizations should prioritize ergonomic interventions, such as subsidizing home office equipment or providing ergonomic training, to alleviate physical discomfort and enhance productivity. Second, fostering self-leadership development through training programs can empower employees to manage work tasks and boundaries, reducing cognitive strain effectively. Managers should also adopt a supportive approach that balances autonomy with structured guidance. Regular check-ins, collaborative tools, and flexible policies can help mitigate feelings of isolation and enhance team cohesion. Addressing individual and organizational factors is essential for creating sustainable and effective remote work environments.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations that warrant consideration. The small sample size and reliance on diary methods limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should employ larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal designs to capture the evolving dynamics of remote work experiences. Additionally, while this study focuses on home-based remote work, exploring alternative settings, such as coworking spaces or hybrid arrangements, could provide valuable comparative insights. Further investigation into the interplay between cultural and personal preferences and their impact on WFH attitudes and self-leadership would enhance the theoretical framework presented here.

6. Conclusion

The study underscores the significance of self-leadership in achieving balance within remote work environments. By leveraging adaptive strategies, individuals can address challenges and align their work experiences with personal and professional goals. However, the findings also stress the importance of organizational support in fostering sustainable remote work practices. These insights provide a foundation for designing effective remote work policies that promote employee well-being and organizational productivity.

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