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**RESEARCH TITLE:**

**REMOTE WORKING DYNAMICS:  
EXPLORING THE TRANSITION FROM  
LEADERSHIP TO E-LEADERSHIP IN UK  
ORGANISATIONS**

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### Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled 'REMOTE WORKING DYNAMICS: EXPLORING THE TRANSITION FROM LEADERSHIP TO E-LEADERSHIP IN UK ORGANISATIONS' submitted to University of Wales Trinity St David - London Campus is the result of my original research work carried out under the supervision of DR Laila Maazouz. This thesis has not been submitted to any other institution or university for any title or qualification.

#### I further declare that:

- I have cited all sources of information in the thesis.
- I have cited the work of others in the text and listed it in the references.
- I have not committed any plagiarism or academic misconduct while writing this thesis.
- Any help received in the preparation of this thesis has been acknowledged.

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## **Abstract**

The rapid adoption of remote working has profoundly changed business dynamics and leadership models in UK companies. This dissertation explores the shift from traditional leadership to e-leadership, a new approach in which leaders must manage distributed teams via digital tools. Through a qualitative analysis based on interviews with leaders and employees from different companies, the research examines the challenges and opportunities associated with this transformation. Particular attention is paid to the impact of e-leadership on communication, employee engagement and organisational effectiveness. The thesis emphasises the importance of advanced digital skills and innovative management strategies to address the complexities of remote leadership. The findings indicate that to maintain high levels of employee productivity and well-being, leaders need to adopt a flexible and technology-oriented approach, without losing sight of the importance of human relationships. This research enriches the existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of the dynamics of e-leadership in the UK context and offers practical recommendations for leaders and organisations facing the transition to remote working.

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**'If it scares you,  
it might **be** a good thing to **try**.'**

**- Seth Godin**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1: Introduction

The rapid evolution of technology and the global push towards flexible working arrangements have significantly transformed traditional workplace dynamics. Remote working has emerged as an important trend, particularly in the wake of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has necessitated a shift towards virtual environments (Montgomery, et al., 2019). This thesis explores the transition from traditional to digital leadership in UK organisations, examining the implications and challenges of leadership in a remote working context, this aims to contribute to the understanding of how leadership styles need to adapt to effectively manage and inspire remote teams. (Neeta, 2023).

## 1.2: Background of the Study

Over the past decade, remote working has become increasingly relevant, with a significant acceleration in recent years thanks to digital tools that allow employees to work from different locations, improving flexibility and work-life balance. This trend has been amplified by technological advances, new employee expectations and the need to maintain business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahuja, et al., 2023).

In the business context, leadership is critical to the success and sustainability of organisations. However, the traditional leadership model based on face-to-face interactions and hierarchical structures has been challenged by remote working, calling for a new form of leadership: e-leadership (Al-A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023). This concept is about leading teams through electronic means and requires leaders to adapt their styles and strategies to promote collaboration, trust and productivity in virtual environments (Kushagra & Gunjan, 2021).

## 1.3 Research Problem

Traditional leadership models, which rely heavily on physical presence and direct supervision, face significant challenges in remote work environments. The absence of face-to-face interactions can hinder effective communication, relationship building and the ability to monitor and support team members (Al-A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023). These challenges require a shift towards more flexible and adaptive leadership practices.

As remote working becomes more prevalent there is an urgent need for leaders to evolve their practices to meet the demands of e-leadership. This includes developing new skills in virtual communication, harnessing technology for collaboration and fostering a sense of community and involvement among remote group members (Ahuja, et al., 2023).

The transition to remote working requires a change in leadership practices. E-leadership requires a different set of skills and approaches, including competence with digital tools, the ability to promote virtual collaboration, and strategies to maintain team cohesion and morale. Understanding how traditional leadership styles can be adapted to fit the remote context is essential for organisational success (Al-A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023).

## 1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

### ***Aim:***

Exploring the transition from traditional to digital leadership in UK organisations. The transition from traditional to digital leadership reflects broader changes in the business world, influenced by technology and evolving work practices (Fernando, et al., 2020).

### ***Objectives:***

- Examine the key drivers and challenges associated with remote working in UK organisations, including the extent of adoption, common practices and challenges faced.
- Explore the evolution of leadership in response to the dynamics of remote working, understand traditional leadership styles and how they translate into remote working environments.
- Explore the challenges faced by leaders in adapting to e-Leadership practices and remote team dynamics.
- Identify challenges and opportunities for e-leadership.

## 1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the dynamics that are emerging in organisations for remote working?
2. What are the main challenges faced by leaders in adapting their styles to e-Leadership practices and effectively managing remote teams?
3. What are the key factors that facilitate the transition from leadership to e-Leadership in remote work environments?
4. How do leaders respond to this new remote situation?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the academic knowledge on leadership and e-leadership by providing insights into the transition process and the adaptations required for effective management of remote teams, and also aims to see what impacts the transition to e-leadership has had on leaders' styles (Kushagra & Gunjan, 2021).

The findings will have practical implications for managers and organisations, offering insights into how to address the challenges of remote leadership and exploit the opportunities

presented by e-leadership. By understanding the dynamics of remote working and the evolution of leadership styles, organisations can better support their leaders and teams in achieving success in a virtual work environment (Bach & Sulíková, 2021).

## 1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

In the first chapter, the challenges and transitions faced by traditional leadership in the digital environment are analysed, emphasising the importance of adapting leadership practices to remote working. Research objectives are also established, which include an analysis of the dynamics of remote work and the evolution towards e-leadership.

The second chapter provides a review of the existing literature, comparing traditional and digital leadership models. Remote working in the UK is analysed, identifying challenges, opportunities and gaps in current research.

The third chapter describes the research methodologies used, including the philosophy, methodological design and qualitative approach. Data collection methods, sampling strategy, and qualitative analysis techniques are explained, and ethical issues and limitations of the study are discussed.

In the fourth chapter, the research results are presented and analysed with the help of tables, diagrams and graphs. The results are interpreted in relation to the research questions and objectives and compared with the existing literature, discussing the impact on theory and practice.

The concluding chapter summarises the main findings, highlights the new leadership concept that emerged and suggests directions for future research and reflects on the significance of the study, offering an overall summary of the thesis.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction:

Leadership is a field that has evolved significantly, adapting to changes in work and organisational dynamics. Initially, leadership theories focused on face-to-face interactions and hierarchical structures. With the advent of remote working, the need for new theoretical frameworks emerged to address the challenges of virtual groups and digital leadership. Building on traditional theories such as situational leadership and path-goal theory, we explore how these models can be adapted to remote teams and digital interactions. In this chapter, the aim is to understand how classical theories can also be useful in virtual contexts and how they can be integrated with new skills and technological tools. The analysis of these theoretical frameworks offers guidance to leaders facing the complexities of leadership in a digitised world.

### 2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Leadership theories have traditionally focused on face-to-face interactions and hierarchical structures. However, with the advent of remote working, new frameworks are emerging to address the challenges and opportunities presented by virtual groups and e-leadership (Bach & Sulíková, 2021).

Leadership literature has evolved significantly to understand the concept of e-leadership in response to technological advances and changes in work environments, a concept that requires leaders to operate primarily through digital platforms, and to manage control and motivation through new means and strategies. Traditional leadership theories, such as

situational leadership and Path-Goal theory, have provided key insights into effective leadership practices (Kushagra & Gunjan, 2021).

### **Situational Leadership**

The Situational leadership, as postulated by Hersey and Blanchard, is based on the idea that effective leadership depends on the leader's ability to adapt his or her style according to the readiness and maturity of his or her followers (Northouse, 2022). This model, while comprehensive, faces significant challenges in virtual environments where non-verbal cues are absent, real-time feedback is limited, and activity control can be more complex (Bach & Sulíková, 2021).

According to Guah(2021), the situational leadership model, while adaptable, does not place sufficient emphasis on the unique communication challenges posed by digital platforms, nor on the difficulties in maintaining adequate control of activities remotely. In virtual contexts, leaders must overcompensate for the absence of physical presence by exploiting advanced communication tools and techniques to motivate the team. However, this dependence on technology introduces new complexities, such as the need for digital literacy between leaders and followers (Montgomery, et al., 2019). Furthermore, while situational leadership promotes flexibility, it is less effective in contexts where rapid decision-making is crucial and digital communication can be a major obstacle.

The application of the model in virtual teams also requires a reconsideration of the 'delegation' style. In traditional contexts, delegation presupposes a level of supervision that is inherently compromised in remote work environments. Therefore, digital tools for performance monitoring become essential, but can create an environment of

micromanagement if not used judiciously (Bach & Sulíková, 2021). This emphasises the need to balance control with trust to prevent the team from losing motivation.

### **Path-goal theory**

The goal-path theory, developed by Robert House, emphasises the role of leaders in clarifying goals and removing obstacles to ensure the success of their team (Northouse, 2022). In digital environments, this theory encounters significant barriers, particularly with regard to maintaining team cohesion, motivation and managing virtual obstacles.

One of the critical limitations of the path-goal theory in the context of remote working is its underestimation of the complexities introduced by digital communication and the need to maintain high motivation at a distance. While the theory supports leadership and supportive behaviours, the lack of physical presence can dilute the effectiveness of these behaviours. For example, supportive leadership in a digital environment requires a proactive approach to maintaining emotional connections and motivation, which can be difficult given the impersonal nature of many digital communication tools (Neeta, 2023).

Furthermore, the theory's focus on removing obstacles needs to be reinterpreted to address the virtual barriers inherent in remote working, such as technological disruptions and communication delays. Leaders are now required to possess not only leadership skills, but also technical skills to solve problems and manage digital tools effectively (Bach & Sulíková, 2021). This change places additional demands on leaders, who now face both human and technological challenges to maintain team productivity and motivation despite more complex control.

## 2.3 E-Leadership

The e-leadership represents a fundamental shift from traditional leadership practices, emphasising the need for leaders to interact with their teams primarily through electronic means. This approach requires a deep understanding of digital tools and platforms, as well as the ability to foster team cohesion and motivation in the absence of physical interaction, all while maintaining effective control of activities (Montgomery, et al., 2019).

### Differences between Traditional Leadership and E-Leadership

The distinction between traditional leadership and e-leadership is clear, particularly in the context of communication, decision-making, risk management and motivation control.

Traditional leadership models rely heavily on interpersonal skills and the ability to create trust through face-to-face interactions. In contrast, e-leadership requires leaders to build trust and manage teams using digital tools, which may be less effective in conveying empathy and establishing personal connections, with the risk of negatively affecting team motivation (Kushagra & Gunjan, 2021).

E-leadership also requires a higher level of agility in decision-making, as digital tools enable fast communication and response times. However, this speed can come at the expense of thoroughness and deliberation, potentially leading to hasty or ill-informed decisions, which can affect the leader's motivation and confidence in control. Furthermore, dependence on digital communication introduces new risks, such as cybersecurity threats and the potential for miscommunication, which are less prevalent in traditional leadership models (Montgomery, et al., 2019).

Therefore, while e-leadership offers numerous advantages in terms of flexibility and global reach, it also presents significant challenges that require leaders to develop new skills and strategies to maintain motivation and effective control (Sułkowski, 2024). The ability to effectively integrate traditional leadership principles with modern technological tools will be crucial for success in the digital age.

## 2.4 Remote Working Dynamics

The increase in remote working has been accelerated by technological advances and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote working has increased significantly in the UK, with a substantial proportion of the workforce continuing to work from home even after the pandemic. According to Hooson (2024), the percentage of remote workers in the UK increased from 4.7 % in 2019 to almost 46.6 % by 2021. This change has led to an increased demand for effective e-leadership as organisations adapt to the new work demands.

### **Challenges and opportunities of remote working**

Remote working presents both challenges and opportunities for leaders. On the one hand, it allows greater flexibility and access to a global talent pool. On the other, it introduces challenges related to team cohesion, communication, motivation and control (Bach & Sulíková, 2021). Traditional leadership models, which emphasise face-to-face interactions and physical supervision, are often ill-equipped to deal with these challenges. Indeed, maintaining high team motivation without face-to-face contact and physical control can be complex, requiring leaders to adopt new strategies to ensure that goals are achieved and team members remain engaged and productive (Kushagra & Gunjan, 2021).

E-leadership, in contrast, offers tools and strategies to manage these challenges, but requires leaders to develop new skills in technology and managing remote teams (Fernando, et al., 2020). The ability to balance these conflicting demands, while maintaining an appropriate level of control without being overwhelming, will be crucial for leaders in the digital era. In this context, leaders must become adept at motivating employees through virtual communication, using techniques such as recognition of work done, transparency in expectations and continuous support (Al-A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023).

## 2.5 Transition to E-Leadership

The transition from traditional leadership to e-leadership represents a significant change in the leadership landscape. Traditional theories, while still relevant, need to be adapted to address the unique challenges posed by digital environments (Guah, 2021). For example, while path-goal theory emphasises the need for leaders to remove obstacles to team success, e-leadership requires leaders to navigate and mitigate digital barriers that may hinder communication and productivity (Neeta, 2023). In this context, control must be rethought: instead of relying on direct supervision, leaders must rely on digital systems to monitor team progress and efficiency, while ensuring that these practices do not stifle employee motivation.

In addition, e-leadership requires a greater emphasis on technological competence and innovation. Leaders must be able to harness digital tools to drive innovation and manage continuous change, a need that is not adequately addressed by traditional leadership theories (Guah, 2021). This change also requires leaders to adopt a more collaborative and networked approach to leadership, using digital platforms to build and maintain connections both within and outside the organisation. In this new paradigm, the ability to motivate and exercise balanced, and non-invasive control becomes central to the success of remote teams.

## 2.6 Summary

The chapter explores how leadership has changed in the digital age, particularly with the rise of remote working. In the past, leadership was based on traditional hierarchical models, with direct control and face-to-face communication. Today, with the use of digital technologies, the figure of the e-leader has emerged, who manages teams remotely using digital platforms. E-leadership requires leaders to be agile and competent with technological tools, but presents challenges such as building trust and motivation in the absence of physical interactions. The chapter compares digital leadership with traditional models such as situational leadership and goal path theory. These models need to be adapted to function effectively in virtual contexts, as limited communication and indirect supervision complicate the application of such theories.

Then, the e-leadership marks a revolution from traditional leadership, requiring a new management of control, greater trust and the use of technology to ensure team cohesion and productivity at a distance.

# Chapter 3: Research Methods & Methodologies

## 3.1 Introduction:

Research philosophy in this paper examines the epistemological and methodological foundations for studying e-leadership in the context of remote work. It focuses on the use of epistemology interpretivism and inductive reasoning to adapt traditional leadership styles to the digital reality. Epistemology helps to review notions of remote leadership, while interpretivism and inductive reasoning inductive reasoning allow for a deep understanding of participants' experiences participants and identify emerging patterns in e-leadership.

## 3.2 Research Philosophy

### **Epistemology, interpretivism and inductive reasoning in the context of e-leadership style change**

Epistemology deals with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge, exploring the assumptions, beliefs and methodologies that shape our understanding of e-leadership in the context of remote work. This involves a review of traditional notions of leadership and their application in a remote environment.

The epistemology adopted in this research is interpretivist, using an inductive approach to develop theory based on the qualitative data collected (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). By interacting with participants' experiences and interpretations, the research provides a detailed understanding of the transition to e-leadership. Interpretivism emphasises the understanding of human behaviour from the participants' perspectives, allowing for a deeper understanding of how leaders and followers interpret their roles in virtual contexts, highlighting changes in leadership styles with the transition to remote working (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

The inductive reasoning used allows general principles to be derived from specific observations, gathering empirical data from UK organisations adapting to remote working (Saunders, et al., 2019). This method makes it possible to identify emerging patterns in e-leadership practices that are not evident in existing theories.

Thus, the adoption of a constructivist epistemological framework, an interpretivist approach and the use of inductive reasoning are key to exploring the transition to e-leadership in UK organisations, enriching the understanding of e-leadership dynamics in response to increasing remote working.

### 3.3 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the transition from traditional to e-leadership styles in UK organisations during the transition to remote working. The choice of a qualitative method is motivated by its ability to offer an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon, which is essential for investigating complex organisational behaviours such as leadership styles in virtual environments (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

Methods such as interviews and focus groups allow capturing the nuances and subjective experiences of leaders and employees, illuminating the evolution and impact of e-leadership styles. The flexibility of qualitative methods is crucial for adapting to dynamic changes and gathering more comprehensive information than simple statistical trends (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study includes primary and secondary methods:

#### **Primary data: interviews**

During this research, 15-20 semi-structured interviews will be conducted with leaders and employees from different organisations in the UK to explore e-leadership. The aim is to gather detailed perspectives on communication, decision-making processes, group dynamics and performance management in remote working. The interviews, involving executives, managers and team leaders, will be conducted in comfortable environments and with the consent of the interviewees. Data will be analysed using a thematic approach to identify

patterns and adaptations in leadership practices related to remote working (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

### **Secondary data: leadership theory**

In order to enrich the understanding of e-leadership transitions, the study will review theoretical frameworks and academic literature on leadership styles. This review will include articles, books and reports focusing on contemporary theories and empirical studies on leadership in the digital age, covering topics such as virtual team management and the impact of technology on leadership. Relevant theoretical frameworks, such as situational leadership and Path-goal theory, will guide the interpretation of the collected data. Secondary data analysis will allow for an in-depth exploration of the observed changes in e-leadership style, corroborating interview insights with established theoretical perspectives (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

## **3.5 Sampling Strategy**

Intentional sampling will be used, selecting participants with specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research question (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). This method ensures a rich sample, offering meaningful insights into the transition to e-leadership.

### **Description of the sample population**

This study focuses on a sample population of 12-15 senior managers and leaders from various organisations in the UK. These individuals are selected based on their role in leading teams that have transitioned or are currently transitioning to remote working environments. The sample includes individuals from sectors such as technology, finance, healthcare and education, ensuring a diverse perspective on e-leadership dynamics.

Selection criteria include (J.W. & Creswell, 2023):

- Seniority: individuals in leadership positions (e.g. managers, directors, executives).
- Experience: leaders with experience in managing remote teams or managing the transition to remote work.
- Sector representation: diversity across sectors to capture different organisational contexts.

Intentional sampling is effective in qualitative research to explore specific phenomena, such as leadership styles in changing organisational contexts. This method allows detailed data to be collected from participants with direct knowledge and experience (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

### 3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data collected through the interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis, which involves the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (themes) within the data (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). The process includes data familiarisation, coding, theme development and revision. Thematic analysis is chosen for its flexibility and ability to provide a detailed and nuanced account of the data.

#### **Qualitative approach:**

The qualitative approach was chosen for this research because it is ideal for exploring complex phenomena such as leadership transitions in the context of remote working (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). This method focuses on understanding the meanings,

experiences and perspectives of individuals, allowing for an in-depth exploration of e-leadership styles and their manifestations in remote work contexts.

One of the main advantages of this approach is the depth of understanding it offers. Through methods such as interviews, observations and document analysis, researchers can gain detailed insights into the evolving nature of leadership practices (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

Flexibility in data collection is another crucial aspect. Qualitative methods allow researchers to adapt their approaches as new information emerges, which is essential when studying dynamic concepts such as e-leadership (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

Therefore, this methodological choice is in line with the objective of exploring and understanding the evolving nature of leadership in contemporary workplaces.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Research on e-leadership in remote work requires fundamental ethical considerations to ensure confidentiality, informed consent and ethical integrity. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the main guidelines are:

1. Confidentiality: Protect the privacy of participants by anonymising and securely archiving all data collected.
2. Informed consent: Clearly inform participants about the purpose of the study, their involvement and use of the data by obtaining explicit consent prior to collection.
3. Ethical integrity: Follow ethical guidelines, reporting results honestly, avoiding conflicts of interest and respecting the rights and dignity of participants.

### 3.8 Limitations of the Study

This study recognises some potential limitations that may affect the interpretation of its findings (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Firstly, the generalisability of the findings may be compromised by the diversity of organisational cultures, sectors and geographical locations, making it difficult to universally apply the findings to all organisations. Furthermore, the time span of the study, limited to recent years, may not reflect long-term trends or future developments in e-leadership styles, which evolve rapidly with technological progress.

Another challenge concerns the measurement of e-leadership behaviours and their impact on the dynamics of remote work. Dependence on self-reports and subjective interpretations introduces potential biases, also data collection methodologies, based on interviews, limit the depth of understanding compared to longitudinal or experimental approaches (J.W. & Creswell, 2023).

These limitations highlight the challenges and boundaries of the study, offering a complex view of e-leadership transitions in UK organisations within the specified period.

### 3.9 Summary

In this chapter, we explored the epistemological method used in our research on the transition from traditional to digital leadership, with a focus on remote working. We adopted an interpretive and inductive approach to analyse how leaders and employees interpret and modify their roles in virtual environments, looking for new leadership models beyond existing theories.

Using qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews with leaders and employees from different organisations in the UK, we gathered experiences and perceptions on digital

leadership. The integration of primary and secondary data enriched the analysis, providing in depth insight into changes in leadership style.

The qualitative approach allowed us to explore the complex dynamics of e-leadership in detail, although there were limitations such as the difficulty of generalising the results and the dependence on subjective interpretations. We strictly followed ethical considerations to ensure confidentiality and integrity in the research. The limitations that emerged suggest the need for further studies to investigate the evolution of digital leadership and different organisational contexts.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter we analyse the results and implications of interviews conducted with leaders from different sectors. This aims to explore how leaders are addressing the challenges of remote working and how they are adapting from traditional leadership practices to those of e-leadership (Franco, 2020).

Thus, it intends to explore how leaders are adapting their practices to meet the demands of a remote and digitised work environment, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the transition to e-leadership.

## 4.2 Description of candidates

In this research, 13 leaders from different industries were interviewed to understand how they deal with the unique challenges associated with their roles. Three Sales Managers were interviewed, active in competitive industries such as technology, retail and financial services, all of whom balance increasing sales with building lasting relationships with customers. Another four are Human Resource Managers, from sectors such as technology, business consulting, manufacturing and transport services, these must manage the well-being of employees and promote an inclusive working environment. Then four Managers in Marketing were interviewed, working in e-commerce, consumer goods, digital publishing and telecommunications, they develop creative strategies to engage consumers. Finally, two General Managers in Logistics and Hospitality ensure efficient operations and adapt to market dynamics.

## 4.3 Analysis of Findings

Research conducted through interviews with several e-leadership leaders revealed a significant transformation in leadership practices, especially in relation to remote working. With these interviews, themes that are of fundamental importance in this change in e-leadership were emphasised (Appendix-2).

Ten of the thirteen leaders interviewed emphasised the importance of effective communication in the context of remote work. The importance of clear and consistent communication emerged as a central theme, in line with Bader, et al (2022), where situational leadership theory emphasises the adaptation of leadership style to the specific context. In the context of remote work, leaders recognised the need to adapt their communication to ensure that all group members were aligned on goals and expectations, overcoming the challenges

imposed by the lack of face-to-face interactions. Standardisation of tools and practices was essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure effective interactions, an aspect that emphasises the leader's role in removing obstacles and providing the support needed to achieve goals (Franco, 2020).

Another concept that emerged from seven leaders interviewed was the shift towards results-based evaluation. In line with situational leadership, this shift was the adoption of a results-based approach to evaluation (Waritay, 2021). In response to the demands of a remote work environment, many leaders have shifted their focus from quantity of time spent to quality and productivity of work. This approach reflects the need to adapt leadership styles to maintain high motivation and ensure the achievement of goals (Gerald, et al., 2019).

Trust building emerged as a fundamental pillar of digital leadership, cited by eight leaders as a crucial element. According to Mohit et al.(2023), leaders adapted their strategies to maintain team cohesion in a remote work environment where daily interactions are limited.

This approach allowed leaders to delegate more autonomy and responsibility, this is in line with Neeta (2023) where the trust built facilitated independent decision-making by team members, enabling them to operate with more independence and creativity.

The psychological health of team members was another area of focus, mentioned by eight respondents. Leaders recognised the importance of adapting their leadership style to support the psychological well-being of the team by incorporating practices that promote mental health. This is in line with Fernando, et al. (2020) where path-goal theory emphasises that leaders need to identify and reduce obstacles to well-being and productivity by providing the support needed to ensure a healthy and motivating work environment.

The adoption of a coaching style adapted to the needs of the team was discussed by four leaders. In a remote working context, coaching has become a crucial tool to improve

performance, in line with Suharyati, et al.(2024) leaders have modified their approach to address specific challenges and support team members in achieving their goals. This represents an evolution of the traditional concept of coaching, adapted to the challenges of digitisation (Franco, 2020).

Recognition and celebration of successes, mentioned by five leaders, maintained a central role in team motivation. This factor is in line with Fernando, et al. (2020) where it emphasises that leaders must adopt their own style to keep motivation high, where the leader uses recognition to reinforce desired behaviour and motivate the team to continue pursuing goals.

Managing and motivating a remote team, discussed by six leaders, was a significant challenge requiring continuous adaptation. The leaders had to develop new strategies to maintain team morale and productivity by implementing regular meetings and timely feedback, this is in line with Benitez, et al.(2022) where it highlights that the remote leader must have excellent adaptive skills to be able to remove obstacles and provide the necessary support to enable the team to achieve goals.

Problem-solving highlighted by six leaders emerged as a key competence in the digital context. Thus, in line with Kushagra & Gunjan(2021) suggests that leaders need to adapt their approach according to the complexity of the challenges faced and emphasises the importance of providing clear direction and support to address these challenges. To meet the challenges of remote working, leaders have adopted new problem-solving methods, such as brainstorming and root cause analysis, improving the team's ability to overcome obstacles.

The adoption of digital tools was a recurring theme, mentioned by five leaders, reflecting the importance of technological leadership and digital competence as emerging dimensions in modern leadership. Here, situational leadership theory manifests itself in the need to adapt

technological tools to the specific needs of the team. At the same time, path-goal theory is applied in the use of these tools to remove barriers to goal achievement and facilitate effective communication and optimised project management (Benitez, et al., 2022).

Encouraging autonomy was recognised as a key element for team success, cited by five leaders. In line with Acharya, et al.(2022), it highlights the importance of adapting leadership style to promote autonomy when team members are ready for it. This view, however, suggests that autonomy can only be promoted when leaders provide the necessary resources and support to enable team members to manage their own projects and make independent decisions, increasing accountability, creativity and motivation within the team (Waritay, 2021). Therefore, the leader in the digital context must ensure that each team member has everything they need to follow their work.

The last topic is that of continuous feedback, discussed by five leaders. In line with (Benitez, et al., 2022), the use of digital tools to provide real-time feedback represents an innovation compared to traditional practices, demonstrating an adaptation of leadership to the needs of an increasingly dynamic and digitised work environment in modern times.

## 4.4 Discussion

In this chapter, a critical analysis of the results obtained will be made, comparing them with the objectives set at the beginning of this study.

### **1. Examine the key factors and challenges associated with remote working in UK organisations:**

Remote working has introduced several challenges and key factors that organisations need to address, especially about communication and team motivation. Traditional leadership theories, such as path-goal theory and situational leadership, remain relevant but need to be

adapted to the digital environment (Al-A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023). For example, clear and consistent communication, fundamental in traditional leadership, becomes even more critical in remote contexts, where the lack of face-to-face interactions can hinder understanding and engagement (Guah, 2021). The main challenges therefore relate to adapting leadership styles, managing digital communication, and maintaining team motivation and morale despite physical distance.

## **2. Exploring the evolution of leadership in response to the dynamics of remote working:**

The research demonstrated a significant evolution in leadership in response to the dynamics of remote working. Seven leaders adopted an evaluation approach based on results rather than the amount of time spent. According to Northouse (2022) change reflects a response to the demands of remote working, where productivity and quality of work have become priorities over mere physical presence. In addition, eight leaders highlighted the importance of building trust and psychological support in maintaining high team motivation. These elements represent a crucial shift from traditional leadership, which often focused on more rigid forms of control and direct supervision. The transition to leadership that values trust and results-based evaluation shows how traditional leadership styles are adapting to the new demands of remote work (Öngel, et al., 2024).

## **3. Exploring the challenges faced by leaders in adapting to e-Leadership practices and remote team dynamics:**

Challenges in adapting to e-leadership practices and managing remote teams were highlighted in various aspects. Leaders reported significant difficulties in managing and motivating remote teams, as well as in problem-solving and adopting new digital tools (Al-

A'ali & Masmoudi, 2023). Strategies adopted to address these challenges include the implementation of regular meetings, timely feedback and an adaptation of coaching techniques. These changes highlight how leaders have had to develop new skills and approaches to maintain team cohesion and productivity in a digital context (Acharya, et al., 2022). Our research shows that e-leadership practices require continuous adaptation and implementation of innovative strategies to overcome emerging challenges.

#### **4. Identifying challenges and opportunities for digital leadership:**

Digital leadership presents both unique challenges and opportunities. Among the main challenges are the continuous adaptation of leadership strategies to integrate established practices with the needs of the digital environment, such as the use of continuous and dynamic feedback made possible by digital tools. However, there are also significant opportunities, such as the possibility of promoting employee autonomy, improving the psychological health of the team and focusing leadership on results rather than processes (Bethlem, et al., 2023). These new approaches offer potential to improve the overall effectiveness of leadership and to respond more efficiently to the challenges of the digital age.

### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter provided an in-depth overview of the dynamics of remote working and the transition from traditional leadership to e-leadership, highlighting the main findings from interviews with leaders. The findings revealed that clear and consistent communication, results-based evaluation and trust building have become key elements in managing remote teams. The research showed how leaders are adapting their practices to meet the challenges of remote working, such as the need to maintain high motivation and effectiveness through

new tools and approaches. Difficulties in adopting digital technologies and managing remote relationships were addressed through innovative strategies, such as implementing continuous feedback and promoting the autonomy of team members. Thus, this chapter demonstrates how leadership is evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly digitised work environment, offering significant insights into how traditional theories are adapting to the new realities of e-leadership and how leaders have changed their style for a new version of e-leadership.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Remote working has profoundly transformed the organisational landscape in recent years, imposing a new form of leadership that goes beyond traditional management practices. This chapter aims to synthesise the main findings from our research on the evolution from traditional leadership to e-leadership in UK organisations and will examine the dynamics that characterise this transition and offer strategic recommendations to guide organisations towards an effective implementation of e-leadership. We will also explore opportunities for further research in this area, with the aim of deepening our understanding of the challenges and opportunities of remote working.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

In recent years, the adoption of remote working has radically changed the working landscape, requiring leaders to develop 'e-leadership' skills. This implies leading teams through digital

tools while maintaining cohesion and productivity. Traditional leadership theories, such as situational and path-objective, remain valid but need to be adapted to the digital context. Clear communication is essential to avoid misunderstandings and keep team members aligned on goals (Bethlem, et al., 2023). The shift from time-based to outcome-oriented evaluation has promoted greater autonomy and reduced microlesion. Trust between members and psychological well-being have become priorities, with specific initiatives to support mental health. The coaching style has become more personalised and flexible, and recognition of successes at a distance is crucial to maintain high morale and a sense of belonging. E-leadership is thus distinguished by a focus on productivity, mental well-being, autonomy, and a culture of continuous feedback, responding better to the needs of digital work than traditional theories (Bach & Sulíková, 2021).

### 5.3 Recommendations

Organisations that are adopting remote working must prepare for the challenges of the transition from traditional leadership to e-leadership. To facilitate this transformation, it is essential that companies invest in the continuous training of their leaders to acquire advanced digital skills and knowledge of best practices for remote management.

It is also important to provide specific certifications that ensure adequate preparation in virtual management. In addition, companies should explore and integrate new emerging technologies that can facilitate collaboration and remote management, such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Being proactive in updating technologies and adapting them to the needs of remote working is crucial (Mohit, et al., 2023).

Another crucial aspect is the adoption of effective communication tools. Companies should choose tools that are easy to use and can be customised to the needs of teams. Furthermore, it

is crucial to offer training on how to use these tools efficiently to avoid communication overload and improve productivity (Benitez, et al., 2022).

Therefore, leadership strategies must be adapted to remote working, including customised approaches to manage remote performance and build team cohesion. It is necessary to invest in the development of leaders' soft skills, such as empathy and the ability to create virtual relationships (Acharya, et al., 2022).

## 5.4 Future research

In the expanding world of remote working, the transition from traditional leadership to e-leadership is opening new avenues of research. Technology plays a crucial role, and understanding how tools such as video conferencing and project management software affect the effectiveness of remote leadership and team management is crucial. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the new digital skills that leaders need to acquire to successfully lead their remote teams (Guah, 2021).

Another point of interest is how remote working changes organisational culture. Companies need to discover how to maintain and manage their corporate culture remotely and address the challenges of inclusiveness and fairness, especially in increasingly diverse work environments (Benitez, et al., 2022).

Employee well-being is a central issue, according to Bethlem, et al.(2023) it is important to observe how leaders manage the mental health and physical well-being of remote workers and what strategies they adopt to prevent burnout and promote a work-life balance, thereby influencing satisfaction and productivity.

Remote performance evaluation is another crucial topic. It is about understanding how leaders monitor and evaluate the performance of employees working remotely and which

practices can optimise the overall productivity of teams. The training of leaders is equally significant. Analysing how organisations prepare their leaders to manage remote teams and how traditional leadership models can be adapted is essential. This includes the study of specific training programmes for e-leadership and the evolution of the necessary skills (Benitez, et al., 2022).

Virtual communication offers further research insights. Exploring the challenges and opportunities of remote communication helps to understand how leaders optimise communication processes and resolve conflicts in virtual environments, improving collaboration between team members.

Ultimately, an international comparison of e-leadership practices can reveal successful models and areas for improvement. Analysing how remote leadership practices in the UK compare with those in other countries can offer valuable insights into how to address the challenges of remote working more effectively. These topics offer a vast field of opportunities to explore the transition to digital leadership and its impact on remote working, providing important insights for future research in the field (Suharyati, et al., 2024).

## 5.5 Summary

In this chapter, we analysed the transition from traditional leadership to e-leadership in the context of remote work in the UK. We saw that, although classical leadership theories remain relevant, there is a need to adapt them to digital work, with a focus on clear communication and results-based evaluation. Furthermore, research has shown that e-leadership requires specific skills to manage remote teams, emphasising trust, psychological well-being and a culture of continuous feedback.

Key recommendations include the continuous training of leaders, the adoption of new technologies and effective communication tools, and the importance of personalised coaching. For the future, it is suggested to investigate how emerging technologies influence leadership, remote organisational culture management, employee well-being and performance appraisal practices. An international comparison of e-leadership practices could offer further insights into the challenges of remote working

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 - Interview Research Questions

### Interview Research Questions

#### **What are the dynamics that are emerging in organisations for remote working**

1. How has the transition to remote working influenced your leadership strategy and the way you manage your team?
2. How have you adapted your leadership style to meet the specific challenges of remote working?
3. Describe any leadership initiatives or practices you have implemented to deal with the remote work context?
4. How have the skills required of leaders changed with the transition from traditional to remote work?

#### **What are the main challenges faced by leaders in adapting their styles to e-Leadership practices and effectively managing remote teams.**

5. What challenges did you face in the transition to e-leadership and how did you overcome them?
6. Could you give practical examples of how you faced the transition from leadership to e-leadership?
7. What changes did you have to make in your leadership style to effectively manage a remote team compared to a team in presence?
8. As an e-leader, what strategies did you implement to manage and maintain team engagement?

#### **What are the key factors that facilitate the transition from leadership to e-Leadership in remote work environments.**

9. What are the main challenges you encountered in the transition from traditional leadership to e-Leadership and how did you deal with them?
10. What skills and qualities do you consider essential for a leader to adapt to e-Leadership in a remote work context?
11. What strategies does a leader, in the context of e-leadership, need to employ to guide and supervise his/her team in managing remote work activities?
12. What types of training or support are most helpful in adapting to e-Leadership roles?

#### **How do leaders respond to this new remote situation.**

13. How do you evaluate the success and effectiveness of your e-leadership?
14. How has the shift to remote working influenced your vision and practice of leadership?
15. Which skills or qualities, as an e-leader, have you found most crucial to maintain your team's effectiveness and cohesion in the remote working context?
16. What new metrics of success have you identified for e-leadership?

## Appendix 2 – framework Themes

| THEMES                             | INFORMANT             | QUOTATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clear and Consistent Communication | 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"The shift to working remotely has required an increased focus on clear and consistent communication to ensure that everyone is aligned despite the physical distance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Improved communication skills, particularly in writing and virtual environments."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ensuring clear communication was difficult in the digital environment, so we standardised our communication tools and practices."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to clearly express ideas and expectations through digital means for effective communication. "</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |
| Results-Based Evaluation           | 1,2,3,5,6,8,9         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"We have moved towards evaluations based more on results rather than time, focusing on productivity and results."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I focus more often on recognising and celebrating results to lift morale."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Managing productivity without micromanagement: we moved to outcome-based evaluations."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Performance indicators: implementation of clear indicators to assess productivity and performance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Quality of work: assessing the quality and accuracy of the team's output."</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |
| Building Trust                     | 2,3,4,5,6,8,11,12     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I have started initiatives to build a working environment based on mutual trust."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Increased focus on building and maintaining trust at a distance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Maintaining trust and team cohesion without face-to-face interactions."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I had to change my approach to building trust as I no longer have daily face-to-face contact with my team."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Using trust as a basis to allow more autonomy and responsibility to team members."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to build and maintain trust in the context of remote work."</i></li> <li>• <i>- "Maintain trust and integrity even in a virtual context."</i></li> </ul> |

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|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological Health                        | 2,3,4,5,6,9,10,12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I have implemented initiatives to support the mental health and well-being of the team."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to recognise and support the psychological wellbeing of team members."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges in a remote context."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Modified my style to include practices that promote mental health and wellbeing."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Develop strategies that integrate support for mental health and wellbeing."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Skilled in managing the psychological wellbeing and mental health of the remote team."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Assess success also based on the team's psychological wellbeing and mental health."</i></li> </ul> |
| Coaching style                              | 2,3,4,5           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I developed and applied a specific coaching style to improve team performance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to adapt coaching style to individual and team needs."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Dealt with challenges in maintaining an effective coaching style in a remote context."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Modified my leadership style to include coaching elements that support the team."</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Recognition and celebration of achievements | 1,2,3,5,8,        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I have implemented practices to recognise and celebrate team successes."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to recognise and celebrate achievements even remotely."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Address challenges in maintaining motivation and recognition of achievements in remote work."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Adapt recognition and celebration of achievements practices for remote work."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Modify one's leadership style to include remote forms of recognition and celebration."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Integrate recognition and celebration practices into supervision and leadership processes."</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                     |

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|--------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Management and motivation from remote      | 2,3,4,5,11, 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I have implemented specific practices to manage and motivate the remote team, such as regular meetings and timely feedback."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ability to effectively manage and motivate remote team members is critical to successful e-leadership."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Addressing the difficulties associated with managing and motivating remote teams is one of the main challenges of the transition to e-leadership."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Adapting management and motivation techniques for the remote context is essential to maintain high team performance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Changing the leadership style to include remote management and motivation practices has improved my team's effectiveness."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Developing strategies to maintain motivation and manage the team remotely has been crucial to the success of our remote work."</i></li> </ul> |
| Problem solving in the digital environment | 2,3,4,6,11,12  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Problem-solving skills are essential for leaders, as they are often faced with complex challenges that require quick and effective solutions."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Tackling complex problems required the adoption of creative techniques and innovative solutions to ensure project success."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I implemented a new problem solving approach that includes brainstorming and root cause analysis to address difficulties more effectively."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Adapting my leadership style to include a greater emphasis on problem solving has improved our ability to overcome challenges."</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adopting digital tools | 2,3,4,9,13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"The adoption of digital tools such as Slack and Trello has greatly improved communication and project management within the team."</i></li> <li>• <i>"The integration of time and task management software has enabled greater efficiency and better resource planning."</i></li> <li>• <i>"We faced some initial challenges with the implementation of new digital tools, but the benefits in terms of productivity and collaboration have been significant."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Ongoing training on the new digital tools is essential to ensure that all team members can use them effectively."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Regularly updating the digital tools used has enabled us to remain competitive and take advantage of the latest features available."</i></li> </ul> |
|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|----------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Encouraging autonomy | 3,4,5,11,13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I encourage my team members to make decisions on their projects without having to seek constant approvals, which increases their sense of responsibility and autonomy."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I provide individuals with the tools and resources they need but encourage them to solve problems and take initiatives independently."</i></li> <li>• <i>"During project meetings, I let team members present their ideas and plans, giving them space to manage their own activities without excessive intervention."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I have noticed that when I give team members freedom to explore different solutions to problems, their motivation and creativity increase significantly."</i></li> <li>• <i>"We do workshops to develop problem solving and decision-making skills so that team members can work more autonomously and confidently."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I encourage autonomy by offering feedback rather than detailed directives, which helps team members make decisions and solve problems independently."</i></li> </ul> |
| Continuous feedback  | 4,6,5,11,12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"We implement weekly feedback sessions where each team member receives feedback on how their projects are going and how they can improve."</i></li> <li>• <i>"I encourage a culture of continuous feedback by asking team members to give and receive feedback on an ongoing basis to hone their skills and solve problems in real time."</i></li> <li>• <i>"We use digital tools to monitor and provide feedback on project progress in real time, which allows team members to adapt quickly and improve their performance."</i></li> <li>• <i>"During the project review process, I provide detailed and constant feedback that helps team members identify areas for improvement and implement immediate changes."</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |