[introduction]

Remote Managament and the Effects on Employees' Mental Health

Within this report, the effectiveness of remote management will be analyzed by looking at both its advantages and disadvantages, as well as exploring how managers can best support their teams within the remote working environment. The key area of focus will be on the potential implications remote work has on the mental health of employees, and how these can be addressed through effective management strategies.

Remote management is the process of guiding and overseeing employees who work outside of a traditional office environment (Funk 2021). This is often from home or other remote locations, perhaps even abroad (Andersen Lab, 2020). Given the global advances in technology and the rise of telecommuting, the shift towards more flexible work arrangements has made it necessary for remote management to become a key aspect of modern leadership and organizational practices (Kluch, 2020).

It has become particularly pertinent in recent years, as the COVID-19 pandemic made it more and more important for businesses and workers to be able to work in this manner, allowing for social distancing, and requiring that working procedures be modified to put employee safety first (Kluch, 2020).

However, post Covid, remote work continues to be implemented (Florisson et al., 2021). This is due to employees generally having expressed a desire to be able to continue working in this way (Ipsos, 2021). Not only this, but companies reap several benefits; for example, employers/businesses may be able to significantly cut overhead costs, as remote workers do not require the rental of office spaces (Funk, 2021).

Throughout, this report will examine several key themes and concepts of managing remote workers. Mental health in remote work will make up the main focus of this report, considering how the mental wellbeing of employees may be affected by this style of work - whether this be a positive or negative impact.
As mental health is becoming an ever-growing issue that employers need to address (Ipsos, 2019), Köhler (2021) suggests that remote working can be extremely beneficial for employees who struggle i. However, it is also important to recognise the ways in which this style of working can put a strain on an employee's well-being (Raj, 2020) and what management can do in order to properly and efficiently support their team (Andersen Lab, 2020).

[literature review]

There is a strong idea that working remotely can be beneficial for both managers and employees alike (Funk, 2021). However it can be a struggle for managers to adjust to this remote way of working, especially considering Kluch's (2020) suggestion: that employees will rely heavily on management for guidance. Kluch (2020) also suggests that 70% of an individual's engagement is driven by their manager, demonstrating the need for managers to be more prolific than usual concerning communication and engagement within their team. This also suggests that the working outcomes and how well a workforce engages with their work is largely down to how their employer and or manager works.
20% of respondents to Mahesh's (2024) study reported that communication and cooperation between employers and employees are the main barriers to their engagement with remote work. This suggests that managers need to make facilitating communication between staff a particular priority.
According to Cune (et. al, 2012) a significant challenge for the remote manager is dealing with a general sense of distrust amongst colleagues. The office environment means that an employee's progress on a task, etc, can be managed much more closely than when the whole team is working remotely (Fisher, 2019).

Fisher (2019) suggests that this means that good communication is even more important as management may be asking for updates more little and often. However, Raj (2020) suggests that to an employee, this may constitute an unwelcome change in behaviour compared to before the introduction of remote working. Fisher (2019) also suggests that i may be advantageous for management for set shorter-term goals in order to continue monitoring progress remotely. Therefore, it is extremely beneficial for the entire team to be on the same page in terms of communication and updates that are now required (The Andersen Lab, 2020). As a manager, it is crucial that tools such as video calls and work group chats are utilized, as well as one on one communication with all employees where possible (Bhat et al. 2023).

A notable advantage of remote work is its potential benefit to both employees and employers, as it may enhance employee motivation and work performance (Kluch, 2020). Fisher (2019) argues that the increased comfort of working from home can be a significant contributing factor to this effect. Additionally, the elimination of daily commuting may further improve productivity, as reduced travel-related stress allows employees to focus more effectively on their tasks and responsibilities (Fisher 2019).

However, research from Ipsos (2021) shows that 49% of Gen Z and 55% of millennials who work at least partially remotely feel that they are under additional pressure to perform at their best when working from home. Bhat (et al. 2023) suggests that during the Covid-19 pandemic, employees were faced with an increased workload due to demand from employers and the constant pressure and anxiety they faced from the unique circumstance of having to work through a global pandemic (Kluch, 2020).
Al-Habaibeh et al. (2021) suggest that this could perhaps be due to limited or less frequent communication between management and employees, which is likely to have a negative effect on the mental health of staff (Raj, 2020).

On the other hand, Raj (2020) also suggests that employees seem to prefer working remotely as they have, in general, more freedom within their working hours. Conversely, as Florisson et al. (2021) suggests, without having a daily commute to and from work, employees may feel there is no longer a division between work and home; their home has effectively also become their workplace making it harder to mentally disengage from work (The Andersen Lab, 2020). This may become more of a struggle when employees are working in different time zones and will not all clock off for the day at the same time (Mahesh, 2024).

It is vital that managers are aware of these impacts of remote work on their employees and that they implement initiatives in order to support and guide their team where necessary (Singh, 2024)
As Mahesh (2024) and (Fisher, 2019) have suggested, the main focus of a remote manager should be on the communication between employers and employees alike. Appropriate technology and technological support (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022) is also crucial for employees to engage in proper communication and be able to carry out work as if they were in office. Without these tools, communication and engagement within the team will often fail and staff are likely to fall behind on targets (Singh, 2023).

According to research from Ipsos (2021), roughly just over half (59%) (average percentage of two different age groups) of the working population wish to have the opportunity to carry out remote work at least three days a week.
This notion aligns with the increasingly prevalent concept of a three- or four-day workweek, which is gradually gaining traction. As Ashford (2015) asserts, "the most productive and wealthy countries are ones that work less." Furthermore, when coupled with the idea that remote workers tend to engage in more creative tasks and capitalize on their strengths (Kluch, 2020), this could have significant implications for the future of workforce management and collaboration, and supports additional research from Ipsos (2021) which suggests that employees value time working in office in order to spend quality face to face time with colleagues.

[data review]

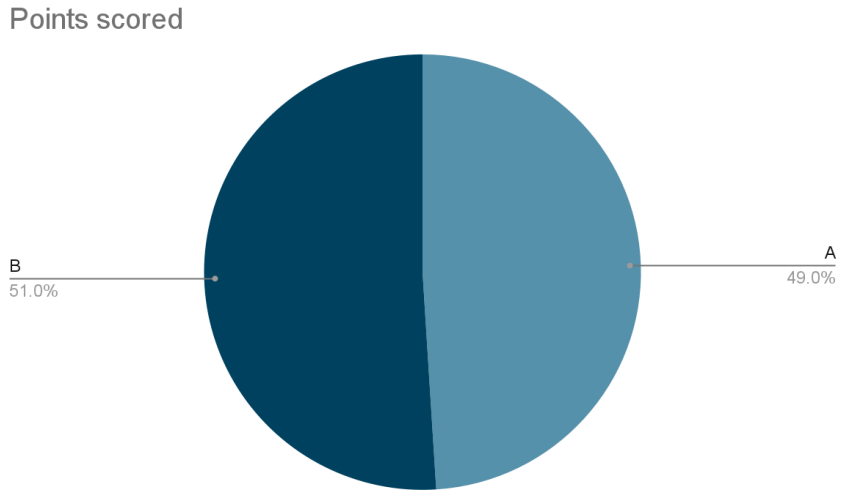
This report uses secondary quantitative and qualitative data, which has been collected from various academic sources. As remote working and management is a relatively new idea which only really blossomed at the beginning of Covid 19 in 2020, it was substantially easier to collect secondary data rather than to conduct research for primary data.

Employees may experience negative feelings of isolation and loneliness within remote work; in fact, 58% of Gen Z and 49% of Millennials feel the need to spend time face to face with colleagues in order to effectively carry out their work. While 6 in 10 employees say remote working has improved their ability to balance their work life and personal time, this shows that personal interaction and quality time are additionally important for an individual's engagement with their work (Ipsos, 2021).

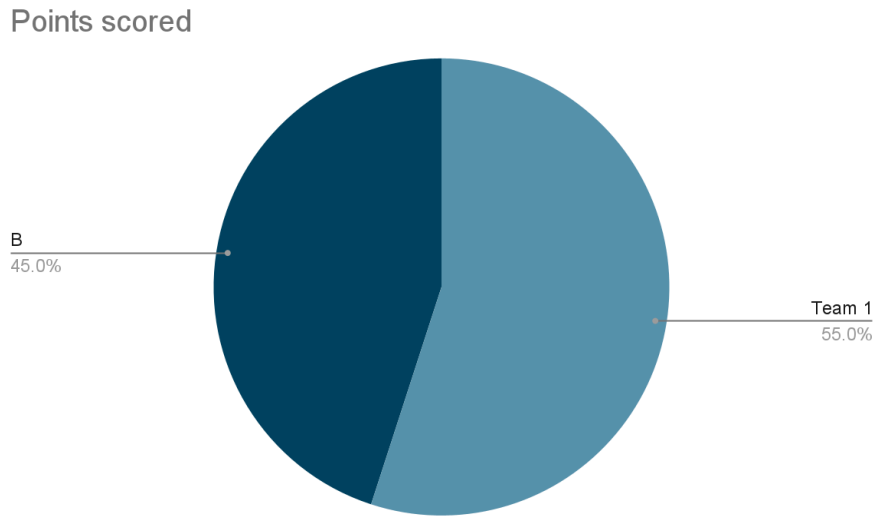
According to Schauer et al. (2014), 90% of staff with the opportunity to carry out their work remotely are happier than those without this option. Additionally, Mahesh (2024) suggests that remote work enables 32% of employees to have more flexibility within their working schedules. Schauer's findings as to an increase in work satisfaction may be linked to Mahesh's suggestion as to schedule freedom

The data throughout suggests that the key ideas are true for roughly half of the population. The below pie chart shows the percentages of Gen Z employees who believe that they are under additional pressure on their performance when working remotely, based on data from Ipsos (2021).

Group A feel they are affected by this and Group B do not.

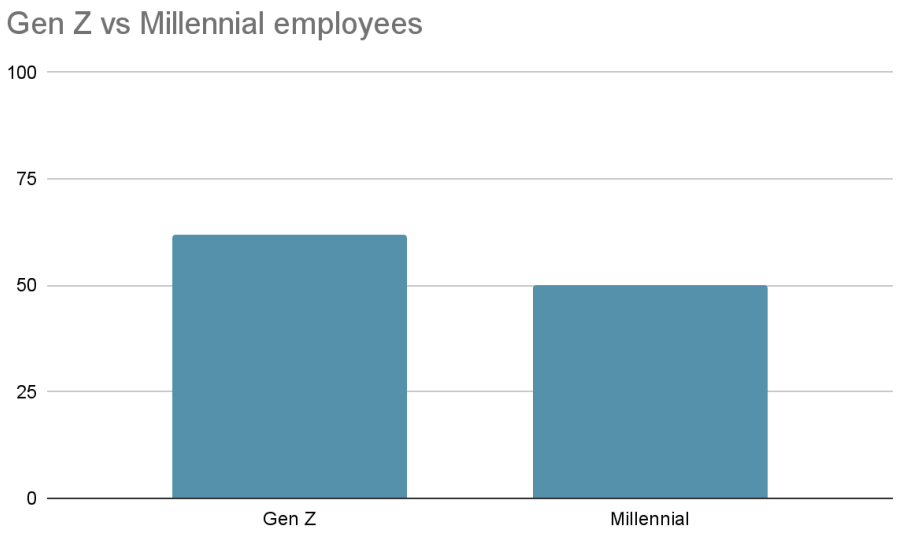


This pie chart shows the same but for Millennial employees. Group A feels they are affected by this and Group B do not. This chart suggests that Millennials feel under more pressure when working remotely than their Gen Z counterparts.

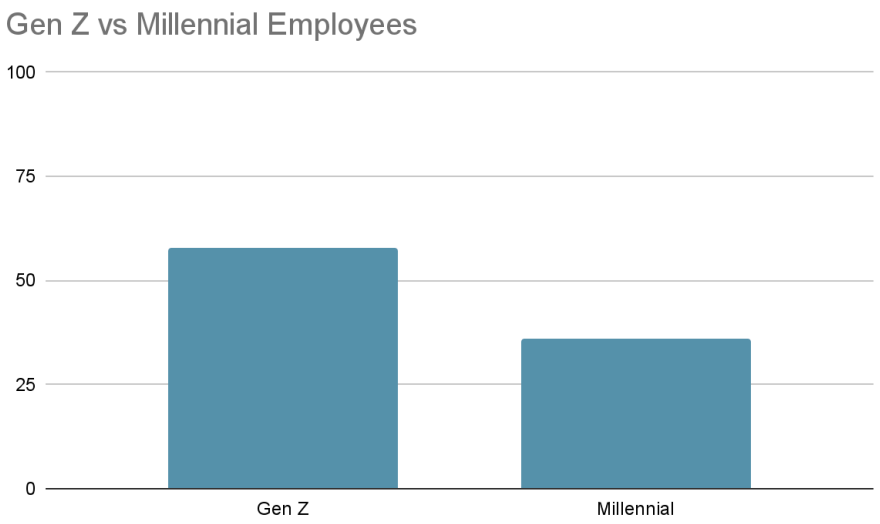


Therefore on average, or the weighted average of percentages (the mean) percentage of employees who feel that they are affected by this is 52%.

The below chart shows the percentages of employees from different age groups who wish to work from home at least three days of the week (Ipsos, 2021).



Six in ten or 58% of Gen Z workers and around half or 49% of Millennial workers feel the need to spend time face to face with their co-workers in order to effectively carry out their work, as shown in the chart below.



[reflection]

In my opinion, the research I have found shows that blended remote working is the best approach for workers; utilizing a mix of in person work with home working supports employees in managing their work-life balance. The data collected shows that at least half, if not the majority of the population prefer a balanced way of working as they find it important to spend quality time with their workplace peers.

On-site work appears to be more effective for management, as many managers are more accustomed to traditional in-person interactions and may encounter challenges when transitioning to a remote management style. Additionally, enhancing communication skills and adapting management approaches may be necessary to ensure effective leadership in remote work environments.

Based on the aforementioned research findings, if I were in a remote management position, I would place a high priority on setting clear guidelines for how each employee should organise their workdays such that work and leisure time are clearly separated. In order to sustain individual involvement and track success, I would also institute frequent video conferences for team-wide updates and one-on-one sessions. In order to support continuous performance evaluation and guarantee sustained productivity in a remote work environment, I would also establish short-term, quantifiable goals for staff members.

I conducted extensive research to gain a deeper understanding of the subject of remote management. I had to gather sources and information on a complex topic as part of my research assignment. I started by reviewing scholarly papers and journals, then I categorised my findings. I also worked with classmates to share resources and talk about our research progress.

The challenge of locating reliable literature and study on this subject made me feel a little overwhelmed before I even began the assigment. But as I began to plan out and organised my research, I became more assured of my capacity to handle the workload. Peer support and assistance were really helpful to me when I was preparing and writing my report.

At first, I had trouble locating trustworthy sources, which made the research take longer than I had anticipated. However, I found it easier to create arguments for and against these opposing views because there are a lot of different points of view on this topic.

The intricacy of the subject and the range of viewpoints found in the literature may have contributed to my difficulty in organising the data. Additionally, I became aware that I had not given myself enough time to evaluate each source seriously before attempting to incorporate it into my writing. When I think back on my research techniques, I can see that a more structured approach to reading and note-taking would have made the process smoother.

This task taught me the value of time management and a methodical approach to research. The writing process would have been lot easier for me if I had dedicated more time to reading up on the subject and formulating my case before gathering references. Additionally, I found that collaborating with others offers insightful viewpoints and assistance, particularly when it comes to activities like these that are unfamiliar to me.

For future assignments, I will develop a more detailed research plan with goals for each stage of the process. I will allocate time for gathering information and analysing sources before attempting to integrate them into my work. I'll also continue to collaborate with classmates and solicit feedback from my professors to ensure that I stay on track.

[academic and research skills]

Throughout this report, good communication skills are demonstrated through the use of well-structured academic writing which is backed up by credible sources, creating persuasive, fact-based arguments.

Interpersonal skills were also used within this assignment, by way of actively seeking out advice from peers and tutors. Within these conversations, active listening was employed in order to gain the full benefit of hearing insights from others, to then apply these to my own writing and research.

Organisational skills are shown within the report, as careful planning was required in order to complete the assignment. Research was undertaken first, before an outline was created as a structure for the assignment.

Critical reading and thinking skills are evident throughout, by way of well-structured arguments and the use of credible sources. Additionally, a variety of opposing ideas and viewpoints are evident throughout, both in favour of and against.

Each source used within this report has been carefully assessed both for relevance to the topic and its credibility. This shows have research skills have been employed within this report, making sure that only reliable, academic sources have been used to support the arguments and analysis made.

[conclusion]

The literature review of this report shows the key findings to be that effective and attentive communication (Cune et al. 2020), alongside clear boundaries between the work and personal lives of employees (Raj, 2020) is paramount in ensuring not only the satisfaction of staff members but additionally their engagement within their work. (Fisher, 2019).

Although the percentage of employees who prefer remote work over in-office work is nearly equal, this data shows that there is still a clear trend of employees expressing a preference for remote work, at least part-time. This could indicate that even though many employees might find remote work's flexibility intriguing, they are not interested in making the whole switch. It is crucial to emphasise that the fact that just a portion of employees choose remote work suggests that they probably place a high value on the structure and interpersonal relationships that come with working in an office environment (Ipsos, 2021).

On the other hand, another study from Ipsos (2021) suggests that employees often feel under additional pressure to perform when working from home. This is a strong indicator that

remote work does in fact blur the boundaries between an individual's professional and personal life (Raj, 2020).

This research makes it evident that the establishment of boundaries (Fisher, 2019) and clear communication is crucial to ensure that remote working can remain both effective and sustainble. One example of this could be that managers must clearly outline working hours and communication expectations (Andersen Lab, 2020).

Since this is still a relatively new way of working, there are definitely a lot of gaps in the research of the subject. It will certainly be interesting to see future developments on this subject; especially how remote work may impact career progression and if totally remote or hybrid work arrangements are sustainable in the long run, particularly with regard to engagement and motivation, the mental health of remote employees.

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