Individual psychological factors and strategies for successful working from home

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Individual Psychological Factors and Strategies for Successful Working from Home

Jemma Pomfrey

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Supervised by

Dr Rachel Lewis and Dr Joanna Yarker

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Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to a range of colleagues, peers, friends and sources of support without whom my doctoral journey would simply not have been possible.

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Abstract

This thesis examines individual psychological factors and strategies that enable employees to successfully work from home (WFH). It offers two studies that advance the understanding of this area.

The first study, a systematic literature review (SLR), followed best practice SLR methodology to explore individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH, with an additional focus on how 'successful' WFH is defined in the literature. Definitions of successful WFH ranged from performance to wellbeing outcomes of WFH. Similarly, a wide variety of individual psychological factors were explored across studies within the SLR. Whilst there appeared to be promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH outcomes, none of the thirteen studies identified in the SLR focused specifically on early careers employees. The SLR additionally showed that the literature was dominated by quantitative methodologies, largely missing out the rich, subjective experience of WFH, and there was limited consideration of theory.

To address the limitations identified in the SLR, the second study used a qualitative design to examine individual psychological factors and strategies that enable early careers employees to successfully WFH, within the context of Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting theories. It offers Person-Environment Fit as a useful definition of successful WFH. Results indicated a range of individual psychological factors or strategies that early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use.

Taken together, the results of the first and second study respond to calls for an increased focus on the role of the individual in successful WFH, demonstrating promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH. Implications for theory, research and practice are discussed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review (Paper)

Abstract

Introduction

Method

Results

Discussion

Appendices...283

List of Tables

List of Figures

Professional Practice Statement

As a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, I am exempt from the first part (Professional Practice Portfolio) of the Professional Doctorate. This thesis therefore satisfies the requirements for Part 2 of the doctorate (Research Thesis) and is the result of two years of part time study. I provide a summary of my professional practice as context to this thesis.

Several years ago, I graduated from my psychology degree at Bournemouth University, achieving the highest grade in my cohort as recognised by the British Psychological Society Undergraduate award. Following that, I completed my Master's in Occupational Psychology with distinction at the University of Hertfordshire, honoured to achieve the highest grade in my cohort as recognised by the University of Hertfordshire Psychology Prize. I balanced studying with an internship at a Leadership Development Consultancy, as I quickly recognised the key link between academic knowledge and practice. Since then, I have developed my career as a Consultant, and have recently been made a Senior Consultant. I am proud to have worked (and continue to work) for Arup, a professional services firm advising on aspects of the built environment. My specific role involves advising on people-related matters, acknowledging that people-environment interactions are fundamental to understanding behaviour. I am part of a supportive, diverse, and innovative team, including other Occupational Psychologists and experts. This has provided and continues to provide a range of opportunities for me to pursue my passions and develop myself as a practitioner. For example, I have both given and received mentoring, there is a strong community of practice focused on sharing the latest research, and technical excellence is a core part of our culture. I have worked in partnership with a variety of clients, ranging from training design and change management with an organisation delivering a new railway, to collaboration, team effectiveness, employee engagement and wellbeing interventions with a telecommunications programme. My skills have also been useful and developed further from an internal perspective, for example in terms of advising on best practice selection and assessment techniques, which are now embedded in my team's recruitment process. As such, I have broad experience across multiple areas of professional practice within the field of Occupational Psychology.

As well as broad experience, I have also developed my skills across the entire consultancy cycle, from gathering, analysing, and validating information, through to applying information by translating research findings into real life applications for my clients whilst taking into account the role of context and organisational culture. I am committed to evaluation of my work, in the interests of continuous improvement and recognising the contributions of psychological input. Regardless of the area of professional practice or part of the consultancy cycle that I have been working in at any given time, evidence-based practice remains central to my approach. It is this dedication to evidence-based practice that partly contributed to my decision to apply for the Professional Doctorate. The Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated client interest in flexible working, and particularly working from home, however the research base appeared to be patchy and difficult to understand and interpret in a coherent manner. Therefore, I identified that there was an opportunity for me to add value by helping to bridge the gap between research and practice, by assimilating existing research in a systematic review and by progressing the field further in my own empirical study.

Partly as a result of my completion of the British Psychological Society Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology (Chartership) and subsequent registration with the Health and Care Professions Council, I hold myself to extremely high standards in ethical practice that I continue to apply in my day-to-day work. This includes not just ongoing awareness of the need to manage confidentiality, consent, and anonymity, but also a strong ability to proactively consider *potential* ethical issues and to mitigate against these accordingly. In order to maintain the highest standards in my professional practice, including consideration of ethical issues and evidence-based practice, reflective practice is a key part of my approach. Setting aside regular time to reflect on what has gone well, what could have gone better and what I will do next time (*throughout* any particular project I am working on, not just at the end), has supported my continuing professional development during my Chartership and beyond.

Another important part of my professional practice over the last few years has been my ongoing involvement in the Occupational Psychology community. For example, I have attended various events including the Association for Business

Psychology Conferences and the British Psychological Society Division of Occupational Psychology Conference. I have undertaken various extra-curricular activities such as my BPS Occupational Test User Qualification (formerly known as Level A and B). This has enabled me to network with other professionals and share ideas, experiences and reflections, ultimately contributing to the quality of my professional practice.

Publications arising from this Thesis

Completed Talks/Presentations:

"The Great Reflection: Post-Pandemic – Taking stock of the world's biggest work experiment" Conference by The Association for Business Psychology Conference, November 2022.

Affinity Health at Work Research Consortium, hosted by Birkbeck, University of London, December 2022.

Planned Journal Publications:

It is envisaged that both the systematic literature review and the empirical paper within this thesis will be submitted for consideration for publication.

Other:

A talk on the systematic literature review was submitted and accepted at the European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology Congress 2022, however the entire Congress was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thesis Structure

Five chapters form this thesis. Chapter One, the Introduction, provides the broad context to the thesis. It sets the scene for the issues and gaps in the literature that this thesis addresses. Chapter Two, the Methodology, provides justification for the ontological and epistemological perspectives underpinning this thesis, as well as justifying the approaches and methods used. This thesis is then comprised of two studies, a systematic literature review (SLR) and a qualitative empirical study, which are presented in Chapters Three and Four, respectively. Finally, Chapter 5, Conclusion, amalgamates the findings of the SLR and empirical study to cohesively explore implications for research, theory and practice.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Under the UK Flexible Working Regulations (2014), any individual who has been continuously employed by the same employer for a period of at least 26 weeks is entitled to request flexible working, including working from home (WFH).

WFH is not an entirely new concept. Historically, humans worked, crafted and produced goods at their home in roles such as weavers or spinners, however many of these roles subsequently became more controlled, structured and organised as they were transferred into factory settings (Newton, 1999, as cited in Clegg & van Iterson, 2013). As explained by Clegg and van Iterson (2013), factory settings helped bring employees together to enable greater efficiency and interconnectedness through fixed hours and the ability to see, hear and be physically present with each other. Since then, office jobs have become increasingly prevalent, with similar benefits to factory settings in terms of bringing employees together to communicate and collaborate.

However, it could be argued that society is circling back to a greater proportion of work being conducted in the home. Indeed, in 1981, just 1.5% of UK employees worked mainly from home, compared to 4.7% in 2019 (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020). This rise in uptake of WFH may be partly attributable to advances in information and communication technology, such as broadband internet and mobile devices that enable jobs to be conducted outside of a central work location (Green, Tappin & Bentley, 2020). Gálvez, Tirado and Alcaráz (2018) described telework (meaning work conducted outside a central office environment, such as WFH (Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2018) as having the potential to create the circumstances for far-reaching social changes, such as in terms of the distinction between work and home and the use of space in the household for work.

The gradual increase in WFH that was observed prior to 2020 was subsequently accelerated by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021), in which the UK government advised all employees to WFH if possible, to help limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The first UK lockdown commenced in March 2020. Felstead and Reuschke (2020) reported that by April 2020, 43.1% of UK employees were WFH. Furthermore, the report identified that 88.2% of employees who were WFH during lockdown wanted to continue WFH as opposed to returning to their central place of work, including 47.3% who wanted to continue WFH often or all the time. By 2022, The Office for National Statistics Business Insights and Conditions Survey reported that UK workers were attending an office on average 1.5 days per week, compared with 3.8 days pre-covid. This trend towards increased WFH was predicted even before the pandemic. For example, a report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Beatson, 2019) estimated that mobile working (of which WFH is one part) would reach 70% in 2020, and European experts for internet, communication and media predicted that 75% of employees would be part-time teleworkers from 2020 to 2024 (TNS Infratest, n.d., as cited in Müller & Niessen, 2019).

As a result of the shift towards WFH associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, many organisations re-considered their approach to WFH and revised their policies. In May 2020, the BBC reported social media giant Twitter's decision that they would support employees with being able to WFH 'forever' if employees are in a role and

circumstance that enables them to do so. Similarly, in 2021, media streaming organisation, Spotify, introduced its 'Work from Anywhere' approach, allowing employees to work in any location that they work best. This contrasts with a statement made seven years earlier by Yahoo: *'Speed and quality are often sacrificed when we work from home... Beginning in June, we're asking all employees with work-from-home arrangements to work in Yahoo! Offices'* (Swisher, 2013, as cited in Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015). It was forecasted that beyond the pandemic, WFH would become a permanent feature of working life for many (Abulibdeh, 2020). Furthermore, it is recognised that WFH is not just for individuals with childcare or family commitments (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013), but rather for any employee who may wish to avoid commuting, allow time to go to the gym, conduct household chores or leisure activities. Research into WFH is therefore an area of increasing relevance, interest, and importance. However, this increasing flexibility prompts the question: for whom does WFH work best?

It is acknowledged that not all jobs can be conducted from home. According to The Office for National Statistics in 2020, analysis of data obtained from the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) indicated that frontline workers are least likely to be able to WFH, especially in cases where their job involves physical activity, tools or equipment. The Office for National Statistics found that employees in higher-paying jobs and professional occupations such as economists and statisticians were most likely to be able to WFH, and the top 20% of jobs that were most likely to be able to be conducted from home were representative of the gender split in the overall workforce: 49% females. Data from two separate studies reported in a Forbes article by Travers (2020) estimated that approximately 40% of all jobs could plausibly be conducted from home. Indeed, there is research evidence that supports this idea that WFH can be conducted successfully, as will be discussed next.

1.2 Outcomes of Working from Home

Research suggests that there are a range of positive outcomes associated with WFH. Indeed, 'telecommuting' (a term used interchangeably with telework and of which WFH is one example) was recognised as early as the 1970s as an important

potential way of reducing commuting and traffic congestion in response to the oil crisis (Bailey & Kurland, 2002, as cited in Caillier, 2016). As well as positive outcomes at the societal level, at the organisational level WFH has been found to generate a 13% increase in performance (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying, 2015). WFH has additionally been associated with a range of positive outcomes at the individual level, including productivity, wellbeing, satisfaction, engagement and motivation, work-life balance and work-family conflict, and other positive outcomes, as explored in turn below.

1.2.1 Performance and Productivity

A study by Baruch (2000) found that employees reported enhanced self-perceived performance when WFH, largely attributed to reduced distractions. These findings were mirrored by Tietze and Nadin (2011), Conradie and de Klerk (2019), and supported in qualitative studies (e.g. Grant, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013) and comparative studies where employees showed enhanced performance on days when they teleworked compared with non-telework days (e.g. Delanoeije and Verbruggen, 2020). Although the extent to which effort translates into performance is debatable, research by Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) showed that WFH significantly and positively impacted work effort, and the more often employees WFH, the higher their levels of work effort.

Nijp, Beckers, van de Voorde, Geurts and Kompier's (2016) research found no link between performance and 'new ways of working' (including WFH), and van der Meer and Ringdal's (2009) research identified no relationship between productivity and WFH. However, van der Meer and Ringdal failed to capture the intensity of WFH, focusing instead on simply whether WFH was used or not. It could therefore be that any relationship between productivity and WFH was underestimated because participants in the study potentially engaged in little WFH. Nijp et al.'s (2016) findings would appear to agree with van der Meer and Ringdal's identification of no relationship between productivity and WFH, offering stronger evidence in the form of longitudinal data comparisons between an intervention group and a control group. However, Nijp et al. acknowledge that their intervention group and control group

differed across multiple other factors beyond WFH. This could possibly have masked any relationship between WFH and performance, especially given that there was substantial attrition in the control group over time. Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 32 correlations from empirical studies conducted by Martin and MacDonnell (2012) identified a small but positive link between telework and a range of organisational outcomes, including productivity, which would appear to challenge Nijp et al.'s (2016) and van der Meer and Ringdal's (2009) findings which would appear to indicate no relationship between WFH and performance or productivity.

1.2.2 Wellbeing

A study by Vander Elst, Verhoogen, Sercu, Van den Broeck, Baillien and Godderis (2017) found that although telecommuting was not directly related to wellbeing, it was indirectly related to wellbeing via social support. A study by Sardeshmukh, Sharma and Golden (2012) found that telework was negatively related to exhaustion. Although perceived interpretations of stress have been shown to vary (Kinman & Jones, 2005), a study by Delanoeije and Verbruggen (2020) identified that employees reported lower stress on days when they teleworked compared to non-telework days. A key strength of Delanoeije and Verbruggen's (2020) study is that it collected both between-person and within-person data. However, support for the relationship between telework and stress was only found with the within-person data and not the between-person data. This raises questions as to the strength of the relationship between wellbeing and WFH, because if the relationship were strong (as studies such as Sardeshmukh et al. (2012) would appear to suggest), it would be expected to emerge as a significant difference between Delanoeije and Verbruggen's intervention group who were WFH and their control group. Nevertheless, this lack of difference may partly be explained by Vander Elst et al.'s (2017) finding that the relationship between WFH and wellbeing may be an indirect one (via social support). This calls for greater attention on the mechanisms through which WFH may influence wellbeing, as it is possible that factors such as social support may explain seemingly contradictory findings. For example, in Delanoeije and Verbruggen's study, it is

possible that the intervention group WFH did not have enhanced wellbeing compared to the control group due to a lack of social support.

A systematic review by Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano and Michailidis (2019) concluded that there is some strong evidence for a positive association between remote work and wellbeing, specifically with regards to employees' positive emotions. For example, research by Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) indicated that when employees telework, they experience more job-related positive affective wellbeing and less job-related negative affective wellbeing. Research by Redman, Snape and Ashurst (2009) demonstrated a positive association between employee wellbeing and WFH, and evidence has indicated enhanced emotional and motivational outcomes on days that employees WFH compared with days that they work from the office (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016). WFH has also been linked to reduced depressive symptoms in women with young children (Shepherd-Banigan, Bell, Basu, Booth-LaForce & Harris, 2016).

Although the research above largely focuses on psychological wellbeing, WFH may also play an important role in physical wellbeing. A study by Lundberg and Lindfors (2002) found employees' blood pressure to be significantly lower when they were WFH compared to when they worked in the office. WFH has also been suggested as a potential return-to-work strategy for individuals with spinal cord injuries as it is argued that WFH alleviates job demands, fatigue and mobility limitations (Bricout, 2004).

1.2.3 Satisfaction, Engagement and Motivation

Although Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive and Heelan's (2010) research found similar levels of job satisfaction between office-based and home-based employees, a meta-analysis by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) reported findings that suggested a positive link between WFH and job satisfaction. Subsequent research would appear to support this, for example, home-based telecommuting seemingly improved quality of life (Hornung & Glaser, 2009), as well as job satisfaction

(Illegems & Verbeke, 2004; Kröll & Nüesch 2019). Flexible working arrangements more broadly have been linked to enhanced employee satisfaction (Wadhawan, 2019). Additionally, high-intensity teleworkers were found to be more satisfied than office-based employees (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

Eek and Axmon (2013) found that having the option to WFH was linked to higher work engagement. Although having the *option* to WFH has questionable comparability with actual use of WFH, actual use of flexible working arrangements or telework has been linked to enhanced engagement in multiple studies (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). Furthermore, WFH for at least one day per week was found to be associated with increased work-related 'flow', that is, the experience of absorption, work enjoyment and intrinsic motivation (Peters, Poutsma, Van der Heijden, Bakker & De Bruijn, 2014). However, it has also been found that although homeworkers may have increased commitment to WFH, this seems to come with an increasingly transactional approach to work, whereby, for example, employees may threaten to leave the organisation if the offer of WFH is withdrawn (Tietze & Nadin, 2011). Other studies such as that by Van Steenbergen, van der Ven, Peeters and Taris (2018) found that work engagement remained stable during a transition to new ways of working (including WFH), potentially indicating complexity in the relationship between WFH and engagement.

1.2.4 Work-life Balance and Work-family Conflict

A meta-analysis by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) reported on research that identified reduced work-family conflict when WFH. Potentially related to this, remote work seemingly enables one's work and non-work lives to be better integrated, as well as improving home relationships through increased contact (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). Research by Madsen (2003) found that home-based teleworkers had lower levels of work-family conflict than non-teleworkers, including lower strain-based work-family conflict (that is, experiences of stress at work interfering with family life or vice versa) and lower behaviour-based work-family conflict (that is, instances of behaviours being inappropriately transferred between work and family

roles). This finding was also supported in a later study (Madsen, 2006), and a study by Hill, Ferris & Märtinson (2003) which found that WFH was associated with more positive perceptions of work-life balance and personal/family success.

In their meta-synthesis of qualitative studies on the link between flexible working arrangements (of which WFH was one part) and work-family conflict, Beigi, Shirmohammadi and Stewart (2018) summarised how overall it seemed that flexible working arrangements can help reduce work-family conflict. However, based on the 45 studies that they reviewed, Beigi et al. (2018) also emphasised that this relationship depends on a variety of moderating variables ranging from career and family stages to the extent to which the organisational culture supports employees' family-related responsibilities.

1.2.5 Other Positive Outcomes

A review by Hacker, Johnson, Saunders and Thayer (2019) identified that through trust, virtual teams were associated with a range of positive outcomes including individual and team performance, satisfaction and morale, as well as commitment and reduced turnover intentions. A decrease in turnover intention associated with WFH was also supported by Kröll and Nüesch's (2019) research. However, Kröll and Nüesch's (2019) definition of WFH also accepted cases in which individuals work in an office but respond to work-related emails at home in the evenings. This is problematic because not only is it different from employees who WFH for substantial proportions of their contractual working hours, but out of hours work has itself been linked to turnover intentions (Tsai et al. 2016). Nevertheless, the link between out of hours work and turnover intentions was positive, therefore the way in which Kröll and Nüesch still identified a *decrease* in turnover intentions associated with WFH despite their WFH definition including out of hours WFH which could plausibly have *increased* turnover intentions perhaps further strengthens their evidence. Supporting this evidence, Martin and MacDonnell's (2012) meta-analysis revealed a small but positive link between telework and retention, as well as between telework and organisational commitment.

A study by Belle, Burley and Long (2015) explored the complex relationship between WFH and organisational belonging, noting that organisational belonging may be experienced through the work itself and/or through alignment between one's own values and their organisation's values when WFH. A study by Caillier (2013) identified a positive link between telework and organisational commitment, however the researcher assumed that even if telework was not used by employees, it would still be perceived as valuable to them, therefore this study was based on satisfaction with telework and not necessarily actual use of WFH. Finally, individuals who were WFH were more likely to perceive their career advancement opportunities as positive than traditional office workers in Hill, Ferris and Märtinson's (2003) research.

In summary, research has demonstrated a variety of positive WFH outcomes which appear to be associated with WFH to varying degrees, ranging from enhanced performance to reduced work-family conflict. Whilst this is promising for both employees and organisations who may wish to adopt WFH more permanently following the Covid-19 pandemic, it would seem that less research has explored the negative outcomes of WFH compared with the positive outcomes, which means the current understanding of WFH outcomes may be skewed and lacking comprehensiveness.

1.2.6 Negative outcomes of Working from Home

It seems that modern WFH is associated with at least some negative outcomes. For example, evidence suggests that remote work can make work-related relationship-building more challenging, it may create a temptation to over- or under-work, and important information may be missed (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). Although the use of technology when employees WFH may help to retain some of the efficiency and interconnectedness offered by a central, shared work location, the adoption of technology by groups has been shown to be a complex, dynamic process characterised by varying usage patterns and potential conflicts regarding use of information communication technology (Bayerl, Lauche & Axtell, 2016).

Increased irritability, loneliness and worry (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003), and decreased opportunities for professional development (Van Steenbergen, van der Ven, Peeters & Taris, 2018) are among the other negative outcomes that have been examined in relation to WFH. It is also important to note that the results of some research studies contradict the findings outlined above regarding positive outcomes of WFH. For example, in contrast with Baruch's (2000) identification of reduced work-related stress, a study by Heiden, Widar, Wiitavaara and Boman (2020) identified increased stress associated with telework. This supports Hill, Raghuram, Wiesenfeld, Gibbs, Hill, Kossek, Nurmi and Axtell et al.'s (2019) acknowledgement that virtual work can have both positive and negative impacts on employee wellbeing.

Research by Orhan, Rijsman and Van Dijk (2016) has highlighted isolation when WFH, however, other studies by Crossan and Burton (1993) and Lal and Dwivedi (2009) do not agree that isolation is a major problem when WFH. Indeed, for every category of research on positive outcomes of WFH mentioned above (1.2.1. Performance and Productivity, 1.2.2. Wellbeing, 1.2.3 Satisfaction, Engagement and Motivation, 1.2.4. Work-life Balance and Work-family Conflict), there is at least one study that contradicts or challenges those findings: Home-based telework was associated with reduced task performance and reduced personal achievement in a study by Hunton (2005). A study by Vittersø, Akselsen, Evjemo, Julsrud, Yttri and Bergvik (2003) found no relationship between quality of life and extent of WFH, and research by Cates and Davis (2013) identified that workplace isolation experienced by teleworkers was associated with reduced employee engagement. The latter could be one reason why research by Caillier (2012) found that teleworkers did not necessarily possess higher levels of motivation than non-teleworkers.

In their review, Bailey and Kurland (2002) concluded that there was a lack of clear evidence for the association between WFH and enhanced job satisfaction. Bailey and Kurland thus recommend that richer insights are required through a focus on theory-building. A study by Kinman and Jones (2008) indicated that increased work-life integration would appear to damage work-life balance. Similarly, research by Sarbu (2018) indicated that home-based teleworkers tend to experience work-family conflict due to difficulty reconciling professional and personal interests. However,

Sarbu also acknowledges that this relationship could be the reverse, in that perhaps individuals choose to WFH in an attempt to manage pre-existing work-family conflict. A greater focus on theory-building may help to address these complications. At least five other studies further challenge the findings on work-family outcomes as discussed above under 1.2.4: WFH may be linked to increased working hours and reduced career aspiration (Baruch, 2000), more blurred boundaries between work and family life (Troup & Rose, 2012), greater family interference in work (Lapierre & Allen, 2006), higher levels of work-family conflict (Higgins, Duxbury & Julien, 2014), as well as increased work-family conflict and difficulty disengaging from work (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Indeed, WFH and the readily available information communication technology that forms a key part of WFH have been described by McDowall and Kinman (2017) as contributing to an 'always-on-culture', yet McDowall and Kinman found that few organisations have work-life balance policies and guidance to support employees.

There would appear to be a similarly complex understanding of the impact of WFH on performance. Research by van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) challenges findings regarding enhanced performance when WFH (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying, 2015), identifying that team performance worsened when more co-workers were WFH. van der Meer and Ringdal (2009) identified no relationship between WFH and productivity. In their review into flexible working (of which WFH was one element), De Menezes and Keliher (2011) identified research that showed positive associations, negative associations and no associations between flexible working and performance. De Menezes and Keliher proposed that future research should consider different individual and organisational mediators and moderators to help explain the inconclusive evidence. Section 1.3.3 will therefore delve deeper by exploring determinants of WFH outcomes. First, Section 1.2.8 will briefly consider outcomes of WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic, recognising that mediators and moderators may differ in that unique context.

1.2.7 Outcomes of Working from Home during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Research in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic has seemingly linked WFH with mainly negative outcomes, such as increased role-conflict and fatigue from virtual meetings (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai & Bendz, 2020). A survey conducted during the pandemic by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) identified that 44% of respondents reported their team was not as productive when WFH, compared with prior to the pandemic when they were in the office. However, Felstead and Reuschke (2020) reported that WFH during the pandemic had little impact on overall productivity levels, with over 40% of homeworkers claiming that they were as productive when WFH in June 2020 as they were six months earlier in the office (prior to the lockdown). A further 28% claimed they were more productive, and 30% claimed they were less productive.

Felstead and Reuschke's (2020) research also considered mental health, identifying that there was seemingly a negative impact of WFH on mental health: individuals who were WFH often or always in June 2020 of the Covid-19 pandemic reported reduced ability to concentrate, greater difficulty in enjoying daily activities and were more often under strain or unhappy with life, compared to individuals who were not WFH at all. Similarly, a survey by the Institute for Employment Studies (Bevan, Mason & Bajorek, 2020), conducted during the first two weeks of lockdown to assess the impact of WFH during the pandemic, found that 33% of respondents reported feeling isolated and 50% were unhappy with their work-life balance. Bevan, Mason and Bajorek (2020) additionally identified musculoskeletal complaints in over 50% of respondents, greater symptoms of fatigue in over 60% of respondents, and long and irregular hours in 48% of respondents. However, it is potentially difficult to disentangle the extent to which these effects are symptoms of WFH versus symptoms of the pandemic context. Section 1.3.1 will explore this further.

1.3 Issues and Critique

It is clear from the literature on outcomes of WFH that there are equivocal findings and inconsistencies. This section will summarise issues and critique the literature around three key areas: 1.3.1. Pre- and Post-Covid-19 Research, 1.3.2. Conceptual Issues, 1.3.3. Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes.

1.3.1 Pre- and Post-Covid-19 Research

It is important to distinguish between research conducted pre-Covid-19, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and post-Covid-19, for at least three main reasons. Firstly, and most notably, due to the extreme context of a pandemic. For many countries, the Covid-19 pandemic was characterised by restrictions on leaving the home (except for essential trips such as grocery shopping), mixed with concern around Covid-19 infection risk and death toll, as well as minimal in-person social contact in both work and non-work life (Spurk & Straub, 2020). Furthermore, employees who were parents were often juggling work responsibilities with home-schooling their children, with schools being closed for a period during the Covid-19 lockdowns (Petts, Carlson & Pepin, 2020).

Secondly, research pre-, during and post-Covid-19 pandemic is important to distinguish between due to *enforced* WFH during the pandemic. The Labour Market Survey by The Office for National Statistics found that in April 2020 of the Covid-19 pandemic, 47% of individuals in employment conducted at least some of their work at home, and for 86% of these individuals the Covid-19 pandemic was the reason they were WFH. Even research prior to the pandemic acknowledged that whether teleworking is voluntary or required could be an important factor in WFH outcomes. For example, Kaduk, Genadek, Kelly and Moen (2019) described voluntary remote work as 'protective', based on reduced stress and reduced turnover intention in employees who worked at least 20% of their work hours from home and who also perceived *moderate to high choice* over where they worked. Fonner and Roloff (2012) recognised that WFH outcomes could be complicated by the way in which employees might *choose* to WFH to avoid stressful interruptions. There is also an argument that

employees who are able to choose to WFH may work harder or exert greater effort than their office counterparts as a social exchange with their organisation in return for the benefits of WFH (Greer & Payne, 2014). Indeed, employees who WFH potentially view their status as teleworkers as a privilege (Feldman and Gainey, 1997, as cited by Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive & Heelan, 2010). However, in the Covid-19 pandemic context, the UK government guidance was that everyone who could possibly WFH should do so. Related to this, reasons for wanting to or not wanting to WFH were likely to vary greatly between pre-, during and post-Covid-19 contexts. During the pandemic, home represented a safe space away from the threat of the Covid-19 virus, whereas prior to the pandemic research alluded to a range of factors linked to desire to WFH. For example, research by Lim and Teo (2000) found that married individuals generally reported more favourable attitudes towards telecommuting. As such, individuals' reasons for wanting to WFH or not would likely differ in a non-pandemic context without the threat of Covid-19.

Thirdly, it is important to distinguish between research conducted pre-, during and post-Covid-19 due to variation in the extent of WFH. Research has supported the idea that extent of WFH is important in WFH outcomes. For example, a study by Suh and Lee (2017) found that employees who engaged in low intensity telework seemingly experienced greater 'technostress' than employees who engaged in high intensity telework. Prior to the pandemic, research by Henke, Benevent, Schulte, Rinehart, Crighton and Corcoran (2016) identified what they referred to as a 'sweet spot' whereby employees who telecommuted occasionally (rather than all of the time or not at all) seemingly experienced the best outcomes with regards to obesity and physical activity. However, during the pandemic, many employees were forced to conduct all their working hours as WFH, in what has been described as a *'forced trial run of working from home'* (p.61) (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020). Moreover, for many employees, this was a sudden change that they were forced to try to adapt quickly to. Indeed, a survey conducted during the pandemic by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) reported that one third of employees who were WFH during the pandemic had not been WFH prior to the pandemic. Research by Salazar (2016) indicated that both the number of days of telework and extent of prior experience of telework impacted the extent to which employees experienced work-family conflict when WFH. As well as extent of WFH, extent of *prior experience* of WFH may therefore be important, and

it is clear from research by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) that prior experience of WFH varied greatly across employees during the pandemic. As such, research conducted prior to the pandemic may be considered more generalisable and comparable. However, this is not without limitations either, for example conceptual issues, as discussed below.

1.3.2 Conceptual Issues

WFH refers to the idea that employees can conduct their work from their own house, flat or other accommodation in which they live. It is about the experience of being 'in work at home' (Felstead & Jewson, 2000, as cited in Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea & Walters, 2001), likely working in one's living room, bedroom or study. However, the literature on WFH is not as straightforward nor specific with respect to how WFH is defined, and this may have important implications for understanding contradictory findings. This is supported by De Menezes and Kelliher (2011) who raised a similar issue with regards to flexible working definitions: 'flexible working' can include flexibility on when employees work, what work they do and where, with WFH often just one element of the wider concept of flexible working. Similarly, Gerards, de Grip and Baudewijns (2018) studied WFH as one part of 'new ways of working', which includes not just WFH but also time-independent work, flexibility in working relations, access to organisational knowledge, and flexibility in management of output. Other researchers have studied WFH to varying degrees as an indistinguishable part of 'virtual communities' (Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui & Shekhar, 2007), 'virtual teams' (Rohwer, Kordsmeyer, Harth & Mache, 2020), 'flexibility i-deals' defined as any personalised employment arrangements mutually negotiated and agreed between employees and employers (Vidyarthi, Chaudhry, Anand & Liden, 2014), 'blended working arrangements' (Wörtler, Van Yperen & Barelds, 2020), a 'mobile workforce' (De Caluwe, Van Dooren, Delafortry & Janvier, 2014) and 'e-workers' (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). This is problematic because it makes it difficult or impossible to distinguish WFH from other factors included in such broad concepts.

It is important to distinguish WFH from broader concepts because WFH involves unique environmental cues and distractions such as laundry, deliveries and matters relating to personal life, compared to other remote locations such as the local library, hotels, or coffee shops, which each offer their own unique set of potential distractions (O'Neill, Hambley & Chatellier, 2014). Indeed, O'Neill, Hambley and Chatellier (2014) cite this as a specific limitation of their study which explored personality in relation to cyberslacking and engagement in distributed work environments, as their study did not distinguish between different types of work environment such as home or coffee shops. The same limitation applies to multiple other studies, including the finding that perceived effectiveness of location-independent working was positively linked to employees' need for autonomy and negatively linked to their need for relatedness and need for structure (Van Yperen, Rietzschel & De Jonge, 2014), and the finding that the effects of new ways of working (including WFH) were seemingly not related to employees' psychological capital such as their levels of hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism (Van Steenbergen, van der Ven, Peeters & Taris, 2018). Moreover, Grote and Raeder (2009) explored four types of personal identity (critical-flexible, self-determined, continuous, job-centred) in relation to experience of five dimensions of flexible working and outcomes such as satisfaction. However, the 'locational' dimension of flexible working did not specify where employees were working, instead simply referring to *'colleagues working from different locations'* (p.229). Telework (of which WFH was one element) has been described as potentially isolating and *'an environment that is very ambiguous, solitary, and lacking in externally supplied structure'* (p.200) (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997, as cited in Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003). WFH is particularly unique and deserves to be distinguished from other locations as it provides employees with greater freedom than other locations (such as coffee shops) to manipulate their environment to optimise their creativity, performance and inspiration (Shockley & Allen, 2012). Hislop and Axtell (2007) would appear to agree with the need to distinguish between mobile teleworkers who work *beyond* both home and office, and WFH.

Most commonly, WFH is studied under the broad concept of 'telework', used in some studies to refer to any work conducted outside a central office environment (Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2018; Caillier, 2012; Aboelmaged & Subbaugh, 2012), not necessarily just WFH. There is strong debate in the literature about the term telework,

and how or even *if* it should be used in academic research. Standen, Daniels and Lamond (1999, as cited in Sullivan, 2003) proposed five dimensions of telework: 1) how time is split between the office and home, 2) the amount of communication required with colleagues, 3) the amount of communication required with external parties, 4) the extent of information technology use required, and 5) the extent to which the job relies on knowledge. Haddon and Brynin (2005) found that studies using the term telework are sometimes further confused by the inclusion of an additional dimension: the time at which work is conducted. To address such issues, Qvortrup (1998, as cited in Sullivan, 2003) called for a single agreed definition of telework to be applied consistently. However, Sullivan (2003), supported by Haddon and Brynin (2005), proposed that it is sufficient to use the term telework, provided that researchers clearly state which specific dimension(s) of telework their research focuses on. For example, Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) stated that *'Teleworking is a unique form of flexibility that brings the workplace into the home without reducing the amount of work to be done'* (p.353). In contrast with Qvortrup (1998) and supported by Wilks and Billsberry (2007) who argued that the lack of a single definition of telework is highly problematic in the literature, Sullivan (2003) and Haddon and Brynin (2005) suggested that multiple definitions of telework are inevitably required to suit the specific context, sample and focus of each research study. However, due to the breadth and complexity of the multiple dimensions, Wilks and Billsberry (2007) recommended that future research dispenses of the term telework altogether, concluding that *'the most useful and consistent distinguishing feature of teleworking is the transfer of the locational anchor of working life from a traditional office base to a home base, a characteristic that was confirmed by all of our participants.'* (p.175). Wilks and Billsberry therefore instead propose the term 'home-anchored worker' as a more specific replacement for the term teleworker. However, from an initial non-systematic scoping of the literature, it seems that the term 'home-anchored worker' has generally not been adopted in the literature. This makes it difficult for researchers and practitioners alike to understand what 'successful' WFH means and how it may be defined and measured.

Taking both sides of the argument together (Wilks & Billsberry, 2007; Sullivan, 2003; Haddon & Brynin, 2005), it seems most academically rigorous for research to focus solely on WFH. This satisfies Wilks and Billsberry's (2007)

argument to focus on the transfer of working life to a home base, as well as the argument made by Sullivan (2003) and Haddon and Brynin (2005) to accept and use the term telework provided that it is clear which dimension(s) of telework is being focused on (for example, WFH). As such, the SLR (Chapter 3 of this thesis) and Empirical Study (Chapter 4 of this thesis), both adopt a definition of WFH focused solely on WFH and use the term 'WFH' as opposed to 'telework', 'telecommuting' or 'home-anchored worker'.

1.3.3 Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

As established under sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, the relationship between WFH and outcomes is clearly complex, characterised by mixed research and contradictory findings. It is argued here that insufficient attention is dedicated in the literature to determinants or mechanisms underlying WFH outcomes, which may help to explain differences in research findings (De Menezes & Keliher, 2011). The following types of determinants will be discussed below: 1.3.3.1 Job-related and Task-related Determinants of WFH Outcomes, 1.3.3.2 Organisational Determinants of WFH Outcomes, 1.3.3.3 Social Determinants of WFH Outcomes, 1.3.3.4 Demographic Determinants of WFH Outcomes, 1.3.3.5 Individual Psychological Determinants of WFH Outcomes. This range of types of determinants in WFH outcomes would appear to be supported by Kinman's (2020) SHARE approach for healthy, sustainable WFH, which takes into account a variety of factors: Safe WFH, Helping oneself and others, Adaptability, Relieving work-life balance pressure, and Evaluating the success of WFH.

1.3.3.1 Job-related and Task-related Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

Boell, Cecez-Kecmanovic, & Campbell (2016) emphasised the role of the nature of the job or task in WFH outcomes. For example, job characteristics seemingly increased teleworkers' 'technostress' (in turn reducing job satisfaction) in research by Suh and Lee (2017). However, technology-based tasks do not always seem to lead to

negative outcomes: a study by Hislop, Axtell, Collins, Daniels, Glover and Niven (2015) found that homeworkers' use of mobile information communication technology seemingly increased their spatio-temporal freedom while reducing isolation. A study by Maruyama and Tietze (2012) found that teleworkers who worked in sales and marketing occupations were more likely to report issues with career development and reduced visibility when teleworking. Research by Hansen (2017) found that 40% of the positive link between WFH and life satisfaction could be explained by a mixture of job characteristics (namely, organisational tenure, company size, contractual working hours, and occupation) and sociodemographic variables (namely, education, number of children, gender, and age).

Research by Konradt, Hertel and Schmook (2003) found that task-related stressors (namely, uncertainty, time pressure, and interruptions) played only a minor role in determining teleworkers' experience of strain and job satisfaction. It was non-job-related factors that were significantly linked to employee wellbeing in Konradt et al.'s (2003) research. However, at least two important considerations regarding the job or task in WFH outcomes include the extent of control and autonomy available to employees, as shown by multiple research studies. For example, research by Gajendran, Harrison and Delaney-Klinger (2015) found that telecommuting is positively linked to task and contextual performance via perceived autonomy. As mentioned previously, WFH research conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic was largely based on employees who *chose* to WFH (as opposed to the forced WFH that characterised the time during the Covid-19 pandemic), hence why autonomy should be such a prominent consideration in WFH outcomes. Dima, Țuclea, Vrânceanu and Țigu (2019) found that teleworker autonomy was strongly related to work-life balance, arguing that a high degree of autonomy may be related to positive WFH outcomes by helping teleworkers develop certain abilities that decrease their dependence on managers. Autonomy has been identified as a moderator or mediator of WFH outcomes in at least two further studies, respectively (Golden, Veiga & Simsek, 2006; Hornung & Glaser, 2009).

Another type of autonomy that has gained particular attention in the literature is schedule flexibility, that is, freedom with regards to *when* work is conducted. Research by Hill, Erickson, Holmes and Ferris (2010) found that the link between

WFH and reduced work-life conflict increased when WFH was combined with schedule flexibility. Kinman (2014) would appear to agree with the importance of considering antecedents of work-life conflict. Furthermore, although WFH was generally associated with more positive emotional and motivational outcomes compared to days when employees were working in the office, this seemingly depended on the degree of worktime control those employees had (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016). The authors suggest that, up to a point, worktime control may act as a resource when WFH, but when employees have a medium to high level of worktime control when WFH, the control becomes a demand rather than a resource, resulting in increased need for recovery.

1.3.3.2 Organisational Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

There is some support for the role of organisational culture in WFH outcomes. Gajendran, Harrison and Delaney-Klinger (2015) identified that WFH was positively associated with performance depending on the extent to which the organisation treated WFH as 'normal'. Similarly, Hayman (2009) found that perceived usability of flexible working arrangements, that is, the extent to which employees felt comfortable and free to use the arrangements that their organisation offered, seemingly played an important role in the link between such arrangements and work-life balance. Research by Timms et al. (2015) looked at the relationship between flexible working arrangements (including WFH) and work engagement and identified that supportive aspects of organisational culture played an important role in this. Moreover, research by Bentley, Teo, McLeod, Tan, Bosua and Gloet (2016) found that perceived organisational support in telework contexts is associated with enhanced job satisfaction.

1.3.3.3 Social Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

As well as job/task and organisation-level determinants, a range of social factors seem to be important in WFH outcomes. For example, research has shown that organisational connection and communication through technology are seemingly

important in the relationship between WFH and both productivity and wellbeing (Hafermalz & Riemer, 2020). Indeed, research by Axtell, Moser and McGoldrick, (2019) indicated that, depending on professional status, one may experience negative attributions or even aggression within the context of online communication through email. Research by Golden (2006) found that the relationship between degree of telecommuting and job satisfaction was mediated by three types of employee relationships: 1) work-family conflict, 2) team-member exchange quality, and 3) leader-member exchange quality. Each of these types of relationships will be explored in turn below, respectively.

A study by Salazar (2016) identified that the experience of work-family conflict was influenced by the presence of other people at home when an employee was WFH. Similarly, research by Hunton (2005) identified that task interruptions may explain why performance was reduced in employees who only WFH compared to employees who had more choice in where they worked. Potentially linked to this idea of interruptions and work-family conflict, research by Hartig, Kylin and Johansson (2007) identified that the availability of a separate room to use for WFH seemingly relieved spatial (but not temporal or mental) overlap between work and non-work life.

Turning to team-member exchange quality, research by Windeler, Chudoba and Sundrup (2017) found that part-time telework seemingly provided a recovery opportunity from work exhaustion. Specifically, work exhaustion decreased as interpersonal interaction *quality* increased, and work exhaustion increased as *quantity* of interpersonal interaction increased (and part-time telework appeared to attenuate this latter relationship). However, it has been shown that professional isolation can negatively influence job performance when teleworking, and this impact of professional isolation increases with the proportion of time spent teleworking (Golden, Veiga & Dino, 2008). Interestingly and unexpectedly, professional isolation when teleworking also seemed to decrease turnover intentions in Golden, Veiga and Dino's (2008) research. A study by Wang, Albert and Sun (2020) explored the role of isolation, identifying that affective commitment in telecommuters was negatively linked to psychological isolation, whereas continuance commitment was positively linked to both psychological and physical isolation. Furthermore, a research symposium by Erez, Axtell, Glikson, Hoch, Wu, Moser and Preece (2016)

demonstrated the role of group norms in a variety of virtual work outcomes, supported in an earlier study by Moser and Axtell (2013).

Turning to leader-member exchange quality, Golden and Veiga (2008) examined leader-member exchange quality in virtual workers and identified that those with high quality superior-subordinate relationships and who also spent the greatest proportion of their working time in virtual settings showed the highest levels of satisfaction, performance, and commitment. Research by Eng, Moore, Grunberg, Greenberg and Sikora (2010) indicated that having a manager who sets clear goals and rewards good work when employees are WFH may prevent employees from over-working and as such minimises work-family conflict experienced by employees. Similarly, Konradt, Hertel and Schmook's (2003) research identified that quality of management by objectives was a strong predictor of teleworkers' experience of strain and job satisfaction. Virick, DaSilva and Arrington's (2009) research found that the extent to which objective criteria was used in employee evaluation moderated what appeared to be a curvilinear relationship between extent of telecommuting and job satisfaction. In a study by Choi (2018), managerial support for telework seemingly reduced turnover intentions in teleworkers. Moreover, research by Nordbäck, Myers and McPhee (2017) suggests that when managers do not trust their employees, this can then lead other employees to distrust teleworkers, resulting in a barrier to coordinated work being conducted between employees who work in the office and employees who telework. However, research by Bentley, Teo, McLeod, Tan, Bosua and Gloet (2016) found that manager support for telework did not influence the outcome of teleworkers' social isolation. Even if it had been found that manager support did influence social isolation in teleworkers, organisational and social factors alone seemingly cannot fully explain WFH outcomes. For example, a review by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) concluded that work-family conflict and employee-supervisor relationship quality had only modest roles as mediators of WFH outcomes.

Further complicating the picture of WFH outcomes and associated determinants, Bellmann and Hübler (2020) refer to a 'remote work paradox', whereby certain positive outcomes may not be able to mutually coexist in remote work contexts: telecommuting may lead to positive outcomes in various aspects of work and non-work life (such as reduced work-family conflict and stress, and enhanced performance

and autonomy), but at the expense of career advancement and quality work relationships. Similarly, increased work flexibility (including WFH) has been referred to as a 'double-edged sword' (Peters, Den Dulk & van der Lippe, 2019, as cited in Mellner, Aronsson & Kecklund, 2014), owing to the idea that WFH provides individuals with greater freedom to work in line with their preferences and non-work commitments, but that in doing so WFH puts greater pressure on the individual to regulate their work and home lives, leading to blurred boundaries, more intense time-demands and poorer work-life balance.

1.3.3.4 Demographic Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

The idea of WFH placing greater pressure on the individual alludes to the importance of demographic or individual determinants in WFH outcomes. Research by Maruyama and Tietze (2012) identified that female teleworkers were more likely than male teleworkers to report that telework helped them cope with caring responsibilities. However, with modern advances in more equal distribution of caring responsibilities across genders and greater proportions of males taking on caring responsibilities (Oleschuk, 2020), as well as questionable applicability to the LGBTQ+ community, gender is potentially a less useful factor to focus on. Additionally, the relationship between caring responsibilities and WFH is potentially less applicable to early careers employees, who tend to be younger and generally less likely to have caring responsibilities outside of work (Koumoutzis, Cichy, Dellmann-Jenkins & Blankemeyer, 2021). More useful demographic factors to focus on may therefore be age or career stage.

Research by Rudolph and Baltes (2017) showed that the impact of flexible work arrangements (including WFH) on work engagement depended partly on employees' age and health, whereby older employees tended to show higher levels of work engagement than younger employees when working flexibly. Indeed, there would appear to be important differences in one's experience of WFH across the lifespan. For example, even when controlling for factors such as gender, type of job and living situation, younger employees were overall found to be less resilient than

older employees in the context of involuntary WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic (Scheibe, De Bloom & Modderman, 2022). Scheibe, De Bloom and Modderman (2022) suggested this could reflect that early adulthood is typically characterised by a greater likelihood of an imbalance between demands and resources in terms of increased demands and reduced resources when compared to older individuals, as well as improvements in self-regulation which are typically observed later across the lifespan. However, it is noteworthy that the youngest age group in Scheibe et al.'s (2022) study (under 25-year-olds) were under-represented. Additionally, not all studies agree that younger, early careers employees are at a disadvantage when WFH compared to their more experienced, typically older colleagues. For example, some studies suggest that WFH-related stress is higher in older employees compared with younger employees (Gualano et al. 2023), or that age has no significant impact on quality of life when WFH (Azarbouyeh, & Naini, 2014). Hamouche and Parent-Lamarche (2022) found that younger age was positively associated with higher performance when WFH, unlike older age which appeared to be linked to lower job performance when WFH. Furthermore, research by Arvola, Piia, Kristjuhan and Siirak (2017) showed that younger employees appeared to be more willing to WFH compared with older employees, and research by Cvetković, Čudanov and Săvoiu (2021) showed that younger employees appeared to perceive more benefits associated with WFH compared with older employees. Conflicting findings in the literature may reflect a curvilinear relationship, as research by Huffman, Culbertson, Henning and Goh (2013) found that it is the youngest and oldest employees who enjoy the least conflict between their work and home demands.

Although WFH is being explored as a means of encouraging older populations to postpone their retirement (Arvola, Lutsoja, Kristjuhan & Tint, 2017), early careers employees seem to represent a demographic who are potentially increasingly WFH, or at least more likely to engage in WFH in 2023 than they were pre-pandemic. In 2008, it was reported that the younger employees were, the less likely they were to WFH (Møller-Jensen, Jensen-Butler, Madsen, Millard & Schmidt, 2008). Zhang, Moeckel, Moreno Shuai and Gao (2020) note that multiple other studies support the notion that younger employees have historically been less likely to engage in WFH than older employees, citing studies including Caulfield (2015), Peters, Tidjens and Wetzels (2004) and Popuri and Bhat (2003). Similarly, just a few years ago it was

reported that the proportion of individuals who WFH positively links to age, whereby 2.1% of 15-24 year olds were WFH compared with 6.6% of 50-64 year olds (Eurostat, 2020, as cited in Bjursell, Bergmo-Prvulovic & Hedegaard, 2021). Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there would appear to be a lasting, global shift to WFH that is evident even when controlling for age (Aksoy et al. 2022). Indeed, whilst Rudzin et al. (2022) acknowledge that the challenges of WFH may be amplified for early careers employees, such as with reference to limited networking opportunities, their research demonstrates how remote collaboration can be achieved by early careers employees during the pandemic and beyond. The implication of this is that managers, organisations and early careers employees themselves are potentially facing a new influx of WFH in the context of the early career stage, requiring a greater focus on tools and guidance to support and inform this. This means that for older employees, the increase in WFH following the Covid-19 pandemic was potentially less substantial as WFH was more likely to be a norm for older employees pre-pandemic, unlike for early careers employees for whom the shift to WFH associated with the pandemic was more likely to be completely new. Research has started to reflect this, for example a study by Olsen, Hildrum, Kummen & Leirdal (2023) which focused purely on under 35-year-olds, finding that support from colleagues and leaders supported job engagement for early careers employees WFH.

Bjursell, Bergmo-Prvulovic and Hedegaard (2021) endorse the importance of both age and experience in understanding WFH, as supported by Beckell and Fisher (2022) who highlight consideration of age differences as important for future research. Interestingly, research has identified increasing variability across a range of psychological, cognitive and physical factors with age, whereby younger employees may be more homogenous in their expectations of work compared with older employees (Nelson & Dannefer, 1992, as cited in Bal & Jansen, 2016). Overall then, younger, early careers employees may be a particularly useful group to focus on as younger individuals may be more comparable to each other, and notably younger employees appear to be more likely than older employees to negotiate flexible working arrangements that they perceive as ideal for them personally (Bal, De Jong, Jansen & Bakker, 2012).

1.3.3.5 Individual Psychological Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

Van Yperen, Rietzschel & De Jonge (2014) recommended that blended working practices (of which WFH was one element) should not be treated as a 'one size fits all' solution. Instead, they suggest that each employee's individual psychological needs should be taken into account to assess their 'fit' and the suitability of WFH for them. It is important to understand who WFH suits and who it does not suit, especially considering what Wessels, Schippers, Stegmann, Bakker, van Baalen and Proper (2019) refer to as 'time-spatial Job Crafting', a context-specific form of Job Crafting whereby employees consider and select to work where (and when) they may work most effectively. Information on individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH could help employees to make informed decisions that support them to perform at their best, whether that be at home or elsewhere. This is supported by Clark, Karau and Michalisin (2012): *'Our research suggests that successfully deploying telecommuting is not easy or automatic and that further research should aid our understand of the role that personality factors play in telecommuting.'* (p.39).

1.4 The Role of Theory in Working from Home Research

It is important to acknowledge the role of theory in research on working from home because, as elaborated on under section '2.6 Theory and Theoretical Contributions', although theories may apply to varying degrees in different contexts, and theories may not yet exist for some findings, theories can provide useful frameworks to *aid the understanding* of research findings and inform next steps for research and practice. For example, building upon section '1.3.3 Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes', at least three theories allude to how relationships between one's work life and personal life may contribute to WFH outcomes. Firstly, Role theory focuses on the social norms, expectations, behaviours, and activities that tend to be attached to different categories or 'roles' that individuals may be perceived to play (Biddle, 1986; Bates & Harvey, 1975). Role theory has been applied to

explanations of work-life conflict in WFH settings, with regards to tension between the multiple 'roles' that an individual may occupy. Namely, one's role as an employee, a spouse and a parent would place various time and energy demands on that person which may compete, especially when WFH where there is not necessarily a physical boundary between the workplace or work roles and the home or non-work roles (Zhang, Moeckel, Moreno, Shuai & Gao, 2020). Furthermore, certain individuals may experience more conflict between their various roles than other people owing to greater willingness to prioritise certain roles or associated tasks as a result of internalised social or cultural expectations about who they should be. For example, Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) demonstrate the example of males feeling more pressured to prioritise job-related roles, in comparison with females who may feel more pressured to prioritise family-related roles such as caring.

A second key theory in WFH research is Border theory (Clark, 2000), which proposes that individuals make regular transitions between roles, crossing the borders between work roles and home roles to achieve a balance between work and family life. For example, individuals who use information communication technology to WFH have been shown to be more likely to view the borders between their various roles as permeable and flexible, as if they have adapted their management of borders to be able to successfully WFH (Leung & Zhang, 2017). Similar to Border theory, Boundary theory (Ashforth, Kriener, & Fugate, 2000) suggests that individuals switch between roles, but that they do so on a continuum from segmentation (whereby various roles are clearly separated through more structured boundaries) to integration (whereby various roles are likely to be blurred through fewer or more flexible boundaries). When comparing Border theory and Boundary theory, a potential issue with Border theory is that it is limited to work and family domains only so that it is focused specifically on work-life balance outcomes, whereas Boundary theory is more focused on a range of socially defined roles and the meanings that people attach to home and work (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004). However, as Desrochers and Sargent (2004) point out, this also means that Boundary theory may be preoccupied with psychological boundaries, unlike Border theory which is praised for including tangible borders such as time and place. Nevertheless, Boundary theory's continuum of segmentation and integration appears to be widely accepted in the WFH literature (Beckel & Fisher, 2022). One potential limitation of the segmentation-integration continuum, however,

is that by categorising individuals as typically preferring either segmentation or integration of boundaries between home and work when WFH, it possibly fails to acknowledge nuances in the different contexts and situations in which segmentation or integration may be the most effective response. Compensation theory (Staines, 1980) may help overcome this issue to some extent by showing how, as well as integrating or segmenting, individuals may choose to compensate for a lack of focus on one role by re-focusing resources on another role to compensate for potential imbalances between roles. This is supported by Resource Drain theory, which explains how an individual's resources such as attention and time are finite (Magni, Ahuja & Trombini, 2022). Indeed, WFH itself may be a method to compensate for dissatisfaction with the impact of commuting to an office on family roles (Standen, Daniels & Lamond, 1999). However, it is also arguable that effective boundary management via integration or segmentation may help prevent the need for compensatory strategies in the first place. For example, segmentation boundary management has been shown to reduce interruptions and conflict between work and home roles when WFH (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018).

Two key theories which are drawn upon in this thesis will be introduced here: Person-Environment Fit theory (Kristof, 1996), and Job Crafting theory (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013).

Person-Environment Fit theory proposes that the characteristics of an individual (such as individual psychological factors as in this thesis) and the characteristics of an environment interact to produce either a 'fit' or a 'misfit'. Person-environment misfit has been linked to a range of negative outcomes, including increased stress (Yang, Che & Specter, 2008), whereas Person-Environment Fit has been linked to a range of positive outcomes, including increased creative performance (Puccio, Talbot & Joniak, 2017). 'Fit' is thus considered desirable and advantageous, however both objective and subjective elements of the person and the environment may contribute to this fit or misfit in complex and interactive ways. This may include, for example, the person's objective age or subjective self-identity, and the environment's objective physical characteristics such as furniture or the subjective way in which events take place in the environment as perceived by the individual (Edwards, Caplan & Van Harrison, 1998). Indeed, as detailed under section 7.2,

Person-Environment Fit can be considered against at least three dimensions: a person's Needs versus what the environment Supplies (Needs-Supplies dimension), a person's Abilities versus what the environment Demands (Demands-Abilities dimension), and the extent to which the individual's Values are congruent with what a specific environment can offer (Values Congruence dimension). Historically, Person-Environment Fit theory has been applied to understand person-job fit, person-organisation fit, and person-supervisor fit (Boon & Biron, 2016). However, none of these types of fit would appear to address the WFH environment specifically, and this is the theoretical gap which the present thesis aims to highlight and subsequently extend Person-Environment Fit theory to the understanding of fit between a person and WFH. Person-Environment Fit theory has previously been used to build upon other relevant theories such as relating to boundary management preference for work-home integration versus segmentation, by proposing that individual boundary management preferences may interact with what the workplace provides to produce varying levels of fit or misfit (Kreiner, 2006).

Whilst Person-Environment Fit theory is praised for its comprehensive approach covering both individual and environmental considerations and has received general support from longitudinal research (Carless, 2005), Person-Environment Fit has been argued to suffer from vague conceptualisations and measures, as well as the idea that a 'perfect' fit is unrealistic given the changing nature of people and environments (Van Vianen, 2018). For example, people may adapt their behaviours to enhance fit (Lee, Reiche & Song, 2010). Linked to this, Job Crafting theory could be viewed as a modern twist on Person-Environment Fit theory, arguably overcoming such limitations of Person-Environment Fit to some extent by acknowledging that many employees have some freedom to shape where and how they work. According to Job Crafting theory, employees may 'craft' or strategically alter their job in three main ways. Firstly, task crafting means changing one's tasks, the nature of a task or the time and energy devoted to any task. Secondly, relational crafting means changing when, how or with who one engages to conduct their job. Thirdly, cognitive crafting means changing one's perception of any element of their job (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013). Moreover, individual motivations such as need for personal control and level of intrinsic motivation are likely to underpin job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Job crafting is considered by Wrzesniewski and

Dutton (2001) to be neither fully positive nor fully negative, therefore it would be of interest to understand the extent to which job crafting strategies play a role in WFH. Indeed, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) position job crafting as a largely individual-level activity, and it is highly relevant to Person-Environment Fit given the description of job crafting as *'a vessel for need fulfilment'* (p.196) (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), linked the Needs-Supplies dimension of Person-Environment Fit.

Other relevant theories include Job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which views positive outcomes as the result of balance between the demands placed on an individual and the resources available to them. This resonates with the Demands-Abilities dimension of Person-Environment Fit. Alternatively, trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003, as cited in O'Neill, Hambley & Chatellier, 2014) argues that certain traits are more likely to be expressed in response to associated cues in the environment so that specific traits may be linked to specific WFH outcomes (O'Neill, Hambley & Chatellier, 2014). However, traits are not always predictive of behaviour (Monson, Hesley & Chernick, 1982). Person-Environment Fit is the focus of this thesis as it emerges as a key theory in multiple studies in the SLR, as well as Job Crafting theory which as mentioned above is well positioned to acknowledge the different behavioural adaptations that individuals may make when WFH. Theories in WFH research are further explored under section '3.3 Theoretical Underpinnings'.

1.5 Summary

In sum, Chapter 1 has demonstrated that research in the area of WFH is relevant and timely, especially given the increase in WFH associated with the Covid-19 pandemic (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020). Chapter 1 detailed the range of outcomes that have been shown to be associated with WFH, including both positive and negative outcomes, as well as highlighting the contradictory nature of the literature whereby findings regarding WFH outcomes do not appear to be consistent. Chapter 1 critically analysed key issues that may underpin such contradictions, including conceptual issues in how WFH is defined (with reference to broader terms such as telework) and the variety of determinants of WFH outcomes (ranging from organisational

determinants to social determinants). It also introduced the role of individual determinants in WFH outcomes, referencing calls from researchers for further attention on the role that individual factors such as personality may play in WFH (Clark, Karau & Michalisin, 2012). To that end, this thesis seeks to advance knowledge on the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH.

Following the Methodology described in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 offers an SLR addressing the main research question: What are the individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully? It aims to understand the extent to which there is evidence suggesting the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes. Given the key issues analysed in Chapter 1, the SLR also considers sub-questions including: How is 'successful' WFH defined and measured in the literature? What are the contexts and populations in which WFH has been studied? What factors may moderate the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes? The rationale for the aims and research questions in the SLR is multifarious. Firstly, there is a need to understand why some individuals appear to be more effective when WFH than others (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015). Secondly, as detailed under section '1.3.3 Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes', a range of factors have been linked to WFH outcomes, however there seems to be a large focus on organisational, social and job-related factors with researchers calling for greater research attention on individual factors (Clark, Karau & Michalisin, 2012). Thirdly, as detailed under section '3.2 Individual Psychological Factors and Strategies as Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes', '*technology, work, organisations and individuals are 'entangled and mutually co-constituting'* (Boell, Campbell, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Cheng, 2013, p.2), indicating that a comprehensive understanding of successful WFH must account for the individual, however it would appear that no SLR on the role of individual psychological factors in WFH yet exists. Fourth, an understanding of what constitutes 'successful' WFH would be useful both in terms of understanding the range of WFH outcomes that research has explored so far and in terms of practical implications for measuring and promoting successful WFH. Finally, the SLR aims and research questions are particularly relevant and timely given the wider context of the shift to WFH associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 4 (Empirical Study) follows on logically from the findings of the SLR to address the research questions: What individual psychological factors do early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use? What strategies can be learned from early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH to support other early careers employees who may struggle with WFH? The empirical study aims to understand the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH from the perspective of early careers employees who identify as having a good person-environment 'fit' with WFH. The rationale for the aims and research questions in the empirical study lies in the way in which the SLR demonstrated that seemingly no studies on the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH have focused on an early careers sample. As detailed under section '1.3.3.4 Demographic Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes', this is important given the apparent differences in WFH across the lifespan. Furthermore, the SLR showed a varied and fragmented definition of successful WFH in the previous literature on the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH, thereby calling for a more comprehensive definition and measure based on person-environment fit with WFH. The empirical study also aims to consider the role of strategies in WFH outcomes as the SLR reported on studies alluding to the role of strategies such as structuring behaviours in successful WFH.

Chapters 3 and 4 each provide a gradual advancement of original knowledge, with the Empirical Study addressing key limitations identified in the SLR, which is reinforced by Chapter 5 which provides a culmination of contributions and implications of both Chapters 3 and 4 together as a whole.

The next chapter (Chapter 2: Methodology) provides the rationales for the methods that were adopted in the SLR and the empirical study. It also justifies the ontological and epistemological perspective adopted, before explaining the research ethics and the stance on theory.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The following section summarises the philosophical stance taken throughout this thesis, as well as the rationale for the methods and approaches adopted in the SLR and empirical study. There is a particular focus on *justification* for the methodologies and approaches. Whilst the Methods sections within the SLR and empirical study can be considered a summary of *what* was done, this Methodology section is a summary of how and why those decisions were made.

The researcher's axiological perspective is that one's beliefs, views and values as a researcher heavily influence and shape the research process. As such, it is seen as essential to discuss here the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives in relation to the research. Overall, this thesis is written from a pragmatic approach, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, and applying them as determined by the suitability for the specific nature and content of the research question. Section 2.1 explains the SLR ontology and epistemology, and 2.2 justifies the SLR method. Section 2.3 explains the empirical study ontology and epistemology, and 2.4 justifies the empirical study method.

2.1 Ontology and Epistemology for Systematic Literature Review: Critical Realist

The pragmatic choice of ontology and epistemology for conducting the SLR was critical realist because the researcher accepts and embraces that whilst there would potentially be such thing as a single reality, there are multiple important mechanisms that influence that in complex, nuanced ways, leading to difficulty in measuring any single reality. Contextually, this is important because it has been established that there are a range of complex mechanisms underpinning the relationships between WFH and outcomes, for example social support in the relationship between WFH and wellbeing (Vander Elst, Verhoogen, Sercu, Van den Broeck, Baillien & Godderis, 2017). To understand the answer to the SLR research question, there is thus a need to look

beyond the surface at the unobservable influences that shape reality (or individual's perceptions of reality). Furthermore, from a pragmatic perspective, the synthesis of primary research papers including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods papers is about reducing the information to understand phenomena, and the nature of SLR methodology is therefore necessarily in line with critical realism. The researcher's critical realist approach to the SLR means that the researcher valued qualitative and quantitative papers equally, and that the interpretation of results was within the view that outcomes arise through complex interactions between rules, conditions and individuals. Whilst there is debate about the complex relations between critical realism and pragmatism, there is substantial overlap (Elder-Vass, 2022), thus the researcher may consider themselves a pragmatic critical realist. To an extent, there was also an element of constructivist thinking in the SLR, which is outlined in section 4.1, however the main approach to the SLR was based on critical realism. This mixed approach to ontology and epistemology in this review would appear to be supported by Boell, Campbell, Cecez-Kecmanovic and Cheng (2013), who noted that: *'it seems that positivist methods, currently dominating research on telework, need to be complemented by in-depth qualitative studies on how the nature of work is transformed through ICT and how these changes are understood and perceived by employees.'* (p.7).

2.2 Rationale for Systematic Literature Review Method

The SLR approach was used in this thesis to understand what is currently known about individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH or serve as barriers to successful WFH. The SLR Method was appropriate for addressing the research questions in Chapter 3 because, as detailed in the Introduction section of Chapter 3, a coherent overall picture of the individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH does not yet appear to exist, with reference to the main research question 'What are the individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully?'. Additionally, WFH is not a new phenomenon and initial scoping of the literature revealed that there appeared to be sufficient existing studies to justify the use of an SLR methodology. There were also

some associated sub-questions such as 'What are the contexts and populations in which WFH has been studied?' which required a broad review-based approach. The SLR Method was also appropriate for the other research sub-questions such as 'How is 'successful' WFH defined and measured in the literature?' and 'What factors may moderate the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes?', as it offered a structured way of being able to compare and synthesise studies to capture the potential *range* of factors or definitions and measures of successful WFH. Finally, it was also expected that given the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated increase in WFH, more research into WFH would be sought out by organisations and practitioners, which an SLR could help direct and shape in terms of identifying what has already been established in previous research and potential priorities for future research.

There are also many more general strengths of the SLR method. For example, Hiebl (2021) identified three main features: 2.2.1 Structured, 2.2.2 Comprehensive, and 2.2.3 Transparent. Each of these is discussed in turn below, followed by a further strength (2.2.4 Quality) and 2.2.5 Limitations.

2.2.1 Structured

The careful planning inherent in SLR methodology makes SLRs highly *structured*. For example, for the SLR in this thesis, a review protocol was developed and followed to support rigorous planning in advance of the SLR process. A key part of this planning included the exploration and identification of relevant search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and multiple appropriate databases. This is important because research by Wanyama, McQuaid and Kittler (2021) found that substantial variation can occur across databases, leading to recommendations to use additional literature search approaches (such as citation indices) and avoid the use of single databases. Both of these recommendations were applied to the SLR in this thesis.

2.2.2 Comprehensive

In line with best practice (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007, as cited in Xiao & Watson, 2019), the choice of databases used in an SLR can be tailored to address the research question. For example, in the SLR described in this thesis, the PsychINFO database was selected based on the psychological nature of individual psychological factors, ABI Inform was selected because of the business context of office jobs and WFH, whilst Web of Science was selected because of its broad scope. This helped to ensure that the SLR was *comprehensive*. Indeed, SLR methodology can be a way of comprehensively integrating and bringing structure to highly heterogenerous fields of research (Inceoglu, Selenko, McDowall & Schalacter, 2019), which was important in the context of the broad research question and ensuring comprehensive coverage of the range of individual psychological factors that could potentially be involved in successful WFH.

2.2.3 Transparent

The SLR process is characterised by ongoing recording of decisions in a reflective report or audit trail which can be regularly updated to record and track decisions in a *transparent* and organised manner (Rojon, Okupe & McDowall, 2021). This not only helps to ensure that every decision is clearly justifiable but also helps to maximise objectivity and transparency of the SLR, especially when compared with a literature review. Transparency is additionally supported in SLR methodology by thoroughly detailing the methodological steps involved, such that other researchers could clearly trace and repeat the process to retrieve the full sample selection. This makes the SLR similar to the thorough design process which would be expected in primary research.

2.2.4 Quality

A further strength of SLR methodology is its focus on *quality* (MacDonald, Canfield, Fesperman & Dahm, 2010). Most notably, as summarised under section '4.5 Quality Assessment', the use of a quality assessment framework (Rojon et al. 2021), such as that by Hong et al. (2018), helps to prevent unsubstantiated claims and focuses the researcher on the methodological quality of the different papers in a more objective manner to support reflective and fair critical analysis. Another example of quality in the SLR method is that the inclusion criteria can be carefully considered to focus on research of optimum quality with regards to contribution to the research question. Namely, in the SLR described in this thesis, the decision was made to only include studies focusing on actual use of WFH rather than availability of WFH. This is important as employees might sign up for WFH but then be set a limit of one day per week by their employer (Eaton, 2003, as cited in Kossek et al. 2006). A decision was also made to exclude grey literature, as this often consists of incomplete data and is usually not peer reviewed. Although peer reviewed, published papers can suffer from publication bias whereby significant and/or positive findings are more likely to be accepted for publication, this is unlikely to be the case in the present SLR as some papers did not identify positive or significant findings.

2.2.5 Limitations

SLR is not a perfect methodology. Any SLR is limited by the parameters set in the search strategy. For example, the search terms and databases used may be too harsh, resulting in limited access to relevant papers or biases towards certain areas. However, several steps can be taken to minimise this issue. For the SLR described in this thesis, this included looking at other reviews in the area of telework (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Siha & Monroe, 2006), discussing with other Occupational Psychologists and researchers, and adopting the pearl growing technique (Schlosser, Wendt, Bhavnani & Nail-Chiwetalu, 2006) to ensure sufficient coverage. This enhanced confidence that no relevant papers were seemingly missed. Another way in which the search strategy could have restricted access to relevant papers was via the

search period from 2003-2020. However, in line with best practice according to Carvalho, Pianowksi and Santos (2019), the period of 2003-2020 was carefully considered and justified. Specifically, 2003 is when Skype software was developed, offering video call and live chat functionality within the WFH context. One of the papers in the SLR in this thesis (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003) recommended that future research explore whether their findings hold true in jobs which may change as a result of technological advances. However, despite the emergence of Microsoft Teams and similar software since 2003, these software packages are characterised by video calls and thus are not overly different from Skype.

All SLRs inevitably involve a degree of subjectivity in decision-making, as noted by Gunnell, Poitras and Tod (2020). However, as in the SLR described in this thesis, this can be addressed in multiple ways. Firstly, the steps taken can be outlined in detail in the Methods section to maximise repeatability. Secondly, a second and third researcher can assist with the title sift, abstract sift and full sift, via blind reviews of 10% of the papers at each stage, resulting in Cohen's Kappa figures. Thirdly, several structured, established and standardised tools can be adopted throughout the process, ranging from the SPIO framework and PRISMA to Hong et al.'s (2018) quality assessment framework. Relating to subjectivity, the SLR methodology can also be highly time-consuming and potentially prone to human error. Although various techniques are being developed in an attempt to automate the SLR process (van Dinter, Tekinerdogan & Catal, 2021), the researcher of the SLR described in this thesis actually found that the process of sifting the papers in a non-automated way enabled the researcher to obtain further relevant knowledge and background to the research area. Moreover, the clear and pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully considered for each paper, and non-automated sifting enabled the researcher to carefully consider nuances in the papers.

2.3 Ontology and Epistemology for Empirical Study: Constructivist

The researcher sometimes adopts varying degrees of a constructivist perspective depending on pragmatic considerations relating to the needs of the

research question. For the empirical study described in this thesis, the researcher adopts a constructivist approach to capture individual's unique, subjective experience of WFH. This was a pragmatic choice however it is also noteworthy that the researcher naturally leans more towards a preference for constructivism over positivism. It is also possible that the researcher's choice of research question was influenced by their preference for constructivism to begin with, with the researcher shaping the research from the start, however the research question was crucially informed by the needs of the literature, as discussed in the introduction to the empirical study. The researcher's constructivist approach to the empirical study means that great emphasis was placed on reflexivity, it was acknowledged that there is possibly no single 'right' answer, and the findings were interpreted within the unique context of the participant's situation at that time. It was a process of shared meaning-making between participants and the researcher.

A positivist approach (inherent in quantitative designs) was not appropriate for the empirical study research question because positivism insists on a single, tangible and deterministic truth (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). In contrast, the experience of flexible working arrangements is highly subjective in nature (Kossek et al. 2006), and data on strategies would be difficult to obtain from quantitative methodologies. Strategies would understandably differ by person, hence the need to delve deeply into each participant's subjective experience. Constructivism is about understanding individual experience, acknowledging the potential for multiple participant meanings, and viewing knowledge and reality as constructed by the individual (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This is appropriate because WFH may be perceived differently by different individuals, the experience of WFH is likely to be highly complex (influenced by a wide range of factors), and the research is about developing ideas from the data in a data-driven manner. As alluded to above with regards to reflexivity, constructivism also has the strength of acknowledging the researcher as an integral part of the research process (Simão, Guimarães, de Freitas, Bastos & Rios, 2016). The researcher does not entirely reject the idea of rules that govern behaviour but emphasises the need to consider the conditions and mechanisms that influence those rules, and the researcher applied constructivism to the empirical study research question as informed by pragmatic considerations relating to the research question, as mentioned above.

An alternative ontological and epistemological perspective that the researcher considered was social constructivism. However, in discussion with the research Supervisor, it was agreed that this was not appropriate. Social constructivism assumes that individuals develop understandings in relation to their interactions with others, however when WFH, individuals are potentially interacting with others *less* than they would do in the office. A constructivist approach is appropriate as the empirical study is about individuals and each individuals' unique experience.

In sum, the researcher generally adopts a pragmatic approach, however the researcher favours constructivism over positivism to varying degrees as informed by the needs of the research question. Thus, for the empirical study, the researcher adopted a constructivist approach to capture individual's unique, subjective experience of WFH, as informed by a combination of pragmatism based on the research question and personal epistemological, ontological and axiological stance.

2.4 Rationale for Empirical Study Method

The empirical study in this thesis explored the individual psychological factors of early careers employees who are a good 'fit' with WFH, including consideration of behaviours or strategies that participants used to achieve a good 'fit'. The empirical study adopted qualitative interview methodology and thematic analysis. The qualitative interview method was appropriate for addressing the research questions in Chapter 4 because the research questions were specific to the rich, lived experience of WFH from the perspective of early careers employees ('What individual psychological factors do early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use?'). Interviews provided participants with a safe, one-to-one setting with the interviewer to open up about their potentially sensitive thoughts and experiences, lending itself to the research question of 'What strategies can be learned from early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH to support other early careers employees who may struggle with WFH?'. The interview method also helped acknowledge that different participants may have different views, as it did not require participants to compare and contrast their perspectives as may have occurred in a focus

group setting, and this was not the focus of the research questions. The thematic analysis approach was appropriate for addressing the research questions in Chapter 4 because the research questions were not interested in the precise language used by participants, and thematic analysis offered flexibility to identify the variety of WFH strategies that may exist. More detail on the rationale for the use of qualitative interview methodology and thematic analysis is presented below in turn.

2.4.1 Rationale for Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection has at least three main strengths that made it appropriate for the empirical study described in this thesis.

Firstly, qualitative data collection is broad and non-restrictive. The research question was necessarily broad (because the SLR identified that there was little known about the individual psychological factors and strategies used specifically by *early careers* employees to successfully WFH), thus it was important to avoid making assumptions and instead allow the individual psychological factors to develop from the data. Qualitative data collection enabled that to happen because of its open, exploratory nature. If the empirical study were a quantitative study, this would have risked missing important individual psychological factors or strategies that were not yet known to be important. In contrast, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to code participants' range of responses. Prior to this empirical study, the SLR showed that there was promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH outcomes, however in most studies such factors had been selected in advance of each study as pre-defined variables to be measured. Anderson et al. (2015) pointed out that '*studies investigating other individual differences and the effects of individual differences on other outcomes would seem very useful*' (p.894). Qualitative data collection was therefore well-suited to capture the broad range of potentially relevant characteristics which were not yet known about. Thus, the qualitative approach was appropriate to answer the research question, which is a key criterion in Hong et al.'s (2018) quality assessment framework.

Secondly, qualitative data collection enables rich, in-depth insights. The demographic focus was on younger, less experienced, early careers employees. However, little to no research had previously considered this group of employees in relation to individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes. The aim of this empirical study was to explore individual psychological factors and strategies in depth, for that particular sample. Qualitative designs are well-suited to generating deep understandings within the context of a highly specific sample. This context-bound approach aligns with the constructivist ontology and epistemology underpinning the empirical study, as supported by Amineh and Asl (2015).

Thirdly, qualitative data collection is well-suited to complex phenomena which is not easily measured, such as the complex nature of certain individual psychological factors and strategies. For example, Kossek et al. (2006) state that boundary management is often considered on a simple spectrum from segmentation to integration, but that there is more complexity to this that future research should consider. The example Kossek et al. give is that *'if an employee is working at home with the door closed while his/her child is watching television; some could say he/she is physically integrating roles; he/she is working at home and is physically there, but is mentally segmenting as he/she is not interacting with his/her family. People cannot move work into the home without changing their social relationships'* (p.364). Kossek et al. recommended that future research therefore considers the multiple types of boundary that may be integrated or segmented, including physical, temporal, mental and behavioural boundaries, as was achieved in the empirical study in this thesis. Qualitative data collection is more capable of capturing such nuances, when compared with quantitative data collection.

Although a key criticism of qualitative designs is the reliance on researcher interpretation of findings, high standards of researcher reflexivity can be maintained throughout to overcome this, which is particularly key in qualitative data collection (Watt, 2007). For example, issues of power and social dynamics, as well as the role of the researcher in interpreting and shaping the data are important (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). This reflexive approach and the use of a qualitative design is in line with the constructivist ontology and epistemology, demonstrating coherence between the

qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation, which is a key criterion in Hong et al.'s (2018) quality assessment framework.

2.4.2 Rationale for Interview Methodology

One-to-one semi-structured interviews are well-suited to focus on participants' rich, lived experience of phenomena (Terry & Hayfield, 2021), in accordance with the constructivist ontology and epistemology.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic which made social distancing and prevention of disease transmission a priority, virtual video interviews were preferred over in-person interviews when conducting the empirical study in this thesis. As noted by Eddleston and Mulki (2017), there are benefits to telephone interviews, as participants may feel more relaxed in their own personal space compared to in-person settings (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, as cited in Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). In-person and telephone methods of data collection have also been found to produce little or no differences in data quality (De Leeuw, 1992, as cited in Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, as cited in Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). The researcher had their video camera on to help participants read the researcher's body language and feel comfortable in speaking to another human being. Similarly, participants were encouraged to use their video camera for the duration of the interview, if they felt comfortable to, thereby enabling non-verbal cues to still be acknowledged, much like in-person settings. Contextually, running the interviews virtually via video also meant that all participants but one (who dialled into their video interview from a private room in their office) engaged in their interview in their home environment whilst they were WFH. Given the nature of the research being about WFH, this could have been an advantage as research has shown that memories tend to more easily emerge when one is in the same environment in which such memories were originally encoded (Smith & Vela, 2001). As such, being at home during their interview potentially enabled such environmental context-dependent memory, thereby possibly enhancing the quality and accuracy of participants' self-reported data.

An alternative to interview methodology that the researcher considered was focus groups, which would have involved optimal group sizes of six participants (Morgan, 1996) engaging in discussion about individual psychological factors and strategies that they feel make them a good 'fit' with WFH. However, interviews were chosen over focus groups for at least four main reasons. Firstly, interviews are better than focus groups at generating a broad range of items (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley & McKenna, 2017). Secondly, compared with focus groups, interviews may help participants feel more comfortable to disclose comments without fear of social stigmatisation from other participants. Thirdly, focus groups may be more likely than interviews to go off topic as the researcher has less control over the data that is generated compared to during interviews. Fourth, focus group data tends to be messier and more difficult to analyse when compared with interview data, as much of the data consists of participants' reactions to the comments made by other focus group members.

2.4.3 Rationale for Analytical Strategy

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry & Hayfield, 2021) was used in the empirical study described in this thesis, because it takes into account the role of the researcher in interpreting meaning. Thematic analysis can often follow a constructivist epistemology (e.g. Butler, Crowfoot, Quain, Davey, Magin & Maguire, 2017), because it acknowledges that participants engage in ongoing meaning-making to construct their own perception of reality, and that research findings are the result of an interactive process between the researcher and participant. Furthermore, thematic analysis had previously been applied successfully elsewhere in the WFH literature. For example, in the SLR described in this thesis, a paper by Greer and Payne (2014) used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach to establish semantic themes in the data relating to employees' strategies for successful WFH. Furthermore, in line with Hong et al.'s (2018) quality assessment framework, the researcher ensured in the analysis that their interpretation of results was sufficiently substantiated by data. For example, the researcher ensured that the quotes they provided to justify the themes were logical and appropriate.

Thematic analysis is not without constraints, and this was carefully weighed up. For example, the researcher knew that it would not enable close examination of the precise language used by participants, however the research question was not dependent on the analysis of exact wording used. Additionally, despite the strength of thematic analysis being a highly flexible approach to analysis, such flexibility may also generate inconsistency and/or incoherence in the themes identified. However, thoroughly reviewing the analysis and remaining close to the data helped to enhance consistency, coherence and confidence in the analysis, whilst bearing in mind that thematic analysis inherently involves a degree of interpretation (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The researcher therefore carefully considered the constraints when selecting their approach to analysis, and this enabled them to determine that thematic analysis was an appropriate method.

Alternatives to thematic analysis which the researcher considered included qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin, 1987), which aims to compare differences within the data. However, the research question was not specifically focused on differences, and comparing differences could result in missing out on the richness or failing to capture the overall story of the data. The researcher considered a narrative analysis approach (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 2001). This would mean viewing the data as 'stories' and looking for similarities across different participants' stories. Although the interview methodology would be ideal for narrative analysis, the researcher decided against narrative analysis because individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes would not necessarily follow the flow of a story (with a beginning, middle and end), and the researcher noted that there is confusion regarding the epistemology of narrative analysis. The researcher also ruled out content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), because it potentially places too much emphasis on counting repetitions of items within the data, possibly at the expense of considering the wider context and patterns within the data.

2.5 Ethical Approach

Key guidelines and regulations were applied throughout this thesis, all of which the researcher was already highly familiar with and well-practiced in from their work as a Practitioner Psychologist, regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and Chartered with the British Psychological Society (BPS). These included The BPS Practice Guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2017), The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014), The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2018), The HCPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2016), and The General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

This study went through a rigorous ethical approval process at Birkbeck, University of London. Ethical Approval Number: OPEA-21/22-03.

2.6 Theory and Theoretical Contributions

As detailed throughout this thesis, theoretical considerations were central throughout both the SLR and empirical study, acknowledging the important role of theory in aiding and representing evidence-based understanding, as well as providing frameworks through which further situations and findings can be interpreted, tested or predicted. However, in line with the researcher's pragmatic epistemological and ontological perspective, the nature of knowledge and reality is not always about testing or predicting but rather about acknowledging the complex interactions between individuals and their environment, based on various different mechanisms and unique contexts that cannot always easily be predicted or theorised (for example, where the constructivist viewpoint becomes the pragmatic choice). As such, this thesis aims to strike a balance between the need for theory to inform practice and vice versa, in an iterative, context-specific fashion.

Whilst it has been said that *'Nothing is as practical as a good theory'* (Lewin, 1951; Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p.19, as cited in Yorks, 2005), an over-emphasis on theory can limit understanding, with many theories lacking in implications for practice

(Ployhart & Bartunek, 2019). The researcher of this thesis agrees with this view, with many theories potentially being based on a purely positivist perspective that fails to acknowledge that often theories may apply differently depending on the person and the conditions surrounding the core prediction(s) of any given theory. Furthermore, obsession with theory *'prevents the reporting of rich detail about interesting phenomena for which no theory yet exists'* (Hambrick, 2007, p.1346).

This view, or the 'practice to theory approach' (Ployhart & Bartunek, 2019), has had at least three main impacts on this thesis. Firstly, the research described in this thesis may not be empirically testing a theory, but it is driven by theories including Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting theories, with the aim being to extend or at least stimulate further interest and development in theory in these areas. Thus, reference to theory in this thesis has not been for the sake of referring to theory but rather to explore and extend theory. For example, in the empirical study, theory is explored in relation to the practice of early careers employees WFH and based on what is observed in the empirical study interviews. Secondly, this research has deliberately been designed in a broad way (not limited to Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting theories) to provide opportunities to notice what may not have been noticed before. Thirdly, the researcher has been motivated from the start to explore issues and phenomena that are important in their own right as opposed to purely being opportunities to test theory.

Overall, it is hoped that a balance has been achieved in this thesis, in terms of capitalising on the benefits of theory for aiding understanding without hindering the emergence of new, interesting findings. It is both a *theory*-driven and a *phenomena*-driven approach, whereby the researcher started with the phenomena and spotted an opportunity to use theory to explain that.

The next chapter (Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review) consists of the write-up of the SLR study which systematically identifies and synthesises research on the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH. It draws upon best practice SLR guidance from Rojon, Okupe and McDowall (2021).

Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review (Paper)

Title: Individual Psychological Factors that enable Employees to Successfully Work from Home: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

Various research studies have explored the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, ranging from the role of personality in employee wellbeing when WFH to the role of cognitive styles in employee productivity when working from home. However, it would appear that no review has been conducted to provide an overview of this research, meaning that a coherent overall picture is missing. The present study aims to address this, by offering a SLR of research into individual psychological factors that influence WFH outcomes. Through clearly justified inclusion and exclusion criteria, the review identified a total of 13 papers that explored individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes. There were seven broad categories of individual psychological factors and five broad categories of outcomes that could be considered part of successful WFH. Key findings included that there is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH outcomes, however taking each individual psychological factor in turn, there tends to be only initial evidence, unclear evidence or no data available. Furthermore, a variety of research limitations are identified, warranting caution in the interpretation of findings. This review recommends that future research should prioritise qualitative research designs, theoretical advancement, and greater consideration of the contextual details of WFH to overcome these limitations. This would enhance rigor in conclusions and recommendations for practice.

Key words: Working from home, Telework, Personality, Boundary management preferences, Self-efficacy, Wellbeing, Performance

Introduction

3.1 Introduction to Systematic Literature Review

The proportion of UK employees WFH was estimated to have risen from 4.7% in 2019 to 43.1% in 2020, according to a report by Felstead and Reuschke (2020). Whilst this drastic increase was largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic response, it is expected that WFH, or at least hybrid working (whereby employees split their working hours between WFH and attending an office), is here to stay (Kinman et al., 2020; Alipour, Langer & O'Kane, 2021). Indeed, according to The Office for National Statistics Business Insights and Conditions Survey in 2022, UK workers were attending an office on average 1.5 days per week by 2022, compared with 3.8 days pre-covid. It is thus more important than ever to understand how to make WFH successful.

3.2 Individual Psychological Factors and Strategies as Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes

A comprehensive account of WFH outcomes is likely to include the role of individual factors as determinants, reflecting the subjective experience of WFH. Indeed, Campbell and Heales (2016) point out in their study of the individual consequences of telework that there is a need to balance research on organisational factors (such as those discussed under section '1.3.3 Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes'), with research on individual factors. Telework refers to work conducted outside an office environment, including WFH (Smith, Patmos & Pitts, 2018). Campbell and Heales further argue that individuals make up half of the

relationship between telework and the organisation, that individuals should be aware of the factors that impact them as teleworkers, and that it is individuals who ultimately decide whether to telework or not (with a key exception being during the Covid-19 pandemic).

Some research such as that by Raišienė, Rapuano, Varkulevičiūtė and Stachová (2020) has explored individual factors in relation to teleworker satisfaction, however this was limited to demographic data. Furthermore, many individual factors (such as qualifications and years of experience), as well as organisational factors and social factors, are likely to change over time, and across types of organisations and job roles. In contrast, many individual *psychological* factors (such as personality or dispositions), are likely to be relatively stable, enduring and underpin how different individuals respond to the same organisational or social factors in different ways (Kankaraš, 2017). Other individual psychological factors (such as structuring behaviours) may be less ingrained or represent skills and strategies that individuals could be taught, thereby potentially enabling them to become better at WFH. Indeed, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a shift towards WFH *'without enabling workers and managers and families to fully develop new social, cultural, and structural systems to delineate roles and effective coping strategies, supports, and expectations.'* (p.364) (Kossek et al. 2006).

There are many examples of previous research studies that support the importance of focusing on individual psychological factors and strategies in relation to WFH outcomes. Sardeshmukh, Sharma and Golden (2012) reported that one limitation of their study on job-related factors in the relationship of telework with exhaustion and engagement is that they did not consider individual differences such as personality, motivational traits, adaptability and self-efficacy. Similarly, Lieke, Bakker, Hetland and Keulemans (2012) found that new ways of working (including WFH) were positively associated with engagement, potentially through more efficient and effective communication, however, they also specifically recommended that future research examines the role of personality characteristics in this relationship. Lieke et al. proposed that individuals who are more open to experiences may experience more engagement from new ways of working. Moreover, with reference to their study of telework in relation to stress and organisational identification, Fonner

and Roloff (2012) speculated that individual differences may moderate these relationships, specifically that extraversion might affect the relationship between telework and stress, and that identities and preference for rigid or fluid work-home boundaries might affect the relationship between telework and organisational identification. Boell, Campbell, Cecez-Kecmanovic and Cheng (2013) agree with the need to consider individual factors, not just organisational and social factors, emphasising that technology, work, organisations and individuals are *'entangled and mutually co-constituting'* (p.2).

The role of individual psychological factors in explaining WFH outcomes seems to be an avenue much in need of exploration. For example, personality has been linked to *perceptions* of virtual teams (Jacques, Garger, Brown & Deale, 2009), and Clark, Karau and Michalisin (2012) explored the 'big five' personality dimensions in relation to *attitudes* towards teleworking. However, the extent to which attitudes predict behaviour (such as successful WFH in the case of the present SLR) depends on a range of factors (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), and even a meta-analysis that supports the ability of attitudes to predict behaviour acknowledges that attitudes could be argued to account for as little as 13% of variance in behaviour (Kraus, 1995). These arguments question the applicability of such research for understanding successful WFH. Aligned with this idea, Luse, McElroy, Townsend and Demarie (2013) explored the role of personality and cognitive style in *preference* to work in virtual teams, recommending that future research focuses instead on actual implementation of virtual teams, given that *'preference is a far cry from performance'* (p.1830).

With regards to actual uptake of WFH (as opposed to preferences, attitudes or perceptions of WFH), initial non-systematic scoping of the literature, conducted in line with best practice systematic review processes (Rojon, Okupe & McDowall, 2021), would indicate that some research has been conducted that explores individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes (Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Neufeld & Fang, 2005). However, it would seem that no review yet exists to neatly synthesise such studies. This is important given that O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) argued that telework is unlikely to be suited to all employees because individual psychological factors may influence an employees' potential to be productive whilst WFH. O'Neill et al. (2009) also cited research by

Baruch and Nicholson (1997) and Harpaz (2002) which highlighted that selection and assessment of teleworkers should be considered carefully, as well as research by Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus and Hambley (2008) which identified that among fourteen organisations, there was a lack of understanding around how best to select employees who were suited to telework. A review of research into individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully would therefore be useful and make a unique contribution to the literature. This is supported by Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano and Michailidis (2019), who emphasise in their review of remote e-worker's wellbeing that a key gap in the literature is an understanding of the role of employee preferences and personality in relation to who would most benefit from remote e-working (including WFH).

As well as addressing a gap in the literature and providing useful insights to inform employees and organisations in practice, a review into individual psychological factors as determinants of WFH outcomes is also important from a theoretical perspective, with Eddleston and Mulki (2017) supporting the need for a greater focus on theory in WFH research.

3.3 Theoretical Underpinnings

There are multiple theoretical rationales for the link between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes. Job demands-resources theory (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) proposes that the degree of balance between demands and resources determines whether employees will experience employee burnout or engagement. Gajendran, Harrison and Delaney-Klinger (2015) used JD-R theory to argue that virtual work arrangements may have positive outcomes through increasing autonomy as a job resource. This notion of certain individual psychological factors serving as resources in relation to WFH outcomes is supported in studies by Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė and Goštautaitė (2019) and Bélanger, Watson-Manheim and Swan (2013). Related theories include Karasek and Theorell's (1990) demand-control-support (DCS) model, and Rubino, Perry, Milam, SpitzMüller and Zapf's (2012) demand-control-person (DCP) model. Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) used the

DCS model of individual stress in their study of boundary management in the telecommuting context, to suggest that employee wellbeing and effectiveness are partly a function of one's beliefs about work-family boundaries, arguing that such beliefs theoretically act as a 'control' factor. Perry, Rubino and Hunter (2018) used the DCP model to suggest that emotional stability affects the role of autonomy as a job resource in protecting remote workers from strain. Perry et al. (2018) additionally used Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory to propose that the relationship between remote work and strain depends on competence and need satisfaction for autonomy and relatedness as mechanisms. Linked to that, Delanoeije and Verbruggen (2019) conducted research into the role of 'volition' in telework outcomes. Volition refers to the degree of alignment between one's behaviour and one's preferences, such as the extent to which employees use or do not use WFH because that is their preference. Delanoeije and Verbruggen (2019) point to Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy and Hannum's (2012) research on boundary management styles (preference for integration versus segmentation) as an example of this. They advocate the importance individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, explaining that employees who experience WFH as volitional (high degree of 'fit': preference for WFH and actual use of WFH), are likely to experience reduced stress, reduced work-family conflict, and greater positive emotions.

Another theory which is of relevance, Person-Environment Fit theory (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Van Vianen, 2018), proposes that concurrence between individual and environmental characteristics generates positive outcomes. P-E fit theory suggests that identification of individual psychological factors that suit the WFH environment may enhance understanding of positive outcomes. Although not specifically in relation to WFH, Kreiner (2006) demonstrated that the interaction between personal preferences for integration or segmentation of work and non-work life and the extent to which an organisation is able to accommodate those preferences can influence work-home conflict. Kreiner thus advocates future research around the 'fit' between a person and their environment and how that relates to outcomes, based upon P-E fit theory. In contrast with Kreiner's study, research by Hyland, Rowsome and Rowsome (2005) which explored P-E fit theory found that a match between one's personal preferences for integration or segmentation of work and non-work life and the flexible work arrangements available to them did not impact work-related

outcomes (with the exception of the availability of compressed workweeks). However, this research used a broad definition of telework that did not separate WFH from other forms of remote work, such as working in the local library.

Other theories that have emerged as potentially relevant to individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes, but which will not be elaborated upon here, include: social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976, as cited in Greer & Payne, 2014), affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, as cited in Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015), theory of cognitive style (Sternberg, 1997, as cited in Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1978, as cited in, Staples, Hulland & Higgins, 1999), ego depletion theory (Müller & Niessen, 2019), and trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003, as cited in O'Neill, Hambley & Chatellier, 2014).

While multiple theories appear to support the importance of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, these theories have often been applied in studies of 'virtual work arrangements' (Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015), 'telecommuting' (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006), 'remote work' (Perry, Rubino & Hunter, 2018) or similar broad terms that focus on WFH to varying extents, blurred with other dimensions of telework such as the time at which work is conducted. It is therefore important to understand what theories apply to individual psychological factors in outcomes of WFH specifically.

3.4 The Present Study

To the authors knowledge, no review currently exists to synthesise existing research into individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH. This review responds directly to calls for a greater understanding of the personality and temperament of employees who are suited to telecommuting jobs (Narayana, Menon, Plaisent and Bernard (2017), to understand how employees' personal preferences impact WFH outcomes (Boell, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Campbell,

2016). Baruch (2000) stated that '*It would be of great importance to characterise people who may be best fit to teleworking'* (p.44).

In particular, the review will identify individual psychological factors and amalgamate their role in enabling employees to successfully WFH, where the definition of *successful* WFH is left open to understand how 'successful' WFH is currently defined in the literature. A key focus of this review is to understand what individual psychological factors have been explored to date, in what populations and in relation to what outcomes. The review is timely considering the increased interest in WFH as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the aim will be to start to provide insight into individual psychological factors that are suited to WFH, as well as how future research could best contribute.

This review contributes to the literature in five important ways. Firstly, it focuses on studies that explore WFH specifically, and excludes studies that do not separate the effects of WFH from other aspects of teleworking, new ways of working or flexible working, such as working in other remote locations. This approach also relies on the studies themselves being clear on their use of the term telework, flexible work, new ways of working and WFH (and what they mean by that). As was the case in a relevant review by Tietze, Musson and Scurry (2009), which explored themes, directions and implications in research studies on WFH, the present study expects to find that authors do not always clearly specify, for example, whether their term 'virtual work' refers to WFH or broader telework dimensions. Unlike Tietze et al.'s (2009) review which *'tried to make reasonable, conceptualized assumptions about the implied meaning of terminology'* (p.599), the present review will only include studies that clearly state that the focus is on WFH, to optimise rigour and comparability. Secondly, this review focuses on the experience of WFH itself (rather than perceptions of, attitudes towards or preference for WFH). Thirdly, it reviews the variety of WFH outcomes that have been studied to obtain an understanding of how successful WFH is defined in the literature. Fourth, this review includes consideration of negative WFH outcomes (not just positive outcomes), to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of successful WFH and what successful WFH is *not*. Finally, this review focuses on individual psychological factors, as opposed to organisational or social factors, to

address the need for greater balance in the literature (specifically more attention on individual psychological factors).

The main objective of this SLR is to understand what is currently known about individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH or serve as barriers to successful WFH. It will therefore address the following main research question and sub-questions:

What are the individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully?

Sub-questions:
- How is 'successful' WFH defined and measured in the literature?
- What is known about the specific individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully?
- What is known about the individual psychological factors that prevent or serve as barriers to successful WFH?
- What are the contexts and populations in which WFH has been studied?
- What factors may moderate the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes?

Method

4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

To address the main research question and sub-questions, this SLR inevitably adopts a specific view of the nature of reality (ontology) and ways of knowing (epistemology). This is clearly stated here, as per SLR best practice according to Rojon, Okupe and McDowall (2021).

The present SLR adopts a largely critical realist stance on ontology and epistemology. This stance proposes that there is an objective world out there, but that the understanding of reality is limited to human consciousness, that humans can only perceive reality to the limits that our existence allows, and thus reality extends beyond our perception as humans (Scott, 2005). However, this review does not reject a more constructivist ontology and epistemology. Indeed, it welcomes research of a quantitative nature (which lends itself to critical realism) *and* research of a qualitative nature (which lends itself to constructivism), acknowledging that the same situation or context (such as WFH) can be perceived differently by different individuals. It is also suggested that, because reality extends beyond human perception (critical realism), individuals may 'construct' different perceptions of WFH (constructivism), hence the two ontologies and epistemologies may not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, the converging of critical realism and constructivism approaches has been noted elsewhere (Al-Amoudi & Willmott, 2011), and has been found to offer the advantage of both interpretation of social phenomena and insight into potential causality (Bogna, Raineri & Dell, 2020). In line with a constructivist approach and other SLRs based on a constructivist approach (Clarke, Lumbard, Sambrook & Kerr, 2016), the researcher updated a reflective report throughout the process of this SLR to proactively engage in reflexivity.

Importantly, the ontology and epistemology has informed the synthesis method selected in this SLR. As will be described in more detail below, a narrative synthesis approach based on thematic analysis of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies was conducted.

4.2 Search Strategy

To start establishing a search strategy, and selecting appropriate databases and search terms, a preliminary search stage included initial scoping on Google Scholar and exploration of what reviews had already been conducted on WFH, as per SLR best practice (Rojon, McDowall & Saunders, 2011). Additionally, the pearl growing technique (Schlosser, Wendt, Bhavnani & Nail-Chiwetalu, 2006) was adopted,

meaning that relevant papers that had already been identified (known as 'pearls') were used as a source for identifying further relevant papers until no new relevant papers were found. For example, in the context of this research, pearl growing was applied in three main ways to identify the range of papers published, databases they were held on and terms they used that may need to be included in the search terms for this SLR. Firstly, by reading relevant papers in detail and checking their bibliography to identify other relevant papers within that and so on, to produce a snowball effect. Secondly, by exploring what other papers had cited a specific paper that was known to be relevant. Finally, by using papers that were known to be relevant to identify new keywords that were then searched for to identify further relevant papers. These steps were repeated until the new material that emerged became less relevant, as supported by Papaioannou, Sutton, Carroll, Booth and Wong (2010), who advocate the use of pearl growing in social science SLRs.

An SLR protocol was developed, containing details of the databases, search terms, and inclusion and exclusion criteria, as outlined below. This protocol and the details within it were reviewed and validated by a member of the research team, as per best practice (Kitchenham, Budgen & Brereton, 2015, as cited in Ali & Usman, 2018). Once the protocol had been agreed, on the 9th of January 2021 a systematic literature search was conducted in the following databases: Web of Science (Social Sciences Citation Index), ABI Inform, PsycINFO. These databases were selected on the basis that they appeared to generate the most relevant papers during the preliminary search stage. The selection of the databases was also informed by checking those databases which a relevant meta-analysis (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and literature review (Siha & Monroe, 2006) had previously used.

The following search terms were applied:

> (Individual OR Characteristics OR Psycholog* OR Personality OR Strategies OR Self-leadership OR Motivation* OR Identit* OR Boundary management) AND
> (Remote* OR Telework* OR "Work* from home" OR Telecommut* OR Flexible work* OR Virtual) AND

(Employee* OR Virtual worker* OR e-work* OR Telework* OR "Home-anchored worker")

AND

(Outcomes OR Succe* OR Performance OR Effectiv* OR Well-being OR Satisf* OR "Work-life balance" OR Sustainab* OR Engage* OR Productiv*)

Search terms were identified through an iterative process including extensive reading in the areas of individual psychological factors influencing work outcomes and WFH, aided by the aforementioned pearl growing technique. For example, a paper by Basile and Beauregard (2016) highlighted that boundary management was important in the WFH context, hence 'boundary management' was included in the search terms. Search terms were also identified through the exploration and testing of the specific search terms required to generate specific papers that seemed to be relevant. Moreover, there was discussion with other Occupational Psychologists and researchers who were conducting research in similar areas. For example, another researcher highlighted a paper by Kankaraš (2017), which discussed a wide range of personality characteristics and their relevance to a variety of work outcomes. This paper acted as a useful benchmark and was used to help identify search terms for individual psychological factors. More general discussion with a specialist university librarian helped to manage nuances in the process, for example, note that the term 'Telework*' is included in both the 'Remote*' and 'Employee*' search strings, because a key paper which was known to be relevant only appeared to be generated when 'telework*' appeared in both search strings.

4.3 Selection Criteria

Papers were selected for inclusion against the precise, pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, as shown in Table 1. The criteria were specified on the basis of an adapted version of the Study Design, Participants, Intervention, Outcomes (SPIO; Richardson, Wilson, Nishikawa & Hayward, 1995) approach, as 'Intervention' was not relevant.

Each inclusion or exclusion criteria item was carefully constructed with a clear rationale (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). For example, studies which focused on self-employed teleworkers were excluded, such as Mustafa and Gold's (2013) study, because Mustafa and Gold themselves point out that there are large differences between self-employed and non-self-employed teleworkers. Namely, self-employed teleworkers are less likely to have an externally determined workflow.

Table 1.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

SPIO Framework	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Study Design	• Qualitative studies, quantitative studies, mixed methods studies • Studies conducted between 2003 and 2020 (with the exception of those conducted within the context of the coronavirus pandemic) • Empirical designs only, published in an academic journal/scholarly journals, peer-reviewed • Published in English language • Studies in which the focus is either explicitly stated to be (or would appear to be) WFH, rather than other elements of remote work such as working in cafes, hotels or satellite offices • Studies in which the focus is on where employees work (home) rather than when or how they work • Studies which focus on actual use of WFH • Studies in which participants may not spend all their working time WFH (e.g. they may spend some of their time working in an office) • Studies which explore individual psychological factors (such as personality), including any individual psychological factors beyond those which are included in the search terms	• Instances where the study does not contain original data such as meta-analyses, SLRs, other types of reviews • Grey literature and non-peer reviewed material, such as CIPD reports • PhDs • Conference papers • Studies that look at broader telework definitions (e.g. not just location of work but also timing of work), without separating out the effects of 'when', 'where' and 'how' elements of work. For example, Van Steenbergen, van der Ven, Peeters and Taris' (2018) study. • Studies that use terms such as teleworking, telecommuting, new ways of working, flexible working and virtual teams without specifying what is meant by that, e.g. studies which are not clear about whether other aspects of telework such as timing of work, technology and contractual arrangements were mixed in with the key location aspect (this review is interested in WFH) • Studies which include in their definition of telework not just WFH but working in any other remote location such as public transport or hotels. For example, Smith, Patmos and Pitts' (2015) study which explored any work that happened at a site other than the ordinary office, without separating WFH from other forms of remote work. Similarly, studies that use terms like 'virtual teams' without clarifying whether that means WFH or not will also be excluded • Studies which focus on availability of WFH, possibility to WFH, decision to WFH, permission to WFH, preference for WFH or attitudes towards WFH, rather than WFH itself

		• Studies conducted within the extreme context of the coronavirus pandemic (March 2020 onwards)
		• Studies that explore WFH only in the context of overtime, 'off-job' time or 'after hours' work
		• Studies that look at team psychological factors at the team level (such as ICT shared mental models in Müller and Antoni's (2020) study), rather than individual psychological factors at the individual level
		• Studies which focus on the experience of the colleagues of home workers, rather than the actual home workers themselves (such as Golden's (2007) study)
		• Studies that look at the leadership style of an employees' manager rather than the style of the individual who is WFH themselves (such as Eng, Moore, Grunberg, Greenberg & Sikora's (2010) study)
Population	• Adults (18+) • Working population (employees) including both part-time and full-time • Studies in which it is reasonable to assume (if not explicitly stated in the paper) that the samples consisted mostly of participants who were mainly in 'office-based' jobs, knowledge work or similar occupations (i.e. occupations in which the work could be conducted in an office but instead is being conducted from home) • Not all participants may WFH (e.g. there may be a control group who do not WFH) • Any countries	• Individuals under 18 years of age • Non-work samples such as student populations • Studies in which participants were WFH in occupations that are clearly not office-based (e.g. on-call nurses) • Studies in which it is not clear what proportion of the work was conducted as WFH or what proportion of the sample were WFH • Studies that focus on self-employed teleworkers
Intervention	No specific intervention required, because the purpose is to look more broadly at the state of the evidence and to understand if there is evidence to suggest that there is an impact of individual psychological factors on WFH outcomes.	
Outcomes	• Studies which explore positive outcomes of WFH beyond those which are included in the search terms • Studies which explore negative outcomes of WFH (as this could be viewed as the opposite of 'successful' WFH which the present study is interested in defining, and negative outcomes could help to understand what successful WFH is 'not')	• No outcomes will be excluded, as one of the sub-questions of this review is to understand how 'successful' WFH is defined and measured in the literature

4.4 Selection Process

The results from each database were exported into reference manager, Mendeley desktop, where they were stored. The papers were subsequently exported from Mendeley into Microsoft Excel, where the results of the sifting process were managed and recorded. Papers were screened and selected (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), through a three-phased approach, as detailed under 3.4.1, 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 below.

4.4.1 Title sift

Based on the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 1, two members of the research team conducted independent reviews of a randomly selected 10% of the papers based on title (n = 191). This process was conducted blind. The results were then compared by percentage of agreement and Cohen's Kappa (See Table 2). A third reviewer conducted a further review, again adhering to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, to resolve discrepancies between the previous two reviewers. The first reviewer reflected deeply on the title sift independent review process and then conducted a review of the remaining 90% of the papers based on title (n = 1,719), using the inclusion and exclusion criteria to continue maximising objectivity.

4.4.2 Abstract sift

As per the title sift, two members of the research team conducted independent reviews of a randomly selected 10% of the remaining papers based on abstract (n = 45). Again, this was conducted blind, based on the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the results were then compared by percentage of agreement and Cohen's Kappa (See Table 2). A third reviewer conducted a further review referring to the inclusion and exclusion criteria to resolve discrepancies between the previous two reviewers. The first reviewer reflected deeply on the abstract sift independent review

process and then conducted a review of the remaining 90% of the papers based on abstract (n = 396).

4.4.3 Full text sift

The full paper sift (n = 234) was conducted by one reviewer, based on the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Although a relatively large number of papers were included in the full text sift, many of these were straightforward to filter out based on the definition of WFH, the sample and whether individual psychological factors were included. This was also reflective of the cautious approach that was applied throughout the title and abstract sifts, whereby if there was any doubt as to a paper's relevance, that paper was sifted in to the next phase.

A small number of papers (n = 23) were subject to a second full text sift and discussion with a second reviewer to ensure confidence in the relevance of those papers. In cases where there was still uncertainty about whether a paper should be included against the inclusion criteria, the researcher emailed the author of the paper to seek clarity and confirmation.

The full text sift resulted in a total of n = 13 papers that from the SLR process it was clear addressed the SLR research questions and met the inclusion criteria (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

Table 2.

Percentage Agreement and Cohen's Kappa for Independent Reviews

	Title Sift:	Abstract Sift:
% Agreement	74.87%	66.67%
Cohen's Kappa	0.47	0.34
Label	Moderate agreement	Fair agreement

Figure 1 below summarises the process of selecting papers, in line with the best practice 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses' approach (PRISMA; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009).
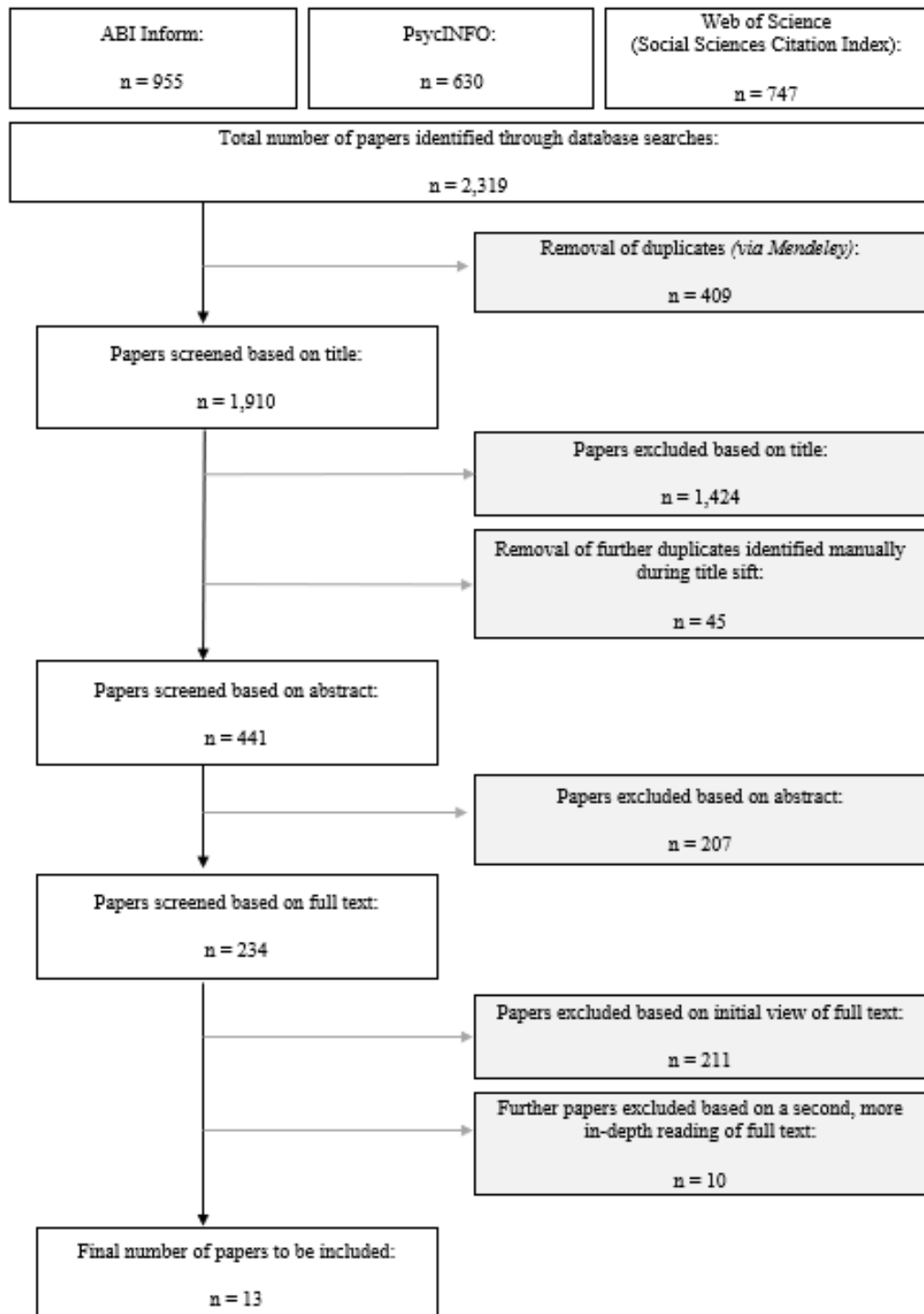
Figure 1.

Flow Diagram of Search Results

4.5 Quality Assessment

All papers that were included in the final selection (n = 13) were appraised using an adapted version of Hong et al.'s (2018) quality assessment framework (see Appendix B). The rationale for selecting Hong et al.'s framework includes that it focuses on methodological quality, as opposed to quality of the research write-up, acknowledging that methodologically sound research can be written up poorly and vice versa. It also provides clear explanations beneath each checklist item, thereby enhancing objectivity. Finally, Hong et al.'s approach not only provides distinct checklists for qualitative and quantitative studies (in accordance with best practice quality assessment according to Rojon, Okupe and McDowall (2021), but it also provides a distinct checklist for mixed methods studies. An example checklist item from Hong et al.'s framework is:

Question: *'Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?'*
Explanation: *'There should be clear links between data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation.'* (p.3).

The only adaptation made to Hong et al.'s quality assessment framework was the addition of one checklist item based on ethics. This was an important addition, recognising the key role of ethical considerations in research best practice (British Psychological Society, 2014). A pre-existing ethics item was added from a quality assessment framework by Snape, Meads, Bagnall, Tregaskis and Mansfield (2017) (see Appendix B).

The quality assessment included an independent review process: two researchers from the research team independently quality assessed two papers and discussed their results to check inter-reliability, maximise objectivity and ensure a consistent frame of reference. Following the independent review, the quality assessment process was repeated by the researcher for the remaining papers. The evidence for each checklist item was graded as 'Yes', 'No', 'Cannot tell'. The quality assessment was conducted in a consistent way for each paper, for example, based on

a consistent cut-off point of an 80% complete data value (Thomas et al., 2004, as cited in Hong et al., 2018) and a 20% drop-out rate (Van Tulder et al., 2003, as cited in Hong et al., 2018).

4.6 Data Extraction

A data extraction tool was developed in Microsoft Excel and refined through discussion with the research team, with the purpose of ensuring that each paper was analysed in a consistent and comparable manner. A 'Guide for Analytical Reading' (adapted from Sweeney, Clarke & Higgs, 2019, as recommended by Rojon, Okupe & McDowall, 2021) is provided to summarise the data extraction tool in a transparent and replicable manner (See Table 3). It included key fields corresponding to the SPIO approach (Richardson, Wilson, Nishikawa & Hayward, 1995), such as Study design (cross-sectional, case study, and whether there were control or comparison groups), as well as the nine fields recommended by Garrard's (2004) matrix method, ranging from Study purpose (aims and hypotheses) to Publication (which journal the paper was published in).

Additional fields were tailored to the specific topic of this SLR. For example, the need to distinguish between whether the study was looking at voluntary or involuntary WFH was identified as important to capture (Kaduk, Genadek, Kelly & Moen, 2019). Other fields were designed to correspond to the specific sub-questions of this SLR. Finally, a field called 'Theoretical lens' was added to capture whether each of the papers were testing a particular theory or had underpinning theories, models or frameworks. This is in line with best practice according to Rojon, Okupe and McDowall. (2021), whose critique of SLR methodology includes the recommendation that *theoretical consideration should permeate and be developed as part of the review process by asking "how well have we theorised the findings?"* (p. 33), rather than theory being treated as a distinct stage within the SLR methodology.

Finally, as recommended by PRISMA (Moher et al. 2009), risk of bias in the studies was assessed by reading the papers in detail and capturing notes on potential sources of bias in the data extraction tool.

Table 3.

Guide to Analytical Reading

Number:	Fields in Data Extraction Tool:
1	Author(s)
2	Title
3	Publication
4	Study type
5	Study purpose
6	Data collection
7	Study duration
8	Study design
9	Sample size
10	Sampling strategy
11	Participant demographics
12	Participant occupation(s)
13	Full-time/Part-time
14	Sample industry or sector
15	Country of Origin
16	Proportion of participant time spent WFH
17	Proportion of participants who were WFH
18	How much experience participants had of WFH
19	Types of tasks that participants were conducting at home
20	Whether the study was looking at voluntary or involuntary WFH
21	Overall study findings
22	Individual psychological factors which had a positive impact on WFH outcomes
23	Individual psychological factors which had a negative impact on WFH outcomes (e.g. barriers)
24	Any individual psychological factors which were studied but had no significant impact on WFH outcomes
25	Outcomes/definition of successful WFH
26	Any interventions*
27	Any controls, moderators or mediators that were included
28	Measures (such as a particular survey)
29	Theoretical lens
30	Analytic methods
31	The author's interpretation of the findings
32	Recommendations made for future research
33	Limitations stated
34	Risk of bias

*Note that no specific interventions were required, because the purpose of the SLR was to look more broadly at the state of the evidence and to understand if there is evidence to suggest that there is an impact of individual psychological factors on WFH outcomes

One researcher independently extracted two papers into the data extraction tool as a pilot. This was then reviewed by a second researcher to check the breadth, depth and quality of the extraction. Feedback was provided and applied before the first researcher proceeded to extract data from the remaining papers.

4.7 Data Synthesis

Given the diverse nature of papers that were identified (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods), and the relatively small number of papers identified as suitable for inclusion (n = 13), data was synthesised in a narrative format. The specific synthesis method adopted was 'integration', which Rojon, Okupe and McDowall. (2021) with reference to Rousseau, Manning and Denyer (2008) define as *'triangulation across multiple studies and methods in order to answer specific questions and explore when interventions are more likely to be appropriate'* (p. 15), or in the case of this SLR, explore which individual psychological factors are more likely to be suited to WFH (rather than interventions).

To achieve this integration, a thematic analysis method by Miles and Huberman (1994), as cited in Berkowitz (1997), was selected and applied. The rationale for this selection included that it was deemed by the researchers to be feasible for the data that had been extracted, it was appropriate for the research question and sub-questions, the researcher is experienced and competent in thematic analysis, and thematic analysis is considered to help encourage theoretical development (Rojon et al. 2021). Furthermore, as Rojon et al. point out, Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic analysis approach has been successfully applied in a range of previous SLRs, such as Abidi, de Leeuw and Klumpp (2014) and Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan and James (2015). Adhering to a particular method of synthesis addresses recent criticism from Rojon et al. (2021) that many researchers conduct SLRs without any particular method of synthesis.

In accordance with Rojon et al.'s (2021) recommendations, the synthesis method selected was informed by the SLR epistemology. Specifically, thematic

analysis is not necessarily limited to any particular epistemological view and thus can be applied across a variety of approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Timberlake, 2015), such as mixed critical realism and constructivism, as in the present SLR. Critical realism and constructivism have both been simultaneously applied to thematic analysis in previous research, such as that by Timberlake (2015). In the present SLR, thematic analysis was informed by critical realism in the sense that the understanding of reality was limited to the categories or themes that could be perceived and labelled by the researcher. The thematic analysis was also informed by constructivism in that an inductive, open approach was adopted based on the principle of being led by the data itself. Applying the Miles and Huberman (1994) thematic analysis method involved three main phases, each detailed in turn below: 4.7.1 Data Reduction, 4.7.2 Data Display, 4.7.3 Drawing Conclusions and Verification.

4.7.1 Data Reduction

Individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes across the papers were clustered by similarity and codes were developed, for example, for individual psychological factors this included personality. The codes were then applied to the data (each of the 13 published papers) and the contents of each code was counted. For example, it was noted that there seemed to be a good balance between papers measuring performance outcomes (n = 6) and emotional outcomes (n = 6). Throughout the analysis process, the researcher noted the latter and other observations as reflections. Most of the codes eventually developed into themes, except for those codes for which the frequency was just n = 1. Individual psychological factors that emerged just once were grouped into an 'other individual psychological factors' category. This general category helped to neatly absorb data that did not logically fit in any of the other themes, in line with Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic analysis approach.

As in other SLRs (such as that by Xia, Zou, Griffin, Wang & Zhong, 2018), the themes were developed inductively during the process of synthesis as opposed to being pre-defined. Making contrasts and comparisons between emerging themes also

helped in the process of developing the themes by forming a rationale for merging or splitting out themes.

4.7.2 Data Display

The themes were reviewed in descending order, whereby themes containing the highest frequency of instances were displayed first and then themes containing progressively lower number of instances next. This helped the researcher to appreciate the commonalities and differences across the papers. As well as looking at the number of papers supporting each theme, the design used by different studies within themes was also considered and displayed (See Table 4 in the Results section). This is in line with Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach which recommends including triangulation in data analysis, whereby different sources and different data collection methods or designs may help strengthen a theme.

Presenting the themes in text format was a useful way of reflecting on the contents of each and checking that the content was appropriate. However, what particularly helped with the data analysis was the production of sunburst diagrams to display the individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes (See Figures 2 and 3 in the Results section). This visual data display was particularly useful as it forced the researcher to summarise the data and test understanding of the meaning of each theme.

Importantly, the overall data display process (including the text, tables and diagrams) also provided another opportunity for earlier data analysis to be compared with later data analysis in a process of constant review, comparison and sorting.

4.7.3 Drawing Conclusions and Verification

Patterns and themes were carefully reviewed a few days after the data display phase, to enable a 'fresh' perspective and to check the clustering of the individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes (Kawulich, 2004). For example,

motivational factors were originally clustered under 'other individual psychological factors', however these were then subsequently separated out into a 'motivational factors' theme because more than one motivational factor had been studied. Although the two factors were quite different (need for autonomy and need for achievement), they were ultimately both 'needs-based' factors, which provided a rationale for them being grouped into a theme.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also recommend considering 'plausibility' and conceptual/theoretical coherence as part of the thematic analysis process. The quality assessment process, focused on the methodology of each paper, helped to inform and justify the plausibility of the findings and themes. Conceptual coherence was reviewed by checking that the contents of each theme looked to possess face validity, in terms of seeming reasonably similar or related. Theoretical coherence was reviewed by considering what theories supported (or indicated the need for changes to) themes. For example, it was identified that it made sense to keep preferences for segmentation and preferences for integration of work and non-work life together under one theme ('Boundary Management Preferences'), because both are key elements of boundary management theory and can be seen on a continuum from complete segmentation to complete integration. The themes were also constantly reviewed against the research questions of the SLR, to make sure that the themes made sense and contributed value in a way that addressed the research questions.

Results

This section outlines the results of the SLR, drawing upon SPIO (Richardson, Wilson, Nishikawa & Hayward, 1995) and PRISMA (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009) best practice guidance in the write-up of results.

The following 13 papers were included in the final selection: Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline

(2009), Greer and Payne (2014), Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006), O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014), Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003), Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), Basile and Beauregard (2016), Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016), Eddleston and Mulki (2017), Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003), Neufeld and Fang (2005), and Müller and Niessen (2019).

5.1 Study Characteristics

Table 4 summarises the characteristics of each of the 13 studies, described below.

5.1.1 Country

The majority of studies were conducted in the United States (n = 5 studies) or Canada (n = 3 studies). Of the remaining studies, one was conducted in the United Kingdom, one in the Netherlands, and three studies were unclear about where they were conducted.

5.1.2 Design

The studies adopted the following research designs: most of the studies were quantitative (n = 8) or mixed methods (n = 4). One study was qualitative. Of the mixed methods studies, two of those studies (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Neufeld & Fang, 2005) were formed of two separate studies or phases within the study, each with a distinct method (one part qualitative and one part quantitative). This is important to note as each of the two separate studies or phases within Eddleston and Mulki (2017) and Neufeld and Fang (2005) also had different samples, unlike the other mixed methods studies. Due to the two different samples within Eddleston and Mulki (2017) and the two different samples within Neufeld and Fang (2005), each of these phases

or 'studies within studies' will be split out when describing Study Characteristics and Participant Characteristics.

5.1.3 Data Collection Time Points

Nearly half of the studies (n = 6) collected data at a single point in time. Four studies collected data at two points in time. The remaining three studies collected data at a variety of time points: three points in time (n = 1 study), four points in time (n = 1 study), and at an initial time point followed by daily surveys twice a day over five consecutive workdays (n = 1 study).

5.1.4 Sample Size

There was a wide range in the sample size across the studies. The largest sample size was 756 (n = 1 study), closely followed by 723 (n = 1 study). The smallest sample size was 32 in Phase One of Neufeld and Fang's (2005) study, followed by 40 in Basile and Beauregard's (2016) study. The majority of studies had between 100 and 200 participants (n = 5), or between 200 and 300 participants (n = 4).

Across the 13 studies, there were a total of 3,392 participants. However, when comparing the Participant Characteristics, it seems likely that the participants in two of the studies (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004) were the same individuals. If so, this would result in a corrected total of 2,669 participants across the 13 studies.

5.1.5 Theoretical Approach

With regards to theoretical approach, none of the studies adopted a purely inductive approach, as they did not tend to start with data collection or use rich data to identify patterns and new theory. Instead, the literature was dominated by deductive

research. Five studies seemed to adopt a purely deductive approach, whereby the development of hypotheses was grounded in existing theory which then guided data collection and analysis to enable one or more theories to be tested.

Seven studies appeared to adopt what was mainly a deductive approach, but with elements of inductive research. For example, O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014) used Person-job fit (Kristof, 1996) and Trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003) to support and justify their hypothesis development (Deductive), and then alluded to how Person-job fit theory could be further developed by integrating the traits in their research to extend the understanding of strong fit and the potential for positive WFH outcomes (Inductive). However, not much detail is provided on exactly how Person-job fit theory could be extended, therefore the study is considered to have *elements* of an inductive approach rather than being purely inductive. One study (Basile & Beauregard, 2016) made no reference to theory.

Table 4.

Summary of Study Characteristics

Paper*:	Country of Origin:	Design:	Data Collection Time Points:	Sample Size:	Inductive/ Deductive/ Unclear:	Theoretical Approach:
						Theory:
1	United States	Quantitative	4	102	Inductive (with elements of Deductive)	The authors '*apply and extend affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) to consider the emotional impact of events occurring both at and beyond one's physical workplace (i.e., "the office"). We expect that, on average, employees will encounter different events when working at home versus in the office. Further, we expect that personality will impact the experience of these events—through differential exposure, perception, or reactions to them.*' (p.883). The hypotheses are developed based on the AET. The authors develop and propose a model based on AET.
2	Western Canada	Quantitative	1	156	Deductive	The authors identified and selected trait measures that were theoretically related to at least one of the following (based on previous research): '*1) ability to separate work from non-work life, 2) working without close supervision, and 3) overcoming threats of isolation.*' (p.146). They used the existing literature to search for traits where they could '*develop a compelling theoretical argument to suggest that a given trait would be more predictive of telework effectiveness versus non-telework effectiveness*' (p.146), and '*The resulting list of traits was then truncated to restrict substantial overlap among traits included (overlap creates redundancy in theoretical arguments)*' (p. 146).
3	N/A	Mixed methods	1	86	Deductive	'*Social exchange theory provides a framework for linking successful telework practices to organisational benefits. In this framework, social exchange is "a two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding process involving 'transactions' or simply 'exchange'"* (Emerson, 1976, p. 336). As applied to the current study, social exchange occurs between teleworkers and their employing organisations*'. (p.93). Based on this, the authors hypothesised that teleworkers' desires to repay their organisation would encourage them to use strategies to optimise performance. Based on social exchange theory, they also hypothesised that telework strategies would be negatively related to turnover intentions. The authors also proposed that '*Boundary theory can be used to help explain why telework presents unique challenges that are not present in traditional work settings*' (p.90), including altered physical, temporal and psychological boundaries.
4	United States	Mixed methods	1 time point for the survey, followed by an interview 3 months later	245	Deductive (with elements of Inductive)	The authors draw upon work-family theory and boundary theory in hypothesis development: '*... many work–family theorists argue that greater integration between work and family roles is a way to balance work and family life and even to use one to catalyze positive effects in the other (Friedman, Christensen, & DeGroot, 1998). Yet recent theory on boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000) suggests that with integration of work and family boundaries, there is the risk of increased process losses, role transitions, and transactions costs associated with role switching. Integrating boundaries may result in more work–family role conflict. The increased cognitive complexity from higher integration of boundaries may relate to higher frustration and depression as well. We do not predict any relationship to performance or turnover, since we believe a boundary management strategy is a measure of personal preferences for one's approach to managing flexibility that will be more strongly related to personal well-being than work outcomes.*' (p.354). The authors compare their findings with theory: '*Those with boundary management strategies higher on integration had greater family-to-work conflict. These results are consistent with theory and evidence developed by Ashforth and colleagues (2000) that contrary to the popular press, an integration of work and family boundaries does not necessarily correspond with less family-to-work conflict.*' (p.362). The authors '*offer new theory on how to conceptualize flexibility as involving both descriptive and psychological forms, as well as differentiating between flexibility practice and policy.*' (p.363), and '*build on classic job design theory (Hackman and Oldham, 1980) and the Karasek and Theorell (1990) model which predicts that autonomy or control over the work process will lead to improved employee attitudes and performance, and show that control over the timing and location of work is also important for positive outcomes.*' (p.363-364).

| 5 | Western Canada | Quantitative | 2 | Timepoint 1: 174

Timepoint 2: 94 (54% attrition rate) | Deductive (with elements of Inductive) | Person-job fit (Kristof, 1996) and trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003) were used to support hypothesis development.

The authors argue that *'Identifying those traits that are the most powerful predictors of outcomes of remote work (i.e., cyberslacking, satisfaction, perceptions of performance) would be advantageous for theory and practice. Theoretically, it would narrow the range of traits needed for a comprehensive framework of personality and remote work outcomes.'* (p.293).

'Person-job fit theories of remote work could integrate these traits as a basis for strong fit and the corresponding potential for positive outcomes.' (p.296). Additionally, the authors state that *'Demands from trait activation theory accommodate the findings for Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Honesty, whereas Distracters from trait activation theory accommodate the findings for Neuroticism and Procrastination (Tett & Burnett, 2003).'* (p.296). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | The organisation was headquartered in North America | Quantitative | 1 | 723 | Deductive (with elements of Inductive) | The authors use self-efficacy theory to position their study and its focus on self-efficacy in the domain of telecommuting: *'According to self-efficacy theory, individuals judge their ability to successfully cope with new challenges when presented with environmental demands, thus developing domain-specific self-efficacy beliefs.'* (p.182).

The authors claim that *'Results from this study support and extend previous research suggesting the importance of self-efficacy in the context of new work forms. The present study demonstrates the relevance of self-efficacy in the telecommuting context.'* (p.192). |
7	N/A	Quantitative	1	756	Deductive	Some light reference to theory is made in hypothesis development: *'In this ambiguous work environment, minimizing resource drain and enabling segmentation may depend on characteristics such as self-efficacy (i.e., individuals' belief in their ability to manage the challenges that they confront; Bandura, 1997), and structuring behaviours (i.e., proactive strategies aimed at planning and organizing the workday; Raghuram et al., 2001, 2003). According to Bandura, when presented with environmental demands, individuals judge their ability to successfully cope with the challenges they face. ... In sum, we expect individual characteristics promoting self-regulation (such as self-efficacy and structuring behaviour) to help virtual workers segment work and nonwork, and cope effectively with stressors causing resource drain (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Rosenbaum & Cohen, 1999).'* (p.264).
8	United Kingdom	Qualitative	1	40	Unclear	No reference to theory.
9	Netherlands	Quantitative	3	251	Deductive (with elements of Inductive)	Seems to extend theory on self-efficacy by focusing on involuntary WFH and uses boundary theory to justify the focus of the study: *'Boundary theory suggests that people can create and maintain boundaries— also called "mental fences"—around roles as a means of simplifying and ordering their environment (Michaelsen & Johnson, 1997; Nippert-Eng, 1996a, 1996b; Zerubavel, 1991). ... We investigated individuals' boundary management strategy given the potential challenge of successfully creating and maintaining boundaries separating work and family when one is forced to work more from home. While self-efficacy in managing competing work and family demands has not garnered as much attention as boundary management strategies have, research done to date suggests that such self-efficacy holds promise in helping individuals more successfully avoid work–family conflict (e.g., Hennessy & Lent, 2008). We wanted to examine whether it holds as much promise in helping individuals successfully avoid WFC when being forced to work more from home.'* (p.805).
10	United States	Study 1: Qualitative

Study 2: Quantitative

(each Study had a different sample hence they are presented separately) | Study 1: 1

Study 2: 1 | Study 1: 52

Study 2: 299 | Deductive (with elements of Inductive) | The authors draw from Boundary theory, implying that it may need to be adjusted to apply to remote workers. The authors claim that, *'given the inherent physical integration of work and home for remote workers, how they navigate work-family boundaries may be complex'* (p.8).

The Study 1 interview questions were *'based on existing research rooted in boundary theory and extant research on telecommuting'* (p.11), and the analysis involved *'a continual process of comparison between data, field notes, interpretations of informant statements and existing theory in order to identify patterns and themes'* (p.12). For example, the authors point out that many of their respondents often juggled work and family demands, and they link this to how in the development of Work/Family Border theory, Clark (2000) discussed the importance of "border keepers" (such as spouses, managers) in an employee's ability to manage the work- family border. Additionally, the authors state that, based on theory of work-family depletion (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) which proposes that resources to cope with work and family are finite, their findings suggest that *'an inability to disengage from work infringes on the family role'* (p.21). The findings from the qualitative study also *'provided useful insights on the work-family experiences of remote workers that appear to contrast with some boundary theory and telecommuting research.'* (p.24).

'While we initially expected remote workers who fully integrated work and family to experience the least work-family conflict based on the Person-Environment Fit perspective of boundary theory (Kreiner, 2006), our qualitative study revealed that efforts to minimise integration seemed to alleviate work-family conflict. The results from the survey-based study supported these findings by demonstrating that high integration increases the WFC and FWC of remote workers. This is an important contribution to boundary theory and research on remote workers.' (p.30). Specifically: *'Remote workers' embeddedness of work in the family domain calls for a more nuanced approach to boundary theory and its implications for the work-family interface.'* (p.35), and *'In contrast to the Person-Environment Fit perspective of boundary* |

						theory, we found that remote workers who are unable to create a boundary between work and family experience the greatest FWC and WFC. This finding extends boundary theory by suggesting that a boundary management style that compensates for a highly integrated work environment is most beneficial in managing competing work and family demands.' (p.31).
11	Implied to be United States	Quantitative	1	261	Deductive	Theory is used to introduce the rationale for the study: '*Consistent with Person-Environment Fit theory (Davis, England, & Lofquist, 1964), satisfaction with one's work results from correspondence between a person's environment and his or her personal characteristics.'* (p.202). The study is also heavily based on Sternberg's (1997) theory of cognitive style: '*People organize and govern their tasks in ways that are consistent with how they cognitively formulate concepts and process information (Sternberg, 1997). ...When cognitive styles and environment are compatible, individuals are better equipped to attend to and interpret relevant information and use this information to decide how to act and perform effectively (Hayes & Allinson, 1998).'* (p.203). The findings are compared with theory: '*The two dependent measures (i.e., commitment to the virtual team and commitment to the telework function) were negatively correlated, which may appear surprising at first but is consistent with Sternberg's (1997) theory.'* (p.211).
12	Canada	Phase 1: Qualitative Phase 2: Quantitative *(each Phase had a different sample hence they are presented separately)*	Phase 1: 1 Phase 2: 1	Phase 1: 32 Phase 2: 100	Deductive	Uses the theory of reasoned action (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980) to justify the hypothesis that telecommuter beliefs and attitudes are positively associated with telecommuter productivity, as it suggests that '*behaviours or outcomes can be best predicted by attitudes that specifically relate to them. Individuals who hold favorable beliefs and attitudes are more likely to practice and learn skills.'* (p.1038).
13	N/A	Quantitative	Participants first completed a general survey. Second, participants filled out daily surveys twice a day over five consecutive workdays (from Monday to Friday) in a typical workweek with at least one home office day	195	Deductive (with elements of Inductive)	The authors claim that the research '*theoretically and methodologically extends research on flexible work arrangements and self-leadership.'* (p.893). For example: '*In his theoretical paper, Ross (2014) proposes a conceptual model of underlying internal processes leading to self-leadership development. He identifies internal states (i.e., self-esteem, self-concept, and self-confidence) as mediators in the self-leadership development process ... However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no empirical research on workplace characteristics as antecedents of self-leadership or on mediating factors from a daily perspective.'* (p.884). Uses Ego Depletion to develop hypotheses, and '*It extends the literature on ego depletion by applying ego depletion theory in the context of self-leadership and part-time telework.'* (p.893). The authors also refer to theory underpinning self-leadership in relation to their findings: '*In line with the theoretical conceptualization of the self-leadership concept (Manz, 1986) as well as past research, MCFAs showed a better but not yet acceptable fit for the nine-factor model'* (p.887), and they use goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) to explain one of their findings.

* 1 = Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), 2 = O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009), 3 = Greer and Payne (2014), 4 = Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006), 5 = O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014), 6 = Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003), 7 = Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), 8 = Basile and Beauregard (2016), 9 = Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016), 10 = Eddleston and Mulki (2017), 11 = Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003), 12 = Neufeld and Fang (2005), 13 = Müller and Niessen (2019).

5.2 Participant Characteristics

Table 5 displays the participant characteristics across the studies, described below.

5.2.1 Age and Gender

Five studies reported the mean age of their participants, ranging from an average of 34.84 years old to an average of 41.74 years old. Four studies did not report the mean age of their participants, but they did report age ranges or percentage categories, for example: 19.51% between 36-45 years old. Four studies did not report any age data.

Of the studies which reported the gender of their participants (all apart from n = 4 studies), there was generally a balanced gender split. Seven studies had between 40-60% female samples. Two studies had a bias towards mainly female participants, and two studies had a bias towards mainly male participants.

5.2.2 Sector and Occupation

There were a wide variety of sectors explored across the studies, ranging from telecommunications (n = 2 studies) to a Big Four accounting firm (n = 1 study). The most frequently studied sector across the studies was the Finance sector, which was the focus of n = 4 studies. Five studies gathered participants from across multiple sectors.

In line with the wide variety of sectors across the studies, there was also a wide variety of participant occupations, and occupations tended to vary within studies as well as across studies. Seven studies included a range of job categories in their sample, for example, one study included a sample comprised of 10% consultants, 9% assistants (such as administrative assistant or executive assistant), 7% audit staff and 7%

analysts. Four studies did not report on participants' occupations; however, it was deemed reasonable to assume from the sector that the majority of participants were in office-based roles.

5.2.3 Seniority and Overall Work Experience

Of the studies that reported on participants' seniority (n = 5), four of those reported percentages which showed that across the four studies their samples were comprised of between 29-43% participants who were in supervisory, managerial, leadership or high-level strategy/top management positions. A fifth study reported the seniority of their participants as means and standard deviations: the mean for Management was .33 (SD = .47), whilst the mean for Top Management was .11 (SD = .31). The other studies (n = 8) did not report on participants' seniority.

Most studies did not report on participants' overall work experience with two exceptions (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009). Eddleston and Mulki (2017) reported work experience ranging from 2.5 years to 33 years in Study One, and from over one year to 40 years with a mean of 7.70 (SD = 8.19) years in Study Two. O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) reported that on average participants had 22.4 (SD = 9.56) years of work experience.

5.2.4 Full Time / Part Time Employees and Organisational Tenure

Three studies restricted their samples to full time employees only. Seven studies did not report on whether their samples were comprised of full time employees, part time employees or the proportion of full time and part time employees. Of the remaining three studies, two reported average working hours per week (44 hours in one study and 47.77 hours in another study), and the third reported that 18% of its participants were employed part time and 82.1% employed full time.

Over half of the studies (n = 7) did not report on the organisational tenure of their participants. Those studies that did report on how long their participants had been working for their current organisation each reported an average of between 6.06 years and 12 years.

Table 5.

Summary of Participant Characteristics

Paper*:	Age:	Gender (% female):	Sector / Company:	Occupation:	Seniority:	Overall Work Experience:	Full Time / Part Time Employees:	Organisational Tenure:	Proportion of Participants WFH:
1	*"3.65% less than 25 years old, 25.61% between 26 and 35, 19.51% between 36 and 45, 28.05% between 46-55, 20.73% between 56 and 65 years old"* (p.887).	50% female	A large US Federal Agency	*"exact job titles varied but generally involved business operations management and contract support"* (p.887).	N/A	N/A	Not clear, though many individuals from the organisation did not work on Fridays *"due to compressed work schedules"* (p.887).	N/A	All
2	Mean = 41.74; SD = 9.79	60.5% female	Eight organisations, *"ranging from small entrepreneurial firms to large multinationals, and varied in organisation type, ranging from private companies to government Organisations"* (p.150).	N/A	31% in a supervisory or managerial position	Mean = 22.4 years, SD = 9.56	Mean hours per week = 44, SD = 8.73	N/A	*"78 were teleworkers, and 78 were non-teleworkers"* (p.150).
3	*"from 23 to 60 years of age (M = 34.84, SD = 8.29)"* (p.95).	*"48 (55.8%) women and 38 (44.2%) men"* (p.95).	Big Four Accounting Firm	"*nine (10%) teleworkers reported consultant as their job title. There were also eight (9%) assistants (e.g., administrative assistant, executive assistant, etc.), six (7%) audit staff, and six (7%) respondents who reported analyst*" (p.95).	*"29 (34%) of the teleworkers reported manager or some variant thereof (e.g., marketing manager, resource manager, etc.)."* (p.95).	N/A	Mean hours per week = 47.77, SD =6.53	*"On average, they worked for the firm 6.06 years (SD = 5.30), in their position for 3.13 years (SD = 3.29)"* (p.95).	All
4	*"Approximately 30% of the sample were 35 years of age or younger, 48% were between 36 and 45, and 22% were 46 years of age or older"* (p.355)	57% female	*"Two large information and financial services organisations"* (p.354).	*"information technology and systems engineering consultants, communications, finance, marketing, and human resources"* (p.354).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	All (though 72% of participants *"were formal users of the telecommuting policy"* (p.355), and the rest were not)
5	N/A	N/A	*"One organization was a financial investment management corporation and the other was a staffing and recruitment firm"* (p.293).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	All

#	Age	Gender	Organisation	Job categories	Management		Work hours	Tenure	WFH/All
6	N/A	67% female	*"a large multinational telecommunications organisation"* (p.186).	*"27 did not report their job categories. The remaining set of respondents consisted of 14% engineers (general, technical support, sales, or project); 28% specialists (general, technical support, marketing, customer service, and project); ... and 14% staff (customer service, technical, and administrator)."* (p.186)	*"32% managers (general, technical, customer service, finance, sales, and marketing); 11% high-level strategy or top management (advisor, consultant, and top management)"* (p.186)	N/A		Mean = 9.5 years	All
7	Mean = 40.61, SD = 8.17	67% female	*"a telecommunications organisation"* (p.265).	*"engineers (e.g., technical support, sales, project), specialists (e.g., technical support, marketing, customer service), managers (e.g., technical, finance, marketing), top management (e.g., advisor, consultant), and staff (e.g., customer service, administrator)."* (p.267).	Management: Mean = .33 (SD = .47). Top management: Mean = .11 (SD = .31)	N/A	Full time	Mean = 9.5 years	All
8	N/A	N/A	*"a large public sector organisation"* (p.3).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	All
9	Mean = 40.60, SD = 8.06	81% male	*"a worldwide operating financial services organisation"* (no page numbers provided)	*"financial sales professionals"* (no page numbers provided)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	All
10	Study 1: *"age ranged from 28 to 58 years"* (p.10). Study 2: *"age of respondents ranged from 20 to 60 plus years"* (p.25).	Study 1: 32 out of 52 participants were female Study 2: 53.8% male (6 respondents did not indicate a gender)	Study 1: *"a large global firm"* (p.10), but additional participants were recruited via industry contacts. Study 2: *"A technology company with a large home-based salesforce and an online firm with access to home-based sales and service employees"* (p.25).	Study 1: *"communications, sales and marketing, PR, IT, and finance"* (p.10). Study 2: *"sales, marketing employees and customer service staff"* (p.25).	Study 1: N/A Study 2: N/A	Study 1: *"from 2.5 years to 33 years"* (p.10). Study 2: *"from over one year to 40 years with a mean of 7.70 (SD = 8.19) years"*. (p.26).	Study 1: Full time Study 2: Full time	Study 1: N/A Study 2: N/A	Study 1: All Study 2: All
11	N/A	N/A	*"a large financial institution"* (p.208).	*"Information systems"* (p.209).	N/A	N/A	Full time	N/A	*"All but two"* (p.209) of the sample WFH (2 out of 261)
12	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: *"On average respondents were 39 years old"* (p.1046).	Phase 1: 75% male Phase 2: 64% male	Phase 1: *"a large multinational corporation"* (p.1040). Phase 2: *"two organisations"* (p.1037).	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: *"been in their organization for 12 years* [on average]*, and had been in their current job for 5 years* [on	Phase 1: All Phase 2: Not clear, though implied to be all

							average]" (p.1045).	
13	Mean = 40.33, SD = 9.36	46.2% female	Varied	*"Twenty-eight percent worked in the information and communication sector, whereas 13.8% were employed in production and manufacturing. About 10% came from the health and service sector. A further 10% worked in financial and insurance services or consulting, and another 10% worked in other services. Eight percent reported working in research and education, 7% in public administration, 3.6% in logistics and transportation, and 0.5% in trading (8.7% other)"* (p.887).	*"28.7% held a leadership position"* (p.887).	N/A	*"Eighteen percent were employed part time, and 82.1 percent employed full time"* (p.887).	Mean = 8.85 years, SD = 8.67	All

* 1 = Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), 2 = O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009), 3 = Greer and Payne (2014), 4 = Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006), 5 = O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014), 6 = Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003), 7 = Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), 8 = Basile and Beauregard (2016), 9 = Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016), 10 = Eddleston and Mulki (2017), 11 = Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003), 12 = Neufeld and Fang (2005), 13 = Müller and Niessen (2019).

5.3 Participant Experience of Working from Home

Table 6 shows details surrounding participants' experience of WFH and the WFH context across the studies, described below.

5.3.1 Proportion of Participants Working from Home

In nearly all the studies (n = 10), all participants were conducting at least some of their work from home. The exceptions to this were one study which compared a number of teleworkers to an equal number of non-teleworkers (therefore the sample was comprised of employees who were WFH and employees who were not), one study in which all but two participants out of the sample of 261 participants were not WFH, and one study in which it was not entirely clear what proportion of participants were WFH but it was implied to be all.

5.3.2 Participants' Prior Experience of Working from Home

Nine studies did not specify how much prior experience of WFH their participants had. However, one of those studies did mention that the participating organisation had implemented their telecommuting program six months previously, which may be an indication of WFH experience, and another of those studies mentioned that 9% of its participants had already been teleworking before all employees were assigned to telework. Of the four studies that did specify their participants' degree of experience of WFH, this ranged from an average of 18.94 months to an average of 4.129 years across those studies.

5.3.3 Proportion of Participant Time Spent Working from Home

There was a large range in the proportion of time that participants spent WFH both across and within the studies.

Looking *across* the studies, six studies reported the average time that their participants spent WFH, ranging from nine days per month to 43.24 hours per week. One study did not report the proportion of participant time that was spent WFH. Another study stated that participants all WFH full time. Of the five remaining studies, the proportion of participant time spent WFH was also varied. For example, across three studies, participants WFH for at least one day per month (n = 1 study), at least two days per month (n = 1 study), and at least 35 hours per week (n = 1 study). One study grouped participants into categories: Occasionally (occasional teleworkers), between 20-50% of the workweek (partial teleworkers), or the majority of the time (full teleworkers). Finally, another study reported intensity of WFH across three time points corresponding to before and after the implementation of an involuntary teleworking policy.

Proportion of participant time spent WFH also varied greatly *within* at least five of the studies, as indicated by the reporting ranges, which included from one day per month to full time in one study, and from .5 days per week to seven days per week in another study.

5.3.4 Types of Tasks Conducted from Home

Four studies provided information about the types of work, tasks and/or duties that participants were responsible for when WFH. For example, n = 1 study explained that participants were responsible for writing, emailing, programming, as well as phone sales and project management when WFH. Across the four studies, there appeared to be at least some overlap in the types of tasks that participants conducted from home. For example, n = 3 studies mentioned forms of administration, n = 3 studies mentioned sales, and n = 2 studies mentioned customer service.

5.3.5 Voluntary or Involuntary Working from Home

Eight studies did not clearly specify whether participants were engaged in voluntary or involuntary WFH. Of the n = 5 studies that did clearly specify this information, n = 3 studies explored voluntary WFH, n = 1 study explored involuntary WFH, and n = 1 study explored *mainly* involuntary WFH (it was reported that WFH was involuntary for at least 91% of the sample).

5.3.6 Participants' Living Situation

Three studies reported on how many other people participants were living with in their household. There was an average of 2.74 persons living in participants' households in one study, and in another study 97.6% of participants were married or cohabiting and 72.5% had at least one child living at home. In the third study that reported on how many people participants were living with in their household, there are two figures to report because the study was comprised of two separate studies: in one of those studies, 40 out of 52 participants indicated that they had others living in their home, and in the other study within that study, the number of people in respondents' households ranged from one (single person) to eight (spouse, children, other) with just 16.7% responding that they lived alone.

Table 6.

Summary of Participant Experience of Working from Home

Paper*:	Prior WFH Experience:	Proportion of Participant Time Spent WFH:	Types of Tasks conducted from Home:	Voluntary or Involuntary WFH:	Living Arrangements:
1	On average, approximately 3 years (36.36 months).	On average, 2.88 days each week (the study compared WFH days with office days).	N/A	Voluntary	N/A
2	N/A	Minimum one day per month. "*Thirty-seven per cent of teleworkers did so* [WFH] *on a full time basis, whereas the mean frequency of telework among participants was nine days per month."* (P.150).	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	N/A	Mean telework volume = 43.24, SD = 39.48	*"writing, email, use of internet, programming, phone sales, or project management."* (p.354).	N/A	N/A
5	N/A	Minimum one day per month, maximum nearly 100% of the time	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	On average, 19 months.	Minimum one half-day per week. Ranged from .5 to 7 days per week, mean = 3.29 days per week.	General technical support, sales, marketing, customer service, finance, advisory, consultancy, management, administration.	Voluntary	N/A
7	On average, 18.94 months.	Mean = 3.27 days per week, SD = 1.49	N/A	Voluntary	Unclear, though in terms of children under 5 years old: Mean = 0.33, SD = 0.62
8	N/A	*"either occasionally (occasional teleworkers), between 20-50% of the workweek (partial teleworkers), or the majority of the time (full teleworkers)."* (p.3).	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	N/A	Timepoint 1: 10.63 hours per week on average. Timepoint 2: 25.87 hours per week on average. Timepoint 3: 23.65 hours per week on average.	Sales.	Involuntary	"*97.6% of participants were married or cohabiting. 72.5% had at least one child living at home."* (no page numbers provided)
10	Study 1: N/A Study 2: N/A	Study 1: Minimum of 35 hours per week Study 2: Minimum 35 hours per week	Study 1: N/A Study 2: N/A	Study 1: N/A Study 2: N/A	Study 1: 40 out of 52 had others living in their home (such as a spouse, partner, children). Study 2: *"The number of people in respondents' households ranged from 1 (single person) to 8 (spouse, children, other), 16.7% lived alone, 23.1% had a spouse or companion living with them, 60.2% had more than two family members living with them"* (p.26).

11	9% of participants had already been teleworking before all employees were assigned to telework.	Full time	*"a range from solitary to collaborative and concrete to ambiguous activities"* (p.208). *"software development, network administration, and systems testing"* (p.209).	Involuntary for at least 91% of the sample.	N/A
12	Phase 1: Not clear, though the organisation *"had implemented a national telecommuting program six months previously"* (p.1040).	Phase 1: On average, 32 hours per week Phase 2: On average, 22 hours per week	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: N/A Phase 2: N/A	Phase 1: Not clear, though 80% were married. Phase 2: Not clear, though 83% were married.
13	Mean = 4.129 years, SD = 4.22	Minimum 2 days per month. 29.81% of weekly working time (SD = 18.70; Range: 1-90%)	N/A	N/A	*"an average of 2.74 persons lived in their household (SD = 1.318)"* (p.887).

* 1 = Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), 2 = O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009), 3 = Greer and Payne (2014), 4 = Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006), 5 = O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014), 6 = Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003), 7 = Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), 8 = Basile and Beauregard (2016), 9 = Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016), 10 = Eddleston and Mulki (2017), 11 = Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003), 12 = Neufeld and Fang (2005), 13 = Müller and Niessen (2019).

5.4 Individual Psychological Factors: Themes

As can be seen in Table 7 and Figure 2, studies have looked at a range of individual psychological factors, which broadly fitted into seven themes: 5.5.1 Boundary Management Preferences, 5.5.2 Personality, 5.5.3 Self-Efficacy, 5.5.4 Structuring Behaviour, 5.5.5 Cognitive Styles, 5.5.6 Motivation Factors, and finally, 5.5.7 Other Individual Psychological Factors. Each of these will be assimilated in turn below, starting with the most frequently studied themes.

5.4.1 Boundary Management Preferences

Four studies focused on boundary management preferences (preference for integration vs segmentation of work and home roles). This was the most frequently studied individual psychological factor across the studies. Two of the four studies measured boundary management preferences based on a 9-item scale developed by Kossek et al. (2006), whilst the other two studies assessed boundary management preferences qualitatively via interviews.

5.4.2 Personality

After boundary management preferences, personality was one of the most frequently studied themes of individual psychological factors across the studies. However, the specific traits varied greatly to the extent that each study looked at different personality traits and no personality trait was measured across more than one study. Three studies focused on personality, and they all adopted quantitative measures to do so. The personality traits measured were Openness to experience, Trait rumination and Sensation seeking in one study, Organisation, Diligence, Sociability in another study, and Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Honesty, Procrastination in the other study.

5.4.3 Self-Efficacy

Three studies explored self-efficacy, and in all three cases self-efficacy was measured using a quantitative measure. Two of the studies focused on WFH self-efficacy and they both measured this using items adapted from Sherer et al. (1982). However, the third study measured a different, more specific type of self-efficacy: work-family balance self-efficacy (self-efficacy in balancing work and family roles). This was measured using a newly created measure for the specific study, adapted from an existing work-family balance measure by Greenhaus et al. (2012).

5.4.4 Structuring Behaviour

Three studies explored one or more elements of structuring behaviour. For example, one study qualitatively reported on task planning, setting goals and prioritising workload. Another study measured structuring behaviour based on a five-item scale developed specifically for the study, and the third study measured 'ability to structure the workday'. The latter was also measured based on a five-item scale developed specifically for the study.

5.4.5 Cognitive Styles

Two studies explored different types of 'cognitive styles'. Specifically, one study explored thinking styles ('Scope', 'Level' and 'Leaning), whilst another study explored nine dimensions of Self-leadership ranging from self-reward to self-cueing. In both cases, cognitive styles were measured quantitatively using Sternberg's Thinking Style Inventory and 18 items from the German version of the Revised Self Leadership Questionnaire (Andreßen & Konradt, 2007; Houghton & Neck, 2002), respectively.

5.4.6 Motivation Factors

Two motivation or 'needs'-based factors were explored, and these were both in the same single study. Specifically, Need for Achievement and Need for Autonomy were assessed and measured using the Manifest Needs Questionnaire (MNQ; Steers & Braunstein, 1976).

5.4.7 Other Individual Psychological Factors

There were an additional three individual psychological factors that were explored but which did not fit into any of the above themes, and each was explored by no more than one study. These individual psychological factors were as follows: One study qualitatively reported on 'work-oriented mindset', whereby participants seemingly treated a workday at home the same as they would a workday at the office, and another study looked at 'inability to disengage from work' using an adapted detachment scale by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007). Finally, another study explored beliefs and attitudes about teleworking.

Figure 2.

Sunburst diagram of Individual Psychological Factors

5.5 Working from Home Outcomes: Themes

As can be seen in Table 7 and Figure 3, studies have looked at a range of WFH outcomes. The majority of studies (n = 9), focused on more than one outcome of WFH. WFH outcomes broadly fitted into five themes: 5.5.1 Performance Outcomes, 5.5.2 Emotional Outcomes, 5.5.3 Family Outcomes, 5.5.4 Turnover Intentions, 5.5.5 Other WFH Outcomes. The main focus of this review is on individual psychological factors as mechanisms in WFH outcomes, therefore this information is assimilated under section 5.6 onwards, however this review is also interested in how successful WFH is defined and measured in such research, therefore this information will be briefly assimilated here first.

It is also noteworthy that there seemed to be a reasonable balance between positive and negative WFH outcomes measures across the studies. This applied both within studies (for example, one study explored Positive affective wellbeing and Negative affective wellbeing), and between studies (for example, one study explored Telecommuter adjustment whilst another study explored Cyberslacking).

5.5.1 Performance Outcomes

Six studies explored performance outcomes, which included a range of measures of performance and productivity. One of these studies did not directly measure performance as an outcome as such, but rather it interviewed 'successful teleworkers'. Another of the studies obtained performance ratings from supervisors via phone interviews using eight items developed by Fedor and Rowland (1989). The other four studies measured performance and productivity using a range of quantitative measures, for example one study used six global job performance items from two different sources (Chen et al., 2002; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994).

5.5.2 Emotional Outcomes

Six studies explored at least one type of emotional outcome. The most frequently studied emotional outcome was Satisfaction, which was measured in three studies. The other emotional outcomes were Positive affective wellbeing and Negative affective wellbeing (both measured in the same single study), and the following outcomes which were each measured in one different study: Depression, Job stress, and Ego depletion.

5.5.3 Family Outcomes

Five studies looked at Family-related outcomes of WFH. In four of the five studies, the focus was specifically on conflict between work and family, whereas the fifth study focused on 'facilitation': Work-to-family facilitation and Family-to-work facilitation. Also, in four out of the five studies, the balance between work and family were considered in both directions, for example not just Family-work conflict but also Work-Family conflict. All five studies measured Family outcomes using quantitative scales, although exact measures varied across studies including measures developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) and Carlson et al. (2000).

5.5.4 Turnover Intentions

Only two studies explored turnover intentions, and both used the same measure: items developed by Boroff and Lewin (1997).

5.5.5 Other Working from Home Outcomes

Three studies each explored a WFH outcome which did not neatly fit into the above themes. These outcomes were: Cyberslacking, Telecommuter adjustment, and Commitment (two types: Commitment to telework and Commitment to virtual teams).

Figure 3.

Sunburst diagram of Working from Home Outcomes

5.6 The Role of Individual Psychological Factors in Working from Home Outcomes

This section is the most important part of the Results, as it marries the previous sections to assimilate what is known about individual psychological factors as mechanisms in WFH outcomes. A summary of this is shown in Figure 4.

5.6.1 Boundary Management Preferences in Working from Home Outcomes

Of the four studies that measured participants' boundary management preferences, three considered Family Outcomes of WFH, and findings with regards to those outcomes were somewhat mixed. Eddleston and Mulki (2017) identified that high integration seemingly increased Work-family conflict and Family-work conflict when WFH, and that many employees created boundaries between work and home to segment the two domains. In line with this, Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) found that individuals with boundary management strategies higher on integration tended to experience higher family-to-work conflict, and although not statistically significant, higher integration strategies were also linked to higher work-to-family conflict. However, Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016) found that boundary management strategy did not have a significant main effect on either time-based nor strain-based Work-to-family conflict.

Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) also identified that, although not statistically significant, higher integration strategies were related to reports of higher depression. A boundary management strategy favouring the separation of work and family boundaries was a predictor of individual wellbeing.

Basile and Beauregard's (2016) interviews with 'successful teleworkers' (based on supervisor ratings of performance) identified that successful teleworkers

were generally able to enact their preferred boundary management style, whether that be integration or segmentation.

Synthesising the above, boundary management preferences are most commonly linked to family outcomes of WFH, however there is early evidence for the role of boundary management preferences in additional WFH outcomes including wellbeing and performance.

5.6.2 Personality in Working from Home Outcomes

Personality factors have been explored in relation to wellbeing (n = 1 study), performance (n = 2 studies), satisfaction (n = 2 studies) and cyberslacking (n = 1 study), which synthesising together indicates the role of a range of personality factors (with a particular focus on traits-based perspectives of personality) in a variety of WFH outcomes. Of the three studies that explored personality factors in total, Anderson, Kaplan and Vega's (2015) study explored cross-level moderation effects of Openness to experience, Trait rumination, and Sensation seeking in relation to Positive affective wellbeing and Negative affective wellbeing when WFH. They found that the relationship between WFH and Positive affective wellbeing was increasingly positive for individuals higher in openness to experience and lower in trait rumination, however the other cross-level moderation effects were not significant.

O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline's (2009) study looked at different personality traits (Organisation, Diligence, Sociability) and outcomes (performance and satisfaction) but was similar to Anderson, Kaplan and Vega's (2015) study in that it identified a mixture of significant and non-significant findings. The personality trait of organisation did not correlate differently with performance nor satisfaction in teleworkers compared with non-teleworkers. Diligence was not related to teleworkers' performance. Diligence was not differentially related to satisfaction in teleworkers compared with non-teleworkers. Finally, Sociability was negatively related to teleworkers' performance. No significant differences were identified for the links between Sociability and satisfaction.

O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich's (2014) study looked at different personality traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Honesty, Procrastination), but the study measured the same outcomes as O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline's (2009) study (performance and satisfaction), plus cyberslacking. O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich's (2014) assessment of personality traits helped to substantially predict all three outcomes. The prediction of satisfaction with remote work was particularly notable across three traits: Conscientiousness (34%), Neuroticism (30%), and Agreeableness (22%). Honesty (10%) and Procrastination (4%) were less important predictors. Prediction of performance was as follows: Conscientiousness (45%), followed by Honesty (28%), Procrastination (14%), Agreeableness (9%), and Neuroticism (4%). Turning to cyberslacking, O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich's (2014) study identified a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and cyberslacking, conscientiousness was negatively linked to cyberslacking, neuroticism was not positively related to cyberslacking, honesty was negatively linked to cyberslacking, and procrastination was positively linked to cyberslacking. The following four traits accounted for a large proportion of total variance in cyberslacking: Procrastination (31%), Agreeableness (27%), Honesty (22%), and Conscientiousness (15%).

5.6.3 Self-Efficacy in Working from Home Outcomes

Self-efficacy has been explored in relation to telecommuter adjustment (n = 1 study) and conflict between work and non-work life (n = 2 studies), however greater synthesis indicates a range of relationships including moderation effects, negative relationships, and no relationships.

Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003) identified a positive relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and telecommuter adjustment. Moreover, extent of telecommuting seemingly moderated the relationship between self-efficacy and telecommuter adjustment (self-efficacy was more strongly associated with adjustment in individuals who WFH more extensively than in those who WFH less extensively).

However, these effects were not replicated for self-efficacy in relation to work interference in nonwork and nonwork interference in work. Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004) found that self-efficacy was not related to work interference in nonwork, and that self-efficacy had a significant negative relationship with nonwork interference in work. Additionally, the researchers' hypothesis that work interference in nonwork and nonwork interference in work would have a stronger relationship with self-efficacy in individuals who WFH more extensively than in those who WFH less extensively was not supported.

Both Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003) and Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004) used the same measure of self-efficacy: items adapted from Sherer et al. (1982). The third study which considered self-efficacy (Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016) focused on a more specific type of self-efficacy. That is, self-efficacy in balancing work and family roles, measured using a new measure developed for the study, based on Greenhaus et al.'s (2012) work–family balance scale. This different measure may underlie why Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer's (2016) findings would seem to contradict the findings of Raghuram and Wiesenfeld's (2004) study. Specifically, Lapierre et al. (2016) found that work-family balance self-efficacy had a significant negative main effect on two types of work-to-family conflict (time-based and strain-based), as well as significantly moderating the association between WFH intensity and both types of work-to-family conflict.

5.6.4 Structuring Behaviour in Working from Home Outcomes

Of the three studies that explored structuring behaviour, there is currently limited ability to synthesise the findings due to the variety of WFH outcomes that have been explored, with various elements of structuring behaviour having been examined in relation to performance, interference between work and nonwork, and self-efficacy.

Greer and Payne's (2014) study found that some high performing teleworkers reported the importance of task planning, goal setting and prioritisation of work.

Additionally, task planning was significantly and positively related to work-to-family facilitation, however not turnover intentions.

Another study looked at structuring behaviour in relation to interference between work and nonwork, taking into account both directions of interference (i.e. nonwork interference in work, and work interference in nonwork). It showed that structuring behaviour seems to be important in nonwork interference in work, in that there was a significant, negative relationship (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). However, structuring behaviour did not seem to reduce work interference in nonwork.

Finally, Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003) examined structuring behaviour as a dependent variable. They reported a positive relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and structuring behaviour. Self-efficacy was more strongly associated with structuring behaviour for employees who WFH more extensively. Because Raghuram et al. (2003) focused on structuring behaviour as a dependent variable rather than an independent variable in WFH outcomes, it was not included in the evidence statements.

5.6.5 Cognitive Styles in Working from Home Outcomes

Of the two studies which explored cognitive styles, one looked at self-leadership in relation to ego depletion and work satisfaction, and the other looked at thinking styles in relation to commitment to telework and commitment to virtual teams. What they had in common was a mixture of findings, both significant and non-significant, which depicts a complex role of cognitive styles in these WFH outcomes.

Müller and Niessen (2019) found no significant indirect effects for any self-leadership strategies with regards to their hypothesis that there would be a positive association between working location and ego depletion through self-leadership. However, they did find a positive indirect effect of working location on work satisfaction through one of the dimensions of self-leadership: self-goal setting.

Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003) assessed the following thinking styles: Scope (External or Internal), Level (Global or Local), Leaning (Liberal or Conservative). With regards to commitment to telework, the study found a negative relationship with scope (indicating that internals were more committed to WFH than externals did), a positive relationship with leaning (indicating that liberals had higher commitment to WFH than conversatives did), and a significant positive relationship with level. With regards to commitment to virtual teams, the study found a strongly positive relationship with scope (suggesting that, compared with internals, externals had significantly higher commitment to their virtual teams), a negative relationship with leaning (suggesting that, compared with liberals, conservatives were more committed to their teams), and a significant positive relationship with level.

5.6.6 Motivation Factors in Working from Home Outcomes

Across the studies, two motivation factors were considered, and these were both in the same study: Need for achievement and Need for autonomy (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009). Need for autonomy was more strongly linked to self-rated teleworker performance and job satisfaction compared to non-teleworker performance and job satisfaction. Need for achievement was more strongly linked to self-rated job performance for non-teleworkers than teleworkers.

5.6.7 Other Individual Psychological Factors in Working from Home Outcomes

Of the three studies that looked at other individual psychological factors (work-oriented mindset, inability to disengage from work, and beliefs and attitudes about teleworking, each in one of the three studies), a range of interesting findings emerged. Beliefs and attitudes about teleworking were found to be strongly linked to telecommuter productivity and useful in discriminating high-productivity telecommuters from low-productivity telecommuters (Neufeld & Fang, 2005). Inability to disengage from work was positively linked to job stress as well as

increased work-family conflict, however it was not significantly related to family-work conflict (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Finally, a 'work-oriented mindset' was reported by high performing teleworkers as a way in which they overcame challenges and made WFH successful in Greer and Payne's (2014) study.

Key:	No studies	One Study	Two Studies	Three studies

	Wellbeing	Depression	Performance/ Productivity	Satisfaction	Turnover intentions	Work-to-family or Family-to-work facilitation	Conflict between work and non-work/family	Cyberslacking	Telecommuter adjustment	Job stress	Commitment to telework	Commitment to virtual teams	Ego depletion
Openness to experience	One Study												
Trait rumination	One Study												
Sensation seeking	One Study												
Organisation			One Study	One Study									
Diligence			One Study	One Study									
Sociability			One Study	One Study									
Need for achievement			One Study	One Study									
Need for autonomy			One Study	One Study									
Work-oriented mindset			One Study										
Structuring behaviour			One Study		One Study	One Study	One Study						
Boundary management preferences	One Study	One Study	One Study				Three studies						
Agreeableness			One Study					One Study					
Conscientiousness			One Study					One Study					
Neuroticism			One Study	One Study				One Study					
Honesty			One Study					One Study					
Procrastination			One Study					One Study					
Self-efficacy							Two Studies		One Study				
Inability to disengage from work							One Study				One Study		
Thinking styles											One Study	One Study	
Beliefs and attitudes about telecommuting			One Study										
Self-leadership				One Study									One Study

Figure 4.

Heatmap of Individual Psychological Factors studied across Working from Home Outcomes

5.7 Controls, Mediators and Moderators

As can be seen in Table 7, studies have looked at a range of controls. The most frequently controlled for variables across the studies were: gender (n = 4 studies), number of children and/or number of family members in the household (n = 3), and the organisation that participants belonged to (n = 3 studies). This was followed by job category (n = 2), experience with telecommuting (n = 2), marital status (n = 2), number of working hours (n = 2) and job autonomy (n = 2). Interestingly, only n = 1 study controlled for the following variables: age, job tenure, schedule control, social support from co-workers, from the supervisor and from one's spouse, as well as perceived workload. This is noteworthy, as many of these factors are relevant to successful WFH, with reference to the research questions of the SLR. For example, age, gender, and job tenure have been linked to successful WFH: Specifically, research has indicated that younger employees are potentially more likely to suffer with poor wellbeing when WFH compared with older employees (Parry et al. 2021). With regards to gender, WFH may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities by favouring male employees (Bonacini, Gallo & Scicchitano, 2020), and with regards to job tenure, longer tenure would appear to predict greater satisfaction with WFH programs (Kwon & Jeon, 2020). As such it is plausible that such factors may interact with individual psychological factors in shaping successful WFH. It is therefore unfortunate that more studies did not control for such factors to acknowledge the holistic range of potential factors involved in determining successful WFH.

None of the 13 studies explored potential mediators in the link between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes. However, five of the studies explored moderators: media richness (Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003), extent of WFH (Raghuram, Weisenfeld & Garud, 2003; Raghuram & Weisenfeld, 2004), gender (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017), and autonomy (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003) explored whether media richness (the extent to which the available technology when WFH enables natural communication such as via visual and audio channels) moderates the effects of an employee's cognitive style on his or her commitment to the telework function and to

his or her virtual team. For example, Workman et al. (2003) found that an interaction between media richness and 'scope' cognitive style seemed to be responsible for significant variance in commitment to telework.

Raghuram, Weisenfeld and Garud (2003) explored the extent of WFH as a moderator of the link between telecommuter self-efficacy and adjustment to WFH, finding that the link between self-efficacy and adjustment strengthens in individuals who WFH more extensively than those who WFH less. Similarly, Raghuram and Weisenfeld (2004) found that the extent of WFH moderated the link between individual psychological factors (self-efficacy and ability to structure the workday) and work-nonwork conflict.

Eddleston and Mulki (2017) explored gender as a moderator in the role of two types of individual psychological factors (inability to disengage from work and boundary management preference for integration) in two WFH outcomes (work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict). They found that gender seemingly moderates the relationship between individual psychological factors and work-to-family conflict, but not family-to-work conflict. Gender moderated the link between inability to disengage from work and work-to-family conflict, and the link between boundary management preference for integration and work-to-family conflict. Gender did not moderate the link between inability to disengage from work and family-to-work conflict, and the link between boundary management preference for integration and family-to-work conflict.

Müller and Niessen (2019) looked at the mediating role of autonomy by considering whether workplace characteristics related to autonomy act as antecedents of self-leadership. Müller and Niessen found that the relationships between working location and four dimensions of self-leadership were mediated by autonomy, however autonomy did not seem to mediate the link between working location and two other dimensions of self-leadership.

Three of the 13 studies treated individual psychological factors themselves as moderators or mediators. For example, Lapierre et al. (2015) did not look at mediators or moderators in the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH

outcomes, but rather explored individual psychological factors as moderators themselves. Lapierre et al. found that boundary management strategy was not a moderator of the link between involuntary WFH and work-family conflict, but self-efficacy was a moderator in that the link between involuntary WFH intensity and work-family conflict was stronger in individuals with lower self-efficacy in balancing work and family. Müller and Niessen (2019) looked at self-leadership as a potential mediator in the link between work location and satisfaction, however only one dimension of self-leadership (self-goal setting) seemed to be an important mediator. Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) explored four individual differences as cross-level moderators in positive and negative affective wellbeing on days when WFH compared with days when working in an office.

Table 7.

Individual Psychological Factors and Working from Home Outcomes across Studies

	Working from Home Outcomes:		Individual Psychological Factors explored in relation to Working from Home Outcomes:			
Paper*:	Outcome(s):	Measure:	Individual Psychological Factor(s):	Measure:	Findings:	Controls, Mediators and Moderators:
1	Positive affective wellbeing, Negative affective wellbeing	Job-Related Affective WellBeing Scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000), consisting of ten items: five for positive affective wellbeing (at ease, grateful, enthusiastic, happy, and proud), five for negative affective wellbeing (bored, frustrated, angry, anxious, and fatigued).	Openness to experience, Trait rumination, Sensation seeking	Ten items (Goldberg, 1999) for openness to experience. Five items for trait rumination, adapted from Treynor et al. (2003) Five items for sensation seeking, adapted from Zuckerman, Kolin, Price and Zoob (1964)	*"Openness is a cross-level moderator of the association between telework and positive affect (γ = .74, p < .05); the relationship becomes increasingly positive as openness to experience increases."* (p.889). Openness seemingly did not influence the telework–negative affect relationship. *"The telework–positive affect relationship becomes more negative as trait rumination increases (γ = −.38, p < .01)"* (p.889). Rumination seemingly does not moderate the telework–negative affect relationship. Sensation seeking seemingly does not moderate either the telework-positive affect relationship nor the telework-negative affect relationship.	The individual psychological factors themselves were looked at as moderators (cross-level moderation effects).
2	'Effectiveness' (self-rated performance and satisfaction)	One item for self-rated performance and one item for satisfaction (with slightly different wording for teleworkers and non-teleworkers)	Organisation, Diligence, Sociability, Need for achievement, and Need for autonomy	Subscales from Manifest Needs Questionnaire (MNQ; Steers & Braunstein, 1976) and HEXACO-PI (Lee & Ashton, 2004)	*"the personality trait of organisation did not correlate differently with performance in the teleworker (r = 0.31) versus non-teleworker sample (r = 0.35), nor did organisation correlate differently with job satisfaction (r = 0.34 for teleworkers, r = 0.20 for non-teleworkers)."* (p.152) Diligence was unrelated to teleworkers' performance ratings (r = 0.07). *"Diligence did not differentially relate to teleworker (r = 0.05) versus non-teleworker satisfaction (r = 0.28), (z = -1.46, p = 0.14)."* (p.152) *"Sociability was related to teleworker performance negatively (r = -0.34)."* (p.152). *"No significant differences were found for the relationships between Sociability and satisfaction (r = -0.16 for non-teleworkers, r = -0.40 for teleworkers)"* (p.152). Need for autonomy was slightly positively correlated with self-rated teleworker performance (r = 0.39) and job satisfaction (r = 0.31). Need for achievement was almost unrelated to teleworkers' self-rated job performance (r = 0.10) and satisfaction (r = -0.00).	Participants' organisation (where they were working) was controlled for.

3	Job performance, work-to-family facilitation, family-to-work facilitation, and turnover intentions	The sample was limited to high-performing teleworkers. Performance was measured by supervisor ratings of job performance using six global job performance items (.90); from two different sources (Chen et al., 2002; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). Work-to-family facilitation, family-to-work facilitation were measured using three items each (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). Three items from Boroff and Lewin (1997) measured turnover intentions.	Work-oriented mindset, Task planning, Setting goals, Prioritising workload.	High performing teleworkers were asked to respond to a single open-ended question: *"Some people believe there are significant issues with teleworking. Please comment on ways you've found to overcome challenges and have made the teleworking arrangement successful."* (p.96).	*"Some teleworkers mentioned adopting a work-oriented mindset in which they treated a work day at home as they would a work day in the main office. Some mentioned task planning, which requires significant foresight to identify the tasks that could be accomplished on telework days and those tasks that needed to be accomplished at the main worksite. ... Teleworkers also mentioned the importance of setting goals and prioritizing their work while they were teleworking."* (p.102). *"Task planning was significantly related to work-to-family facilitation (r = .17, p < .05)."* (p.105).	N/A
4	Turnover intentions, Family-work conflict, Performance, Depression	Two turnover intention items (Boroff & Lewin, 1997). Work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales adapted from Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991). Supervisor performance ratings via phone interviews using eight items (Fedor & Rowland, 1989). Four items for the depression subscale, from a wider set (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison & Pinneau, 1980)	Boundary management preferences	A nine-item measure adapted from Kossek et al.'s (1999) theoretical definition of the boundary management strategy construct. Also, a further three items for boundary management behaviours.	*"Individuals with boundary management strategies higher on integration tended to have higher family-to-work conflict. Although not statistically significant, higher integration strategies were related to higher work-to-family conflict and depression in the expected directions"* (p.360). A boundary management strategy favouring the separation of work and family boundaries was a strong predictor of individual wellbeing.	Gender, marital status and children. The authors also controlled for fixed differences across the two organisations they studied. They created *"interaction variables of formal telecommuting policy use and women with chilldren, and volume of flexibility and women with children"* (p.358).
5	Cyberslacking, Performance, Satisfaction	New items developed for the purpose of the study.	Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Honesty, Procrastination	Selection of workplace-relevant items from International Personality Item Pool scales (IPIP; Goldberg et al., 2006).	Negative and significant relationship between agreeableness and cyberslacking. Conscientiousness was negatively related to cyberslacking. Neuroticism was not positively related to cyberslacking. Honesty was negatively related to cyberslacking. Procrastination was positively related to cyberslacking. *"prediction was substantial for all outcomes, with the total percentage of variance explained equal to 12% (cyberslacking and satisfaction) and 19% (perceptions of performance)"* (p.296).	Controlled for the potential effect of organisation on cyberslacking by collecting data from two organisations.

					"the overall prediction of cyberslacking was significant as evidenced by the R2, and four of the five traits were involved. Specifically, Procrastination (31%), Agreeableness (27%), Honesty (22%), and Conscientiousness (15%) accounted for the bulk of the total variance explained." (p.296). *"the overall prediction of satisfaction with working remotely was concentrated across three traits: Conscientiousness (34%), Neuroticism (30%), and Agreeableness (22%). Honesty (10%) and Procrastination (4%) were relatively unimportant predictors."* (p.296). *"prediction of perceptions of performance was driven by Conscientiousness (45%), followed by Honesty (28%). Less important predictors were Procrastination (14%), Agreeableness (9%), and Neuroticism (4%)."* (p.296).	
6	Telecommuter adjustment	A 5-item scale modelled on previous measures (builds upon previous research on indicators of employee adjustment in new contexts, such as newcomer adjustment (Nelson et al. (1988); Saks (1995))	Telecommuter self-efficacy, Structuring behaviour	Self-efficacy was measured in the telecommute context via 3 items adapted from Sherer et al. (1982). Structuring behaviour was measured with a 5-item scale developed for this study.	*"The hierarchical regression results show that the relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and telecommuter adjustment is positive (β = .27, p < .01)."* (p.189). *"the relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and structuring behaviour is positive (β = .31, p < .01)."* (p.189).	Controlled for gender, experience with telecommuting and job category. Extent of telecommuting moderated *"the relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and telecommuter adjustment such that self-efficacy will be [was] more strongly associated with adjustment for employees who telecommute more extensively than for those who telecommuted less extensively."* (p.189).
7	Work-nonwork conflict	Scales developed by O'Driscoll et al. (1992).	Self-efficacy, Ability to structure the workday	Self-efficacy was measured in a domain-specific way (relating to WFH), using 3 items adapted from Sherer et al. (1982). Ability to structure the workday was measured as structuring behaviour using a 5-item scale developed specifically for the study.	Self-efficacy was not linked to work interference in nonwork. Structuring behaviour was not linked to work interference in nonwork. *"self-efficacy (β = –.24, p < .01) and structuring behaviour (β = –.24, p < .01) had a significant negative relationship with nonwork interference in work."* (p.271).	Controlled for the number of young children (less than five years of age) in the household, gender, age, experience with virtual work (in months), respondents' job categories. Extent of WFH: *"Contrary to our expectations, individual factors (self-efficacy and structuring behavior) and trust were no less important for those who work virtually less extensively than for more extensive virtual workers."* (p.273).
8	'Successful teleworkers' (implied to be productivity)	Interviews with employees from an organisation *"whose longstanding telework program yields participants with above-average productivity ratings*	Preferences for integration vs segmentation	In-depth interviews	*"Perceived levels of job-related autonomy and schedule control seemingly helped teleworkers align their enacted boundaries to their preferences."* (p.7). *"Teleworkers were generally able to enact their preferred boundary management style."* (p.7).	Perceived levels of job-related autonomy and schedule control: *"Teleworkers reporting greater autonomy and control over their work agenda were better able to implement integration or segmentation strategies to match*

		compared to their office-based counterparts.” (p.3).				*their boundary management preferences”.* (p.7).
9	2 types of work-to-family conflict (WFC): Time-based, Strain-based	*“At each time point, we measured time-based and strain-based WFC with Carlson and colleagues' (2000) three-item Scales”* (no page numbers provided)	Boundary management strategy (integration vs. segmentation), Self-efficacy in balancing work and family roles (work-family balance self-efficacy)	*“Boundary management strategy was measured with a 9-item scale developed by Kossek et al. (2006).”* (no page numbers provided) To measure work-family balance self-efficacy, the authors created a new measure for this study, based on Greenhaus et al.'s (2012) work–family balance scale, adapted to capture participants' level of self-efficacy in balancing work/family roles.	*“boundary management strategy did not have a significant main effect on either type of WFC … this individual difference variable did not significantly moderate the link between telework intensity and either type of WFC”* (no page numbers provided). *“Work-family balance self-efficacy, not only had “a significant and negative main effect on each type of WFC … but also IT significantly moderated the link between telework intensity and each type of WFC.”* (no page numbers provided). In individuals with *“weaker work–family balance self-efficacy (1 SD below the mean), the relationship between telework intensity and time-based work-to-family conflict was significantly positive (simple slope = .02, t = 2.80, p< .01).”* (no page numbers provided).	The individual psychological factors themselves (boundary management preference and self-efficacy in balancing work and family roles) were studied as moderators of the relationship between extent of WFH and work-to-family conflict. Controlled for social support from co-workers, from the supervisor and from one's spouse, as well as total number of hours worked per week and perceived workload.
10	Work-family conflict (WFC), Family-work conflict (FWC), Job stress	Study 1: 1-hour and 40-minute interviews Study 2: Measures developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996)	Study 1: Boundary management strategies–-preference for segmentation vs integration Study 2: Inability to disengage from work, and work-family integration	Study 1: 1-hour and 40-minute interviews Study 2: Items adapted from Sonnentag and Fritz's (2007) detachment scale, and Kreiner's (2006) measure of work-family integration	Study 1 showed that *“efforts to minimise integration seemed to alleviate work-family conflict”* (p.30). The results from Study 2 supported these findings, demonstrating that high integration increased both work-family conflict and family-work conflict. When WFH, many individuals appeared to create *“temporal and tangible boundaries within the home to segment”* (p.31) work and family domains. Those *“who are unable to create a boundary between work and family experience the greatest FWC and WFC”* (p.31). *“Study 2 showed that an inability to disengage from work increased WFC but was not significantly linked to FWC”* (p.32). *“Study 2 also showed that an inability to disengage from work is positively related to job stress.”* (p.32).	Study 2 controlled for gender, as well as *“marital status, job tenure, and number of family members in the household.”* (p.27). It was found that *“male remote workers need to highly segment their work and family roles if they are to minimise WFC. … Conversely, for female remote workers the integration of work and family roles was not as devastating to their WFC as it was to that of men. However, an inability to disengage from work significantly increased women's WFC.”* (p.30).
11	2 types of commitment: Commitment to telework, Commitment to virtual teams	*“The 15-item Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) was used to measure commitment. … The 15 items were presented twice, once to measure commitment to telework and once to measure commitment to virtual teams.”* (p.210).	Three dimensions of Sternberg's (1997) thinking styles (reflecting an individual's cognitive style): Scope (External or Internal), Level (Global or Local), Leaning (Liberal or Conservative)	Sternberg's Thinking Style Inventory (Scope, Level and Leaning, each comprised of 16 items)	*“A negative relationship (β = 44; p < 001) existed between scope and commitment to telework, suggesting that internals were more committed to the telework function.”* (p.212). *“A strongly positive relationship (β = 75; p < 001) was identified between scope and commitment to the virtual team, suggesting that externals had significantly higher commitment to their virtual teams than did internals.”* (p.212). *“We found a positive association between leaning and commitment to telework (β =14; p < 05), suggesting that liberals had higher commitment to telework.”* (p.212). *“A negative relationship (β = 12; p < 01) existed between leaning and commitment to the virtual team, indicating that conservatives were more committed to their teams than were liberals.”* (p.212).	Looked at whether media richness moderates *“the effects of an employee's cognitive style on his or her commitment to the telework function and to his or her virtual team.”* (p.200). *“the interaction between media richness and scope explained significant incremental variance in commitment to telework (β = 19; p < 001). A follow up plotting of this interaction found that people low in scope (i.e., internals) enjoyed substantial gains in commitment to telework when richer media was used (β = 37; p < 001), whereas*

#	Outcome					
					"*Significant positive relationships existed between level and commitment to telework (β = 38; p < 001), as well as between level and commitment to the virtual team (β = 17; p < 001).*" (p.213).	*people high in scope (i.e., externals) exhibited decreased commitment to the telework (β = 26; p < 05) when richer media was used.*" (p.213).
12	Productivity	Phase 1: 30-45-minute interviews Phase 2: Paper-and-pencil survey (exact measures not clear)	Beliefs and attitudes about telecommuting	Phase 1: 30-45-minute interviews Phase 2: Paper-and-pencil survey (exact measures not clear)	"*Beliefs and attitudes were strongly linked to telecommuter productivity (x2 = 18.1, p < 0.001)*" (p.1042). Beliefs and attitudes "*were useful in discriminating between high- and low-productivity telecommuters … (r = 0.94, F = 93.5, p < 0.001)*" (p.1047).	Manager interaction, family interaction, resource availability and distractions were considered as variables in discriminating between high- and low-productivity telecommuters. Semi-structured interview questions also took into account gender, number of children, social factors such as colleagues' attitudes towards oneself, and situational factors such as privacy, lighting and furniture.
13	Ego depletion, Work satisfaction	Measured ego depletion using the German version of the Self-Control Capacity Scale (short version; Bertrams, Unger, & Dickhäuser, 2011; Ciarocco, Twenge, Muraven, & Tice, 2007). Work satisfaction was measured using a single item (Kunin, 1998).	Six self-leadership dimensions (self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-cueing, visualizing successful performance, evaluation of beliefs and assumptions)	18 items from the German version of the Revised Self Leadership Questionnaire (Andreßen & Konradt, 2007; Houghton & Neck, 2002). The original intention was to measure nine self-leadership dimensions, however three (self-observation, self-talk and natural rewards) had to be excluded "*due to low internal consistency*". (p.887).	"*No significant indirect effects for any of the six self-leadership strategies*" (p.891) on the association between working location and ego depletion. "*A positive indirect effect of working location on work satisfaction through self-goal setting (ACME = 0.02, 95% CI [0.00, 0.05], p < .05, proportion mediated = 0.04, p < .05).*" (p.891). "*None of the other five self-leadership strategies showed significant indirect effects.*" (p.892).	Autonomy as a mediator. Compared days WFH with days working in the office. "*As multilevel analyses showed that participants of our study worked significantly longer on office days than on home days: (γ = −0.67, SE = 0.09, t = −7.44, p < .001); we controlled for number of working hours in all analyses. Moreover, as a large part of the sample worked at home on Fridays, they also controlled for the respective weekday.*" (p.888).

* 1 = Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), 2 = O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009), 3 = Greer and Payne (2014), 4 = Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006), 5 = O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014), 6 = Raghuram, Wiesenfeld and Garud (2003), 7 = Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), 8 = Basile and Beauregard (2016), 9 = Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters and Kluwer (2016), 10 = Eddleston and Mulki (2017), 11 = Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer (2003), 12 = Neufeld and Fang (2005), 13 = Müller and Niessen (2019).

5.8 Quality Assessment Results

The full results of the quality assessment can be found in Appendix B. Table 8 below summarises the evidence statements and quality ratings. Further detail on how the quality ratings were assigned can be found in Appendices B and C. The quality assessment also considered risk of bias ('*Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?'* (p.2) for quantitative data and *'Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?'* (p.2) for qualitative data (Hong et al. 2018)), therefore a separate section specifically on risk of bias (as recommended by PRISMA) is not presented, to prevent duplication.

Table 8

Evidence Statements and Quality Ratings

Evidence Statement:	Quality Rating:	Reasoning:
Overarching Statement:		
Individual psychological factors are associated with WFH outcomes.	Promising evidence	Overall, there are multiple studies (e.g. Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Greer & Payne, 2014; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014), however these studies all have limitations in design and approach.
Specific Statements:		
Boundary management preferences are associated with WFH outcomes.	Initial evidence	There are four studies (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016), however all have limitations, and the findings are mixed (significant main effect, another found a non-statistically significant effect)
Self-efficacy is associated with WFH outcomes.	Initial evidence	There are three studies (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003; Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004), however all have limitations.
Personality is associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There are three studies (Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015; O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009; O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014), however there is a mixture of significant and non-significant findings, and all studies have limitations.
Structuring behaviours are associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There are two studies (Greer & Payne, 2014; Raghuram & Weisenfeld, 2004), however task planning was not significantly related to turnover intentions and structuring behaviour did not appear to reduce work interference in nonwork. Furthermore, both studies have limitations.
Self-leadership is associated with positive WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (Müller & Niessen, 2019), however there was a positive indirect effect of working location on work satisfaction through just one of the dimensions of self-leadership, and the positive association between work location and ego depletion through self-leadership was not supported. Additionally, the study has limitations.
Thinking styles are associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003) with multiple significant findings, however the study has limitations

Need for autonomy is associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009), however it has limitations.
Need for achievement is associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009), however it found that need for achievement was almost unrelated to teleworkers' self-rated job performance and satisfaction.
Work-oriented mindset is associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (Greer & Payne, 2014), however it has limitations.
Inability is disengage from work is associated with WFH outcomes.	Unclear evidence	There is one study (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017), however it has limitations.
Beliefs and attitudes about telecommuting are associated with WFH outcomes	Unclear evidence	There is one study (Neufeld & Fang, 2005), however it has limitations.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this SLR was to understand what is known about individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH, by systematically collecting, analysing and assimilating existing research. As this appears to be the first review to focus on individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes, this SLR also sought to understand what definitions and measurements of successful WFH have been used.

6.1 How is 'Successful' Working from Home Defined and Measured in the Literature?

Although not the main focus of this SLR, understanding how successful WFH is defined and measured is key for framing the central research question. The 13 studies that resulted from the SLR methodology represent a diverse body of evidence covering a range of positive WFH outcomes. Specifically, across the 13 studies, a total

of eight positive WFH outcomes were measured, ranging from performance to commitment. What this means is that successful WFH is apparently comprised of a range of elements, including but not limited to: performance, minimal work-family conflict, wellbeing, satisfaction, and commitment. This makes sense as many of these outcomes are themselves linked, for example work-family conflict is negatively linked to wellbeing and performance (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011, as cited in Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016; van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009, as cited in Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016). However, one key problem with this broad definition of successful WFH is that it may force organisations to choose elements of successful WFH over others. For example, O'Neill et al. (2014) suggest that *'If a particular outcome among cyberslacking, satisfaction or perceived performance when working remotely is of particular value, the organisation could focus on the subset of traits identified as most relevant in the importance analyses'* (p.296). It is difficult to imagine a situation in which an organisation would not want the best across all three of these outcomes simultaneously.

In line with the varied definitions of successful WFH, measurement across the studies was similarly varied, with many studies using established, validated scales but also a surprising number of studies developing their own measures. Even within WFH outcomes, there was great variation in their conceptualisation and measurement across studies. For example, O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) used self-rated performance measured via a single item, while Greer and Payne (2014) used supervisor ratings of performance measured via six items.

O'Neill et al.'s (2014) inclusion of cyberslacking in their measures of WFH outcomes is one example of a negative outcome of WFH that was considered in the studies within this SLR. Cyberslacking would understandably be an important WFH outcome because technology is a key component of telework (Standen, Daniels & Lamond, 1999). Although O'Neill et al.'s (2014) study was the only study that measured cyberslacking, other studies considered a range of other negative outcomes of WFH. For example, five studies focused on outcomes relating to conflict between work and family, which is important as employees who have children are arguably

more likely to WFH than engage in other forms of remote work such as working in cafes (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline, 2009).

Overall, whilst the understanding of what comprises successful WFH is broad, comprising a range of outcomes, it could be argued to be vague and imprecise.

6.2 What Individual Psychological Factors have been found to Enable Employees to Work from Home Successfully?

Alongside the broad range of WFH outcomes, a similarly broad range of individual psychological factors have been explored. Across the 13 studies, no less than 20 different individual psychological factors were found to be either linked to at least one WFH outcome or acting as cross-level moderators or predictors of one or more WFH outcome(s), in at least one or more study. Indeed, Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) concluded that affective outcomes of WFH *'vary dramatically as a function of individual differences'* (p.892) in their study focusing on personality in relation to wellbeing when WFH. However, whilst there is promising evidence that individual psychological factors overall are associated with successful WFH, when focusing in on any one individual psychological factor, most individual psychological factors are only explored in one or two studies, let alone with the identification of any effect or *significant* effect.

It is equally as important to understand individual psychological factors that prevent or serve as barriers to successful WFH as it is to understand individual psychological factors that enable successful WFH. Not only does this further the understanding of what successful WFH is by demonstrating what it is *not*, it also ensures a balanced view. However, as with positive WFH outcomes, research into negative WFH outcomes is lacking for certain individual psychological factors, as most individual psychological factors and negative WFH outcomes are explored in no more than a single study.

There is initial evidence for the role of boundary management preferences in WFH outcomes. Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton (2006) found that a boundary management preference for segmentation of work-family boundaries was a key predictor of individual wellbeing (assessed via a measure of depression). Basile and Beauregard (2016) identified that effective teleworkers developed strategies to align their boundaries between work and home with their preference for integration or segmentation. However, as shown in Basile and Bearegard's study, it may not be preference for segmentation or integration that is important, but rather the ability to enact a strategy that aligns with one's preference for either of these. Although there is less evidence for the role of boundary management preferences in negative WFH outcomes (compared with positive WFH outcomes) due to mixed findings between the three studies that explored these (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006; Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016), it may be that the same principle applies. For example, Eddleston and Mulki's (2017) research found that neither preference for integration nor segmentation in boundary management strategies were superior when WFH, but rather employees' perceived ability to freely control the work-home boundary in their preferred way was key. This means that it might not be the individual psychological factor itself (preference for segmentation or integration) that drives WFH outcomes, but rather the potential for the WFH context to accommodate that individual psychological factor. Thus, the interactions between different elements of WFH and different individual psychological factors may be key.

There is unclear evidence for the role of personality in WFH outcomes. Looking at personality in relation to *negative* WFH outcomes first, openness to experience, trait rumination and sensation seeking did not seem to impact the relationship between WFH and negative affective wellbeing (Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015). However, agreeableness, conscientiousness and honesty were negatively correlated with cyberslacking, and procrastination was positively related to cyberslacking (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014). Although the findings across these two studies were therefore mixed, they looked at different elements of personality and different negative WFH outcomes. Therefore, the findings may not be comparable, calling for further research in both areas to test these findings. Similarly, there is unclear evidence for the role of personality in *positive* WFH outcomes, with studies identifying a mixture of findings. Openness and rumination seemingly play a

role in the relationship between WFH and positive affective wellbeing (Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015). Although organisation was positively correlated with performance and satisfaction when WFH in O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline's (2009) study, they found that diligence was unrelated to both performance and satisfaction, and sociability was slightly negatively correlated with satisfaction. It could therefore be that some elements of personality are important in some positive WFH outcomes, and that attention to detail is key in understanding these nuances. It poses an important question about how different elements of personality may interact within an individual. For example, if one scores highly on organisation, which O'Neil et al. (2009) found to be positively related to satisfaction, and scores high on sociability, which O'Neil et al. (2009) found to be slightly negatively related to satisfaction, it could mean that that person's level of organisation would reduce or disguise the negative impact of sociability on satisfaction. Perhaps it is the combination of different traits or types that are important, however this does not appear to have been acknowledged in the research to date.

Overall, there is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, justifying further research attention in this area. However, just like job, task or social factors alone cannot fully account for WFH outcomes, it is likely that individual psychological factors alone cannot fully account for WFH outcomes either. This demands a holistic approach, accounting for the person and their environment, using research methodology that enables the exploration of complex interactions.

6.3 What Mechanisms may be important in the Relationship between Individual Psychological Factors and Working from Home Outcomes?

Consideration of mechanisms that may be important in the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes has implications for understanding why certain individual psychological factors may make some individuals better suited to WFH than others. For example, Anderson, Kaplan and

Vega (2015) argued that their findings could reflect how WFH may be characterised by reduced external stimulation such as reduced social interaction and noise. This is important because an understanding of what it is about WFH that may interact with individual psychological factors to produce positive outcomes could be used to design the WFH environment to optimise such effects. However, Anderson et al. (2015) did not measure social interaction or noise, and the studies in this SLR seemingly lacked detailed consideration and measurement of the WFH environment. This is problematic as it is easy to imagine that WFH in a studio apartment would feel different from WFH in a dedicated home office. Similarly, workplace characteristics such as the extent of autonomy would understandably shape the WFH experience. However, only one study (Müller & Niessen, 2019) looked at autonomy as a moderator in the link between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes.

Participant characteristics seem to play a role in the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes. Only four of the 13 studies reported participants' years of experience of WFH, which Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004) found to be important. Specifically, participants' WFH experience and their managerial job category appeared to be responsible for significant variance in job stress. Another seemingly important mechanism in the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes is the extent of WFH. Eddleston and Mulki (2017) note how exclusively WFH may lead to the home becoming associated with both work and family. Their research indicates that exclusively WFH may bring advantages by offering greater flexibility to manage work and family demands, whilst simultaneously perpetuating conflict between work and family. Eddleston and Mulki contrast this with research on intermittent WFH which found that more telecommuting reduces conflict between work and family, as intermittent WFH potentially offers less flexibility than exclusively WFH (Mulki et al. 2009, as cited in Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). This means that outcomes when exclusively WFH could be more complex than outcomes when intermittently WFH. Problematically, six studies in this SLR did not specify the extent to which their participants were WFH or provided only an average or minimum time. This is important because Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) recognised that their findings could either be stronger or weaker in full-time teleworkers; stronger because they may be more isolated (Golden et al. 2008, as cited in Anderson et al. 2015), or weaker because they might plan their time in different

ways compared to part-time teleworkers. Moreover, measuring the extent of WFH as a moderator enhances confidence in the findings (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003). When attempting to understand employees' ability to adapt to the challenges of WFH, it helps to verify that the true source of the challenges is indeed WFH rather than a potentially confounding variable. Although there may be other factors that perpetuate WFH challenges, for example having children could increase distractions, three of the 13 studies did control for number of children or family members in the household (e.g. Eddleston & Mulki, 2017).

Overall, some of the mechanisms that are known to be important, such as extent of WFH, are included in the studies as moderators, but not all studies and not all mechanisms. Indeed, less than half of the studies in this SLR assessed moderating effects. Moreover, none of the studies looked at mediating effects. This means that although there is some understanding of the strength and direction of relationships, little to no attempt has been made to understand the process through which individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes are related, by exploring mediators. This represents a methodological or analytical limitation, because if more of the studies had used structural equation modelling (as Eddleston & Mulki (2017)) did, they might have been able to show exactly where individual psychological factors fit. However, instead the research is largely cross-sectional and focused on associations, which does not provide as much insight. This means the understanding of mechanisms is limited, which in turn limits the ability to interpret, theorise and apply the findings.

6.4 Theoretical Considerations

Rojon, Okupe and McDowall's (2021) recent critique of SLRs recommended that SLR Discussion sections consider: *'Have the findings been sufficiently theorised? What is the theoretical contribution to knowledge which can be concluded?'* (p.29). This will be addressed here.

It is not surprising that individual psychological factors have been linked to WFH outcomes as there are multiple theories about how and why this could be.

Indeed, individual psychological factors can impact one's reactions, perceptions and exposure to environmental factors (Barsky, Thoresen, Warren & Kaplan, 2004, as cited in Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015). Importantly, most studies interpreted their results based on theory. For example, O'Neill et al. (2014) discussed how the role of agreeableness in cyberslacking may be due to that trait becoming 'activated' when the individual feels they have earned a break. This nods to trait activation theory. Only one study (Basile & Beauregard, 2016) made no reference to theory.

Many studies were guided by theory from the start, using theory to shape the research. For example, Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) selected individual psychological factors to study that would theoretically be related to WFH outcomes. This means theory and mechanisms acted as the starting point, providing an important foundation.

Person-Environment Fit theory was considered in three studies in this SLR (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003), proposing that employees may be more effective in environments that suit their personality. However, there was also a notably wide variety of theories referenced across the studies. This means that there are potentially multiple mechanisms through which individual psychological factors may impact WFH outcomes. Some of the theories in the studies were specific to certain individual psychological factors, such as boundary theory and self-efficacy theory, whereas other theories such as trait activation theory could potentially apply across multiple individual psychological factors. It would be interesting to compare theories and identify the most parsimonious explanation. This could enhance the understanding of the reasons underlying the apparent links between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes. However, currently the research is not led by theory in a consistent manner (or at least not based on the same set of agreed theories), and this may be underpinning why researchers are using different measures, different conceptualisations of WFH and a wide range of individual psychological factors. This makes the findings difficult to interpret in a connected way. Furthermore, given the variety of individual psychological factors that have been considered across the 13 studies, it may be worth reviewing relationships between individual psychological factors to identify any overlap and, if necessary, truncate the factors. Indeed, O'Neill,

Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) engaged in such an exercise in their study, noting that overlap between the factors may weaken theoretical arguments.

In summary, it would appear that the findings of the studies are reasonably theorised however the parsimony of how findings are explained may be questionable due to the wide variety of theories used. It is possible that multiple theories are at play, but if this is the case, a more integrated understanding of the theories is needed in terms of the specific details about when a particular theory becomes important. Furthermore, there would appear to be a reasonable theoretical contribution to knowledge from across the 13 studies, however this varies greatly between studies, and the studies are not all explicit about if or how they are contributing to theoretical knowledge.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Systematic Literature Review

There are at least two key strengths of this SLR. Firstly, as far as is known, this SLR is the first and only SLR to offer an overall view of what is currently known about individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully or serve as barriers to successful WFH. As such, it provides novel insights on the state of the literature in this area. Secondly, this SLR was carefully designed to filter out studies that had not been peer-reviewed, studies that did not focus on participants who were specifically WFH (as opposed to broader forms of remote work), and studies conducted within the extreme context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the findings of this SLR have a level of specificity that may lend itself to greater generalisability. The rationale for excluding studies conducted during the pandemic was that the pandemic was characterised by the extreme context of WFH without a choice, concern around Covid-19 infection risk and death toll, as well as minimal social contact. This decision may produce limitations such as questionable generalisability of pre-pandemic findings to post-pandemic contexts (given that WFH has perhaps become more 'acceptable' or 'normal' following the pandemic), however pre-pandemic research is arguably more comparable to post-pandemic contexts than research conducted during the pandemic, in light of the extreme factors such as

concern around Covid-19 infection risk as mentioned above. It is possible that the individual psychological factors involved in successful WFH may have been even more evident in the Covid-19 pandemic contexts given that many employees were forced to WFH regardless of their individual psychological factors, which could have provided some interesting comparative data between those who thrived when WFH during the pandemic and those who struggled with WFH during the pandemic. However, excluding studies conducted during the pandemic also potentially helped the SLR to control for environmental factors such as the potential impact of not being allowed to leave one's home. Furthermore, for many employees, WFH during the pandemic was possibly their first experience of WFH, thus they may not have had sufficient time to understand and report on the role of their individual psychological factors in WFH, unlike employees who may have more experience and self-awareness around WFH in the context of longer-term pre-pandemic WFH. These benefits of excluding studies conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic therefore potentially outweigh such limitations, especially considering that initial scoping of the literature indicated a sufficient number of pre-pandemic studies to justify an SLR. A future SLR may wish to focus on the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic, however, in the meantime, the present SLR seeks to provide a neat, clear-cut synthesis of findings by focusing on pre-pandemic research. This decision is reinforced by the important role of environmental factors in WFH outcomes, such as the suitability of one's home as a place to work, in terms of noise and temperature (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė, 2019), which individuals potentially had limited time and opportunity to manipulate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite these strengths, there are at least two limitations of this SLR. Firstly, the definition of individual psychological factors used in this SLR could be interpreted as overly vague or subjective, as behavioural factors such as structuring behaviours were included. It could be argued that structuring behaviours are not an individual psychological factor in the same sense that personality is an individual psychological factor. However, workplace behaviours would appear to be governed by personality to an extent (Pletzer, Bentvelzen, Oostrom & De Vries, 2019), and personality itself is no longer considered to be unchanging (Beck & Jackson, 2022). Therefore, a definition of individual psychological factors by Kankaraš (2017) that focuses on

relatively stable, enduring patterns in behaviour was deemed appropriate for this SLR, supported by consultation with another researcher and other studies in the field of individual differences. Secondly, the quality of the studies within this SLR was questionable. Whilst it is commendable that a quality assessment was undertaken as part of this SLR, the assessment of the papers against quality statements often resulted in a 'Cannot tell' result (see Appendix B). However, this was deemed more cautious and appropriate than assuming a 'Yes' result when it was difficult to judge certain quality statements against the limited detail provided in the papers.

6.6 Strengths and Limitations of Studies within this Review, Future Research and Future Practice

6.6.1. Strengths of the Studies within this Review

There are three key strengths of the studies in this review:

Firstly, the identification of 13 papers in this review demonstrates that research has been conducted in this area, providing promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes. This makes a valuable contribution to the evidence base by increasing the understanding of what successful WFH is, and showing that it is not just task-, social- or organisational-factors that are important in determining WFH outcomes. As noted by O'Neill et al. (2014), their study served to advance cyberslacking research, and indeed, all of the studies in this review would appear to have advanced the understand of the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes. Considering that all the studies focused on WFH (as opposed to broader telework definitions), actual use of WFH (as opposed to, for example, preference for WFH), and office job roles, it is particularly commendable that 13 studies exist. Moreover, field settings (employees working for organisations as opposed to in simulated environments) enhances the external validity of the findings.

Secondly, four of the 13 studies adopted mixed methods designs. This is beneficial because quantitative research often involves from larger sample sizes, and thus enhanced generalisability, whilst qualitative research brings unique advantages such as rich, detailed insights that might be missed in a quantitative approach. For example, Eddleston and Mulki's (2017) quantitative study was guided by the findings from their qualitative study. Eddleston and Mulki used structural equation modelling, which may have multiple statistically equivalent models with equal fit (MacCallum, Wegener, Unchino & Fabrigar, 1993, as cited in Eddleston & Mulki, 2017), however Eddleston and Mulki explain that basing their hypothesised model on their earlier qualitative findings helped to minimise that risk. Although not all studies adopted mixed methods designs, eight of the 13 studies adopted quantitative designs, therefore most studies had the advantage of large sample sizes. Additionally, Lapierre et al. (2015) used a repeated measures design.

Thirdly, the approach to analysis was sometimes strong. For example, O'Neill et al. (2009) identified trait-criterion correlations of a 'considerable magnitude'. Although O'Neill et al. (2009) were not able to explain all variance in WFH outcomes, at least one study (O'Neill et al. 2014) went a step further by looking at not just correlations but also regressions, enabling the research to determine the relative importance of individual psychological factors. For example, O'Neill et al. (2014) found that procrastination was the most important trait in predicting cyberslacking.

6.6.2 Limitations of the Studies within this Review

As with all research, there were not just strengths across the studies within this SLR but also limitations. There appear to be three main limitations across the studies: 6.5.2.1 Design, 6.5.2.2 Measures, 6.5.2.3 Contextual Issues.

6.6.2.1 Design

The studies were largely quantitative. As acknowledged by Lapierre et al. (2015), it is possible that an uncontrolled factor may have played a role in their findings. A qualitative methodology which is less limited to strict measurement items may help to uncover such uncontrolled factors that might otherwise be difficult to predict or measure to be able to account for it. Kossek et al.'s (2006) mixed methods study agrees that how an individual psychologically experiences flexibility is important, noting that '*it is not uncommon for research to frame flexibility access as a dichotomous, non-socially constructed variable.*' (p.349). Kossek et al. identified that boundary management preferences make the psychological meaning of flexibility an important element to be considered. They emphasise the importance of distinguishing between descriptive and psychological forms of flexibility, to better reflect the varied nature of flexibility. More qualitative research could have helped to address this.

6.6.2.2 Measures

Issues with measures used across the studies include reliance on single-item measures, such as in Neufeld and Fang (2005), making validity assessments more difficult than if they had used measures with multiple items. Although single-item measures may seem highly practical and supportive of high response rates across participants, single-item measures may not fully represent all elements of a construct. For example, this was acknowledged by Müller and Niessen (2019) with regards to their measure of work satisfaction.

6.6.2.3 Contextual Issues

This SLR focused on office-based samples to support comparability across studies, and because office-based work is particularly conducive to being conducted at home. However, office-based work is itself broad and diverse. The most frequently

studied sector, which was included in four of the 13 studies, was Finance, although most studies included participants in a range of office occupations. This means that although the research has seemingly covered a broad range of occupations, the understanding of the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes in any single particular sector is likely to be restricted. Moreover, although some studies have low response rates, for example 31.5% in Raghuram et al.'s (2003) study, Raghuram et al. (2003) noted that their sample appeared to at least be representative of the target population.

It is also disappointing that none of the 13 studies specify the proportion of graduates or apprentices that made up their samples. Of the studies that reported the overall work experience of their participants, the lowest was a range starting from 2.5 years. This is important as graduate and apprentice populations may be new to WFH and may receive less guidance or support compared to employees working in an office. It additionally limits the ability to provide targeted WFH support for the graduate and apprentice populations, given their unique context of not only having to adapt to a new job but also potentially WFH for the first time. One study did focus on a highly specific population: only employees who were either married, cohabiting or had at least one child living with them were included in Lapierre et al.'s (2015) study. A similar approach could be taken to include only apprentices, graduates or early careers employees in a study sample. This is important because this sample may possess unique contextual factors that play an important role in the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes.

6.6.3 Implications for Future Research

Although there are limitations associated with the studies in this review, such limitations do provide interesting directions for future research. There are at least five agendas for future research to follow up on.

Firstly, future research should aim to fill the gaps identified in the research to date. There is initial evidence for the role of a range of individual psychological factors

(including thinking styles, need for autonomy, work-oriented mindset) in positive WFH outcomes, suggesting it is worth investing further research to test and build upon this. For other individual psychological factors such as inability to disengage from work, there seems to be no data available to evaluate any potential link with positive WFH outcomes. As such, there is currently insufficient evidence to be able to claim with high confidence that any individual psychological factor has an impact on WFH outcomes. This is disappointing but perhaps not surprising given the range of individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes that have been considered across the 13 studies, resulting in thin coverage. Future research may also wish to test each individual psychological factor against each WFH outcome. For example, self-leadership was not useful in understanding ego depletion, but it might be involved in other WFH outcomes that it has not been measured against yet, such as wellbeing. This is important because it is clear that successful WFH is currently viewed as broad and multi-faceted. More studies across the individual psychological factors in this SLR would enhance coverage and comparability. In addition to more research on the variables identified in the studies within this SLR, it may be that the list of variables needs to be extended. For instance, the broader telework literature would suggest that personality traits not measured in the studies in this SLR may predict preference for working in virtual teams over face-to-face working. For example, a study by Luse, McElroy, Townsend and Demarie (2013) linked introversion-extraversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling, and judgement-perception from the Myers-Briggs type indicator (Myers & Myers, 1998) with aspects of preference for working in virtual teams. However, this seemingly has not yet been explored in the more specific context of WFH and in relation to actual use of WFH as opposed to preference for working in virtual teams.

Secondly, future research should aim for enhanced research designs and measures. Future research should ideally use pre-existing multi-item measures with supporting reliability and validity data. If possible, measures should be neutral, avoiding the use of particularly positive or negative language to avoid biasing responses. As part of the design of studies on involuntary WFH, participants should be asked if they would have chosen to WFH if they had the choice, to control for this. As part of the design of studies on voluntary WFH, participants should be reassured that the data will not be used by their employer to prevent them from WFH, so that

participants feel no pressure to convey WFH as effective. Most notably, there appears to be a need for more qualitative research. This would be beneficial to capture any individual psychological factors which may have been missed in existing research, and to delve deeper into the theory in this area. Future qualitative research might even help to produce a measure of 'successful WFH' so that other future research can produce more comparable findings. Qualitative research would also help account for the subjective nature of individual employees' WFH experiences, addressing the need for future research to distinguish between descriptive and psychological forms of flexibility, acknowledging the socially constructed nature of flexibility (Kossek et al. 2006).

Thirdly, future research must be clearer about the contexts within which WFH is being studied, such as whether the WFH is taking place in a flat or a large house, and in a bedroom or a dedicated home office. Ideally, future studies will recruit participants from a wider range of sectors to enable a more representative understanding across the literature.

Fourth, future research would benefit from a more inclusive approach, for example, it should be more inclusive of same sex relationships, single parents, and families in which a father is the primary caregiver. It would be valuable if future research could clearly report on such factors. It is also important that future research focuses on (or at least clearly includes) graduates and apprentices, as these populations appear to be neglected currently.

Fifth, a more integrated theoretical understanding is needed in terms of the specific details about when a particular theory becomes important. Future research must be more explicit about any theory or theories that are being used, whether it be to formulate hypotheses, establish factors to focus on or ideally extend a theory. Future research could extend theory in this area by taking greater control over potential extraneous variables, moderators, and especially mediators (as no studies in this SLR looked at mediating effects). This might include (but not be limited to) factors such as commuting time (as suggested by Anderson et al. 2015), extent of WFH, manager support for WFH, and gender.

6.6.3.1 How the Findings of the SLR Shaped the Next Study in this Thesis

Building upon the implications for future research discussed above, the findings of the SLR directly informed the next study in this thesis (Chapter 4). There are at least three main ways in which the findings of the SLR were used to shape the next study (a qualitative interview study), in terms of the constructs examined, the theoretical frameworks drawn upon, and the methodology, each of which are discussed in turn below.

Firstly, the constructs examined. The SLR found promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH outcomes, and that a broad range of individual psychological factors appeared to be linked to successful WFH. This therefore warranted a broad, exploratory approach in the qualitative interview study, using a definition of successful WFH aligned to the SLR that focuses on relatively stable, enduring patterns in behaviour (Kankaraš, 2017). Indeed, the SLR demonstrated that this was the logical next step to progress the literature, as the SLR indicated that there was not yet enough research to justify future studies immediately looking at any single individual psychological factor in WFH (given the range of individual psychological factors). For example, it was not yet known if the individual psychological factors identified in the SLR applied to WFH outcomes in the same way in younger, early careers employees. Also with regards to constructs, the SLR found that there was no single definition of successful WFH in the literature, which led to the qualitative interview study using Person-Environment Fit as a definition of successful WFH. From the SLR, it was clear that a range of WFH outcomes had been explored, but they tended to be focused on performance or emotional outcomes. A focus on overall 'fit' was therefore potentially more useful to explore in the qualitative interview study, especially considering that some outcomes such as performance and wellbeing are sometimes contradictory. For example, an employees could have one outcome but not another, thus they might perform well at home but have poor wellbeing when WFH, meaning that overall WFH is not a good fit. Furthermore, findings by O'Neill et al. (2014) suggested that the individual psychological factors

linked to one WFH outcome are not identical to those linked with other WFH outcomes. This may be problematic for organisations because if the importance of a particular individual psychological factor depends on the particular outcome, it forces organisations to weigh up different outcomes and choose between them. Instead, looking at overall 'fit' in the qualitative interview study was therefore a more useful way of looking at individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes, building logically on the SLR.

Secondly, the theoretical frameworks drawn upon. The SLR revealed that many studies lacked a coherent theoretical foundation. While a wide range of theories were referenced across studies in the SLR, an integrated theoretical understanding was absent, however the SLR showed that the application of Person-Environment fit offered promise. The SLR identified that three studies drew upon Person-Environment Fit theory: O'Neill et al. (2014), Eddleston and Mulki (2017), and Workman et al. (2003). Amongst these studies, the SLR showed there was mixed support for Person-Environment fit theory, for example Eddleson and Mulki (2017) found that *'in contrast to the person-environment fit perspective of boundary theory, our study shows that remote workers who segment work and family, combining a physically integrated work-family environment with strategies to segment work and family, report the lowest WFC and FWC'* [work-family conflict and family-work conflict] (p.35). However, this was within the context of boundary management preferences. Findings by Workman et al. (2003) and O'Neill et al. (2014) appeared to support the notion of Person-Environment fit leading to positive WFH outcomes, indeed O'Neill et al. (2014) even recommend that *'Person-job fit theories of remote work could integrate these traits as a basis for strong fit and the corresponding potential for positive outcomes.'* (p.296). The qualitative interview study therefore addressed the findings of the SLR by adopting a clear theoretical approach seeking to extend Person-Environment fit theory to early careers employees. However, the SLR identified that as well as relatively stable and enduring individual psychological factors such as personality seemingly playing a role in successful WFH, more behavioural individual psychological factors also appeared to play a role, such as structuring behaviours. Therefore, the qualitative study went beyond personality to consider *strategies* for successful WFH, and it drew upon the job crafting theoretical framework to achieve this. None of the studies in the SLR had specifically looked at job crafting yet,

however a study in the SLR by Raghuram et al. (2003) had made multiple subtle references to it. For example, *'Future research should examine how virtual workers utilize their motivations and abilities to proactively shape their jobs and careers over time'* (Raghuram et al. 2003, p.196). Thus, inclusion of job crafting theory was another way in which the qualitative interview study added to the theoretical understanding in a way that addressed the findings of the SLR. In response to the SLR showing there that there was limited focus on theory in this research area, the qualitative interview study not only used Person-Environment fit theory to sift participants into the study, but it also used Person-Environment fit theory and Job Crafting theory to design the interview questions.

Thirdly, the methodology used in the qualitative interview study was shaped by the SLR findings. For example, the decision for the sample to consist of early careers employees was informed by the way in which the SLR identified that previous research tended to focus on general, non-specific samples of employees. Thus, the qualitative interview study directly addressed the recommendation of the SLR that *'It is also important that future research focuses on (or at least includes) graduates and apprentices, as these populations appear to be neglected currently.'* The qualitative interview study was UK-based, which is important because only one out of thirteen studies in the SLR was conducted in the UK. Place is likely to be important in the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, because of cultural norms (Poster & Prasad, 2003, as cited in Kossek et al. 2006). Furthermore, as per a specific recommendation made by the SLR, the qualitative interview study made it clear about the contexts within which WFH was being studied, such as whether the WFH was taking place in a flat or a large house, and in a bedroom or a dedicated home office. The qualitative nature of the study and in particular a one-to-one interview approach was ideal to enable the study of individual psychological factors within the unique context of the individuals' subjective experience and situation, which was highlighted by the SLR as a key gap in previous literature which was dominated by more objective, quantitative methodologies which lacked rich, in-depth insights. Only one study in the SLR was purely qualitative, and the large proportion of the studies being quantitative could potentially have led to missing out other potentially important individual psychological factors, which was a limitation identified by the SLR that the qualitative interview study helped to address.

6.6.4 Implications for Future Practice

The limitations specified under 6.6.2 above mean that, as with all research, caution is advised in application of the findings to practice. However, there is clearly great potential in these findings and great need for support with WFH. Depending on the resolution of these limitations, potential implications for practise exist at three different levels: 5.5.4.1 Employees, 5.5.4.2 Line Managers and 5.5.4.3 Organisations. Each of these will be considered in turn below.

6.6.4.1 Employees

The findings of the studies in this SLR could be used to provide information to help individuals decide whether or not to apply for, accept or stay in a job that would require them to WFH (Lapierre et al. 2015). For example, O'Neill et al. (2014) stated that '*with further validation evidence ... we see the potential for using employee personality as one of the several sources of information useful for informing selection and placement of remote work roles'* (p.296). This could help employees find jobs that suit their personal style and preference, for optimal satisfaction, wellbeing and work-life balance. Employees would understandably want to be aware of this to maximise their career success.

Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, the findings of the studies could be used to inform the design of training so that employees who possess individual psychological factors linked to positive WFH outcomes can learn how to optimise those effects, and so that employees who do not possess such individual psychological factors can learn how to overcome potential WFH challenges and adapt their style (Lapierre et al. 2015). Indeed, *'employees need to be prepared for the opportunities and risks that await them'* (p.893) (Müller & Niessen, 2019), and this research could provide insight into potential development opportunities for employees who are WFH.

6.6.4.2 Line Managers

The findings in this review could have implications for job design, in terms of what work is conducted where, how much of the work may be conducted WFH and how tasks may be split across jobs, employees and locations. For example, O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014) proposed that knowledge of the role of personality in WFH outcomes could be used to develop structures that reduce (or increase) opportunities for certain outcomes, especially for those individuals with personalities known to be predisposed to certain WFH outcomes. The example they give is of increasing managers' monitoring of employees who may be more prone to cyberslacking.

6.6.4.3 Organisations

Knowledge of how different types of individuals and the WFH environment interact could provide clues for organisations as to how to maximise the effectiveness of WFH programs and policies. Although the findings are not strong enough to advocate specific approaches to the programs and policies, the studies in this SLR do clearly indicate that 'no one size fits all' when it comes to WFH. A sensible recommendation may be to offer employees a trial period of WFH to test WFH, prior to any permanent WFH arrangements being agreed. Furthermore, organisations considering whether or how to implement a WFH policy may be able to use the information to assess and spot trends in their workforce's individual psychological factors that might then help the organisation understand whether WFH would be a cost-effective option for the company (Lapierre et al. 2015) and how to support the workforce with WFH successfully. For example, it has previously been found that high performing employees in traditional office settings failed to cope with virtual work settings when their employer implemented a virtual program, ultimately leading the employer to revert back to traditional office working (Fursaro, 1997, as cited in Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003; Wallace, 1998, as cited in Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer, 2003). Such instances might be avoided with a greater

understanding of individual psychological factors and support. Ultimately, however, the research in this SLR suggests that a range of options (not just WFH or not just office space) is required. This means that organisations which do not offer reasonable choice to their employees where the nature of the job allows (for example, both options to work in an office or WFH), could be seen as discriminating against certain individual psychological factors.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

At the time of writing this SLR, the UK has recently emerged from its third lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and businesses are increasingly recognising the opportunities offered by WFH. It is hoped that this SLR provides a strong foundation upon which further research can build, for organisations and individuals to benefit from considerations around the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes. As far as is known, the 13 studies that this SLR has captured and assimilated constitute the full breadth and depth of published research in this area from 2003 up to 2020 (except for research conducted during the extreme context of the Covid-19 pandemic). This SLR has shown that there is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH, however there is not a strong understanding about the role of any single individual psychological factor in WFH outcomes. The key message from this SLR is therefore that there is a great need for further research in this area.

The next chapter (Chapter 4: Empirical Study) consists of the write-up of the subsequent qualitative interview study which seeks to address key gaps and limitations identified in previous research by the SLR (Chapter 3).

Chapter 4: Empirical Study (Paper)

Title: Individual Psychological Factors and Strategies that Enable Early Careers Employees to Successfully Work from Home: A Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting Perspective

Abstract

Whilst previous studies have shown that there is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH, such studies generally focus on individual psychological factors in broad samples of employees with no specific age or career stage. WFH may be especially challenging for younger employees who are embarking on their early career, however there may be an opportunity to learn from early careers employees who thrive in the WFH environment. This study examines the role of individual psychological factors and strategies in successful WFH from the perspective of younger, early careers employees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 early careers employees in the United Kingdom. Unlike previous research which is characterised by varied definitions of successful WFH and a mixed theoretical approach, this study seeks to ground the definition of successful WFH clearly in Person-Environment Fit theory. Participants were filtered into the study upon being measured as having a good 'fit' with WFH. Participants identified a range of individual psychological factors and strategies that enable them to achieve a good fit with WFH. Thematic analysis revealed five themes and 19 sub-themes relating to individual psychological factors, and seven themes and five sub-themes relating to strategies. Although the qualitative design of this study naturally led to a small sample size with questionable generalisability, some of the findings resonated with those of previous studies which had been dominated by quantitative methodologies. This study makes unique contributions in the form of rich, qualitative insights into the subjective experience of WFH, from the perspective of the previously neglected sample of younger, early careers employees, underpinned by consideration of Person-Environment Fit theory and Job Crafting theory. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Introduction

7.1 Background

The home environment is now a common place to conduct what was traditionally considered office-based work. In response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, governments around the world advised employees to WFH where possible to help limit the spread of Coronavirus. Thirty two percent of individuals who were WFH during the pandemic and who responded to a survey by Owl Labs (2021) reported that they would quit their job if they could not WFH post-pandemic. Furthermore, research by Barrero, Bloom and Davis (2021) indicated that plans to have at least some WFH post-pandemic became increasingly popular between May 2020-October 2021. Employees and employers have learned that WFH *is* possible without compromising performance, and WFH may enhance performance, with 88.4% of employees reporting that they had achieved as much work, if not more, WFH during the lockdown as they did previously in the office (Parry et al. 2021). Lund, Madgavkar, Mayika, and Smit (2020) estimated that up to one quarter of the workforce in advanced economies could work remotely for 3-5 days per week without productivity loss. This is important because prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, many executives seemed sceptical and reluctant to allow employees to WFH, reflected in phrases such as 'shirking from home' (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying, 2015). Research on WFH has perhaps never been more relevant.

As society is amid a WFH transition at scale, there are likely to be many unknowns. In particular, the differential impact of WFH on employees at different stages of their career is not fully clear, although there is some insight and evidence

supporting the importance of considering this, as highlighted under section '1.3.3.4 Demographic Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes'. A study of 128 teleworkers agreed with Lund et al. (2020) that WFH may increase productivity (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė, 2019). A meta-analysis of 46 studies spanning 12,883 employees, identified that WFH was related to reduced work-family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). However, the mean age of participants in these papers was 37 years old and 39 years old, respectively, indicating a lack of research focusing specifically on younger, early careers employees. Whilst it is important not to stereotype, there may be merit in considering participants' career stage, because at a mid-life stage, such as the average participant age in studies such as Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė and Goštautaitė's (2019), employees may be more likely to have family responsibilities, making the potential for reduced work-family conflict more pertinent (Ragins, Lyness, Williams & Winkel, 2014, as cited in Akkermans, Richardson & Kraimer, 2020). In contrast, WFH for younger, early careers employees (or currently 'Generation Z', born since 1997) is perhaps more likely to be within the context of a focus on learning, self-development and mentoring as one starts to settle in their first career (Jayathilake, Daud, Eaw & Annuar, 2021). However, research focusing specifically on the WFH experience for early careers employees is lacking. One exception would be a related study by Jeske and Axtell (2018) which, through interviews with interns and internship organisers, found that commitment, supervisory engagement and use of technology were important for positive relationships in the context of virtual internships.

Reduced job engagement (Sardeshmukh, Sharma & Golden, 2012) and irritability have been identified as disadvantages of WFH (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003). Nevertheless, just 10% of the sample in Sardeshmukh, Sharma and Golden's (2012) study were age 18-25 years old, and the majority of participants in Mann and Holdsworth's (2003) study were between 25-44 years old. Other studies on WFH outcomes, such as Orhan, Rijsman and Van Dijk's (2016) and van der Lippe and Lippényi's (2020), did not collect or report on the age of their participants at all. This is problematic because different positive and negative outcomes of WFH would understandably have differential impact across ages and career stages. The evidence for both positive and negative outcomes of WFH, combined with the unknowns (most notably, the differential impact of WFH on employees of different ages and career

stages) and the aforementioned wider context of increased interest in WFH post-pandemic, means there is an urgent need for more research in the area of WFH. This is supported by a recent SLR which recommended future research focus on both the role of the *person* and their environment in WFH outcomes, as well as more clearly integrate theoretical considerations (Pomfrey, Yarker & Lewis, in preparation).

7.2 Theoretical Considerations: Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting

Building upon, section '1.4 The Role of Theory in Working from Home Research' in Chapter 1, Person-Environment Fit theory (Person-Environment Fit; Kristof, 1996), with its focus on not just the WFH environment but also the *person*, may be a useful way of understanding early careers employees' experience of WFH. According to Person-Environment Fit theory, the degree of compatibility between a person's characteristics and the characteristics of their environment is key. Person-Environment Fit theory assumes that a high degree of compatibility or 'fit' results in positive outcomes, whilst low compatibility or 'mis-fit' results in negative outcomes, for which there is evidence to support (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). In terms of conceptualising 'fit', there has historically been (and continues to be) great debate. Three main approaches have been taken, conceptualising Person-Environment Fit as based on a person's Needs, Abilities, or Values, relative to the environment's Supplies, Demands, or Values Congruence, respectively. Pomfrey, Yarker and Lewis' (in preparation) recent SLR on the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes noted that although some WFH studies considered theory, there was opportunity to better integrate theory. Furthermore, three studies in Pomfrey et al.'s (in preparation) SLR considered Person-Environment Fit theory, but not in relation to early careers employees. Person-Environment Fit theory thus appears to be a promising avenue for further investigation and extension to understand the WFH experience of younger, early careers employees. Additionally, it may explain certain traits *'as a basis for strong fit'* (p.296) with WFH (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014).

As with any theoretical perspective, Person-Environment Fit theory is not without its limitations. It appears to assume that the person is a passive reactor to their environment. This is important because it poses a question around whether employees can be held accountable for their actions or whether they are merely responding to the WFH environment. An extension to Person-Environment Fit theory is Job Crafting theory (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013), which was first introduced in section '1.4 The Role of Theory in Working from Home Research' in Chapter 1. Job Crafting theory acknowledges that employees actively shape their environment. This is especially relevant to WFH given that WFH typically provides employees with greater autonomy than office-based work (Dimitrova, 2003), and thus greater potential for the influence of Job Crafting in Person-Environment Fit-related outcomes. Job Crafting might also help explain instances where support for Person-Environment Fit theory was not found. For example, Eddleson and Mulki (2017) (as cited in Pomfrey et al. in preparation) found that *'in contrast to the Person-Environment Fit perspective of boundary theory, our study shows that remote workers who segment work and family, combining a physically integrated work-family environment with strategies to segment work and family, report the lowest WFC and FWC'* (p.35) [work-family conflict and family-work conflict]. Use of a segmentation boundary management strategy could be considered an example of Job Crafting, as the person is actively shaping their environment. Indeed, Job Crafting theory proposes that there are three main categories of 'crafting' one's job. Firstly, task-based Job Crafting whereby a person may alter the nature of a task, the effort they spend on a task, or the task itself. Secondly, relational-based Job Crafting whereby a person may alter who they work with in their job, when or how they work. Finally, cognitive-based Job Crafting whereby a person may alter the way they think about their job (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013).

Previous studies have used Person-Environment Fit theory and Job Crafting theory when examining WFH in general. For example, with reference to Person-Environment Fit theory, research by Bentley, Teo, McLeod, Tan, Bosua and Gloet (2016) indicated that perceived support from one's organisation when WFH seemingly increased 'teleworker-environment fit'. Indeed, Bentley et al. (2016) highlight social isolation resulting from a lack of support when WFH as a key person-environment fit problem in the WFH context, pointing to support from a study by Haines, St-Onge and Archambault (2002). Although Bentley et al.'s research is

supported by the notion of socio-technical systems theory (Bélanger, Watson-Manheim & Swan (2013), by exploring organisational support Bentley et al. largely focus on the environment part of fit with WFH as opposed to the 'person' part of person-environment fit. There is evidence to suggest that individual psychological factors and person-environment fit are inherently linked, for example, although not specifically in relation to WFH, Liao (2021) found that both person-job fit and person-organisation fit mediated the role of proactive personality in career satisfaction, job satisfaction and job involvement. It may therefore follow that Person-Environment Fit with WFH could potentially be involved in understanding the role of personality in WFH outcomes. For example, Person-Environment Fit has been used in an attempt to understand individual factors that 'fit' with virtual organisations (Shin, 2004). However, 'virtual' organisations do not necessarily equate to WFH, in that WFH does not consist of the same environment as general virtual settings such as coffee shops, trains or hotels. Nevertheless, it stands that multiple studies have explored and supported a role for Person-Environment Fit theory in WFH more generally. For example, with respect to fit playing a role in job satisfaction when WFH (Arroyo, 2021) and stress when WFH (Weinert, Maier & Laumer, 2015).

Previous studies have also used Job Crafting theory when examining WFH more generally. For example, Liu, Wan and Fan's (2021) study demonstrated that WFH may positively impact job performance with job crafting as a mediator between that relationship. Liu et al. (2021) also provide an explanation for this with support from Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001), whereby job crafting is used by individuals to acquire and protect resources to be able to effectively deal with the resource pressures that WFH places on them. Liu et al. additionally explain that job crafting may help individuals to integrate resources, which may include person-related resources such as self-efficacy around using certain WFH equipment and environment-related resources such as the availability of WFH equipment itself, alluding to connection and overlap between Person-Environment Fit theory and Job Crafting theory in the WFH context. However, Liu et al. highlight a key limitation of their study as failing to consider the role of 'self-monitoring personality' in one's decision to job craft when WFH, which suggests a need to focus on job crafting in the context of individual psychological factors. For example, as identified in an SLR by Pomfrey et al. (in preparation), a study by Raghuram et al. (2003) suggested that

perceived remoteness and distractions when WFH may generate increased pressure for employees to self-manage and shape their job responsibilities, and there is a trend whereby *'work, jobs, and careers can be proactively self-defined'* (p.193), making employee proactivity particularly important (Raghuram et al. 2003). Furthermore, a study by Stempel and Siestrup (2022) identified that increasing structural and social resources using job crafting seemingly played an important role in enhancing wellbeing when WFH, as this apparently helped individuals adapt to the sudden onset of WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic. This need to quickly adjust to WFH as a new experience may be comparable to the experience of younger, early careers employees WFH for potentially the first time, linking to section 7.3 below. Furthermore, Biron, Casper and Raghuram (2022) demonstrated that WFH is a dynamic process whereby job crafting may help individuals ensure their needs are met.

Overall, Person-Environment Fit theory and Job Crafting theory seem to be a combination of theories that are worth pursuing to advance current understanding of the role of individual psychological factors in WFH, with a particular focus on younger, early careers employees.

7.3 The Working from Home Environment of Younger, Early Careers Employees

As detailed under section '1.3.2 Conceptual Issues' in Chapter 1, WFH has previously been explored as part of wider concepts such as 'telework' and there is merit in focusing purely on WFH to avoid confusion with other remote working locations such as coffee shops. Therefore, in this study, WFH refers to an employee conducting all or part of their job from their own personal accommodation, whether that be a flat, a house share, or one's family home. Previously, WFH has been proposed as a solution for supporting a senior workforce, for young mothers or for people with disabilities (Arvola, 2006). The Covid-19 pandemic forced many employees into involuntary WFH, regardless of factors such as age (Caligiuri & De Cieri, 2021). However, some research indicates that younger employees view WFH more favourably than older employees (Raišienė, Rapuano & Varkulevičiūtė, 2021).

Indeed, as discussed under section '1.3.3.4 Demographic Determinants of Working from Home Outcomes' in Chapter 1, there are differences in experiences of WFH across the lifespan. As such, it is important that WFH research considers age, yet little research appears to do so, especially with regards to younger, early careers employees WFH.

'Early careers employees' are individuals who have only recently started working on a permanent, usually full-time basis. They may be apprentices, graduates or school-leavers, but they are characterised by being at the start of their first career and therefore often have little relevant previous work experience upon which to draw in their current role. As such, they also tend to be young. In this study, early careers employees are defined similarly to The Children and Families Act (2014) and NHS (2019) which specify 'young people' as referring to those individuals up to the age of 25 years old. Similarly, in Super's (1953) Career Development theory, the 'exploration' stage in which individuals are starting to understand themselves and their workplace, is considered to be up to the age of approximately 24 years old. The importance of distinguishing early careers employees from other groups would appear to be supported by a study by Kinman and Grant (2017), finding that early careers employees tend to define concepts such as resilience as a reactive coping mechanism in balancing job demands, unlike more experienced employees who perceived resilience as a proactive, protective factor in wellbeing.

As with anyone WFH, early careers employees' experience of WFH is likely to vary greatly depending on their personal accommodation. A recent study by Bloom (2020) found that 49% of American employees WFH had the luxury of a dedicated room for WFH, whereas 51% had to WFH in a communal area or bedroom. The latter may be particularly challenging; WFH in a bedroom has been linked to increased distractions (Goodwin, Webber, Baker & Bartos, 2021), and work-life balance issues (Allen, Merlo, Lawrence, Slutsky & Gray, 2021). Furthermore, use of media such as computers and phones in one's bedroom is linked to poor sleep habits (Brunborg et al. 2011). Younger, early careers employees are especially likely to have to WFH from their bedroom or communal area (Parry et al. 2021), potentially making them particularly vulnerable to problems with WFH. Whilst it is important not to over-generalise across younger employees, research indicates that younger employees often

start on lower salaries (Weinstein, 2017), thus they may have less financial resource to address the disadvantages of WFH compared with the wider population. Parry et al. (2021) reported younger employees as being more likely to live in geographical locations with fewer personal connections, perpetuating loneliness and isolation when WFH. Indeed, a study by Aviva (2020) found that 24% of young employees felt that WFH made them feel less connected, and that younger employees were most likely to experience anxiety (53% against a 34% national average), and to rank their mental health as bad (17% against an 11% national average), in relation to WFH. Furthermore, younger employees would appear to experience difficulty separating work and home commitments as well as increased organisational demands when working remotely (Klopotek, 2017). It is therefore the combination of younger *and* early careers employees who perhaps most require research attention, however it is acknowledged that individuals often now have multiple careers throughout their life at various ages (Gratton & Scott, 2016), thus not all early careers employees may be young and not all young employees may be in their early career.

Such a variety of potential disadvantages that younger, early careers employees may face when WFH would understandably lead one to question why they would want to WFH at all. However, research such as that by Jeske and Axtell (2016) is supportive of virtual internships, especially in terms of benefits for skill development and diversity. Indeed, a more balanced view of the literatures indicates many benefits of WFH. Young workers in a study by Nedelcu (2020) reported that WFH not only enhanced their autonomy and motivation, but also alleviated stress related to commuting. However, the precise links between WFH and key outcomes are not clear in the wider population, let alone specifically in early careers employees. For example, reduced (Hunton, 2005) and enhanced (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020) performance when WFH. Nevertheless, it could be argued that younger employees are well-suited to WFH because they grew up with technology, unlike older employees. Indeed, Van Yperen, Rietzschel and De Jonge (2014) proposed that younger, more 'tech-savvy' employees may partly underlie their research which identified no correlation between age and perceived effectiveness of hybrid working. With reference to Person-Environment Fit and job crafting theories, perhaps person-related factors help early careers employees to adapt or compensate for potentially difficult

WFH environments, especially given that many early careers employees view WFH favourably (Wong, Cheung & Chen, 2020).

7.4 Individual Psychological Factors and Strategies linked to Working From Home Outcomes

One way of understanding who is best suited to cope or even thrive when WFH is to explore the specific 'person', or individual psychological factors and strategies, that would appear to contribute to Person-Environment Fit with WFH. Individual psychological factors refer to *relatively* stable patterns of thinking or behaviour in a person (Kankaraš, 2017), ranging from personality and motivation to attitudes and preferences. One's personality can evolve over time in response to various developmental influences (Srivastava, John, Gosling & Potter, 2003). Furthermore, individuals can adopt a range of strategies outside of their preferred styles, such as a behaviour that 'compensates' for an individual psychological factor that one lacks, in addition to behaviours that are partly produced by one's personality (Guthrie, Coate & Schwoerer, 1998; Baltes, Zhdanova & Clark, 2011). As mentioned previously, job crafting theory provides a useful lens through which strategies may be viewed. Furthermore, research indicates that younger employees may prefer to adopt job crafting techniques compared to older employees (Bashir, Hameed, Bari & Ullah, 2021).

It is important to focus on individual psychological factors and strategies because whilst factors such as organisational culture, family arrangements and leadership have been found to be linked to WFH outcomes (Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015; Powell & Craig, 2015), according to Person-Environment Fit theory, a comprehensive understanding must consider the person. For example, different individuals may respond to organisational culture in different ways, possibly explaining why antecedents of some WFH outcomes, such as job satisfaction, have been described as ambiguous (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė, 2019). Similarly, the impact of environmental factors would understandably shape, influence or be exacerbated by individual psychological factors. For example, with regards to

individual psychological factors in Person-Environment Fit, younger people often experience social isolation (Klopotek, 2017) and difficulty learning from others (Leesman, 2020) when WFH, however what this means may depend on the individual's characteristics or job crafting strategies. If the individual has low self-efficacy, missing out on learning from others is likely to be especially difficult due to limited access to that reference point or behavioural observations to follow. Different individuals may also have different propensities to adopt job crafting strategies that enhance their access to opportunities to learn from others when WFH. For example, if one has low self-efficacy and they are not getting feedback as regularly because of the often socially isolating nature of WFH, they are potentially more likely to be compromised than a person who has high self-efficacy or feels confident using job crafting strategies to proactively ask for feedback. This is where Person-Environment Fit theory and job crafting theory can support the understanding of WFH outcomes.

Pomfrey et al.'s (in preparation) SLR identified, analysed and reviewed 13 studies looking at individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH. The review concluded that there is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes. However, none of the studies focused specifically on younger, early careers employees. As such, the need to focus on individual psychological factors in younger, early careers employees' experience of WFH is not only supported by popular trends and the wider literature, but also by a recent SLR.

7.5 The Present Study

This study will contribute new knowledge in three ways:

Firstly, it will add to the existing understanding of individual psychological factors related to WFH outcomes, as summarised by Pomfrey et al. (in preparation). Previous studies *'suggest that future research on the role of personality in predicting telework effectiveness will likely prove fruitful.'* (p.158) (O'Neill et al. 2009). Rather than focusing on any single individual psychological factor, this study will take a

broad approach because, as demonstrated by Pomfrey et al. (in preparation), a range of individual psychological factors appear at play in determining WFH outcomes. To capture this, the present study will adopt a qualitative methodology, reflecting the complexity of Person-Environment Fit interactions as experienced subjectively by individuals.

Secondly, the present study will focus on a sample of UK-based younger, early careers employees, a neglected sample in the WFH literature. This is both original and important in response to the findings that this sample are perhaps particularly likely to be at a disadvantage when WFH, for example due to frequently having shared accommodation living arrangements (Parry et al. 2021). The sample will be UK-based because only one out of thirteen studies in Pomfrey et al.'s (in preparation) SLR was conducted in the UK. Place is likely to be important in the role of individual psychological factors in WFH outcomes, because of cultural norms (Poster & Prasad, 2003, as cited in Kossek et al. 2006).

Finally, the present study will apply and extend both Person-Environment Fit theory and job crafting theory to the understanding of individual psychological factors in WFH success. Person-Environment Fit offers a way of neatly conceptualising successful WFH based on three dimensions of 'fit'. Combining this with job crafting theory acknowledges that individuals are not merely passive reactors. A continued focus on strategies (building on previous research: e.g. Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Greer & Payne, 2014) is endorsed by Lapierre et al. (2016). Indeed, *'Future research should examine how virtual workers utilize their motivations and abilities to proactively shape their jobs and careers over time'* (p.196) (Raghuram et al. 2003).

The overall objective of this study is to understand the individual psychological factors and strategies that younger, early careers employees use to successfully WFH, with a specific focus on those who identify as a good 'fit' with WFH. It will thus aim to answer the following research questions:

What individual psychological factors do early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use?

What strategies can be learned from early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH to support other early careers employees who may struggle with WFH?

Method

The detail provided here follows recommendations regarding reporting standards for qualitative research in psychology, as outlined by Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson and Suárez-Orozco (2018).

8.1 Design

8.1.1 Research Design Overview

A semi-structured interview design was used to understand the individual psychological factors and strategies used by early careers employees who had a good 'fit' with WFH. Participants were sifted into the research to be interviewed only if they were identified to have a good fit with WFH. Fit was measured through three items adapted from a measure of Person-Environment Fit by Cable and DeRue (2002). More detail on the process of sifting participants into the study can be found under 8.3.2. The approach to inquiry was largely constructivist.

8.1.2 Rationale for the Design Selected

The Methodology chapter is dedicated to the rationale for the method selected, however a degree of reference is made to the rationale here, as recommended by Levitt et al. (2018). The semi-structured interview design was appropriate for this study for at least three main reasons. Firstly, it was appropriate due to the broad, subjective nature of the research question. Secondly, it reflected the early stage of maturity of this research area. Thirdly, the nature of 'strategies' is likely to be at least partly unique to individuals (hence wider qualitative designs such as focus groups would not have been appropriate) and difficult to measure quantitatively (hence quantitative designs such as Likert scale surveys would not have been appropriate).

8.2 Study Participants and Data Sources

8.2.1 Researcher Description

The researcher's background in approaching this study is characterised by a strong prior understanding of relevant literature, having recently completed an SLR in this area which informed the study design. The researcher is a female in her twenties, who was well positioned to empathise and relate to early careers employees as participants. The researcher also had prior experience of conducting interviews and thematic analysis and underwent thematic analysis training immediately prior to analysing the data in this study. The researcher was supported by an experienced research team of supervisors.

8.2.2 Data Sources

The study took place in two organisations: 1) a large UK energy organisation, 2) a large UK rail organisation. The rationale for conducting the research in just two organisations was twofold. Firstly, to increase the comparability of each interview

based on the unique organisational culture and context. This was especially important given the complex nature of the research question, as interviewing employees who all worked for the same two organisations helped to ensure a deep, detailed focus on individual psychological factors, rather than broader organisational factors. Secondly, to serve as a degree of control for organisational factors, as it ensured the researcher had a level of understanding around the organisational context within which participants were working. Previous research has shown that organisational factors such as the extent to which organisations treat WFH as 'normal' are important in WFH outcomes (Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015), therefore the researcher's prior knowledge about the organisation enabled them to bear this in mind when interpreting the data on individual psychological factors.

The following background details regarding organisational context are worthy of note. Firstly, the organisations' policies and procedures on WFH at the time of the interviews were in a state of flux following the Covid-19 pandemic. In neither of the organisations was WFH or office attendance mandatory, meaning participants generally had a choice in WFH and both organisations respected that employees may prefer to WFH due to the ongoing risk of exposure to Covid-19. However, multiple participants from one of the organisations in particular expressed resistance to some communications that they had received from their organisation encouraging office attendance. For both organisations, WFH was a new way of working triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, with limited WFH prior to the pandemic. As the UK had emerged from strict Covid-related lockdown rules at the time of nearly all of the interviews, the organisations were starting to experiment with hybrid working whereby employees were being welcomed back into their offices, without being 'forced' to return to an office. Both organisations had made their offices available throughout the pandemic but only for those employees who felt they could not WFH, for example due to inadequate workspace, therefore participants in this study had the option to work in an office if they wanted to, but generally chose not to. Some participants mentioned that they were starting to engage in conversations with their teams and managers to explore potential new working patterns, for example trialling a set number of days per week in the office, but participants typically expressed a strong preference for WFH over office attendance. Other contextual points relate to types of tasks and roles. The types of tasks that participants were engaged in for their organisation varied between

166

participants but consisted of computer-based tasks including producing spreadsheets, presenting information in reports or presentations, conducting data analysis, writing emails and engaging in meetings on Microsoft Teams. Their roles in the organisations meant participants could be described as knowledge workers, whereby they were developing and drawing upon specialist knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide services in the form of advice or discrete knowledge-based tasks. Participants' roles included HR Graduate, Commercial Trainee, Asset Engineer, Business Graduate, Project Management Apprentice, and Cyber Security Assistant. Many of the participants expressed identifying with a specific early careers cohort, such as a specific annual intake of graduates who formed a support group of peers on a comparable developmental journey or route in their early career. Indeed, seven participants identified as graduates, four participants identified as apprentices, one participant identified as an industrial placement employee, and the remaining three participants did not identify with a specific cohort.

8.2.3 Participants

A total of 15 participants were interviewed, corresponding to 15 interview transcripts analysed. Younger, early careers employees were identified by the researcher as ideal participants to help explore the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH from a Person-Environment Fit perspective. The criteria for participation in the research was that individuals were between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, within the first few years of their career, and were typically WFH for three days per week or more. One exception was made, with regards to one volunteer who had turned 26 years old within one week prior to their interview. Participants had an age range of 19-26 years old (mean = 22.6 years old, median = 23 years old). Forty percent of the sample (n = 6) was comprised of individuals who identified as female, 60% of the sample (n = 9) was comprised of individuals who identified as male. This compares reasonably well against the finding that in the UK, younger, early careers employees are generally evenly split by gender, with 48% of entry-level hires being female (Thomas, Cooper & Cardazone, 2020). It is possible that there was a slight

under-representation of individuals who identify as female, however this was deemed acceptable in light of the closeness to 48% of UK entry-level hires being female.

The only other criteria was that participants had to identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH (measurement of this is outlined under section 8.3.2 below). All 15 participants reported that WFH provides them with a good fit with the things that they value in life. Twelve participants reported that there is a good fit between what WFH offers them and what they are looking for in a work environment. All participants reported that there is a good match between the demands of WFH and their personal skills. Twelve participants responded 'yes' to all three of these statements, interpreted as a highly good fit with WFH, whilst the remaining three participants responded yes to at least two of the statements.

As with most qualitative studies, the sample size was relatively small, and as such, demographic details on the types of tasks individuals were conducting and their precise job roles will not be shared, to protect participants' anonymity. However, it is worth noting that the researcher was aware of this information, and it formed useful context against which to interpret and understand meaning during the data analysis stages. All participants reported that they worked full time. In a typical week, participants reported spending between 3-5 days WFH, except one participant who reported a range between 2-3 days per week, however they were still included in the study because they often WFH for 3 days per week (mean = 3.93 days, median = 4 days). Note that the latter mean and median was calculated by taking the middle point in instances where participants provided a range, for example a response of 3-4 days was taken as 3.5 days. Participants were generally WFH on a voluntary basis (as participants had access to an office), however at least some of the participants may have felt obliged to WFH, especially one participant who was interviewed in December 2021 when the government had recommended all UK employees WFH in response to the Omicron Covid-19 variant, and this advice was eased during the first half of 2022 when the remaining interviews took place.

The duration of WFH experience participants had ranged from six months to two years. The duration for which participants had been working in their current job role ranged from four months to one year and eight months. Since leaving school,

participants had spent between six months and eight years in either a full time or part time job. As such, participants had sufficient rich, lived experience to enable them to talk about their experience of WFH, balanced with still being early on in their career. The research also captured participants' WFH set up, such as with regards to where they worked, whether anyone else was at home with them (and if so, who), and whether they had adequate equipment/technology. Thirteen out of the 15 participants reported that they did not have a dedicated room for WFH in, often reporting that they worked in their bedroom or living room. Five of the 15 participants lived with their family, five participants lived with flatmates/friends, and the remaining participants lived alone, with their partner or did not specify who they lived with. Fourteen of the 15 participants did not have their own child who lived with them. All participants reported that they had the equipment and technology they needed to do their job effectively at home (e.g. video conferencing, a desk, a mouse/keyboard). The participants seemed to have an understanding or at least awareness of the environmental factors surrounding their experience of WFH (such as working in their bedroom), which contributed rich contextual information that was well-suited to the exploratory nature of this research, especially considering that the research is at an early stage.

The table below provides a more in-depth description of the demographic details of the participants, along with their WFH 'fit' score which is explained under section 8.3.2. Regarding the sample and the relevant contextual factors, it is also noteworthy that multiple participants referred to having time-consuming or expensive commutes to the office which WFH protected them from, as well as convenient access to cheaper and healthier food and refreshments when WFH as their offices were typically based in busy city centres. At least two participants also mentioned an added benefit of WFH regarding access to their pet (a dog in one case and a cat in another case), which they reported as helping to manage their stress while working as well as being able to better care for their pet.

Table 9.

Participant Demographics

Participant Code:	Gender:	Age (in years):	Full time / Part time:	Years WFH (not including studying):	Organisational tenure (in years):	Years spent in either a full time or part time job:	Days spent WFH in a typical week:	Number of people living with them:	Availability of a dedicated room for WFH:	Have own children who also live with them:	Have the equipment/ technology needed to do the job effectively at home:	WFH 'fit' score:
1	M	24	Full	0.5 years	0.5	7	4 - 5	1	No, living room	No	Yes	3/3
2	F	23	Full	1 year, 3 months	1 year, 3 months	2 years, 3 months	4	0	No, living room	No	Yes	3/3
3	F	22	Full	1 year	4 months	4	5	5	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
4	M	21	Full	0-1 year	0-1 year	0-1	5	0	No, bedroom	No	Yes	2/3
5	M	26	Full	2	0.8	2.5	3 - 4	4	No, bedroom	No	Yes	3/3
6	F	21	Full	7 months	7 months	7 months	5	4	No, parents' bedroom	No	Yes	3/3
7	M	23	Full	1.5	1.5	3	5	2	No	No	Yes	3/3
8	F	21	Full	1 year on and off	6 months	3	3	4	No	No	Yes	3/3
9	M	19	Full	6 months	6 months	6 months	2 - 3	3	Yes	No	Yes	3/3

170

10	M	25	Full	1.5	1.5	8	3	1	No, bedroom	No	Yes	3/3
11	M	19	Full	6 months	6 months	6 months	3 - 4	3	No, bedroom	No	Yes	3/3
12	M	22	Full	1 year and 7 months	1 year and 7 months	6	5	4	No	Yes	Yes	3/3
13	F	25	Full	1.5	1.5	7	3	1	No	No	Yes	2/3
14	F	24	Full	1 year and 8 months	1 year and 8 months	8	3	3	No	No	Yes	3/3
15	M	24	Full	1.5	1.5	1.5	4	2	No	No	Yes	3/3

8.2.4 Researcher-Participant Relationship

The researcher had no relationship with the individual participants prior to the research. The relationships and interactions between the researcher and participants always remained professional and specific to the purpose of the research. The researcher made a special effort to help participants feel comfortable during the interviews, such as by making friendly conversation such as asking participants how they were, how their weekend was and generally aiming to help participants feel at ease.

8.3 Participant Recruitment

8.3.1 Recruitment Process

The recruitment process was conducted via email. The recruitment email contained a poster-style flyer, briefing information sheet and message introducing the researcher. The researcher arranged this through business contacts at the organisations whose job roles involved supporting early careers employees and/or flexible working including WFH. The researcher crafted a message to go out to request volunteers, which the business contacts then shared via the organisations' internal communications teams to email distribution lists of current early careers employees. The researcher worked with the business contacts by regularly updating them on the number of participants obtained and arranging for occasional reminder emails to be sent to the distribution lists where appropriate.

Participants were recruited via a volunteer sample (no incentives or compensation), whereby the aim was to obtain participants who, by the nature of having voluntarily put themselves forward to take part in the study, would likely be more willing and open to actively share their views and details of their experience of WFH. Whilst volunteer samples can be prone to attract a particular type of individual

(Demir, Haynes, Orthel-Clark & Özen, 2017), potentially resulting in bias or non-representativeness, the purpose of the study was not to over-generalise the findings but rather to explore in depth the unique, subjective experiences of individuals, as per the qualitative methodology.

With respect to determining the number of participants in relation to the study design, it was decided that initially twelve participants would be recruited and interviewed, but that the exact number of participants would depend upon the point at which theoretical saturation was reached, meaning no further themes come up so the researcher can be confident that no key information has been missed (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles & Grimshaw, 2010). Furthermore, *'It has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006)'* (as cited in Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). After the minimum of twelve participants had been interviewed and that data had been analysed, data saturation did not quite appear to have been reached, thus three further interviews with three additional participants were conducted. This number of further interviews was determined by pre-decided criteria: the point at which three interviews were conducted with no new ideas emerging. Therefore, the decision to halt data collection was based on data saturation being reached. This approach of a sample size for initial analysis then specifying how many more interviews will be conducted without new ideas emerging (known as the stopping criterion) is supported by research (Francis et al., 2010). It also aligns with the researcher's constructivist ontological and epistemological perspective, in that it is a flexible and emergent design, seeking in-depth understanding and focusing on the 'whole' of each participant.

Of the 15 volunteers, all 15 were sifted into the study based on the criteria outlined above. No participants dropped out or withdrew their data. As such, the final sample was comprised of 15 participants. As data saturation was achieved, no further recruitment was required.

8.3.2 Participant Selection

Participant selection and data collection took place between the 10th of December 2021 and 3rd of May 2022.

Upon volunteering, the researcher assessed whether potential participants had a good 'fit' with WFH. Participants who had a good 'fit' with WFH were obtained in two ways. Firstly, by wording the recruitment email for the research in such a way that it was clear the research was interested in individuals who are good at WFH. Secondly, prior to their interview, participants were asked to complete a demographic sheet that measured their fit using three items adapted from Cable and DeRue (2002), whereby an answer of 'Yes' to two or more items was considered indicative of a good fit with WFH:

> '1. Working from home provides a good fit with the things that I value in life.
> *(Yes or No)*
> 2. There is a good fit between what working from home offers me and what I am looking for in a work environment.
> *(Yes or No)*
> 3. The match is very good between the demands of working from home and my personal skills.
> *(Yes or No)*'

Had participants responded 'No' to two or more of the above items, they would have been filtered out of the study, however all participants responded 'Yes' to two or more items. Participants were not made aware of this criterion, so that they would not feel pressured to respond 'Yes'.

To support with participant recruitment, the snowball technique (Robinson, 2014) was used, whereby the researcher asked existing participants to speak to their colleagues about the research and to share the researcher's contact details, as a way of further building up the sample of volunteers.

8.4 Data Collection

8.4.1 Interview Design

Interview data was collected to address the research question in this study. The interview schedule consisted of five main, open-ended questions and up to nineteen open-ended probing questions. An example main question is: 'What behaviours have you used to be able to WFH successfully?'. An example probing question is: 'How would you describe your working style when WFH?'. The full semi-structured interview schedule can be found in Appendix E.

The researcher used both inductive and deductive methods in the interview design. For example, the design was inductive in that it was researching an area that did not seem to have been studied or given much theoretical attention before. Specifically, it was seeking to identify new themes and patterns in individual psychological factors that early careers employees have or use to successfully WFH. The design was also deductive as it was seeking to examine existing theory. Specifically, as mentioned in the Introduction, the research sought to make a clear theoretical contribution by extending Person-Environment Fit theory and job crafting theories to the understanding of individual psychological factors that early careers employees have or use to successfully WFH. This was achieved through the interview design by including interview questions that tapped into pre-existing, well-established dimensions of those theories. For example, questions which were shaped around Person-Environment Fit theory (Kristof, 1996; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Edwards, 1991) included *'Is there anything that's particularly important to you or your values that WFH allows you to do?'* (Values congruence dimension of Person-Environment Fit). Questions which were shaped around job crafting theory (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013) included *'Is there anything you'd like to say about the way you work with others when WFH?'* (Relational-based Job Crafting). The methodology of this study is strengthened by drawing upon questions from both Person-Environment Fit and job crafting theories, taking what previous scholars have done and adapting it and extending it.

The design of the interview questions was also informed by guidance and best practice principles by Braun and Clarke (2013). For example, interview questions were designed to be concrete, focused questions that would culminate in the potential answer to the research question. The interview procedure was based on a logical flow of questions starting with more general questions before moving onto more specific, probing questions, all of which were designed in plain English. Moreover, the researcher created conditions to ensure that participants felt comfortable to disclose information. This included establishing trust and rapport with each participant, such as by reassuring them of the confidentiality of their individual input, by advising them that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and by adopting a two-way process between the researcher and participant to suit the dynamics of the participants' answers. This led to rich, deep insights that would unlikely be attainable through focus groups, surveys or diary studies.

There were no major alterations of design or strategy in response to the evolving collection of the data, however, as would be expected in semi-structured interviews, questions were adapted where appropriate to reflect the dynamic content of each interview.

8.4.2 Pilot

The interview design was piloted with three early careers employees with whom the researcher worked with in their job role. This resulted in useful feedback that enhanced the interview design in at least three main ways. Firstly, it enabled the researcher to clarify the language and wording of some of the questions. Secondly, it enabled the researcher to condense, merge or split out questions that were deemed as too similar or complex. Thirdly, it resulted in a particularly useful suggestion which the research applied: the researcher emailed each participant two days before their interview to not only remind them that the interview was booked in, but also to share some of the key questions which would be covered in the interview so that participants had the chance to think in advance and come to their interview prepared.

8.4.3 Data Collection Procedures

Each participant's data was collected at a single timepoint via a semi-structured interview. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 48-58 minutes. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic being close in time to this research, face-to-face interviews were not deemed appropriate. All the interviews were conducted on a 1:1 basis over Microsoft Teams. The researcher always had their video camera turned on during the interviews. Use of video camera was encouraged but optional for participants and nearly all participants did choose to have their video camera on during their interview. Nearly all participants were in their WFH environment at the time of their interview. At the end of each interview, participants were encouraged to email the researcher with any subsequent thoughts or reflections that they would like to be included in the research, however no participants did this.

As recommended by Watt (2007) and in line with the constructivist ontological and epistemological perspective of this study, the researcher engaged in deep reflexivity throughout the research procedure, considering their role as a researcher in the quality of data collection, analysis and meaning making. This is important because even when following best practice research guidance such as that by Braun and Clarke (2013), the uniqueness of the present study means that the specific decisions of the individual researcher ultimately determines the shape of the study (Watt, 2007). Acknowledging this is therefore essential to understand the phenomena of early careers employees' experiences of WFH, and the research process underpinning this. For example, the researcher identified that they personally were well-placed to interview younger, early careers employees as the researcher was one year outside of fitting the criteria for being a younger, early careers employee themselves. This was advantageous as it helped the researcher to empathise with the participants and helped to quickly establish a relationship with participants based on the shared identity of 'younger, early careers employee'. If a more experienced employee had been conducting the interviews, participants may have felt less understood or less able to open up about experiences that they perhaps felt were specific to being a younger, early careers employee.

The semi-structured interview procedure provided consistency across the interviews, while simultaneously enabling ad hoc probing questions to clarify the participants' meaning and check the researcher's understanding. The researcher followed up on participants' answers in a 'live', dynamic way which was well suited to the early stage of the research, because it allowed the researcher to explore interesting or unexpected details or leads that arose during the interview which could not have been predicted or asked about otherwise (Adams, 2015). Participants were also provided with an opportunity to add final comments and ask any questions.

8.4.4 Recording & Data Transformation

With each participant's fully informed consent, each interview was recorded in a purely audio format, transcribed verbatim and stored securely by the researcher. Transcripts were typed verbatim by the researcher within two weeks of each interview taking place. The researcher decided against the use of a transcription service because manual transcription is a way of enhancing data familiarisation (Cloete, 2007). Transcription was conducted using guidance from Gubrium and Holstein (2001), for example, using dots to denote pauses and using square brackets and question marks in instances where words were not clear. Transcripts were checked for accuracy and shaped in a clear format for analysis. During the transcription process, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. To further protect participants' right to anonymity, transcripts were cleansed to ensure that as far as possible participants' gender and other details that could reveal their identity were omitted. Direct quotes from the transcripts to support the themes were also carefully selected to avoid using quotes that may contain clues as to any participants' identity.

8.5 Analysis

8.5.1 Data-analytic Strategy

The interview data was analysed using a thematic analysis strategy (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry & Hayfield, 2021), with the goal of recognising themes and patterns across the overall dataset. This strategy was carefully selected as an appropriate methodology because it is flexible and iterative, not relying on any particular pre-existing framework or theory to guide it. From a theoretical perspective, the data analysis process was an inductive approach which was well-suited to the research question because of its broad, open, exploratory nature. Although not directly involved in the data analysis in a deductive way, Person-Environment Fit theory and Job Crafting theory were useful reference points and were borne in mind during the analysis, which was appropriate given the early stage of the research.

With previous experience in thematic analysis, the researcher was well-placed to conduct the analysis and maintained awareness of the potential for bias in the analysis process, which helped to minimise the likelihood of such biases. For example, to mitigate against confirmation bias (the human tendency to seek and analyse information in a way that supports one's beliefs), the researcher withheld their own views as far as possible and used open, non-leading questions in line with best practice (Powell, Hughes-Scholes & Sharman, 2012).

8.5.2 Data-analytic Steps

The thematic analysis involved five main steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). Firstly, the capturing of initial notes and data familiarisation. The recordings were listened to multiple times and transcripts read repeatedly. Certain parts of the transcripts which seemed especially interesting or relevant were highlighted. Secondly, a log of key notes, words and interpretations was maintained to conduct the analysis in a systematic, traceable manner. Thirdly, as data familiarisation increased, codes, themes and sub-themes were developed and shaped

through a process of working through and re-visiting the transcripts, recordings and log of notes. Fourth, the overall perspective on the data that had now been obtained was used to identify repeating codes and themes, in an inductive way that was data-led rather than being restricted to a particular framework. Finally, the entire process and the resulting themes were reviewed in detail to explore ideas, connections and interpretations. Ongoing notetaking and reading of the data supported this. The naming of the themes, sub-themes and codes were also reviewed to ensure the names accurately captured the essence of the data and edits were made to reflect this where required.

The overall process of identifying codes, themes and sub-themes was conducted by the lead researcher. The distinction between theme and sub-theme in this study aligns with the definitions set out by Terry and Hayfield (2021). Specifically, themes are the overall story of the dataset with each theme representing a distinct central organising concept (an idea that connects data together). Sub-themes are related to the primary theme that they sit beneath and the other sub-themes beneath that primary theme but consist of their own central organising concept. It is important to highlight that, as with any thematic analysis approach, the results identified in this study are based on a degree of subjective interpretation by the researcher, and as such the data may be open to different interpretation across different people. However, the output was discussed with a research supervisor as part of enhancing researcher reflexivity and acknowledging the subjectivity of the sense-making process. Samples of the thematic analysis process were reviewed to test the process and the output, which helped to check agreement amongst the researchers, thereby strengthening the thematic analysis process. This stage of testing the themes and sub-themes was particularly important to check the interpretation of the data and how codes had been clustered or grouped under over-arching themes and concepts.

As a result of the discussion between the researchers, key changes were discussed, agreed, and made. For example, 'Laidback nature', 'Has the attitude that there is more to life than work' and 'Focuses on efficiency' were able to form sub-themes of an overarching 'Work-life balance needs' theme rather than as separate themes.

Once the changes had been made, the lead researcher conducted a final review to check the overall coherence of the output, and re-shared the revised themes with the other researcher, at which point they were in agreement with the results. This review process was deemed sufficient as inter-rater reliability is not necessarily aligned with the researcher's constructivist ontology. As such, reflexivity was used as the main quality indicator, and this was captured through a reflective report kept by the lead researcher.

8.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in this research study was entirely voluntary, with great care taken to ensure no implicit or explicit pressure on any individual to take part. For example, the recruitment email for the research was sent to an early careers email distribution list by the organisations' internal communications team, with instructions to contact the researcher directly if interested in taking part in the research.

Volunteers for the study were fully briefed on the nature of the research in a transparent manner, with no element of deception involved. All participants provided fully informed consent to take part in the study, with multiple opportunities to ask questions of the researcher. Before each interview started, participants were reminded of the briefing information and their understanding was checked to ensure that they fully understood what was involved in research participation. Participants were reassured that their data would be treated confidentially, and that anonymity would be assured as far as possible (acknowledging that identities are more difficult to protect due to the nature of qualitative research). Participants were notified of their right to withdraw their data from the research, up until a specified time after the interview (when their data would be analysed as part of the wider dataset and no longer identifiable to be able to extract). A debrief sheet was also provided to each participant after their interview, including sources of support.

Finally, this research was granted ethical approval from Birkbeck, University of London, prior to any data collection commencing. Ethical Approval Number: OPEA-21/22-03.

Results

This section presents the themes and sub-themes resulting from the thematic analysis of the interview data, in line with reporting standards for qualitative research in psychology (Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson & Suárez-Orozco, 2018).

This study aimed to examine individual psychological factors and strategies that early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use. For individual psychological factors five themes and 19 sub-themes were identified. For strategies seven themes and five sub-themes were identified. Whilst there is no 'magic formula' for how many themes a study should have (Braun & Clarke, 2012), other qualitative semi-structured interview studies have previously reported similarly high numbers of themes and sub-themes, for example 13 themes (Hong, Gonzalez-Reyes & Pluye, 2018) and 20 sub-themes (McArthur, Dumas, Woodend, Beach & Stacey, 2014).

The five themes for individual psychological factors consisted of, firstly, 'Emotional Intelligence', which reflected participants' apparently strong ability to perceive, understand and manage emotions in both themselves and others when WFH. Secondly, 'Influenced by purposeful, internal motivational drivers', which was about specific needs that individuals perceived having and the way in which those needs motivated them to behave in specific ways to achieve need fulfilment. Thirdly, 'Work-life balance needs' which describes participants' reports of highly valuing compromise between the demands of their work and their desires outside of work, including associated behaviours such as boundary management strategies to achieve their desired work-life balance. Fourth, the 'Growth Mindset' theme represents the way in which participants typically viewed and embraced learning as an ongoing journey which helped them tackle challenges with a positive mental attitude and adaptability when WFH. Fifth, the 'Independence of approach within the context of being comfortable with self' theme could be summarised as covering the way in which participants were seemingly at ease with working on their own, with multiple participants identifying as more introverted than extraverted.

The seven themes for strategies consisted of, firstly, 'Getting into the zone or a 'flow' state' which reflected participants' reports of being able to fully immerse themselves in their work tasks when WFH, leveraging concentration techniques and an intrinsic motivation or enjoyment of the work itself. The second theme under strategies was 'Technology skills to make effective use of technology' which is about participants reporting being able to confidently use computer-based systems to complete their work. Thirdly, 'Feels and responds to a sense of psychological safety' reflects participants feeling able to express themselves openly when WFH including asking questions and communicating honestly with colleagues. Fourth, the 'Establishes and maintains relationships as a source of social support' captures how participants tended to recognise the importance of social support in their ability to WFH effectively and, linked to that, the way in which they invested in workplace relationships to enhance their access to such social support. Fifth, 'Adopts structuring and organising behaviours' reflects how participants generally reported being highly organised, favouring a planned approach that involved use of to-do lists and strategically blocking out their time for priority tasks. The sixth theme under strategies is 'Seeks and uses information and resources', which captures how participants often referred to the importance of accurate record-keeping, management of information as well as seeking out information in the first place, as this may not be easily accessible when WFH without upfront effort. The seventh and final theme under strategies is 'Adopts a disciplined approach to WFH', and this reflects participants' perceived ability to adopt a controlled form of behaviour that enabled them to resist distractions in the home environment and ultimately meet the needs of their role despite not having someone physically there in the home environment to oversee that they were fulfilling their commitments to the organisation.

The themes for both individual psychological factors and strategies are presented in more detail on the pages that follow, under sections 9.1 and 9.2, respectively.

9.1 Individual Psychological Factors

This section summarises the individual psychological factors which participants reported as contributing to their good fit with WFH.

Figure 5 below shows the flow of themes and sub-themes relating to individual psychological factors.
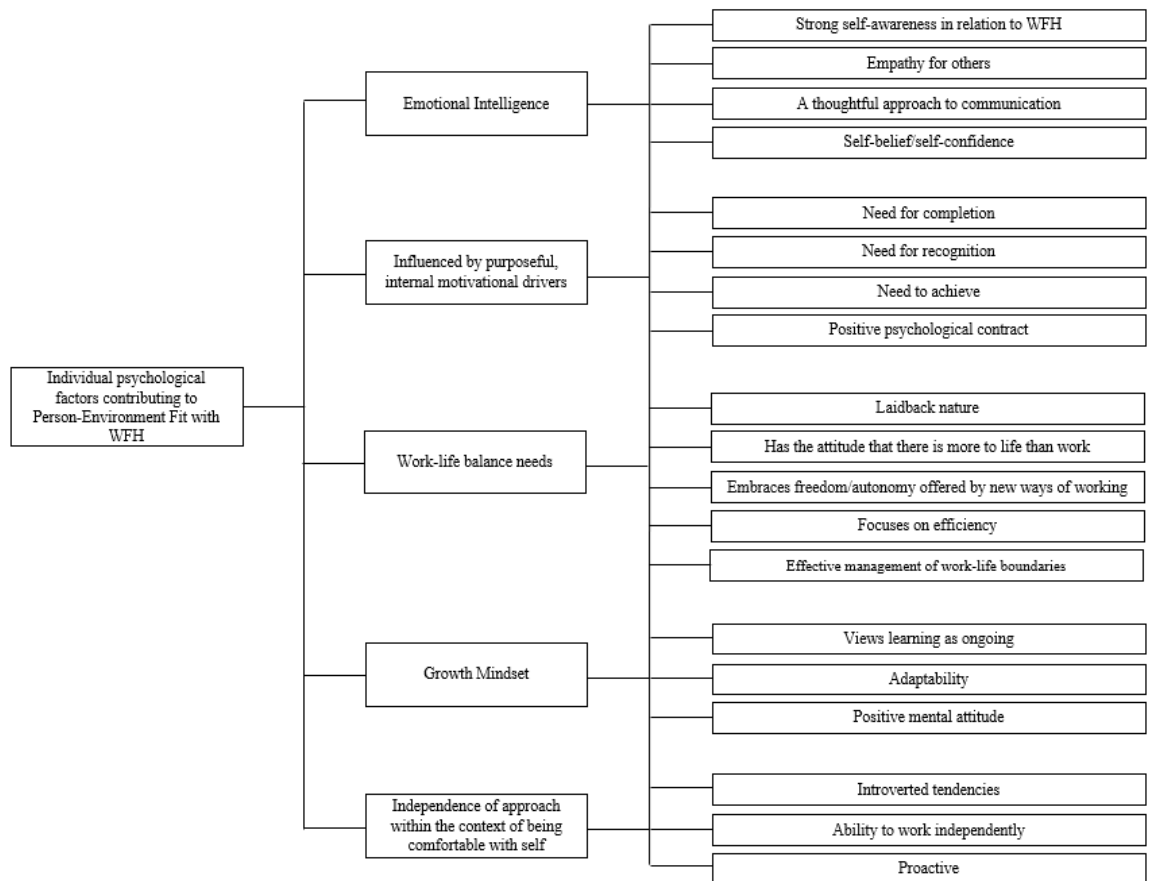

Figure 5.

Flow Chart of Themes and Sub-Themes: Individual Psychological Factors

9.1.1 Emotional Intelligence

This first theme reflects participants' ability to perceive and understand their own and other people's emotions to be able to respond and behave in appropriate ways. The concept of emotional intelligence was coined by Goleman (1995; 1998)

and was evident in the interviews, as supported by four sub-themes: strong self-awareness in relation to WFH, empathy for others, a thoughtful approach to communication, and self-belief/self-confidence.

9.1.1.1 Strong Self-Awareness in relation to WFH

Many participants expressed a strong sense that they personally liked and enjoyed WFH: '*I absolutely love it* [WFH]' (Melissa). Participants explained that knowing oneself played an important role in their ability to WFH. For example, *'being fully aware of how I work and how I work best and assessing that myself'* (Amanda). Participants also seemed highly aware of their own personality and the role of individual differences in ability to WFH. Layla stated: *'That's just the kind of person that I am but I think it's good'.* Linked to this, participants demonstrated awareness of their own weaknesses when WFH, combined with knowing when to voice their own needs: *'it's just going to people, erm, people who you've created those relationships with and just saying 'listen, this is the situation, this is what I need.'* (Toby).

9.1.1.2 Empathy for Others

Participants perceived the importance of being able to see situations from other people's perspectives and consider how their own actions may come across to others. Eleanor refers to this when she says, *'especially if you… you know, maybe it's a new person or someone needs help, you don't want to, you know, scare them off'.* Participants demonstrated an awareness of other people's styles, such as sensitivity to the way in which *'people can sit away on mute and hide away, so knowing who those people are'* (Toby). There was also an appreciation of the need to build rapport with people, such as through being personal, so that people do not *'get defensive'* (James). Patience was mentioned by multiple participants, for example, *'Patience is probably definitely the key because you can't keep going up to someone in the office and keep pestering them.'* (Toby).

9.1.1.3 A Thoughtful Approach to Communication

Participants often reported that communication skills were key when WFH: *'communication connects everything we do'* (Amanda). However, in particular, it was about taking time to consider the best way of communicating when WFH. Most notably, using the right medium or channel for the right level of communication: *'knowing how to communicate, erm, making the right choice between a call, a Teams message or an email.'* (Jack). For example, *'I'll generally email if it's a meaty question'* (Amanda). Additionally, being highly aware of the limitations of written communication including loss of meaning or misinterpretation. James pointed out *'often if you have written it to those, that loses the communication, it can come across as a lot harsher'.* It was also about knowing individuals well enough to know how they like to receive communication: '*some people just want to get straight to the point, which you know, you just have to know who you're talking to'* (Eleanor). Related to this, participants highlighted the need to strike a balance between formal and informal communication when WFH, as well as a balance between work-related and non-work-related conversation.

9.1.1.4 Self-Belief/Self-Confidence

Participants perceived that self-believe and self-confidence were important in their ability to WFH. Indeed, if *'they are not confident in their own sort of abilities, that can be a lot harder for people'* (James). Self-confidence when WFH seemed helped by *'knowing that you've been employed to do that job for a reason is more or less a reason for knowing that you have the ability to speak up'* (Toby). The particular form of confidence most commonly mentioned by participants as key to WFH success was confidence to contact people: '*it's not having that fear to reach out to new people ... I think that's a crucial skill to have for working from home.'* (Lucas).

In sum, the 'Emotional Intelligence' theme is about the importance of a strong ability to understand and manage emotions in oneself and others when WFH. It includes high levels of self-awareness, high empathy for others, consideration of how one's communication may come across to other people, and belief in oneself, as captured in the sub-themes beneath 'Emotional Intelligence'. The next theme which was identified as important in successful WFH by early careers employees was 'Influenced by purposeful, internal motivational drivers, as described below.

9.1.2 Influenced by Purposeful, Internal Motivational Drivers

This theme explores participants' motivations that make them well suited to WFH. Many participants seemed to be highly self-motivated and recognised this as important for WFH. This is illustrated when Rory states, *'I think you need to have a lot of kind of drive within yourself to complete your work.'*. Four sub-themes underpin this theme: need for completion, need for recognition, need to achieve, and positive psychological contract.

9.1.2.1 Need for Completion

Participants reported the importance of a strong drive to just get on with their tasks and complete their work when WFH. This was evidenced by statements including *'having that kind of urge to get something done'* (Jack). Linked to this, participants indicated that they were determined. For example, *'I'm pretty persevering ... Erm, I'm quite determined so I don't like letting a challenge sort of just sit and wait, it sort of like eats away at me a bit in the back of my head.'* (Muhammed). Participants were also highly committed to completing their work, as indicated by Toby: *'delivering whatever work you say you're going to deliver'*. Participants reported a desire to progress with pace, energy and results, as mentioned by Amanda: *'I enjoy sort of pace and energy'*. This was supported by a disliking of inactivity: *'even*

on my days off and stuff I like to, I'm not the type of person to just sit in bed all day, I like to do at least one or two things.' (Jack).

9.1.2.2 Need for Recognition

Need for recognition was noted, or a need for other people to appreciate participants' work. Amanda states, *'getting credit where credit's due, so where I have done a good job I really like sort of, it to be known that it was a good job'*. Many participants were keen to please and not let other people down, *'knowing that you don't want to break the trust of the people you're working alongside'* (Toby). Participants described a need to ensure other people knew about their work: *'if you were able to produce really good work, but you can't speak about it, that's almost useless'* (James).

9.1.2.3 Need to Achieve

Participants described a desire to do well in their job with a motivation to achieve and progress in their career: *'motivation to get things done, to be able to say I've achieved'* (Sophie). Participants indicated the importance of a goal-oriented mindset in successful WFH, setting themselves goals or targets for the day/week ahead but also longer-term, ambitious, inspirational goals: *'I'm in this business because I want to make a difference, so that's kind of one of my overarching goals'* (Rory). High need to achieve may also be reflected in participants' apparent willingness to go above and beyond minimum requirements, for example: *'it's really easy to just do the bare minimum, working from home ... get your piece of work done, see if there's anything else you can look at, ask to see document libraries and files and how things work'* (Toby).

9.1.2.4 Positive Psychological Contract

The term 'psychological contract' refers to an employees' beliefs about reciprocal exchange and obligations between themselves and their employer which are not written down in a formal contract (Rousseau, 1989). Participants reported that WFH gives them certain benefits, such as enhanced flexibility, which may motivate them to perform: *'if time was keeping you like, for example, you go to the bank for an hour and you come back, you might have a better mindset, like 'right, I can, I should do some things because I would like to pay back that hour'* (Ezra). Similarly, many participants reported that being able to WFH aligns with their personal future goals: *It can all be done virtually so I can progress my career to the highest it can go from working from home'* (Lucas). Importantly, WFH was viewed as beneficial to both the individual and the organisation: *'It's a win-win I think, to the organisation and to me'* (Ezra). However, participants also recognised a greater need to stay connected to the organisation when WFH and how their work contributes to real-world meaningfulness: *'I think WFH can actually take away sometimes what your company actually do, because you don't get to see it face to face so you sort of have to keep that in mind … it can definitely isolate you in departments and you can forget about what the rest of the company does.'* (Toby).

In sum, the 'Influenced by purposeful, internal motivational drivers' theme is about the presence of specific individual needs that participants appeared to be motivated to fulfil and which seemingly served as advantages in the WFH context. It includes high need for completion, need for recognition and need for achievement, as well as the presence of a positive psychological contract, all of which formed the sub-themes beneath the 'Influenced by purposeful, internal motivational drivers' theme. The next theme which was identified as important in successful WFH by early careers employees was 'Work-life balance needs', as described below.

9.1.3 Work-Life Balance Needs

This theme focuses on the individual's ability to establish a healthy work-life balance as important in successful WFH, however it also seemed that participants in this study highly valued work-life balance. There appeared to be five components to this, as demonstrated by the five sub-themes: laidback nature, has the attitude that there is more to life than work, embraces freedom/autonomy offered by new ways of working, focuses on efficiency, and effective management of work-life boundaries.

9.1.3.1 Laidback Nature

Participants frequently reported their working style when WFH as being laidback: Layla claimed to be *'relaxed and not, not like worrying too much about things'* and that *'as a person I'm quite easy-going anyway',* whilst Melissa stated, *'I'm quite laidback really. I'm just quite calm'*. Other participants perceived that they felt enjoyment from working in a relaxed way when WFH or enjoyed the convenience of WFH: *'being at home, it's just easier'* (Otis). WFH itself seemed to help participants feel more relaxed or manage their wellbeing: *'it just allows me to keep a level head a lot of the time'* (Toby).

9.1.3.2 Has the Attitude that there is more to Life than Work

There appeared to be a strong view amongst participants that there is life beyond work and that work should not dominate one's life. Participants reported the importance of how WFH means *'having that bit of time back in your life and not thinking that you're giving all of your time up for work'* (Jack). Participants highly valued and actively maintained a sense of work-life balance, such as through developing hobbies and interests outside of work: *'in my personal life, I prioritise my sort of my, my hobbies, like playing game'* (Alex). Furthermore, participants often

recognised and expressed appreciation for the extra time that WFH allows for activities outside of work, which they seemed to use for the gym or seeing friends and family: *'as soon as five hits I'll just go to the gym'* (Muhammed); *'by five o'clock like I can spend the evening with my family'* (Layla). This is in contrast with the monotony of working full time in the office, when *'before in the office it was very much work, work, work, very work-focused, whereas this one gives you the ability to, if you do it right, to enjoy both your work and your, like, outside hobbies.'* (Muhammed). In particular, participants highlighted that commuting takes away time for enjoyment and WFH means their evening is not taken up preparing for the office the next day: *'So, I suppose your evening time is also kind of taken up with thinking about work, if you're going away, erm, from home'* (Susie). In general, participants highly valued their evening time: '*I value my evening time a lot'* (Susie). There was also a financial element to this, as participants reported that they valued saving money when WFH compared with working in an office: '*they're* [young people such as myself] *also having to save up money for their rent or their food and stuff. So I think yeah, the savings is very important'* (Eleanor). Finally, at least five participants reported having ambitions outside of their job that WFH supports, for example, *'I do kind of want to set up a bit of a side business'* (Jack).

9.1.3.3 Embraces Freedom and Autonomy offered by New Ways of Working

Participants perceived that they made use of high levels of freedom when WFH: '*you can do whatever you want whenever you want'* (Toby). This often included using freedom to set when one's work hours are ('*they don't track hours here'* (James)), autonomy to choose where to work such as one's own home, parent's home or a friend's home (*'it suits me there because I can go and see my friends who I wouldn't be able to see just over a weekend. You know, I can do four days weekends, work a Friday and a Monday from their house'* (Rory)), and using freedom to listen to music while WFH: *'I listen to music, I put that on when I'm working. I find that quite relaxing'* (Sophie). However, participants perceived that they valued having the option to go to the office as well as WFH, and often reported that they used the office

to break up WFH days for a change of scenery: *'I sometimes work in an office … just for a change in scenery'* (Rory). At least nine participants alluded to the idea of office attendance needing to be purpose-driven, for example*: 'if it doesn't require a meeting in person I won't be here* [the office], *it's as simple as that really!'* (Rory).

Participants generally highly valued or needed freedom, noting that *'some people much prefer kind of having a hands-on manager … whereas I, as I say, like being able to choose for myself'* (Sophie). This often included freedom to move around, for example: *'I'll get up. I will pace around. I will think about stuff. I'll go and stand on my balcony.'* (Alex). Participants used (and liked having the option to use) freedom to do other activities in between work, such as using WFH to accommodate non-work appointments: *'working from home has been a massive help … we had sort of episodes of where we had to go to hospital and that sort of thing'*. (Lucas). Similarly, participants liked and used freedom to take flexible breaks, which was seemingly encouraged and enabled by the organisation: '*in my old job it was like you only get like a half an hour break for lunch … With this job it's quite nice, we're not penalised or anything'* (Eleanor).

9.1.3.4 Focuses on Efficiency

The fourth sub-theme under the theme of work-life balance needs reflects participants' focus on efficiency. This was demonstrated through having an output-focused rather than location-focused perspective: *'you're still producing the same output, you're just in a different location.'* (Muhammed). Making efficient use of time was a key part of this, for example with reference to the office, '*Having to wake up an hour earlier to get to work at the same time was a bit, erm, not something I'm happy with'* (Otis). Similarly, participants reported inefficiency as irritating them: '*inefficiency, that, that, that irritates me.'* (Alex). Making a decision about whether to WFH or go to the office was reported as being driven by careful cost-benefit analysis: *'That's the thing that's always in the back of my head, is, 'is this trip worth it?''* (Alex). Focusing on efficiency also included not forcing oneself to work for the sake

of it, for example, when not in right frame of mind: *'if I'm just not in a good headspace for the day … not force myself to overwork and make the situation worse I suppose'* (Otis). Similarly, participants wanted their work to be purposeful and meaningful because *'you don't want to be tweaking things for the sake of tweaking them'* (Amanda).

9.1.3.5 Effective Management of Work-Life Boundaries

Linked to strong work-life balance needs, within the context of WFH participants often reported a preference for boundary management that focused on segmenting work and life outside of work: *'I like the divide … I like to be able to sit and work nine til five, and then do what I want after, I don't think I'd mix it up'* (Jack). This preference for segmentation boundaries (as opposed to integration, in which work and activities outside of work are mixed) included reports of four types of boundaries, as outlined below.

Firstly, temporal boundaries: '*I think it's a bit of separation and the bit about just disconnecting when time needs to.'* (Muhammed). Many participants reported being strong willed or confident to push back against temptation to over-work: '*it's about having the confidence to say 'no, the work can't be done, I've got to work to this''* (James).

Secondly, physical boundaries: '*you start associating that room with work and you can't relax in there and vice versa.'* (James). Participants reported a clear recognition of the need to move and get out of the house to create a physical boundary: '*it helps enormously having something when you go out, like in the evenings or at lunch, just having a reason to be out.'* (Susie). Participants were also highly aware of the need to manage potential work-home conflict by the nature of WFH taking place within the same physical boundaries as their home. For example, *'take turns on, you know, who's in which room, and make sure we weren't getting in each other's way.'* (Rory).

Thirdly, mental boundaries. Participants reported that WFH enabled them to better manage stress by stepping away from the work when needed: *'when I become sort of… overwhelmed by what's going on, or tired or just erm, just taking a fresh pair of eyes on something is often good.'* (Alex). Linked to this, participants reported using WFH for escapism from work-related stress when needed: *'if you've had a really stressful call at home* [as opposed to the office] *you can take that five minutes, have that time out and just have a breather, have a cup of tea …speak to someone in your house who's just completely irrelevant to the job that you do.'* (Toby).

Finally, behavioural boundaries, such as going for walks as a break or having established routines and habits outside of work: *'or on a Friday night, 'oh, it's Friday, I'll go out and do snooker now, I'm not doing this'. Having that extra stuff outside of work'* (James). This ability to switch off from work when WFH reportedly came naturally ro many participants: *'I don't have a problem with the separation of work life and home life. I can, I can just switch it off. …it doesn't affect me at all.'* (Alex).

In sum, the 'Work-life balance needs' theme is about the high value that participants seemingly placed on achieving a compromise between the needs of life at work and life outside of work such that both could be satisfied. It includes having a laidback nature, the attitude that there is more to life than work, embracing freedom/autonomy offered by new ways of working, a focus on efficiency, and effective management of work-life boundaries, all of which formed the sub-themes beneath the 'Work-life balance' theme. The next theme which was identified as important in successful WFH by early careers employees was 'Growth Mindset', as described below.

9.1.4 Growth Mindset

This theme explores the belief that knowledge, skills and abilities can be learned and developed (as opposed to viewing them as fixed), otherwise known as having a 'growth mindset' (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). This theme is underpinned by

three sub-themes indicative of a growth mindset: views learning as ongoing, adaptability and positive mental attitude.

9.1.4.1 Views Learning as Ongoing

Participants reported that they did not expect to become experts straight away, for example '*you've just got to sort of, it's not 'fake it til you make it' but 'fake it til you become it' a little bit. Erm, just keep doing it and naturally it will just become part of it'* (Muhammed). This was combined with reports of an appetite for learning, especially commitment to ongoing learning: *'why practice at something you're already good at?'* (Muhammed). Participants reportedly drew upon other people's skills and expertise effectively, knowing that others had more experience than themselves: *'Who is the expert in x, y and z? Who do you need to get to know?'* (Rory). There was also an apparent understanding that WFH successfully was about continuous improvement, for example WFH was *'something I'm very much still working on'* (Amanda), with WFH viewed as a skill.

9.1.4.2 Adaptability

Participants were seemingly able to flex and adjust to the different demands of WFH: '*you might have a delivery or something else which you can attend to but it's being able to adapt to those situations'* (Muhammed), including on an ongoing basis: '*I think you've got to be open to being, sort of, adapt constantly to changing environments'* (Muhammed). There was also an element of being accepting of and willing to adapt to last-minute changes: *'I'm a very flexible person, I don't mind changing my plans the day before, and I think that helps with working from home, I think you need to be dynamic and flexible'* (Rory). The sub-theme of adaptability was also about openness to trying new things: *'you shouldn't be afraid to just try new things'* (Muhammed), and openness to new, better ways of doing things: *'constantly 'how am I performing? How can I work more effectively or work better?'* (Amanda).

Finally, adaptability included a sense that younger people are better able to adapt to WFH: *'maybe because I'm a bit younger I think it's* [WFH] *the way forward, whereas maybe some people who are a bit older, who've been working in their office and done their time through working in the office, feel erm, that is unfair.'* (Toby). Participants reported acceptance and excitement towards WFH: *'excited for things to, to like, come out and change, change how we work, whereas other people are, don't want things to change'* (Alex).

9.1.4.3 Positive Mental Attitude

At least nine participants alluded to the idea that as an early careers employee, they had not necessarily known any different to WFH, and this was often expressed positively by participants as an advantage: '*I mean you've got that advantage that of… you've not known any different'* (Jack). More generally, participants reported the need to have a positive mental attitude when WFH: *'I think you've got to keep optimistic'* (Muhammed). This was balanced with a healthy ability to stay grounded, being realistic rather than perfectionist: *'at times it's difficult, like it's not going to be perfect, no one is going to be perfect* (Muhammed). Participants also seemingly took personal responsibility for looking after their own positive mental attitude: *'making sure that, sort of, you're okay. And, sort of, mental wellbeing'* (Lucas).

In sum, the 'Growth Mindset' theme is about participants' atttiude towards knowledge, skills and abilities, specifically viewing these as being developed over time as opposed to fixed. It includes viewing learning as ongoing, high levels of adaptability, and a positive mental attitude, which were the sub-themes beneath the 'Growth Mindset' theme. The next theme which was identified as important in successful WFH by early careers employees was 'Independence of approach within the context of being comfortable with self', as described below.

9.1.5 Independence of Approach within the Context of being Comfortable with Self

This theme consists of reports by participants of feeling comfortable in themselves to adopt an independent way of working when WFH. There were three parts to this as represented by three sub-themes: introverted tendencies, ability to work independently, and proactive.

9.1.5.1 Introverted Tendencies

Many participants referred to themselves as an introvert or at least having a degree of introverted tendencies. This included clear statements such as *'I'm generally an introverted character so I do find it easier to work from home'* (Amanda). Some participants reported preferring to work alone rather than in groups: *'I would err more towards solo working rather than group working'* (Muhammed). Many participants reported that WFH particularly suited their introvert-type energy levels: *'it* [the office] *kind of uses up your social battery ... when you're working from home you don't necessarily need that, you can kind of go straight out there doing things.'* (Susie). However, participants also recognised that introversion may not always fit well with WFH: *'I think perhaps on the introversion-extraversion spectrum there's perhaps, you could go too far in that you don't want to communicate with people. I do want to communicate with people'.* (Amanda).

9.1.5.2 Ability to Work Independently

At least nine participants indicated a strong ability to work without overly relying on other people: *'you have to be independent working from home because you don't have that person all the time'* (Jack). Participants reporting taking responsibility for their own productivity: *'It comes down to you, erm and it's not like you can blame someone else for it if it goes wrong'* (Rory). Participants spoke about self-monitoring and self-evaluating productivity and time spent: *'it feels like I've been busy but I*

haven't produced anything but then I look at that like 'oh that's where my time's been'
and maybe I could use it better' (Amanda). Participants spoke of independently
prioritising their workload: *'just being able to prioritise for myself'* (Sophie). There
was also an element of liking to have one's own responsibilities: *'your own projects,*
it's my preferred way to do it' (James). Another key part of working independently
was independent problem-solving: '*I sometimes benefit from just being able to work*
something out myself' (Otis). Finally, at least six participants alluded to an internal
locus of control (a belief that outcomes and consequences are the result of one's own
independent actions or abilities): *'You know, you're the driver of your own success,*
you own the goal, nobody else' (Rory).

9.1.5.3 Proactive

The word 'proactive' was repeatedly mentioned across multiple participants in
various forms relating to WFH. The most common examples included proactively
getting help from other people, mentioned by at least seven participants: *'rather than*
just waiting, asking the question in the email can be helpful to pin them down, to get
a response' (Sophie). At least six participants reported proactively keeping other
people (usually their manager) updated as a WFH strategy: *'it's like keeping people*
updated rather than, you know, just like keeping it to yourself' (Layla). At least five
participants mentioned the importance of proactively contacting people when WFH:
'*I'm a little more proactive in terms of reaching out to people'* (Amanda).

In sum, the 'Independence of approach within the context of being comfortable
with self' theme centres around participants' apparent ability to feel at ease with lone
working. It includes introverted tendencies, ability to work independently, and being
highly proactive, which were the sub-themes beneath the 'Independence of approach
within the context of being comfortable with self' theme. The themes described so far
(under section 9.1) reflect the individual psychological factors that participants
reported helped them to achieve a good fit with WFH. The section below (9.2) focuses
on the strategies that participants associated with a good fit with WFH.

9.2 Strategies

This section summarises the strategies that participants used to achieve a good fit with WFH.

Figure 6 below shows the flow of themes and sub-themes relating to individual psychological factors.
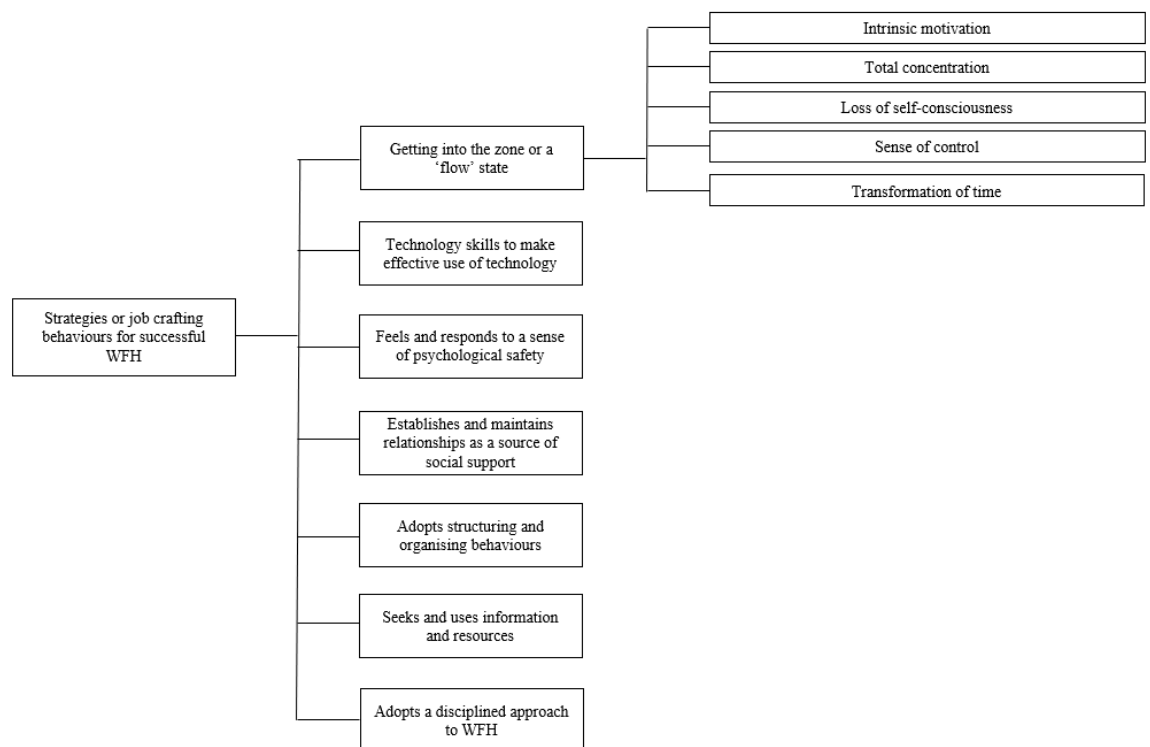
Figure 6.

Flow Chart of Themes and Sub-Themes: Strategies

9.2.1 Getting into the Zone or a 'Flow' State

This theme explores the way in which many participants referenced the importance of getting themselves into a state of focus, immersion and absorption in their task when WFH. More generally, this is referred to as a 'flow' state (Csikszentmihalhi, 2020). According to Csikszentmihalhi and Csikszentmihalhi (1990), flow consists of nine dimensions, five of which were evident in participants'

interview responses and formed sub-themes: intrinsic motivation, total concentration, loss of self-consciousness, sense of control, transformation of time.

9.2.1.1 Intrinsic Motivation

At least eight participants referenced their motivation for the job itself (as opposed to factors external to the job, such as salary or benefits) as being involved in their ability to successfully WFH: *'You have to like what you're doing.'* (James). Interestingly, for some participants, another part of their intrinsic motivation was that the job itself suited WFH: *'it's very systems-based, like you're just using Excel, or Word or you know, all of that. So it's not too bad I think. I think my job's quite good for working from home'* (Eleanor). Participants seemed to enjoy this type of analytical, spreadsheet-based work: *'I love doing Excel spreadsheets'* (Otis).

9.2.1.2 Total Concentration

An ability to focus was mentioned by at least six participants as important when WFH: *'you have to have good focus'* (James). At least seven participants referred to being free from distractions when WFH, such as other people talking: *'be able to do work uninterrupted'* (Amanda). Although participants reported a strong ability to stay concentrated on their task, there was an acknowledgement that the WFH environment is itself conducive to focusing on the task: *'When I need to, it's, allows me to just concentrate on what I need to do, not have any distractions.'* (Otis). Additionally, there was an element of having (or creating if it was not there) a quiet space to concentrate without distractions: *'what makes, makes me really enjoy working from home is the quietness'* (Ezra). Linked to this, participants reporting helping themselves get into a WFH 'mindset': *'it's a sort of mindset. So yeah, it's all about getting yourself okay, you know, knowing how to get yourself into that sort of work brain.'* (James). Finally, at least seven participants reported deep periods of concentration followed by regular, short breaks to maintain focus: '*have that half an hour break just to reset my mind'* (Toby).

9.2.1.3 Loss of Self-consciousness

At least six participants expressed the view that WFH enables them to feel less judged compared with working in the office: *'being able to spend as long or as little on things as I want to without feeling kind of judged for it'* (Sophie). Linked to this, participants sometimes referred to feeling self-conscious when working in the office, for example taking stretch breaks or walking around in the office: *'other people would be like, 'what is* [anonymous participant] *doing?!''*. (Alex). Similarly, participants highlighted that they felt they benefitted from WFH enabling them to be more authentic: *'not having to, erm…. I don't know like, perform for other people'* (Sophie). This was reinforced when multiple participants referred to habits that helped them perform and which they felt comfortable doing when WFH but not in the office: *'I like to just sort of like, lean back or whatever, I put my feet up and just like, tap, or whatever, do something that in an office environment is considered rude and annoying to other people.'* (Alex). Furthermore, participants reported that comfortable clothing was an important part of effective WFH: *'for me it's just, to do with just the comfort as well, so I've got a hoody on, I work a bit better when I'm in comfort.'* (Jack). Participants generally felt they worked best in comfort, with the home environment serving as their comfortable environment: *'I'm at home and I'm comfortable'* (Melissa).

9.2.1.4 Sense of Control

Participants reported statements in line with having a high need for control: *'I just like being able to have some control over it and be able to do work uninterrupted'* (Amanda). Linked to this, many participants claimed that they found it easier to control their workload when WFH: *'it's not just the person shouting the loudest* [as it would be in the office*] but it's the one who's the actual priority'* (Amanda). Participants took ownership and control of their goals: *'ownership of your goals as well. It's up to you to deliver them, not anyone else.'* (Rory). This sense of control extended beyond work when WFH, into broader life: *'not feeling like work's*

controlling you, feeling like you're controlling your life and what you're doing is nice'. (Jack). Participants also reported feeling able to manipulate the WFH environment to suit their needs: '*At home you can listen to whatever you want, listen to the radio, ...it all helps make your work environment.'* (Toby), with at least ten participants perceiving that the home setup itself is important in successful WFH. For example, '*just buy a chair. Otherwise, every sort of pain just comes into existence'* (Muhammed).

9.2.1.5 Transformation of Time

Participants reported recognising the risk of losing track of time when WFH, for example '*You can lose hours doing that sort of thing.'* (James). Often participants set aside dedicated periods of time to immerse themselves in a task without that time getting broken up or interfered with: '*Sometimes I will like create a block in my calendar where I say, 'these two hours I'm going to do this'. ... people can't take that space.'* (Susie). Linked to this, participants reported liking to dedicate their time to one task at a time: '*I don't like jumping around from project to project constantly throughout the day.'* (Muhammed).

9.2.2 Technology Skills to make Effective Use of Technology

Participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of making effective use of technology to be able to WFH, and there was a perception that younger people are particularly good at this: '*younger people nowadays, technology is like second nature to them'* (Lucas). Participants reported that being able to use technology was important to enable collaboration when WFH: '*you have to know how to use the technology properly to, to collaborate with people.'* (Alex). Participants reported being skilled at using technology to monitor and manage their workload when WFH: '*I actually find Teams really helpful, and Outlook, and Microsoft Analytics because you can track your workload a lot better.'* (Amanda). However, for some participants technology seemed to be a particular area of passion, or participants were going beyond the minimum technology required for WFH, finding new or innovative ways in which

technology could support them with WFH: *'I guess that I like computers as well. So I can see the potential that they have. And because I'm quite a computer person'* (Alex). There was evidence from at least two participants of the use of mobile phone apps to support concentration when WFH: *'I have like an app on my phone that like plants trees for focus time. It like, you set the timer basically, and if you go on your phone or look at a different app before the time is up it like kills the tree'* (Sophie). Another participant used technology which informed their family and friends of where they were, meaning family and friends could see the participant had not left their house in a while and prompted them to move. Overall, technology skills and being comfortable working with computers was viewed by participants as essential for WFH, or as Lucas put it: '*being technology fluent'*.

9.2.3 Feeling and Responding to a Sense of Psychological Safety

Participants described WFH strategies that were about feeling able to express oneself and behave without fear of punishment or humiliation. For example, being *'prepared to maybe look a little bit silly'* (Otis), and the use of trial-and-error approaches: '*you can try out a few more things before you get started I suppose, because you can try a few more silly methods ... But if you're in the office you tend to get straight into it, and you're worried about what other people think is on your laptop and things like that.'* (Toby). At least ten participants reported the importance of feeling comfortable to ask questions: *'being able to feel like it's okay to ask questions if you're not sure and that you're not going to be like, I don't know, like, shamed'* (Sophie). Similarly, participants reported feeling psychologically safe to take up other people's time when needed: *'I felt like a bit of a nuisance but after sort of a month, err, month and a half, two months, I was like 'they don't actually mind.''* (Lucas). Another WFH strategy (linked to psychological safety) which participants mentioned was being open and honest, as highlighted by at least five participants: '*just always open and honest with them* [my team] *about what it was that I was doing and where I was at'* (Melissa).

9.2.4 Establishes and Maintains Relationships as a Source of Social Support

This theme is about how participants relate to other people when WFH. Participants frequently reported recognising the importance of a supportive line manager when WFH (*'my manager is like very nice and you know, he doesn't want you to be stressed out'* (Eleanor)), a supportive team (*'I'm in like a really great team and I've got really great people around me'* (Eleanor)) and supportive colleagues (*'most people are pretty happy to help'* (Sophie)). Many participants also mentioned having a peer group of fellow graduates or apprentices which they used: '*as a graduate cohort we do have some weekly coffee chats.*' (Ezra). However, participants reported that they themselves adopted strategies to establish and maintain relationships as a source of social support and recognised the importance of relationship-building when WFH: *'I find that whole relationship-building thing really important.'* (Amanda). For example, participants expressed awareness that building relationships can be challenging when WFH (*'I think difficulty as well with working from home is some of the networking side of it.'* (Muhammed)), and they compensated for this by making time for non-work-related chat with colleagues: *'I have probably more catch ups. ... Those kind of informal conversations scheduled.'* (Susie). Some participants mentioned striking a balance between being friendly and being professional when interacting with others: *'try and keep it professional but still like friendly'* (James). This included taking an interest in people by remembering what people said last time and asking about it to build relationships: '*there's one woman in my other team who's getting married. And like every other week I'll say so, you know, 'any wedding updates? What's going on?''* (Layla). When participants went to an office rather than WFH, they reported using the office specifically to meet people in person and arranging their office-based days based on when other people would be in: '*I prefer to go in on the days when the team are in so I can actually see the people that I work with'* (Melissa). Finally, some participants reported having a close relationship with someone who they talked through problems and challenges with in a mutually beneficial way: *'...some of the challenges in her team or mine and we'll talk through problems'* (Amanda).

9.2.5 Adopts Structuring and Organising Behaviours

At least ten participants reported that they plan time out in advance as a WFH strategy: *'I've always sort of laid down everything I'm going to do.'* (Lucas). Indeed, *'organisation and time management, I think like it's just something I've naturally done from quite early on.'* (Muhammed). Structuring and organising behaviours included planning meetings with other people in advance: '*You need to have that advance booking'* (James), as well as careful time management: *'planning and time management …I tend to find I sort of quote myself the hours of work that I've got to do…'* (James). At least nine participants referred to use of to-do lists: *'when you start the day, I like to set up lists, I think that's just a personal thing that I like to do but I like to have like a list of things to do.'* (Muhammed).

Liking and establishing routines for oneself was another structuring behaviour reported by multiple participants, especially consistent start and finish times for work: '*wake up pretty consistently at the same time … have like a very allocated time before you work'* (Muhammed). Linked to this, participants reported putting structure in place to set themselves a direction, including a consistent, structured approach to tasks: '*Kind of structuring the goals, so if you're given a task, what are your milestones?'* (Rory). Multiple participants reported that they enjoyed following clear processes: '*I feel comfortable, I like doing this, it's very process-y'* (James). Furthermore, participants' used WFH to get the time and space they desired to think through their work: *'I like to think things through. So I feel like, at home you have a bit more time, a little bit more space to do that'* (Jack).

9.2.6 Seeks and Uses Information and Resources

Participants spoke about various forms of help-seeking and information-management behaviours which form the focus of this theme. Participants often

reported using a notepad to write things down: *'I gotta write it down immediately'* (Otis); and even adopting different hierarchies of information management: *'but the book is sort of the first level, just anything goes in there. Erm, and then I think 'oh that's done', erm, but yeah, more longer-term stuff for heavier projects might go to the Planner'* (James). Participants also reported record-keeping: *'I keep a log of everything that I do in the week. And then have like actions at the end of the week so that I can come back to it after like the weekend and know exactly where I stand with it'* (Muhammed).

At least seven participants referred to the importance of being comfortable to seek help when WFH: *'I think developing a skill to ask people for help is important'* (Otis). This included having or establishing role clarity: '*You need to know what you're doing.'* (James). Participants reported preparing one's requests for feedback/questions for other people to be in one go: '*you want to get as much feedback as possible in that one short stint so you don't have to keep going back to them over and over again'* (Toby). Some participants expressed a preference for written communication: '*having it in an email or something means I can save it somewhere and refer back to it.'* (Otis). However, participants also acknowledged the importance of being able to pick up the phone to call people for help: *'I don't like just randomly phoning people, but as you get through it you realise it's actually not that much of a hassle, it's a lot easier than trying to send an email.'* (Muhammed). Participants seemingly recognised that they could not do everything alone: *'as an individual you need that support'* (Jack). Overall, seeking and using information and resources such as social support appeared to be highly important when WFH and was reported by participants to require extra effort from the individual: *'That's quite a valuable part of being in the office which is not available to you at home because if you, if you feel that you have to reach out to someone on Teams saying 'Can I just get your eyes on this for a second?' it feels like a whole thing.'* (Alex).

9.2.7 Adopts a Disciplined Approach to WFH

This final theme focuses largely on participants' self-control and commitment when WFH to be able to do the 'right' thing. At least six participants reported that being disciplined helps them to WFH effectively, for example *'I've always been one to follow rules, I was always a good kid at school'* (Sophie). Part of this discipline was about resisting temptations or potential distractions in the home environment such as the television, with at least seven participants identifying the risk of distractions: '*it's very easy just to say 'Oh, well, you know, let me just go clean the kitchen or I can go do something else.'* (Layla). Linked to this, there was a clear recognition of the need to avoid procrastination when WFH: *'when you're not being watched it can be quite easy to procrastinate or like, you know, skive off or whatever, but being able to motivate yourself to do things is a useful skill to have'* (Sophie). Participants also reported being disciplined in terms of their strong ability to commit to deadlines or *'promise to other people'* (Rory) and to log on in the morning to complete their full eight hours of contracted work: *'be punctual, stick to it.'* (Lucas). Interestingly, participants also expressed evidence of adopting a disciplined approach to WFH in the form of examples of delayed gratification, showing an approach that looked to the future: *'if I can commit to it now, put these hours in now, it's ready for tomorrow'* (Melissa).

Discussion

This study explored the individual psychological factors and strategies used by 15 early careers employees who were identified as having a good Person-Environment Fit with WFH. Five themes and 19 sub-themes were identified for individual psychological factors, addressing the research question: What individual

psychological factors do early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use? Seven themes and five sub-themes were identified for strategies, addressing the research question: What strategies can be learned from early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH to support other early careers employees who may struggle with WFH?

10.1 Interpretation of Findings

This study contributes to knowledge on the role of individual psychological factors and strategies in successful WFH in three main ways. Firstly, it reinforces some of the findings from previous studies. Secondly, it potentially conflicts with some findings from previous studies. Finally, it contributes novel findings. Each of these will be discussed in turn below. When comparing the findings of this study with those of previous studies, it is important to acknowledge that the interviewees in the present study were selected on the basis of having a good fit with WFH. Thus, comparisons may be difficult and are made with caution. In particular, it may be difficult to make comparisons because it is unclear how good fit with WFH would compare with the range of measures of successful WFH used in other studies, such as high performing teleworkers as identified by supervisors (Greer & Payne, 2014), and wellbeing (Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015). It is possible that certain findings about the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH are specific to certain outcomes. Despite this, person-environment fit more generally has been linked with factors such as performance (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009) and wellbeing (Götz, Ebert & Rentfrow, 2018), suggesting that there is merit in making such comparisons.

10.1.1 Reinforcement of Previous Findings

Participants reported a wide range of individual psychological factors that they perceived as contributing towards their good 'fit' with WFH, including some which resonate with the findings of previous studies. Importantly though, the present study extends such findings to an early careers sample. For example, self-efficacy for WFH

and self-efficacy for work-family balance have previously been linked to WFH outcomes (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003; Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer, 2016), which may be comparable to the present study's finding that self-belief or self-confidence seemed to play a role in early careers employees' perceptions of what made them a good fit with WFH. Similarly, a study by O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) identified that need for autonomy was positively related to WFH performance, which the present study echoes, finding that many participants seemingly embraced the freedom/autonomy offered by WFH. This would make sense given that participants in the present study had a good 'fit' with WFH and Person-Environment Fit has previously been linked with performance (Demir, Demir & Nield, 2015).

Many participants in the present study reported adopting structuring and organising behaviours to aid their WFH, such as planning their time out in advance. This finding resonates with previous research including a study by Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), which found that one's ability to structure the workday was negatively related to nonwork interference in work. Moreover, research by O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) found that organisation (defined as a trait focused on seeking order and structured approaches to tasks) was slightly correlated with teleworkers' levels of job satisfaction. However, such previous studies relied heavily on quantitative methods, meaning the present study has strengthened the literature in the form of qualitative data to reinforce the role of structuring behaviour in successful WFH.

Many participants in the present study reported that effective management of work-life boundaries is important for WFH. This links to previous research supporting the role of boundary management strategies in successful WFH (Basile & Beauregard, 2016). The present study could be interpreted as indicating that participants generally preferred a segmentation boundary management approach, meaning they generally preferred to keep their life at work and their life outside of work as distinct. This seems plausible considering previous studies indicating that the opposite of segmentation boundary management (known as integration boundary management, meaning a preference for blurring one's life at work and life outside of work, such as by working outside of typical work hours) has been linked to increased work-home conflict

(Eddleston & Mulki, 2017) and higher levels of depression (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006). However, the present study advances this by highlighting the different *types* of boundary management that participants adopted, ranging from behavioural boundaries to temporal boundaries. This satisfies Kossek, Lautsch and Eaton's (2006) call for consideration of different types of boundary management (that might be integrated or segmented).

Proactivity was reported by many participants in the present study as important in their fit with WFH. It may be that proactivity helps employees to overcome challenges such as cyberslacking when WFH, especially given that procrastination (which could be viewed as the opposite of proactivity) has previously been linked with increased cyberslacking (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014). The opposite of cyberslacking could be viewed as total concentration on one's work, with 'total concentration' being a key sub-theme in the present study. Participants in the present study reported the importance of getting into a WFH mindset to achieve total concentration, such as giving themselves time to wake up before focusing on work tasks. Similarly, a study by Greer and Payne (2014) identified that a work-oriented mindset, whereby participants treated WFH as similar to a workday in the office, was reported as important by their participants who were high-performing teleworkers.

Overall, the above alignments between the present study and previous studies suggests that at least some of the findings of previous studies (which typically focused on broad age ranges of employees) may be generalisable to the specific demographic of *younger, early careers* employees.

10.1.2 Conflicts with Previous Findings

The findings of the present study would appear to conflict with some previous findings, although as discussed here it may be that there are plausible explanations for this. The present study identified that participants frequently reported themselves as having a laidback character. This is interesting as more laidback individuals may be expected to adopt fewer structuring and organising behaviours, with structuring and

organising behaviours having been found to be important for WFH in studies by Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), O'Neill et al. (2009), as well as the present study itself. However, it could be that adopting more structuring and organising behaviours helps the individual to remain laidback, especially as participants in the present study reported that they *enjoyed* following clear processes. Indeed, neuroticism (which could be viewed as the opposite of being laidback) was found to be negatively linked to satisfaction with remote work in a study by O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014).

Participants in the present study reported the importance of an ability to work independently when WFH. Moreover, many participants expressed a preference for lone working. These findings could be seen as contrasting with Müller and Niessen's (2019) finding that self-leadership was largely unrelated to ego depletion and work satisfaction when WFH. However, ability to work independently in the present study was largely about not relying on other people, taking responsibility for one's own productivity and self-monitoring of productivity, which simply may not be comparable with the niche dimensions of Müller and Niessen's (2019) self-leadership, such as visualising successful performance.

Previous research has explored elements of personality in relation to successful WFH, ranging from agreeableness to conscientiousness (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014). Participants in the present study did not identify these specific personality traits as important in their WFH, however this may be because the present study did not specifically ask about any particular personality trait(s), but rather interview questions were deliberately non-leading and open to participants' views. For example, need for achievement in the present study could be interpreted as conscientiousness, especially given that need for achievement and conscientiousness have been linked in previous research (Kertechian, 2018).

Participants in the present study reported a highly disciplined approach to WFH. This may be comparable with diligence, which O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell and Kline (2009) define as persistence on tasks and strong work ethic. However, O'Neill et al.'s (2009) study found that diligence was unrelated to teleworker performance and satisfaction. This is surprising given that participants in

the present study reported a strong need for completion and proactivity, which could be interpreted as reflective of a strong work ethic or diligence. It may be that being highly disciplined or diligent is more important for early careers employees when WFH compared with the wider population, for example, because early careers employees may face more challenges when WFH (Parry et al. 2021), that they would then potentially need to be disciplined to overcome.

Overall, despite potential conflicts between the findings of the present study and previous studies, these conflicts are potentially resolved by careful consideration of nuances in interpretation, samples and methodological differences.

10.1.3 Novel Findings

Beyond reinforcement of previous findings and potential conflicts with previous findings, the present study offers key novel findings. For example, participants reported elements of emotional intelligence as important in their ability to WFH, including empathy for others. This is important because previous studies have argued for the need to consider emotional intelligence in relation to the extent to which individuals can *adapt* and thrive in new methods of working such as WFH (Parent-Lamarche, 2022), but would not appear to have considered emotional intelligence in relation to fit with WFH. Interestingly, adaptability itself was highlighted by many participants in the present study as playing a role in WFH effectiveness. Adaptability would not appear to have been explored in previous studies looking at individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes, representing a unique contribution beyond previous knowledge. Similarly, having a growth mindset (an overall theme which adaptability was a sub-theme of in the present study) would not appear to have been considered in previous studies on WFH, indicating that a growth mindset may previously have been missed in the literature.

Many participants in the present study alluded to the role of introversion in fit with WFH. This is an important new finding because as far as is known little to no research has explored the introversion-extraversion spectrum specifically in relation

to WFH. A study by Luse, McElroy, Townsend and Demarie (2013) linked introversion-extraversion from the Myers-Briggs type indicator (Myers & Myers, 1998) with aspects of preference for working in virtual teams. However, 'virtual teams' is a far cry from the more focused definition of WFH applied in the present study. Nevertheless, it has previously been identified that sociability is negatively linked to teleworkers' performance (O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline 2009), which could be viewed as an alignment with the present study's finding that early careers employees who had a good fit with WFH often reported introverted tendencies. However, introversion is arguably about more than sociability. For example, it is about where individuals get their energy from (Russell, Woods & Banks, 2022), with some participants in the present study referring to a 'social battery' that relies on time alone to re-energise.

Taking sections 10.1.1, 10.1.2 and 10.1.3 together, the present study not only appears to reinforce some findings from previous research, but it also extends several findings to early careers employees and contributes a range of novel findings.

10.2 Theoretical Contributions

The present study has demonstrated that Person-Environment Fit theory and job crafting theory can be applied to understand the individual psychological factors and strategies that are used by early careers employees to successfully WFH. This is important because neither Person-Environment Fit nor job crafting theory would appear to have been applied to WFH research to this extent previously. Person-Environment Fit theory has been briefly linked to previous research (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014), whilst job crafting theory has been alluded to in previous research but not specifically referenced as job crafting theory (Raghuram et al. (2003). The present study has built upon this by focusing on Person-Environment Fit and job crafting theory deeply throughout, most notably in the interview design whereby questions aligned to each dimension of Person-Environment Fit and job crafting theory. This contributes towards satisfying calls from various researchers for

greater consideration of theory in WFH research (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Narayanan, Menon, Plaisent & Bernard, 2017).

The present study extends Person-Environment Fit theory to the WFH context by demonstrating that the concept of 'fit' may be a useful way of defining successful WFH and exploring the individual psychological factors related to that. Additionally, Person-Environment Fit theory proposes that it is not just the environment that contributes to outcomes, but it is also about the person, which this study would support in the sense that certain individual psychological factors and strategies that a person has or adopts would appear to represent a good fit with the demands of the WFH environment. For example, intrinsic motivation and having a positive mental attitude were described by participants as helping them with WFH.

The findings of the present study also support and extend job crafting theory in that participants highlighted a variety of strategies that they adopted to further enhance their 'fit' with WFH. These strategies included making effective use of technology and getting oneself into a 'flow' state to be able to focus on the work despite distractions in the WFH environment. This means that as well as individual psychological factors which may be more enduring, there are also behaviours (in the form of WFH strategies or techniques) that may be learned to enhance one's 'fit' with WFH. The present study thus combines job crafting theory and Person-Environment Fit theory to help overcome a key limitation of Person-Environment Fit theory, in that Person-Environment Fit theory assumes that individuals are mere passive reactors to their environment. Previous research has shown that individuals play a role in shaping their environment, both in home life and work life (Demerouti, Hewett, Haun, De Gieter, Rodríguez-Sánchez & Skakon, 2020), however the present study extends this to WFH. Indeed, the present study indicates that individuals actively shape their WFH environment to suit their needs, combining Person-Environment Fit theory and job crafting theory for a holistic exploration of individual psychological factors that contribute to successful WFH. Mirroring the finding in the present study that having a growth mindset is seemingly important in WFH, it means that rather than one's ability to WFH being 'fixed', there are practical steps individuals could take (or learn) to actively become more effective at WFH. Such implications for practice are discussed below.

10.3 Implications for Practice

In line with the constructivist ontology and epistemology of this study, the findings of this study would necessarily have differing levels of implications and applicability to each individual and their unique context. However, the implications discussed below may be taken as indicative implications for consideration. Implications for organisations, professionals, managers, early careers employees, and others are discussed in turn.

Organisations need to be aware of the individual psychological factors and strategies that enable early careers employees to successfully WFH, to better support their early careers employees. Early careers employees in the present study expressed a range of WFH strategies that could be embedded into early careers onboarding and welcome packs. The findings of the present study also suggest that in job design, there could be a benefit of providing freedom for job crafting. This could be achieved by organisations providing freedom and flexibility on how early careers employees complete tasks (task-based job crafting), how they relate to others within the organisation (relationship-based job crafting), and how they influence their own mindset (cognitive-based job crafting) when WFH. Additionally, organisations might use the findings of the present study in combination with the dimensions of Person-Environment Fit theory to potentially help enhance early careers employees' fit with WFH. For example, making sure that early careers employees have a balance between their individual abilities (such as ability to be organised, in the present study) and the demands of the job role when WFH (demands-abilities dimension of Person-Environment Fit). Also making sure that early careers employees have a balance between their individual needs (such as need for recognition, in the present study) and the supplies that employees have available to them (such as mechanisms for recognition) (needs-supplies dimension of Person-Environment Fit).

Human Resources teams, Learning and Development teams, Occupational Psychologists or 'future of work' professionals could factor the strategies identified in the present study into their policies and guidance relating to WFH. For example, by encouraging early careers employees to experiment with WFH strategies and by

acknowledging the role of individual differences in WFH. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that policies grant early careers employees access to appropriate technology, work-life balance, and psychological safety, all of which the present study identified as important in WFH. There could be opportunities to help embed healthy and productive WFH behaviours through behaviour change programmes.

Line managers need to express reasonable trust and freedom when their early careers employees are WFH so as not to micro-manage them, balanced with a supportive and caring approach. Line managers may be able to support early careers employees with implementing WFH strategies as part of personnel development or performance reviews.

The present study also intends to be useful for early careers employees themselves. Indeed, job crafting theory emphasises the individual as an active shaper of their environment. Participants referred to structuring behaviours, such as use of to-do lists, which are highly practical, simple actions that any individual could easily adopt when WFH. Whilst the present study is limited to an early careers sample, it is possible that the wider population could learn from early careers employees' ability to WFH. For example, contrary to some research finding that early careers employees struggle to WFH (Parry et al. 2021), many participants in the present study (which focused on early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH) highlighted that some younger, early careers employees may be *better* than the general population at WFH. For example, participants in the present study reported that typically younger, early careers employees may be more adaptable or more accepting of new ways of working which contrast with the traditional 9am-5pm office-based workday.

Finally, 'buddy scheme' members, mentors and careers coaches might find the findings of the present study helpful in their roles in supporting early careers employees. Similarly, universities, schools and colleges (institutions which help prepare young people for work) could take note of these strategies as ways to prepare young people for jobs that require WFH, especially given the important role of academic learning in organisations committed to lifelong learning (Kinman & Kinman, 2001).

10.4 Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

The present study benefits from rich, detailed, subjective data from 15 early careers employees' on the individual psychological factors and strategies which they perceive make them a good 'fit' with WFH. The semi-structured interview methodology enabled in-depth probing of participant responses, as well as identification of broad findings which would not easily have been predictable otherwise. This was highly appropriate given how little was previously known about individual psychological factors and strategies used by early careers employees to successfully WFH. It is acknowledged, however, that this inevitably also means that the findings have questionable generalisability beyond the participants in the present study. Nevertheless, this provides an opportunity for future research to investigate the generalisability of the findings from this present study. For example, future studies could interview early careers employees working in other sectors beyond energy and transport, such as sales, marketing, or technology.

By focusing purely on early careers employees, the present study overcomes the limitation of much previous research which did not differentiate between career stage or age range. Such previous studies may miss out on nuances related to career stage or age range, potentially resulting in diluted findings. Future research should thus continue exploring individual psychological factors in successful WFH from the perspective of specific career stages and/or age ranges. For example, it would be interesting to understand the degree of similarity or contrast between early careers employees and the views of late-stage careers employees. The present study further narrowed its sample by focusing on early careers employees who were a good 'fit' with WFH, which would be commended by positive psychology perspectives around conditions or factors that underpin the optimal functioning or thriving of individuals (Gable & Haidt, 2005). As all participants in the present study went through a screening process which sifted them into the study upon being identified as a good fit with WFH, the individual psychological factors and strategies described in the present study could be interpreted as representing an indicative 'profile' for what type of individual may have a good Person-Environment Fit, when the environment is WFH.

Unfortunately, this does mean however that the findings of the present study do not capture the experiences of those who have a poor fit with WFH. This could bolster the understanding of what makes a good fit as well as providing important insights around the risks of WFH, acknowledging that not everyone thrives when WFH. Future research should thus compare the findings of the present study with the perceptions of early careers employees who identify as a poor fit with WFH.

Linked to the above, a further limitation of the present study is that there is no valid and reliable established measure of Person-Environment Fit for WFH. Therefore, adapted measures of Person-Environment Fit had to be used to sift participants into the present study (Cable & DeRue, 2002). It would be interesting for future research to contribute to a measure of Person-Environment Fit with WFH, building on pre-existing measures of person-job fit and person-organisation fit (e.g. Edwards et al. 2006). However, it is commendable that the present study did not limit the idea of 'fit' to individual psychological factors, such as personality, which may be viewed as more stable and enduring parts of an individual (Kankaraš, 2017). Specifically, consideration of strategies represents an important contribution of the present study, arguing that to an extent, 'fit' with WFH is a skill which can be learned through the use of various strategies. Research such as that by Kinman (2021), which offered implications for supporting employees with transitioning to WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic, would appear to support this notion that WFH is something individuals can adapt to.

Whilst the present study is limited by a cross-sectional design, in a single country and specific organisational sectors, this may at least offer the advantage of to some extent controlling for the role of social, cultural and organisational factors in WFH success, enabling a purer focus on individual psychological factors in early careers employees. It is acknowledged that the present study focuses on the role of the individual in Person-Environment Fit with WFH as opposed to the role of the environment. This was justified given that the gap in the literature was with regards to individual psychological factors and in early careers employees specifically. However, it is the view of the researcher that it is not just up to the individual employee to make WFH work, but rather it needs to be a joint effort with the employer providing adequate support, such as equipment for WFH. Indeed, although the role of the

environment or organisation did not emerge as a theme in the present study, many participants did specifically mention that the home setup itself was important, such as having a desk, and both organisations in the present study provided participants with financial support in acquiring WFH equipment. As such, future research may wish to complement the present study by exploring environmental and organisational factors in the WFH environment that enable individuals to effectively WFH, including how specific WFH environmental factors may interact with the individual psychological factors identified by the present study.

Finally, it is notable that when compared against a quality assessment framework such as that by Hong et al. (2018), the present study would be rated positively. For example, the qualitative approach is highly appropriate to the nature of the research question, the semi-structured interview data collection method is clearly justified for understanding early careers employees' subjective experiences of WFH, and the findings and interpretations are clearly derived and substantiated by the data. Furthermore, coherence between the data sample, collection, analysis and interpretation is evidenced by the consistent grounding in theory and constructivist epistemology.

10.5 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that there are a range of individual psychological factors that early careers employees who identify as having a good fit with WFH have or use. These include proactivity, ability to work independently and high need for completion. Job crafting strategies also appear to play a key role in successful WFH for early careers employees, such as adopting structuring and organising behaviours. This means that it is not just what participants 'have', such as personality factors, that make them a good fit with WFH, but crucially, it is also what participants 'do' that plays a key role in WFH success. It is proposed that the strategies identified in this study may be learned by early careers employees who struggle with WFH, to help more individuals achieve a good fit with WFH in what would appear to

be a more permanent shift towards WFH (or at least hybrid working) following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The next chapter (Chapter 5: Conclusion) seeks to amalgamate the overall thesis by offering an overview of the findings spanning both the SLR (Chapter 3) and the Empirical Study (Chapter 4), as well as discussing the overall contributions, overall strengths and limitations, as well as the implications of this thesis as a whole for theory, research and practise.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter brings together the overall thesis, aiming to amalgamate the key contributions, learnings, and implications of the SLR and empirical study, and coherently extend understanding with regards to the individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH.

11.1 Overall Findings

This thesis sought to understand the role of individual psychology in determining what enables some individuals to be particularly successful at WFH, unlike other individuals who may struggle to WFH. However, 'successful' WFH is a highly vague term. The findings of the SLR concluded that although there are a wide range of possible positive outcomes of WFH, including wellbeing (Anderson, Kaplan & Vega, 2015) and productivity (Neufeld & Fang, 2005), there is no clear definition of 'successful' WFH. The SLR also concluded that whilst there was promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors in general in WFH outcomes, when looking at any single individual psychological factor in isolation (such as boundary management styles), there was only unclear evidence or initial evidence supporting a role in WFH outcomes. Building on the findings of the SLR, the empirical study described in this thesis proposed 'fit' with WFH (based on Person-Environment Fit theory) as a more useful way of defining successful WFH and developed evidence of the variety of individual psychological factors and strategies that are important in enabling early careers employees to achieve a good 'fit' with WFH. A summary of the findings of this thesis (amalgamating the findings of the SLR and empirical study) can be found in Table 10.

Table 10.

Summary of Study Findings and Contribution

	Systematic Literature Review	Empirical Study	Contribution of SLR & Empirical Study
Research Questions	• What are the individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully? • Sub-questions: • How is 'successful' WFH defined and measured in the literature? • What is known about the specific individual psychological factors that enable employees to WFH successfully? • What is known about the individual psychological factors that prevent or serve as barriers to successful WFH? • What are the contexts and populations in which WFH has been studied? • What factors may moderate the relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes?	• What individual psychological factors do early careers employees who identify as having a good 'fit' with WFH have or use? • What strategies can be learned from early careers employees who are a good fit with WFH to support other early careers employees who may struggle with WFH?	• The empirical study research questions directly addressed the gaps identified in the SLR, most notably: • The promising evidence from the SLR on the role of individual psychological factors in WFH success meant there may be other individual psychological factors that were missed by the studies in the SLR. • Previous research was lacking a focus on employees of any specific age group or career stage. • There was little qualitative research in the SLR, missing out on the highly subjective nature of WFH strategies.
Perspective on what constitutes 'successful' WFH	• Successful WFH can be viewed as consisting of a range of components, such as minimal work-family conflict or high levels of performance, wellbeing, satisfaction and commitment. However, this view means that the current literature is fragmented in nature, and not easily comparable.	• Successful WFH requires individuals to agree with at least two out of the three statements below: • Working from home provides a good fit with the things that I value in life. • There is a good fit between what working from home offers me and what I am looking for in a work environment. • The match is very good between the demands of working from home and my personal skills.	• Previous research has focused on specific outcomes of WFH such as wellbeing or performance. However, this forces individuals and organisations to potentially choose between outcomes. • A more holistic, theoretically-grounded approach would be to view successful WFH as person-environment 'fit', which could help make future studies more comparable.
Findings: Individual psychological factors that enable employees to successfully WFH	• Previous research has explored a broad range of individual psychological factors in relation to WFH outcomes. • There is promising evidence for the role of individual psychological factors overall in WFH outcomes.	• A wide range of individual psychological factors and strategies were perceived by early careers employees as important in achieving a good 'fit' with WFH.	• Taking both studies together, it is clear that some of the individual psychological factors identified in the SLR also emerged in the empirical study.

• Most individual psychological factors have only been explored in one or two studies, equating to initial evidence or more often unclear evidence for the role of any single individual psychological factor alone in successful WFH. • Existing studies are heavily reliant on quantitative approaches, with a need for in-depth qualitative research to better understand the variety of individual psychological factors.	• The findings of the empirical study advance the literature beyond the SLR, by exploring a new sample (early careers employees) using a qualitative research design.

11.2 Overall Strengths and Limitations

There are strengths and limitations of this overall thesis to be aware of. Three key strengths are discussed initially. Firstly, much previous literature focused on the role of organisational (Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015) or social (McLeod, Tan, Bosua & Gloet, 2016) factors in WFH success, however, there were a range of individual psychological factors (such as personality or dispositions), which would plausibly lead different individuals to respond to the same organisational or social factors in different ways (Kankaraš, 2017). This thesis extends the understanding of the importance of individual psychological factors in WFH. For example, it had been suggested that future research should consider the role of personality in the relationship between 'new' ways of working such as WFH and levels of engagement (Lieke, Bakker, Hetland & Keulemans, 2012). Focusing on the potential role of individual psychological factors in WFH success thus has important implications for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of what contributes to successful WFH, especially given that individuals, organisations, work, and technology are mutually entangled (Boell, Campbell, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Cheng, 2013). A second strength is that this thesis addresses conceptual issues by avoiding broad terms such as 'telework', opting to focus purely on WFH instead. As described under section 1.3.2, there is debate around the breadth of telework definitions (Wilks & Billsberry, 2007; Sullivan, 2003; Haddon & Brynin, 2005), which this thesis overcomes by focusing on the transfer of working life to a home base, whilst accepting

terms such as telework provided that it is clear that the dimension of telework being focused on is WFH. Thirdly, the focus of this thesis is relevant and timely given the societal shift towards WFH (or at least hybrid working) following the Covid-19 pandemic (Felstead & Reuschke, 2020).

As with all research, this thesis has some limitations. Firstly, this thesis goes only part way to distinguishing between research conducted pre- and post-Covid-19, which as discussed under section 1.3.1 is important. Whilst the SLR focused on pre-Covid-19 research, the empirical study had to be conducted partway through the Covid-19 pandemic. This is unfortunate as it meant some participants may have felt obliged to WFH to avoid Covid-19. However, the impact of this on the overall thesis is arguably minimal, because at the time of nearly all the interviews, WFH was not mandated by the government in the UK. A second limitation of the overall thesis is that both the SLR and the empirical study would appear to largely neglect the WFH experiences of an older generation who may be characterised by nearing retirement. Thirdly, whilst this thesis contributes heavily to advancing the understanding of what constitutes successful WFH, a clear measure of successful WFH remains outstanding. The measure of Person-Environment Fit with WFH adapted from a measure by Cable and DeRue (2002) in the empirical study indicates a possible route to a measure, however this needs to be validated. Moreover, a more holistic view of successful WFH based on Person-Environment Fit theory may require greater emphasis on the environment, balanced with the individual psychological factors explored in this thesis. For example, relying solely on individual factors (the 'person' in 'Person-Environment Fit') comes with multiple limitations including potentially under-estimating the role of environmental factors and not accounting for interactions between individual factors and environmental factors in the understanding of successful WFH. However, this limitation may to an extent be overcome when viewing this thesis within the context of the wider WFH literature, in which research on the role of environmental factors in WFH has as previously discussed historically outweighed research on the role of individual factors. As such, this thesis brings a more balanced approach to the overall literature by focusing on individual psychological factors, and this was reflective of the early stage that the relevant literature was at and therefore was what was needed at the time given the lack of clarity over what is currently known about individual psychological factors in successful

WFH. This thesis also offers a focused, in-depth view of the role of individual psychological factors, as opposed to attempting to cover both individual and environmental factors at the risk of barely skimming the surface of either. Indeed, this thesis has shown that the range of individual psychological factors alone is broad. Furthermore, inclusion of a specific focus on environmental factors could have led to a confounding mixing of effects whereby the true relationship between individual psychological factors and WFH outcomes could have been distorted by the addition of environmental factors (Skelly, Dettori & Brodt, 2012). It is also acknowledged, however, that focusing on individual psychological factors poses a risk of placing too much pressure on the individual in making WFH successful, as opposed to a joint effort between employees and employers. However, as discussed later, there are multiple implications of this thesis for training and policies that employers could support with. This thesis does not pretend to cover all factors relevant to successful WFH but rather intends to offer clear, succinct new knowledge as one *part* of the full view as represented by the overall literature. Indeed, a literature review by Vleeshouwers et al. (2022) focuses on the impact of the psychosocial work environment on WFH, thereby adopting a similarly focused approach but rather looking at environmental factors and not individual psychological factors, and could be viewed as complementing the present thesis by offering a different part of the full view. As such, it is important to note that relying solely on individual psychological factors is not sufficient in obtaining a full understanding of all the factors involved in successful WFH. Furthermore, whilst this thesis proposes job crafting as a potential opportunity to enhance Person-Environment Fit with WFH, such attempts may have limited effectiveness if for example the job crafting strategy is implemented within the context of an unsupportive manager, a lack of WFH equipment or an organisational culture which explicitly or implicitly rejects WFH as the norm, all of which have been shown to be involved in WFH effectiveness (Eng et al. 2010; Buomprisco, Ricci, Perri & De Sio, 2021; Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015). Taking into account contextual factors may thus help unlock opportunities for the full potential of individual psychological factors in successful WFH to be realised. This further reinforces the importance of a holistic perspective on WFH that accounts for the range of potential factors involved in its success, as well as a multi-level perspective that considers how different combinations of the various factors may interact to produce different WFH outcomes.

A fourth limitation relates to the search terms used in the SLR, particularly with respect to the difficulty in capturing all relevant concepts. This is generally a known and accepted limitation of the SLR method and is weighed up against SLRs offering the advantage of a highly structured, replicable approach (Bramer et al. 2018). However, it is important nonetheless, especially within the context of the broad range of terms for WFH as discussed under section 1.3.2 Conceptual Issues. To add to this issue, the increased prevalence of WFH as a result of the pandemic has accordingly given rise to widespread use of various newer terms, such as 'hybrid' working in which employee's working hours are split between home and an office (Šmite, Moe, Klotins & Gonzalez-Huerta, 2023), which was not necessarily captured in the SLR in this thesis. In order to address this limitation, future SLRs must continuously adapt their search terms rather than relying on the search terms of previous SLRs and stay up to date with the latest terminology. For example, this may be achieved through the aforementioned pearl growing technique as well as a thorough SLR protocol stage in which the SLR is planned, scoped out and discussed with a range of practitioners, employees and organisations to capture the full range of possible search terms.

Fifth, there are limitations associated with participants being employees who *self-identified* as having a good 'fit' with WFH. For example, this relies on employees having a high level of self-awareness and reporting honestly. However, from the interview data, many participants did appear to have high levels of self-awareness, as indicated by the sub-theme of 'Strong self-awareness in relation to WFH'. Additionally, although it cannot be ruled out that employees may have reported having a good 'fit' with WFH simply because they enjoyed WFH, the sifting questionnaire content steered away from enjoyment of WFH focusing instead on the well-established dimensions of 'fit'. The same issue of participants often self-identifying as successful at WFH applies to the SLR, although perhaps to a lesser extent as the SLR considered *barriers* to successful WFH as well as individual psychological factors that appeared to enable successful WFH. Furthermore, multiple different measures of 'successful' WFH were used across the studies in the SLR, ranging from wellbeing to performance, which meant that self-identification was not required to be as direct as identifying as having a 'good' fit with WFH. However, such wellbeing and performance measures still frequently relied upon self-report questionnaires,

which have been noted to suffer from issues such as social desirability bias (Van De Mortel, 2008). This issue may be overcome to an extent by gathering data from other sources as part of the sifting-in process, as part of evaluating 'fit' with WFH or 'successful' WFH. For example, the views of colleagues, clients, or managers on the degree to which an employee is deemed 'successful' at WFH could be collected or even triangulated. One of the studies included in the SLR, by Greer and Payne (2014), identified high performing teleworkers to include in the research via supervisor ratings of job performance. Interestingly, Greer and Payne's study produced findings which are comparable to the empirical study described in this thesis, such as the finding that structuring behaviours such as task planning seem important in successful WFH emerged in both studies. This suggests that obtaining data from other sources beyond employees themselves (such as managers) may represent an opportunity to strengthen existing findings and potentially help overcome the limitations of focusing on employees who self-identify as successful at WFH. Moreover, measuring employees' 'fit' with WFH or 'success' at WFH via sources such as managers or colleagues may be particularly valid in cases where the research is interested in those employees who perhaps have a poor fit with WFH or are deemed unsuccessful at WFH. In these cases, it may be expected that employees would potentially feel less comfortable to self-identify as having a poor fit with WFH or being unsuccessful at WFH. As this thesis was mainly focused on successful WFH and good fit with WFH, perhaps self-identification was more appropriate, especially given the additional ethical considerations associated with sensitive data obtained about individuals from other people. Nevertheless, focusing on employees who self-identify as having a good fit with WFH remains an important limitation for awareness in relation to this thesis.

11.3 Unique Contributions

This thesis makes at least three unique contributions.

Firstly, this thesis serves to extend the literature by highlighting and filling a key gap: younger, early careers employees. Ultimately these individuals are the future workforce who will pave the way for future generations, however it has previously

been established that the early careers demographic is perhaps most likely to struggle with WFH (Parry et al., 2021), making the understanding of individual psychological factors and strategies that could help these individuals with WFH especially important. Indeed, the findings of the SLR and the empirical study are usefully compared in Table 11 to demonstrate how this thesis contributes an ability to compare the findings from wider populations of employees (as in the SLR) with individual psychological factors and strategies that are important in WFH for early careers employees (as in the empirical study).

Table 11.

Individual Psychological Factors common across Systematic Literature Review and Empirical Study

Individual Psychological Factor	SLR Finding(s)	Empirical Study Finding	Notes on Contribution
Need for autonomy (embracing freedom/autonomy, liberal thinking style)	Need for autonomy was slightly positively correlated with self-rated teleworker performance and job satisfaction. Findings from another study in the SLR indicated that liberals (individuals with a thinking style focused on deviating from tradition or set ways) had higher commitment to telework.	Participants reported the importance of embracing the freedom/autonomy offered by new ways of working in their 'fit' with WFH.	Need for autonomy could be interpreted as akin to embracing the freedom/autonomy offered by new ways of working, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa. Participants in the empirical study could be interpreted as having a liberal thinking style as they reported embracing freedom and autonomy, in which case this would represent an alignment between the SLR and empirical study.
Trait rumination (positive mental attitude)	The telework–positive affect relationship becomes increasingly negative as trait rumination increases.	Participants reported the importance of having a positive mental attitude in their 'fit' with WFH.	Positive mental attitude could be viewed as the opposite to trait rumination, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa.
Organisation and structuring behaviour	The personality trait of organisation was slightly positively correlated with teleworkers' performance and satisfaction. The relationship between telecommuter self-efficacy and structuring behaviour is positive. Structuring behaviour had a significant negative relationship with nonwork interference in work, but was not linked to work interference in nonwork. Task planning was	Participants reported the importance of adopting structuring and organising behaviours in their 'fit' with WFH.	Alignment between both studies with regards to organisation and structuring behaviour, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa.

	significantly related to work-to-family facilitation.		
Diligence (disciplined approach)	Diligence was unrelated to teleworker performance and satisfaction.	Participants reported the importance of adopting a highly disciplined approach to WFH in their 'fit' with WFH.	This may indicate a conflicting finding between the SLR and empirical study, or it may be that diligence and discipline are simply not comparable.
Sociability (introverted tendencies)	Sociability was related to teleworker performance negatively, and sociability was slightly negatively correlated with satisfaction for teleworkers.	Participants reported the importance of introverted tendencies in their 'fit' with WFH.	Sociability could be interpreted as similar to introverted tendencies, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa.
Need for achievement	Need for achievement was almost unrelated to teleworkers' self-rated job performance and satisfaction.	Participants reported the importance of need for achievement in their 'fit' with WFH.	This may indicate a conflicting finding between the SLR and empirical study.
Work-oriented mindset (to achieve total concentration)	Some teleworkers mentioned adopting a work-oriented mindset whereby they treated a workday at home as they would a workday in the office.	Participants reported the importance of getting into a WFH mindset to achieve total concentration, such as giving themselves time to wake up and then focus on the task in their 'fit' with WFH.	There may be a link between getting into a work-oriented mindset as identified in the SLR and achieving total concentration as identified in the empirical study, however this is tenuous.
Boundary management preferences (segmentation, ability to disengage from work)	Mixed findings: Individuals with integrated boundary management strategies tended to experience higher family-to-work conflict, higher work-to-family conflict and depression (although not statistically significant). Segmentation of work and family boundaries was a strong predictor of individual wellbeing. In another study, teleworkers were generally able to enact their preferred boundary management style. In a further study, boundary management strategy did not have a significant main effect on work-to-family conflict and did not significantly moderate the link between telework intensity and work-to-family conflict. A fourth study found that efforts to minimise integration seemingly alleviated work-family conflict. Potentially related to boundary management, an inability to disengage from work increased work-family conflict but was not significantly linked to family-work conflict. An inability to disengage from	Participants reported the importance of effective management of work-life boundaries in their 'fit' with WFH, with an apparent tendency towards preferring segmentation boundary management.	The findings on the role of boundary management in successful WFH in the SLR were mixed, however the empirical study adds weight to the findings from some studies that would indicate that a segmentation boundary management approach is advantageous for WFH. Participants in the present study reported segmentation boundary management strategies which would potentially enhance their ability to disengage from work.

	work was positively linked to job stress.		
Agreeableness (emotional intelligence, high need for recognition, establish and maintain relationships)	Negative and significant relationship between agreeableness and cyberslacking.	Participants reported the importance of emotional intelligence (including a thoughtful approach to communication), high need for recognition, and establishing and maintaining relationships as sources of social support in their 'fit' with WFH.	The combination of agreeableness relating negatively to cyberslacking and a range of factors that could be interpreted as linked to agreeableness being reported by participants in the empirical study, could be interpreted as alignment in findings.
Conscientiousness (self-awareness in relation to WFH, sense of control, and seeking and using information and resources)	Conscientiousness was negatively related to cyberslacking.	Participants reported the importance of self-awareness in relation to WFH, sense of control, and seeking and using information and resources in their 'fit' with WFH.	Some of the individual psychological factors mentioned by participants in the empirical study (most notably self-awareness in relation to WFH, sense of control, and seeking and using information and resources) could be interpreted as reflective of high conscientiousness. If so, the finding from the present study that participants reported self-awareness in relation to WFH, sense of control, and seeking and using information and resources as important in their 'fit' with WFH would make sense in relation to the finding regarding conscientiousness from the SLR.
Neuroticism (laidback)	Neuroticism was not positively related to cyberslacking.	Participants reported the importance of having a laidback nature in their 'fit' with WFH.	Neuroticism could be viewed as the opposite to having a laidback nature, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa.
Procrastination (proactivity)	Procrastination was positively related to cyberslacking.	Participants reported the importance of proactivity in their 'fit' with WFH.	Procrastination could be viewed as the opposite to proactivity, indicating supporting evidence from the SLR for the empirical study and vice versa.
Self-efficacy	Positive link between telecommuter self-efficacy and telecommuter adjustment. Another study found that self-efficacy was not linked to work interference in nonwork but had a significant negative relationship with nonwork interference in work.	Participants reported the importance of self-belief and self-confidence in their 'fit' with WFH.	This would appear to indicate an alignment between SLR and the empirical study with regards to self-efficacy being important in successful WFH.
Self-leadership (ability to work independently, internal thinking style)	Self-leadership was largely unrelated to ego depletion and work satisfaction when WFH. Findings from another study indicated that internals (those with a thinking style focused on independent working) were more	Participants reported the importance of having an ability to work independently in their 'fit' with WFH.	Self-leadership could be viewed as similar to having an ability to work independently, the latter of which participants reported as important in the empirical study. However, self-leadership was largely unrelated to successful WFH in the SLR, potentially

committed to the telework function.	meaning that self-leadership and ability to work independently are not comparable. Nevertheless, ability to work independently in the empirical study would align with the findings around internal thinking style from one of the studies in the SLR.

The second unique contribution of this thesis is that there is a strong theoretical focus throughout the thesis. The limited consideration of theory in the literature as identified in the SLR was addressed in the empirical study via the positioning of Person-Environment Fit theory as a useful way of defining and measuring successful WFH, as well as use of both job crafting theory and Person-Environment Fit theory to design the interview questions. This is discussed further under section 11.5.

Thirdly, this thesis results in a model of individual psychological factors and strategies linked to successful WFH, to be tested by future research (see Figure 7). This latter contribution regarding a model is a particularly important contribution of this thesis as it helps to bring the findings of the thesis together in a clear, conceptually cohesive manner, it represents a framework upon which future research could build upon, and it offers a structure for the progression of future theories in this area.
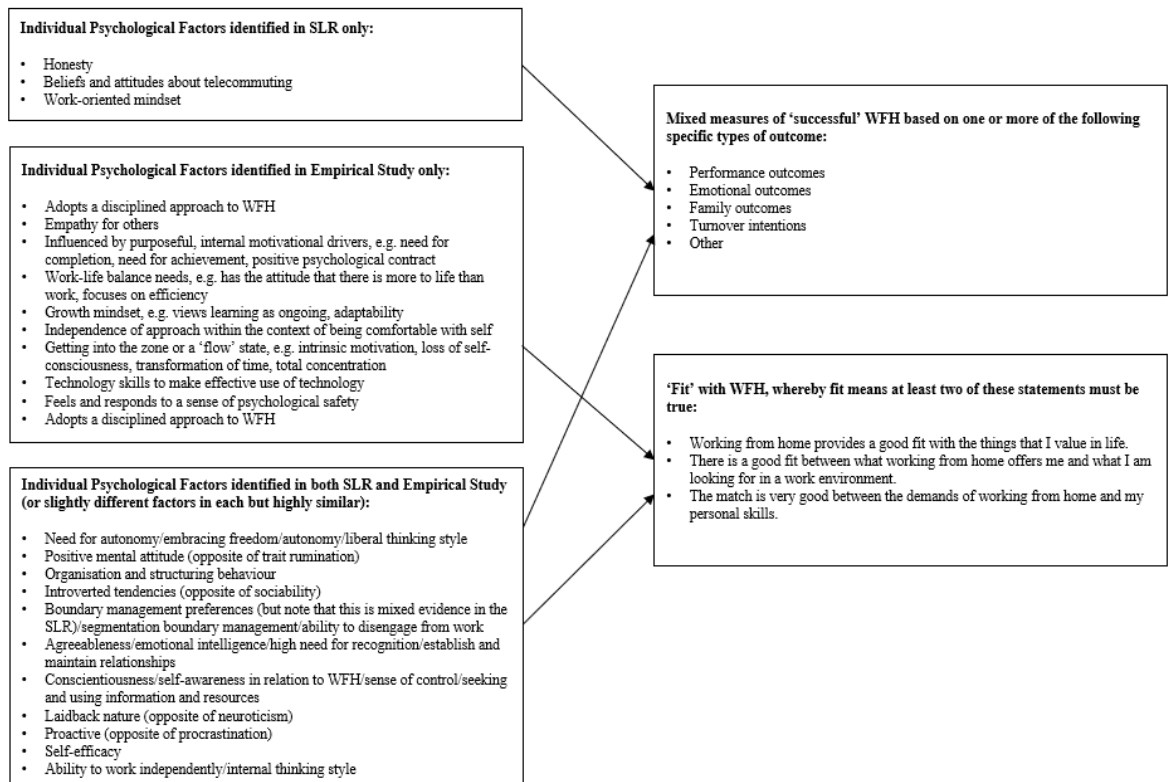
Figure 7.

Conceptual Model of Individual Psychological Factors that enable Employees to Successfully Work from Home, including Consideration of how 'Successful' Working from Home is Defined

Note that with regards to Figure 7 and Table 11, comparisons between the SLR and empirical study are made with caution because, as detailed under section 1.3.1, it is important to distinguish between research conducted pre-, during and post-Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of the SLR relate to pre-Covid-19 studies, and the empirical study was conducted towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, given that participants in the empirical study were predominantly interviewed *after* the Covid-19 lockdowns were lifted (when UK government guidance did not specify that WFH was essential), they were largely WFH voluntarily, thus it was deemed appropriate to compare the SLR findings with the empirical study findings. Moreover, multiple participants expressed that Covid-19 did not overly impact their decision to

WFH over working in the office, and many of the participants did not WFH every day, opting to attend the office occasionally similarly to how employees WFH prior to the Covid-19 pandemic may have done. Nevertheless, as with all comparisons between studies, caution is warranted.

11.4 Implications for Research

There are at least five implications of this thesis for future research.

Firstly, future research would benefit from remaining mindful of the distinction between pre- and post-Covid-19 studies, with regards to the potential contextual impact of Covid-19 on enforced versus voluntary WFH (Kaduk, Genadek, Kelly & Moen, 2019), and with reference to section '1.3.1 Pre- and Post-Covid-19 Research' of this thesis. The studies in the SLR were pre-Covid-19, whereas it cannot be fully ruled out that contextual factors such as potentially WFH for fear of catching Covid-19 played a role in the findings of the empirical study, although participants did not specifically report concerns around Covid-19.

Secondly, future research would benefit from exploring the role of individual psychological factors in the WFH experiences of an older generation who may be characterised by nearing retirement, providing useful comparative data against the present thesis.

Thirdly, there is an opportunity for research to test and validate the measure of Person-Environment Fit used in the empirical study, thereby addressing the call from this thesis for a clear definition and measure of successful WFH.

Fourth, now that this thesis has established the important role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH, when combined with previous research on the role of environmental factors such as organisational (Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015) or social (McLeod, Tan, Bosua & Gloet, 2016) factors in

successful WFH, there is perhaps an opportunity for future research to more specifically explore *interactions* between individual psychological factors and environmental factors in successful WFH. For example, Kinman's (2020) SHARE approach highlights key *conditions* for healthy, sustainable WFH, which could be compared with the findings of this thesis. Namely, safe WFH conditions as in Kinman's SHARE approach may be supported by certain individual psychological factors. Indeed, it is likely that there are complex mechanisms in the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH. Future research could delve more deeply into this through more qualitative designs seeking to establish what specific *behaviours* or strategies may result from any individual psychological factor to enable successful WFH, beyond the scope of this thesis. Building upon this, a greater focus on interactions between individual psychological factors and contextual factors in successful WFH would help provide a more holistic understanding of the factors that influence successful WFH, when compared with the present thesis which focuses on individual psychological factors. It is acknowledged that research on individual level factors without an examination of the context cannot provide full insight into the factors that influence successful WFH. For example, the same individual with the same individual psychological factors may respond to different contexts with different behaviours, and such behaviours may be directly triggered by contextual factors as opposed to being initiated from within the individual themselves (Tett & Burnett, 2003, as cited in Hoffmann, Nißen, Scheel & Willim, 2021). Therefore, whilst this thesis focuses on the views of employees, future research may wish to consider employer or manager perspectives on the factors that shape successful WFH. This would not only provide an external view on the role of individual psychological factors but also an external view on the role of contextual factors, which could be compared and contrasted with the individual internal experience of successful WFH. It is possible that the views of employers, managers and employees may need to be reconciled which could help to further test and validate the factors associated with successful WFH, expanding beyond current literature which predominantly focuses on the perspectives of employees. This reconciliation could be achieved through the use of focus group methodology, for example, whereby employee participants and employer participants debate the factors involved in successful WFH. More generally, it is important for future research to consider not just employee views but also employer views because, as noted by Smite, Moe, Hildrum, Huerta & Mendez (2023),

many managers are establishing new 'one size fits all' policies that demand all employees to attend an office for a set proportion of their working hours, which would appear at odds with the diverse preferences for WFH that Smite et al. (2023) found across employees. The existence of potentially conflicting views between employees, employers and managers on successful WFH (and even the acceptability of WFH) could in itself be an interesting avenue for future research to explore, as such conflicting views would plausibly place pressure on the relationships between those individuals, which could in turn impact the extent to which WFH is successful. Indeed, telework has been shown to alter the 'psychological contract', that is, the unwritten obligations, expectations and beliefs as viewed subjectively by the employer and employee (Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). The way in which Jaakson and Kallaste's (2010) research indicated a shift in greater responsibility transferring to the *employee* when WFH perhaps supports this thesis' focus on the individual and their views on WFH, however it could also indicate that more emphasis is needed on the employer to re-balance this shift in responsibility.

Finally, it is hoped that academics will take note of the model produced by this thesis and conduct further research to test the model. In particular, there is some alignment between the findings of the SLR and the empirical study, such as with regards to the importance of need for autonomy and structuring behaviour in successful WFH (as detailed in Table 11). Table 11 also shows that academics should be aware that the current thesis challenges whether at least some of the findings from some of the studies in the SLR would apply to early careers employees. This has important implications as it means previous studies described in the SLR (with their broad, non-specific samples in relation to age and career stage) may report findings which are somewhat diluted, when compared with the empirical study in this thesis which focused on a narrower sample. For example, there was a conflicting finding between the SLR and empirical study with regards to the role of need for achievement in successful WFH.

11.5 Implications for Theory

The broader theoretical context of this work is that the literature appeared to be characterised by limited consideration of theory, with the findings of studies in the SLR seeming to be reasonably theorised but not necessarily in clear or explicit ways, with little mention of how findings contributed to theoretical knowledge. In contrast, the findings of this overall thesis provide support for the usefulness of Person-Environment Fit because it seemed there was some alignment between the findings from the SLR and the findings from the empirical study, which could be interpreted as supporting the usefulness of Person-Environment Fit as a definition and measure of successful WFH, given that participants in the empirical study were identified as having a good 'fit' with WFH and reported similar individual psychological factors to those identified in the SLR (comprised of broad definitions of successful WFH).

Whilst caution is always warranted in generalising findings, the similarity may also indicate that some of the findings from the SLR could potentially be generalised to an early careers sample. One of the individual psychological factors which was explored in one of the studies in the SLR but which did not emerge in the empirical study in this thesis was sensation seeking. However, there is still an apparent alignment between the SLR and the empirical study with regards to that, because sensation seeking seemingly did not moderate either the telework-positive affect relationship or the telework-negative affect relationship in the aforementioned study within the SLR. Similarly, if sensation seeking were important in 'fit' with WFH, it plausibly would have been a theme in the empirical study described in this thesis, however no such theme was indicated by the data. Overall then, the model in Figure 7 represents a useful summary, from which further research could build upon, and refine into a theory.

This thesis has sought to make a strong contribution to theory. Firstly, by demonstrating the need for a stronger focus on theory, as a lack of consistent, in-depth theoretical focus was a key limitation in existing research as shown in the SLR. Secondly, by seeking to address that limitation in the empirical study by extending two theories (Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting). Job Crafting theory is logically extended to the WFH context, responding to Raghuram et al. (2003), who

argued that their findings around the benefits of self-efficacy and structuring behaviour when WFH *'contribute to current theorizing by linking self-efficacy to employees' proactive efforts to shape their jobs and work'* (p.193) and that *'Future research should examine how virtual workers utilize their motivations and abilities to proactively shape their jobs and careers over time'* (p.196), alluding to Job Crafting. Whilst Person-Environment Fit theory had already been applied to the WFH context as shown in the SLR (O'Neill et al. 2014; Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Workman et al. 2003), this thesis has extended it to early careers employees' experience of WFH. However, this thesis also takes its theoretical contributions a step further by blending Person-Environment Fit and Job Crafting to explain how fit could be modified through Job Crafting techniques. The theoretical implication is that multiple theories may be needed to understand successful WFH. It could also mean that if an individual lacks Person-Environment Fit with WFH, for example, due to high levels of procrastination (which O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich's (2014) study in the SLR indicated as a barrier to successful WFH), this effect could potentially be mitigated or overcome through the adoption of job crafting strategies, such as increased adoption of structuring behaviours including planning and use of to-do lists. Conversely, some individuals may have a pre-existing, natural 'fit' with WFH due to certain personality factors such as high conscientiousness (O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich, 2014), but perhaps they may have subsequently developed certain behaviours or bad habits that are reducing their fit with WFH. This would indicate that a process of un-learning may be required. This approach of combining theories has implications for providing greater insight into the complex mechanisms which underlie successful WFH, as it does not limit the view to relatively stable, enduring factors that individuals may not have the ability to change. Instead, it offers an empowering approach that emphasises the idea that WFH is a skill which could at least to some extent be learnt, through the adoption of effective WFH job crafting strategies. From a theoretical standpoint, this thesis therefore helps overcome the limitations of Person Environment Fit and Job Crafting perspectives by blending the two theories for a more comprehensive view that better reflects the range of potential mechanisms in successful WFH and how such mechanisms may interact.

11.6 Implications for Practice

There are seven potential implications for practice from this thesis, including for implications for consideration by employees, managers, practitioners, policymakers and organisations.

Firstly, there are implications for enabling employees to develop an awareness of individual differences. This thesis emphasises the range of individual psychological factors that would appear to play a role in successful WFH. Efforts should thus be made to help employees identify and celebrate personal strengths that aid their fit with WFH, as well as identifying development areas. This could be done through the design of questionnaires, tools, and resources to help with WFH, based on the individual psychological factors identified in this thesis. For employees, this would have implications for better understanding oneself, with direct ability to influence or take ownership of one's own behaviour, and therefore better manage one's own wellbeing and performance. For groups, this would include implications for better understanding the individual differences within groups or teams, thereby enhancing appreciation, empathy and tolerance of each other's individual strengths and development areas with regards to WFH.

A second implication of this thesis is around encouraging open dialogue. Open conversations are needed regarding individuals' experiences of WFH, so that employees and employers can work together to make WFH a success. For this to happen, managers would need to help establish a culture of psychological safety, creating a safe space for employees to talk about their ability to WFH without judgement, and openly discuss development areas where employees could establish strategies to enhance their ability to successfully WFH or unlock opportunities to receive support and guidance. For organisations, this would include taking greater responsibility for helping employees to make WFH work, through clear communication that encourages and supports employees to experiment with WFH strategies. The model presented by this thesis, combined with consideration of organisational factors, could be a useful aid or checklist in such conversations.

Thirdly, this thesis suggests that the measurement of an employee's 'success' at WFH requires careful consideration as there are currently multiple definitions of successful WFH. Great caution would therefore be needed in cases where a manager was pursuing disciplinary action against an employee for what is perceived as unsuccessful WFH. It could be that the employee has simply not been equipped with the right training or strategies for WFH. For policymakers, the findings of this thesis may therefore indicate a need for WFH policies designed around being patient with employees in their adjustment to WFH or their progress towards optimal WFH performance. In instances where there are challenges with employee performance or counter-productive work behaviours when WFH, the findings of this thesis could be considered for use as a basis to help encourage a positive shift in WFH performance. In the context of employee performance reviews or annual performance appraisals, the findings of this thesis may be used to ask employees questions about how they are finding WFH. The findings could also be used to inform continuing professional development plans, key performance indicators or targets such as the extent to which an employee is able to set their desired level of boundaries between work and home.

Fourth, there are implications of this thesis for talent management. For example, for succession planning the findings of this thesis may be considered in the context of developing individuals ready for future roles that are known to require WFH. Key leaders within organisations could actively role model the strategies identified in this thesis to encourage others. This may be more difficult when leaders are potentially less visible when WFH, but role modelling could be done through leaders talking about the WFH strategies they use. Furthermore, an organisation's ability to support successful WFH with the right help and training in place for employees is likely to have important implications for that organisation's ability to attract, retain and develop their employees more generally. Indeed, in the early stages of talent management, the findings of this thesis could be used to inform the design of job descriptions for roles that require WFH. It might be that selection and assessment criteria for a role requires greater balance between technical competencies for the job and consideration of where that job will be conducted (for example, the extent to which candidates can demonstrate WFH strategies for job roles that can only be conducted from home). Individuals might also refer to the findings of this thesis when

considering their suitability for WFH and as a part of their decision around whether to apply for a job role that can only be conducted from home.

Fifth, this thesis identified some individual psychological factors in successful WFH which may be fairly stable and enduring, such as personality traits. It could be that WFH is simply not for everyone, in which case the implications for selection and assessment discussed above would be even more important. However, with WFH having been established as a legal right in the Netherlands (Baazil & Fernandez Cras, 2022), there are likely implications beyond this, for policy makers, professional bodies and practitioners (such as Occupational Psychologists and Human Resource experts). For example, around building a pool of WFH training and encouraging organisations to provide support for employees to achieve a good 'fit' with WFH through consideration of strategies. As shown by this thesis, strategies related to behaviours for successful WFH include structuring behaviours. Therefore, this thesis argues that individuals could *learn* to WFH successfully, even if they potentially struggle with WFH initially. Similarly, tools and training could be developed to help employees learn technology skills, which were identified as important in the empirical study.

Sixth, linked to the above policy implications and legal WFH right in the Netherlands, it is hoped that these findings will support or enhance the longer-term feasibility of WFH following the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond, into the future. During the pandemic, WFH was a necessity for many employees and organisations, however the findings of this thesis could be used to help individuals who have a strong preference for WFH (whether that be due to childcare, work-life balance, or convenience reasons) but perhaps feel their performance or wellbeing is lacking when WFH compared to when working in an office. Individuals could use the findings of this study to implement strategies to help themselves with WFH. Applying the strategies in this thesis when WFH may also help individuals access greater job opportunities. For example, through adopting strategies for successful WFH and sustaining strong performance when WFH (using the findings of this thesis), individuals may have the opportunity to apply for WFH jobs many miles away from their home, which they would not be able to do if there was a requirement to travel to an office regularly. Organisations would also benefit from more employees becoming more successful at WFH, with respect to access to a wider talent pool (not reliant on

close geographical proximity to an office, but rather a broader pool of individuals who can successfully WFH), as well as potentially access to a more diverse workforce of individuals for whom WFH might be the only way they could acquire and sustain employment (for example, due to agoraphobia).

Finally, with many jobs which used to be conducted from an office now being conducted from home, or split between WFH and an office, this thesis indicates that there are opportunities for job design to provide structures or policies that help employees make the most of their individual psychological factors. This may include giving employees greater autonomy for Job Crafting behaviours such as seeking and using information, as identified in the empirical study. There are also implications for wellbeing policies with regards to ensuring employees have access to work environments that provide a good Person-Environment Fit with their needs and styles (whether that be WFH or an office), or where that is not possible, the findings of this thesis could be used to help individuals adapt to WFH. Similarly, organisations or policymakers encouraging employees back to an office could use the findings of this thesis to adopt a more humanistic approach focused on acknowledging and embracing individual differences in choosing whether to work in an office or WFH. Given the role of individual psychological factors in WFH as indicated by this thesis, it will be important not to assume that any single job or task is better suited to WFH or an office, as this is likely to depend at least to some extent on the individual.

11.7 Concluding Remarks

Overall, this thesis enhances knowledge regarding the role of individual psychological factors in successful WFH. It also advances the understanding of what constitutes 'successful' WFH, all at a time when the world of work is experiencing a paradigm shift from commuting to an office to working in one's own home.

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Appendices

Appendix A. *Glossary of Terms*

Acronym:	Stands for:
WFH	Working from Home
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
SPIO	Study Design, Population, Intervention, Outcomes
SLR	Systematic Literature Review

Appendix B. *Full Quality Assessment Results: Qualitative Assessment, Quantitative Assessment, and Mixed Methods Assessment*

		Hong et al. (2018)							Snape et al. (2017)
		Screening Questions:		Qualitative Assessment:					Ethics:
Author:	Title:	S1. Are there clear research questions?	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	1.1 Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	1.2 Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	1.3 Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	1.4 Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	1.5 Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
Basile & Beauregard	Strategies for successful telework: how effective employees manage work/home boundaries.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell
Eddleston & Mulki *	Toward Understanding Remote Workers' Management of Work-Family Boundaries: The Complexity of Workplace Embeddedness.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Neufeld & Fang *	Individual, social and situational determinants of telecommuter productivity.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell

*Note that two of the studies appear under both Qualitative Assessment and Quantitative Assessment, because they were mixed methods but could not be assessed under the Mixed Methods Assessment because the qualitative and quantitative components of the study each consisted of a different sample.

| | | Hong et al. (2018) | | | | | | | Snape et al. (2017) |
| | | Screening Questions: | | Quantitative Assessment: | | | | | Ethics: |
Author:	Title:	S1. Are there clear research questions?	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	4.1 Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	4.2 Is the sample representative of the target population?	4.3 Are the measurements appropriate?	4.4 Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	4.5 Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
Anderson, Kaplan & Vega	The impact of telework on emotional experience: When, and for whom, does telework improve daily affective well-being?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	Yes	Cannot tell	Yes	No
O'Neill, Hambley, Greidanus, MacDonnell & Kline	Predicting teleworker success: an exploration of personality, motivational, situational, and job characteristics.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	No	No	Yes	Cannot tell
O'Neill, Hambley & Bercovich	Prediction of cyberslacking when employees are working away from the office.	Yes	Cannot tell	No	No	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	No
Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud	Technology enabled work: The role of self-efficacy in determining telecommuter adjustment and structuring behaviour.	Yes	Cannot tell	No	Cannot tell	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell
Raghuram & Wiesenfeld	Work-nonwork conflict and job stress among virtual workers.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell
Lapierre, Steenbergen, Peeters & Kluwer	Juggling work and family responsibilities when involuntarily working more from home: A multiwave study of financial sales professionals.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell
Eddleston & Mulki *	Toward Understanding Remote Workers' Management of Work-Family Boundaries: The Complexity of Workplace Embeddedness.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
Workman, Kahnweiler & Bommer	The effects of cognitive style and media richness on commitment to telework and virtual teams.	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell
Neufeld & Fang *	Individual, social and situational determinants of telecommuter productivity.	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	No	Cannot tell	Yes	Cannot tell	Cannot tell	Cannot tell
Müller & Niessen	Self-leadership in the context of part-time teleworking.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cannot tell	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

*Note that two of the studies appear under both Qualitative Assessment and Quantitative Assessment, because they were mixed methods but could not be assessed under the Mixed Methods Assessment because the qualitative and quantitative components of the study each consisted of a different sample.

		Hong et al. (2018)							Snape et al. (2017)
		Screening Questions:		**Mixed Methods Assessment:**					**Ethics:**
Author:	**Title:**	5.1 Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	5.2 Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	5.3 Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	5.4 Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	5.5 Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	5.1 Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	5.2 Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
Greer & Payne	Overcoming telework challenges: Outcomes of successful telework strategies.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton	Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work-family effectiveness.	No	No	No	Cannot tell	No	Cannot tell	No	No

286

Appendix C. *Assigning Quality Ratings*

Although Hong et al.(2018) advise against obtaining overall ratings or scores in quality assessments, given the volume of data and the way in which other quality assessment frameworks do recommend obtaining an overall quality rating (e.g. Snape et al. 2017), obtaining overall ratings was deemed necessary in the present SLR. The approach to obtaining overall quality ratings was based on the Grade method, as recommended by Snape et al. (2017) and many other guidelines and systematic review organisations as specified by Whiting, Wolff, Mallett, Simera and Savović (2017). In line with Hong et al., the more detailed view of the criteria and ratings are presented under Appendix B, to provide a fuller picture of the data which underlies the overall quality ratings. Furthermore, the overall ratings were not purely relied upon to judge the quality, but rather they informed the judgement whilst taking into account the fuller picture.

Grade:	Studies:	Quality Rating:
High quality, high confidence (confidence that an individual psychological factor has had an impact on WFH outcome(s)).	More than one high quality study, with similar results	Strong evidence. Confidence that the evidence can be used to inform decisions
Moderate quality, moderate confidence (impact may occur but further investigation is required)	Single high quality study with some limitations, or multiple studies most with some limitations	Promising evidence. Need to incorporate further information to inform decisions
Low quality, low confidence (an effect may occur)	Single study with some limitations	Initial evidence. Need to incorporate further information to inform decisions
Very low quality, very low confidence (insufficient evidence to make conclusions)	Some studies may show effects in different directions, or studies may have significant quality issues	Unclear evidence. Best not to act upon this finding in practice

Appendix D. *Demographic Sheet, including measure to gauge WFH 'fit' (questions 13-15)*

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Working from home research

The purpose of this 5-minute sheet is to gauge your suitability for the research. It will also help provide context and understanding of what situations the research participants are in **as a group.** Your name will not be connected to your data in the research reports.

	Item:	Your Response:
1.	Name:	[Please type here]
2.	Gender:	
3.	Age (years):	
4.	Full time or part time:	
5.	How many years have you been working from home? *(NOT including studying)*	
6.	How long have you worked in your CURRENT job role at Cadent (in years)?	
7.	Since leaving school, how many years have you spent in either a full time or part time job?	
8.	In a typical week, how many days do you currently spend working from home?	
9.	How many other people live with you in your accommodation? *Please specify their relation to you, e.g. are they family, friends, flatmates?*	
10.	Do you have a dedicated room just for working from home? *(if No, please specify, e.g. are you working in your bedroom, kitchen etc?)*	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)
11.	Do you have your own children who also live with you?	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)
12.	Do you have the equipment/technology you need to do your job effectively at home? *(e.g. video conferencing, a desk, a mouse/keyboard)*	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)
13.	Does working from home provide a good fit with the things that you value in life?	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)
14.	Is there a good fit between what working from home offers you and what you are looking for in a work environment?	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)
15.	Is there a good match between the demands of working from home and your personal skills?	YES / NO (Please delete as appropriate)

Appendix E. *Semi-Structured Interview Schedule*

Individual psychological factors and strategies that enable early careers employees to successfully WFH: A Person-Environment fit and job crafting perspective		
Introduction (5 minutes): Hello, how are you? *[help participants feel comfortable and confident, make friendly conversation]* Introduce self – researcher at Birkbeck, University of London. Reminder of content of information sheet – check they have read and understood, check they have signed consent form, check they are still happy to proceed. Remind them that they can pause or stop at any time. We will be chatting about your experience of WFH for up to 60 minutes. Please try to answer openly and honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. **Your responses to the questions that you answered before your interview indicated that working from home (WFH) really suits you as an individual. In this interview, I'd love to understand why you think that is.** Have you got any questions before we start? I'll press record now then.	**Notes:** *Help them feel at ease.*	**Theory that is being tapped into:**
Questions: **Probing Questions:** **Time:**	*Remember to flex on questions and timings – it is only semi-structured.*	
Part 1 – Individual Characteristics		
Preamble: We all have different experiences of WFH, it's really great to hear that you've thrived when WFH. A number of different things influence our experience of WFH. This includes our environment, such as whether we are in shared accommodation with friends, whether we are working in our bedroom and also the nature of our job, the kinds of tasks we are required to do. But then there are also factors related to our individual preferences and our style of working, and that's what this research is really interested in. There are three areas that I'd really like to explore about what is working for you in terms of WFH. One is about your individual preferences and needs, one is about your skills and the way that you like to work, and then the other is about your individual values.	*Have a conversation and feed in points between questions to help people feel relaxed.*	

1. The initial survey that you completed identified that you are good at WFH. Why do you think that is?	1.1 What else do you think it is about yourself that enables you to WFH well? 1.2 What do you have as an individual that makes you a good match for WFH? **1.3 [skip if needed] Tell me more** about your abilities / personality / skills ? *[ONLY if they mention personality / skills / abilities – don't bias it by bringing in personality if they haven't mentioned personality]* 1.4 You've started talking about XYZ, and that's what I'd like to dig a little deeper into now… 1.5 Is there anything else about your character that enables you to successfully WFH? / What other characteristics do you have that enable you to successfully WFH?	15 minutes	*Use brief responses such as 'um hm' or 'yes' followed by silence to give participants space to open up and expand on their answers.* *Don't say 'my next question is…' (instead, treat it as a conversation)*	*Demands-abilities dimension of PE fit*
2. What is it about your individual needs that the WFH environment meets?	2.1 What is it that WFH gives you? *(only ask if they get stuck on question 2)* 2.2 How would you describe your working style when WFH? 2.3 Can you think of any differences between you and others that make you better suited to WFH? 2.4 Are there any particular aspects of WFH that you find challenging? **2.4.1 How did you overcome those challenges (if at all)?** 2.4.2 How did you adapt your style? 2.4.3 *[depending on answers above, i.e. do not be leading]* How have you changed the way you do things at work to be able to WFH successfully? (if at all) **What?**	15 minutes	*Keep language as simple as possible.*	*Needs-supplies dimension of PE fit*
3. Is there anything that's particularly important to	**[In case they ask what values are]:** Definition of values (based on Schwartz's (1992) model of Basic Values: *'Values are abstract and context-independent beliefs about what people want to achieve in*	5 minutes	*If they are going off on a tangent, say something like: 'can we just park that for a moment, now*	*Values congruence dimension of PE fit*

you or your values that WFH allows you to do?	*life, e.g., power. Values are motivational goals which refer to desirable end-states' and they 'serve as guidelines in people's life'* (Schwartz, 1992, as cited in Kesberg & Keller, 2018). Is there anything you want to achieve in life that WFH supports? Is there anything you want to have in life that WFH supports? Is there anything you want to be in life that WFH supports?		*what I'm really interested in is...'*	
Part 2: Strategies				
Preamble: WFH is quite different from the office, for example there is more potential to shape your work and how you do it. So, I'm really interested in understanding what you've done differently, and how you've created a way of WFH that suits you.			*Frame the participants' mind around what you're looking at.'*	
4. What behaviours or strategies have you used to be able to WFH successfully?	4.1 How do you approach your tasks differently when WFH? (i.e. differently from when working in the office, **or if you've never been to the office, differently from when working in a school or college)** 4.2 Is there anything you'd like to say about the way you work with others when WFH? 4.3 **How have your perceptions of your job changed since you've been WFH? (if at all)** / What do you think about your job when WFH? 4.4 What strategies have been **most effective** for you so far when WFH?	15 minutes	*Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers (try to avoid social desirability)*	*4.1: task-based job crafting* *4.2: relational-based job crafting* *4.3 cognitive-based job crafting*

5. Before we close, is there anything else you'd like to say, any final thoughts, or anything I haven't asked you that you'd like to share?	Extra if time: 6.1 If we were to ask your colleagues what they think makes you good at WFH, what do you think they would say? 6.2 If you had any advice for new early careers employees WFH for the first time, what advice would you give them?	2 minutes **Maximum of 60 mins per interview**	*No need to use probing questions for every main question (Braun & Clarke, 2013)*	
Close (3 minutes): Thank you for taking part in this research Next steps – I will transcribe the recording and then analyse it *[Summarise the contents of the debrief sheet]* Have you got any questions? *[Immediately after the interview, email the participant a debrief sheet]*				