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Remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic: A scoping review

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A research report submitted

By

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology

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If it were not for the Lord who carried me and showed me love and favour, I never would have made it this far. Even during my darkest hours, he never abandoned me.

Declaration

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Chapter 1: Overview of the study

1.1. Introduction

The risk of the Covid-19 virus prompted national lockdowns in numerous countries throughout the world in 2020 (Buchanan et al., 2021). This led to many organisations and employees shifting from working in a traditional office to working from home. The severity of the virus meant that this shift had to occur in a short time and with insufficient preparation as the pandemic was unexpected (Buchanan et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the rapid spread of the virus also meant that schools, nurseries, and universities also closed, leading to mostly online learning. Therefore, many white-collar professionals had to adjust to mandatory and full-time working from home, while also adjusting to all members of their household being present in the home 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). Consequently, due to increased childcare and family responsibilities, and having to juggle work and other roles, role conflict became an issue for many employees working remotely under strict lockdown regulations (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020).

Both men and women experience role-conflict even though women spend more time on developmental and non-developmental childcare, and general domestic duties (ONS, 2020; Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). It is important to note that as gendered attitudes around parenting and domestic work within the home continue to alter, men are also confronted by role conflict because of the multiple obligations that they need to tackle (Gatrell et al., 2015). Hence, research needs to investigate the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict in both men and women during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic and the call for remote work has had a severe impact on organisational processes, and employees' work-life interface. Therefore, this called for the exploration of the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic to get a better understanding of how these constructs are related. Hence, the present study conducted a scoping review on this topic to establish what research has been conducted, what the findings were, and the implications for future remote and hybrid work.

The concept of remote work first gained hold in the 1970s, and it has since grown in popularity (WORK, 2018). According to Monteiro et al. (2019), workers can now do tasks outside of the office due to the growing usage of cloud services and remote access to work apps. It has been said that those who have long commutes to work may benefit from remote working because it frees up time for non-work pursuits (Monteiro et al., 2019). It may also make it easier to mix

work and non-work activities. The integration of work and one's life can lead to either work-life balance or work-life conflict depending on the demands or lack of demands that comes with working from home (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020).

According to Klopotek (2017), in 1983, the first references to the phenomenon of remote work were identified in Olson's work. Olson (1983) defined remote work as "Organisational work that is performed outside the normal organisational confines of space and time" (p.182). The definition emphasises that remote work entails working anywhere other than the office and outside of conventional working hours. However, the time factor in this definition is debatable because remote work in other organisations is more focused on space than time because employees are often still expected to work during conventional office hours, even if they are not working from the office (Olson, 1983). Some employees may be required to work outside of conventional office hours when working overtime. Nonetheless, this definition will not be applied to this study because of the time aspect.

Remote work is also defined as "The form of organisation and/or performance of work, whereby an employee can carry out work that could also be carried out at the employer's premises regularly out of these premises through the use of information technology" (WORK, 2018, p. 174). This definition emphasises the fact that through access to technology, employees can work anywhere outside the office, this can include working at home, at a restaurant or even in another country. The time in which employees work remotely to perform their work is based on the standards set by the organisation that the employee works for. This definition will be used in this research, as the study will refer to remote work as a working physical space that is geographically separated from the organisation. This could include but is not limited to the home.

Telework, telecommuting, virtual organisations, and working from home are among the various synonyms used to describe remote work (Klopotek, 2017). All these synonyms are some kind of remote work; thus, they are considered as remote work synonyms in the current study (Klopotek, 2017).

1.2. Rationale

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant and unexpected impact on workplace and organisational processes (Matli, 2020). According to Wang et al. (2021), before the Covid-19 pandemic, many workers and employers had little to no experience with remote work, thus they were not prepared to support it. Regardless of the poor readiness, employers and employees were forced to turn to remote work due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus, the need to quarantine, and the strict lockdown measures put in place to maintain social distancing. Therefore, millions of individuals throughout the world become remote workers due to the lockdown restrictions, resulting in remote work quickly becoming a new norm during that time (Wang et al., 2021). The shift to working remotely from home meant that many employees had to convert their homes into offices (Kylili et al., 2020). This was a challenge for many employees whose homes were not conducive for working from home (Kylili et al., 2020). Moreover, those who needed to segregate their work and life outside of work to avoid role conflict were greatly affected by this forced shift (Mostafa, 2021). This is because remote work meant they had to integrate their work and life, resulting in blurred boundaries (Mostafa, 2021). Therefore, it is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on the work-life interface.

Working from a traditional office in the absence of a pandemic versus working remotely from home during a pandemic provides different problems and role conflicts. Therefore, while research in the past has explored work-life conflict among employees working from the office (Duxbury, 2003; Bond; 2004; Bohle et al., 2004), it is also important to study the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic. This will help to better understand how the recent rapid shift to working remotely from home during the Covid-19 pandemic has improved or worsened work-life conflict for employees. Examining existing literature can provide insight into work-life conflict as employees worked remotely from home during the pandemic, hence, the current study aimed to do this. As far as could be ascertained, there has been no attempt to identify the nature and extent of research evidence on this topic, hence, a scoping review was conducted.

Research found that employees experience greater work-life conflict when they integrate their work and life (Yang et al., 2019). As remote work was enforced for many employees during the Covid-19 pandemic's strict lockdowns, employees had to work from home and integrate work and life. This heightened the risk of work-life conflict because of role conflict and

spillover that the employees were exposed to when working from home. Role conflict leads to professional work spilling into employees' life and vice versa, leading to work-life conflict (Zhang et al., 2020). It was, therefore, important to identify how working remotely impacted on the work-life interface of employees during the covid-19 pandemic to get a better understanding of the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict. This provided insight into the factors that led to employees experiencing or not experiencing work-life conflict during this period. Remote and hybrid work are likely to persist in the future due to the significant influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on organisational processes. As a result, the present research has significance for organisations as it provides valuable information on work-life conflict and remote work which can influence policy development to support employees in organisations.

Furthermore, a scoping review of international literature on the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic will be useful in determining the scope, range, and nature of existing research on the topic. It will help compile and disseminate research findings from a variety of sources. Furthermore, it will also contribute to the planning of future research on remote work and work-life conflict by identifying research gaps in the literature and the implications for remote and hybrid work in the future.

1.3. The aim of the study

This scoping review aimed to investigate the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic to determine the range of empirical evidence available on the topic and identify gaps in the literature.

The current scoping review will start by reviewing pre-pandemic literature and present the theoretical framework and research questions that will guide and support the present study. The methodology chapter, which describes the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and utilised to carry out the scoping review, will come next. The findings and responses to the study's research questions are then presented in the results sections. A discussion section describing, analysing, interpreting, and contextualising the findings will come next. The study's theoretical and practical implications are discussed in the section on implications that follows. A section that outlines the gaps in the literature and offers suggestions for future research follows this. Lastly, a section discussing the study's limitations comes next, followed by a conclusion to close of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The pandemic has caused a significant increase in remote work, but this is not a new phenomenon—remote work has been around for a while. This also pertains to work-life conflict; the idea behind it has long been a subject of discussion. This is indicated by the numerous research that exists on work-life conflict and remote work conducted in the past (Raghuram & Weisenfeld, 2004; Russell et al., 2009; Byron 2005, Hills et al., 2010). Thus, this section will discuss some of the research on remote work and work-life conflict prior to the pandemic. The studies included in the literature review were selected through a thorough search on Google Scholar. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks utilised in pre-pandemic literature will also be covered in this section and they will serve as the study's structural basis. The research questions that directed this scoping review will then be outlined at the end of this section.

2.1. Work-life conflict

2.1.1. What is work-life conflict?

The concept of work-life conflict has been researched extensively across the world as authors have been concerned about the relationship between paid work and employee's lives outside of work (McGinnity & Whelan, 2009). McGinnity & Whelan (2009) argue that work-life conflict focuses on trade-offs, with the fundamental idea being that meeting demands in one domain makes meeting commitments in the other domains difficult.

Jang and Zippay (2011) define work-life conflict as "situations in which the demands and responsibilities of paid work and nonwork roles are incompatible in some respect" (p.84). This definition is vague as it does not specify which non-work roles it refers to. This is problematic as some authors concentrate solely on family roles by looking at how work can conflict with an employee's family roles (McGinnity & Whelan, 2009). They do not consider other aspects of people's lives, which should be the case since the word "life" is part of the term. Therefore, due to this limitation, the definition will not be applied to this study.

Kossek and Lee (2017) on the other hand, define the notion of "work-life conflict" as the idea that a person's work can interfere with their life outside of work and personal interests. This is an extension of work-family conflict, as it is not focused on family only, but other personal interests and spheres in a person's life such as time with friends, exercising time, and recreational time among many other things (Schieman et al., 2021). This definition is more specific as it outlines that the focus is on individuals' broader personal life and interests, and

not only family. Thus, this definition will be the one used since this study is focusing on the work and life domain of employees working remotely, it is not limited only to the family domain.

Various research has been conducted, and it has been found that work-life conflict is related to outcomes such as depression, stress, exhaustion, anxiety, poor mental health, hypertension, and fatigue (Jang & Zippay, 2011; Michel et al., 2013). These various physical and psychological effects also affect employees' job satisfaction, morale, and productivity (Jang & Zippay, 2011). These implications of work-life conflict highlight the significance of further investigation into the concept. Gaining a deeper understanding of work-life conflict can assist in developing strategies that will help employees address it. Hence, the researcher conducted a scoping review that will contribute to the planning of future research.

2.1.2. Research conducted on work-life conflict before the Covid-19 pandemic

Work-life conflict has long been a source of concern, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Studies by Spain and Bianchi (1996) and other authors, which examined the potential conflicts between job and life roles outside of work, set the groundwork for later studies on work-life conflict. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the concept has been explored over the years.

The correlation between work-life conflict and job performance has been the subject of curiosity for some time. As a result, there are studies that looked at the relationship between the two, and the results were mixed (Frone et al.,1997; Aryee, 1992; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006).There are authors that found a significant negative relationship between work-life conflict and job performance (Frone et al.,1997; Aryee, 1992; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). However, other studies did not find any significant relationship between work-life conflict and job performance (Netemeyer et al.,1996). Therefore, this indicates that work-life conflict has varying effects on job performance for individuals.

A study by Bond (2004) explored the relationship between organisational culture and work life conflict. Some of the findings that were established from the study were that organisations that have longer working hours increased the work-life conflict of employees. They also established that potential benefits of providing family-friendly policies may not be realised if a conducive work-life culture does not exist, and that increased use of work-life policies in organisations was linked to higher levels of work-life conflict (Bond, 2004). The author argued

that the research conclusion may imply that policy provision is insufficient to relieve work-life conflict since it persists even when provision seems to have been made (Bond, 2004).

Another study was conducted by Hämmig and Bauer (2014) which looked at work-life conflict and employees' health. The findings showed that work-life conflict indeed has an impact on employee's health. This is something that researchers and organisations need to take note of since work-life conflict has been ignored as a health risk factor in the past (Hämmig & Bauer, 2014). Neto et al. (2018) also explored work-family life conflict and mental wellbeing. The findings suggested that work-life conflict was negatively associated with mental wellbeing (Neto et al., 2018).

Demerouti et al. (2011) on the other hand, explored the impact of work-life conflict on absenteeism. This study effectively demonstrates that employees will take longer and more frequent absences from work when they feel that their work interferes with their family life (Demerouti et al., 2011). Thus, this indicated that work-life conflict does lead to increased absenteeism.

The extensive research on work-life conflict indicates that the concept has been a cause for concern for many years because of its implications on various aspects of work and individual's lives. Thus, it is essential for research to continue to be conducted on this concept as the world of work encounters drastic changes. This will provide more insight into the concept and how various changes influence work-life conflict.

Most of the pre-pandemic research on work-life conflict discussed above was done in developed countries (Frone et al.,1997; Aryee, 1992; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Bond, 2004; Hämmig & Bauer, 2014; Netemeyer et al.,1996). This includes countries such as Canada, Switzerland, Singapore, Cyprus, United states, and the United Kingdom.

2.1.3. Work-life conflict among remote workers before the Covid-19 pandemic

The practice of working remotely predates the Covid-19 pandemic and has been around for a while. The phrase "telecommuting" was first used to describe working remotely. Jack Niles, who is regarded as a pioneer in the field of telecommuting, invented the term first (Nilles, 1994). His impact has influenced discussions about flexible work arrangements. Overtime, flexible work arrangements have grown in popularity as a result of ongoing technological improvements (Raghuram and Weisenfeld, 2004). This includes the establishment of virtual organisations, remote work and other options that allow employees to work in spaces other

than the office. Flexible working arrangements have reduced commute time and costs, and it is thought that they enable employees to manage their time in a way that allows them to fulfil the numerous demands they confront on a daily basis (Raghuram and Weisenfeld, 2014). There have been findings that remote work can be beneficial to employees because of the flexibility that allows them to juggle their work and life better, which promotes work-life balance (Russell et al., 2009). However, there are also contrary beliefs that remote work and other flexible work arrangements can lead to work-life conflict, especially when there is a spillover effect between work and life (Russell et al., 2009). This implies that people have different perspectives on work-life conflict among remote workers.

Research has been done on work-life conflict and remote work in the past, and varying research findings were established. Some research findings suggest that telework reduces work–life conflict by allowing employees to plan their time ahead, minimising friction between work and life domains (Raghuram & Weisenfeld, 2004). According to Hill et al. (2010) similar findings were established by Gajendran and Harrison as they noted that telecommuting was linked to decreased work-family conflict. Byron (2005) also found that flexible working arrangements such as working from home was significantly related to decreased levels of work-life conflict. These results are also supported Hill et al.'s (2010) study.

Contrary to many studies, Russell (2010) found that working from home is linked to higher levels of job pressure and work–life conflict. Russell (2010) argues that working from home appears to be related to increased working hours, and greater interference of work into personal life, thus it may be justified as job intensification. These findings contradict those found by researchers such as Raghuram and Weisenfeld (2004). These contradicting results may be because of differences in sample demographics and varying contexts in studies. Hence, it was important to review the various studies on remote work and work-life conflict to establish what type of work is being carried out as well as the family and situational context of the sample in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic to better understand the findings.

2.1.4. Work-life conflict among employees: socio-demographic differences

The experience of work-life conflict may vary across employees because of socio-demographic differences. These differences can be based on gender, age, educational level, number of children/dependants, age of children, relationship status, support for childcare and work experience. Research shows that it has become more normal for men to take on domestic chores, which were previously assigned to women (Duxbury et al., 1994; Leroy, 2003 as cited

in McElwain et al., 2005). This is due to the rise of dual-earner households which has led to conventional roles and obligations for men and women changing (McElwain et al., 2005).

In a study conducted by Hogan et al. (2014) it was found that there were no differences in the reported levels of work-life conflict among men and women. The study also found that high levels of job demand resulted in increased levels of work-life conflict for both genders (Hogan et al., 2014). Duxbury and Higgins (1991) also found no gender differences as the findings of the study suggested that both men and women experience challenges when it comes to balancing their work and family life. This was confirmed by Nanda's (2015) study which indicated that gender had no significant impact on work-life conflict. This indicates that various research has not found gender differences in the experience of work-life conflict.

Work-life conflict has also been explored in terms of age differences. A study conducted by Chou and Cheung (2013) found that in comparison to employees between the ages 45-55, those between the ages 26-35 and 35-45 reported significantly higher levels of work-life conflict. Chaudhry and Ahmad (2011) also found that "as the age of the employees increase, they experience lesser conflicts relating to work and life domains" (p.173). This is because as people grow older, they learn how to perform, manage relationships, and strike a balance between work and life (Chaudhry & Ahmad, 2011). Moreover, their children get older and become more independent which puts less strain on employees. It was also discovered in Shen and Jiang's (2013) study that Xers (28-45) had a harder time separating their work and nonwork activities than Millennials (16-27). These results can be supported by the fact that Xers may have more responsibilities in terms of work and family than millennials (Shen & Jiang, 2013). The results suggest that there is a negative relationship between age and work-life conflict as employees between the ages 28-45 seem to experience greater work-life conflict than those who are younger or older than that age group.

Work-life conflict has also been measured in terms of occupational categories. It has been discovered that employees in high-ranking occupation groups such as executives, managers, and professionals have much more work–life conflict than employees in low-ranking occupations (Chou & Cheung, 2013). The same results were found in other studies as findings suggests that men and women who are managers and professionals reported higher levels of work-life conflict than service workers (Grzywacz et al., 2002; Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Schieman, 2006). This is because of the involvement, hours, authority, and demands that come with their jobs (Schieman, 2006). This confirms that occupational categories do indeed

influence the work-life conflict experienced by employees. In line with this finding, it was also established that higher-educated people were more likely to have a significant work-life conflict (Grzywacz et al. 2002; Mennino et al. 2005; Schieman et al., 2006; Knecht et al. 2011). This makes sense because high-ranking employees are more likely to be educated, and high-ranking employees have been reported to experience more work-life conflict.

Research clearly shows that there are differences in work-life conflict experiences due to the diverse socio-demographics that exist around the world. Hence, contradicting studies have been found on work-like conflict.

2.1.5. Remote worker's individual and work differences, and work-life conflict: Pre Covid-19 pandemic

According to research, there are various work and individual differences among remote workers which influence them experiencing or not experiencing work-life conflict (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) job-related ambiguity, in particular, makes it harder for employees to set clear boundaries to segment their tasks, as confusing work roles lead to unpleasant feelings, weariness, and tension, which may be linked to resource drains. According to Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004) when working remotely, it can be difficult for remote workers to receive clear feedback that can help them feel confident and comfortable in their roles. This makes it difficult for employees with job ambiguity to manage their roles. On the other hand, employees who receive clear feedback and guidance find it easier to maintain their role and in turn other roles in their lives (Raghuram and Wiesenfeld, 2004). Thus, job-role ambiguity is one the factors that contribute to work-life conflict among employees. This argument suggests that employees who are more confident in their role are less likely to experience work-life conflict than those with job ambiguity.

It has also been argued that due to the physical distance and isolation that remote workers may experience, they may feel disconnected from the organisation that they are working for and experience feelings of lack of support (Kurland & Egan, 1999). Their perception of job stability and professional advancement may be adversely affected by their perceived lack of visibility and inability to showcase their abilities. This may lead to feelings of pressure to perform well at work, ultimately resulting in a conflict between the work and life domains (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004).

Another important element that distinguishes the experiences of work-life conflict among remote workers is believed to be the number days spent working remotely (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). It is believed that employees who spend more days working remotely from home are more likely to experience work-life conflict (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). This is because of the challenges they may experience when it comes to separating work and life. This is believed to be different for employees who work in the office some days and work from home other days as they can segment their work and personal life (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). This argument suggests that employees who work full-time from home are more likely to experience work-life conflict than those who alternate between working from home and in the office. This indicates that work-related factors can influence remote workers' experiences of work-life conflict.

Individual characteristics among remote workers are also believed to help remote workers avoid or cope better with work-life conflict (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Self-efficacy, which is an individual's belief in their ability to deal with challenges is one the individual characteristics (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld). It is believed that individuals with self-efficacy are able to establish ways to confront their challenges of conflict between work and life, which allows them to avoid or cope better with work-life conflict (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). Individuals who do not have self-efficacy are, therefore, more likely to fall into the trap of work-life conflict and experience challenges getting out of that trap. Raghuram et al. (2003) also believe that individuals who effectively employ structuring behaviour may be better able to define precise work as well as life related goals. The behavioural parameters they create for themselves may aid remote employees in focusing their efforts on achieving domain-specific goals within certain time constraints (Raghuram et al., 2003). This will allow them to establish work-life balance, instead of work-life conflict.

Research in the past clearly suggests that there are work and individual differences among remote workers that influence their experience of work-life conflict. Thus, it is essential to note that even in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, various factors may have influenced the experiences of work-life conflict among remote employees.

2.1.6. Work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic

According to Allen and Martin (2017) in 'normal' times, the distinctions between work and non-work responsibilities are potential flashpoints for conflict that many people face in their daily lives. However, the start of 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic eliminated the element of

normality in many ways (Moring et al., 2021). This is because the pandemic called for strict lockdowns in many countries around the world to ensure social distancing. “In mid-March 2020, as many employees began working at home because of government dictates for social distancing, the abrupt shift in the nature of work-nonwork boundaries generated potential shocks to role conflict” (Schieman et al., 2021, p.1). This led to an increased concern about employee’s work-life interface.

A restricted sphere hypothesis was adapted by Schieman et al. (2021) which is based on the idea that since the strict lockdowns were imposed, the life aspect of work-life conflict was restricted. Therefore, employees' work-life conflict experiences are believed to have been decreased by the 'life sphere' restriction outside the home. However, it should be noted that the term "work-life conflict" does not exclusively apply to the aspects of life outside of the house. It also includes aspects like family, household chores, communicating electronically with friends and family outside the home, online religious activities, and activities such as reading a book, among many other things that people do in the lives within the borders of their home (Schieman et al., 2021). Therefore, the life aspect restriction outside the home does not mean that employees did not experience work-life conflict within their homes.

According to Williams (2020), employees who live with their families and children were more at risk of work-life conflict due to the enforced work from home policies during the pandemic. Therefore, the biggest divide was among parent and non-parents since schools and nurseries closed during the pandemic. Therefore, “when schools and day-care centres closed, the family-related needs on the life side of the work-life ledger altered significantly for many workers” (Schieman et al., 2021, p.1). As a result, it is possible that, despite the increased constraints on life outside the home, opposing demands linked with children inside the home were more prominent because of childcare, related domestic necessities, and other personal interests that can be performed within the home (Schieman et al., 2021). It is, therefore, evident that work-life conflict was a concern during the times when strict lockdown restrictions were imposed. However, it is important to note that the lockdown restrictions varied overtime which could have had different implications on work-life conflict as the Covid-19 pandemic persisted

2.1.7. Research designs used in work-life conflict research in the past

In the past, non-experimental, cross-sectional, or correlational quantitative research designs were utilised in various studies focusing on work-life conflict (Bond, 2004; Hämmig et al., 2014; Neto et al., 2018; Demerouti et al., 2011). The researchers collected data through surveys

or questionnaires to gain insight into work-life conflict. The use of surveys and questionnaires show that these researchers worked based on the assumption that a single reality exists which can be measured on a scale, this can be a positivist or post-positivist assumption (Park et al., 2020). Moreover, the method that the researchers used indicated that they remained objective and separated from the findings, so that the knowledge can be developed in a way that is impartial (Park et al., 2020). This is an advantage of quantitative research. However, the disadvantage of this approach is that it might miss more significant themes and meaning in its quest of precise, quantifiable links. Thus, follow up qualitative research may be necessary in some instances to gain deeper understanding on the topic.

There are also researchers who took a qualitative approach, they collected and evaluated non-numerical data to understand people's attitudes, beliefs, and motivations in order to comprehend their social reality (Bohle et al., 2004; Boloorizadeh, 2013; Dixon & Bruening, 2007). The advantage of this is that it allows researchers to assess subject materials in more detail since they are able to determine the underlying causes and significance of people's actions and experiences (Oranga & Matere, 2023). However, the disadvantage of this approach is that it might not accurately reflect the population since it is quite subjective and usually relies on smaller samples. Thus, cultural sensitivity and transparent reporting is necessary in qualitative research. Nonetheless, interpretivism and constructivism are the paradigms that were commonly used by the researchers following a qualitative approach. Interpretivism centres on comprehending the significance that people attach to their experiences, whereas constructivism highlights the influence of social constructs on the formation of reality (Krauss, 2005).

This study aims to outline the different types of research designs used in the research on work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, it useful to know which designs were used in past research.

2.2. Theoretical frameworks

The theoretical frameworks that have been used prior to the pandemic include the conservation of resources theory, the boundary theory, spillover theory and the compensation theory. These frameworks present a variety of perspectives on work-life conflict, which aid in understanding the various ways in which it manifests.

2.2.1. Conservation of resources theory

In the conservation of resources theory, work-life conflict is often thought of as a sort of stress (Kossek & Lee, 2017). This theory argues that when people strive to balance work and life obligations such as family, they may lose or be threatened with losing resources such as energy and time, resulting in stress, which is a type of work-life conflict (Kossek & Lee, 2017). Resources are broadly described as anything that people value—that is, states, circumstances, and other things (Hobfoll, 1988). The conservation of resources theory is founded on the assumptions that: (1) people want to obtain and defend objective sources or circumstances; (2) stress arises when resources are threatened, and resource investment does not result in gaining resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Therefore, this theory emphasises the idea that resources need to be protected such as personal health, family help, self-discipline, good relationships, and free time (Hobfoll, 1989). This is because the loss of these resources can lead to individuals experiencing work-life conflict.

According to Holmgreen et al. (2017) both intra- and inter-role stress are explained by the conservation of resources theory. For instance, employees who are facing work-role conflict which occurs when employees face contradictory work demands, may feel that they are unable to perform the job successfully (Holmgreen et al., 2017). Therefore, due the fear of losing their job, they might devote additional resources to their work, which may result in resource loss in their life domain. The conservation of resources theory asserts that inter-role conflict causes stress since resources are lost while balancing both work and life responsibilities such as family or social activities (Holmgreen et al., 2017). Therefore, work-life conflict, dissatisfaction, depression, or physiological strain can all result from these prospective or real resource losses (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Thus, this theory is useful in providing insight on how resource loss might result in work-life conflict among employees. The theory has been used by various authors to examine work-life conflict (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014)

2.2.2. Boundary theory

The boundary theory asserts that some employees create stronger boundaries around their work and life domains to keep these domains separate, while others create weaker boundaries for the domains to be interconnected (Bulger et al., 2007). When roles are separated, boundaries are clearer and easier to maintain. More integrated role sets, on the other hand, can make role transitions, which refer to moving from one role to another, easier (Bulger et al., 2007). However, integrated role sets can also complicate the needs of these roles, increasing the

likelihood of role blurring (Bulger et al., 2007). When roles are blurred, it is easier for work-life conflict to occur.

Yang et al. (2019) argues that employees have different preferences when it comes to boundaries. However, research has found that when employees establish strong boundaries to separate their work and life domains, this reduces the effects of spillover, and as a result, this helps them to avoid work-life conflict (Yang et al., 2019). Employees who separate their work and life and manage them in a way in which their life domain does not impact their work and vice-versa, this allows them to establish a stronger work-life balance (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010, as cited in Yang et al., 2019). Olanipekun et al. (2021) also argues that although integration may allow some employees to cope better with the pressures of work and personal life, segregation is necessary to prevent spillover between the two spheres. Integration can blur boundaries between work and life at times, hence, segmentation is necessary to mitigate work-life conflict.

The boundary theory is based on the idea that workers may experience conflict if they are available for work and life at the same time (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). This helps better understand why employees may experience work-life conflict when their work and life demands are integrated. Thus, this theory is helpful in explaining how blurred boundaries due to integrating work and life can lead to work-life conflict among employees. The theory has been used in the past to examine work-life conflict. It can also be used to understand work-life conflict among remote workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2.3 The spillover theory

The spillover theory focuses on how people's attitudes, behaviours and emotions are transferred from one area to another (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990). It explains that work obligations can spillover into the life domain and vice versa, which can lead to work-life conflict (Lakshmypriya & Krishna, 2016). Spillover can be positive in a situation where an individual's sense of accomplishment and satisfaction is conveyed from one domain to the next (Olanipekun et al., 2021). However, it can be negative if one domain's challenges pour over into the other. For example, when an employee's work and life become incompatible due to a time conflict, such as when work overload leads to overwork at the price of recreational time (Lakshmypriya & Krishna, 2016). This helps us understand how work-life conflict emerges through spillover, as it is known that when the energy, time, or behavioral demands of a job collide and spillover to the life domain, work-life conflict develops (Kossek & Lee, 2017).

This theory gives insight on how a spillover effect may result in the emergence of work-life conflict. As a result, it can help better understand how remote work and work-life conflict relate in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2.4 Compensation theory

The compensation theory refers to efforts intended to mitigate poor experiences in one domain by increasing efforts for positive experiences in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). An unhappy employee, for example, would choose time with friends over work, thus redistributing resources (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). The compensation theory asserts that the work and life domains have an inverse relationship, with work and nonwork experiences being fundamentally opposed (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Individuals invest differently in the two environments, compensating in one for what is lacking in the other (Vans & Bartolome, 1984, as cited in Zedeck, & Mosier, 1990).

When desirable behaviours, psychological states, and experiences that are inadequately present at work are pursued in non-work activities, supplemental compensation occurs (Zedeck, & Mosier, 1990). Reactive compensation, on the other hand, happens when deprivations at work are compensated for through activities that are not related to work (Zedeck, & Mosier, 1990). Work-life conflict , therefore, occurs when the equilibrium between the work and life domains is not optimal (Stepanski, 2002). Individuals who are content with their life but dissatisfied with their job, for example, may devote more time and effort to developing their life domain (spending time with friends, attending social events, going to church, exercising, and spending time with family) (Stepanski, 2002). This results in conflict between work, and the life domains. This means that when efforts become imbalanced in one domain due to attempts to compensate for the other, work-life conflict can occur (Stepanski, 2002). Thus, this theory helps understand how work-life conflict may arise due to the process of compensation.

All the theories discussed above have been used in the past to offer explanations for the root causes of work-life conflict in diverse circumstances. This contributed to a better understanding work-life conflict and encouraged further investigation of the concept. Since the theories provide insight into work-life conflict, they can also help understand work-life conflict among remote workers during the covid-19 pandemic by providing insight into the different ways in which work-life conflict might emerge in individual's lives.

2.3 Research questions

The following questions served as the basis for this review:

1. What research has been conducted on work-life conflict among employees working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic?

1.1. What samples have been used in the studies?

1.2. What were the sampling techniques and sample sizes of the studies?

1.3. What research designs were used in the studies?

1.4 What descriptor, independent, moderator, mediator and dependant variables have been included in the studies and what were the findings?

2. Which theoretical approaches were used in the studies?

3. What can be inferred about the connection between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic from the literature that has been published?

Chapter 3: Research methodology

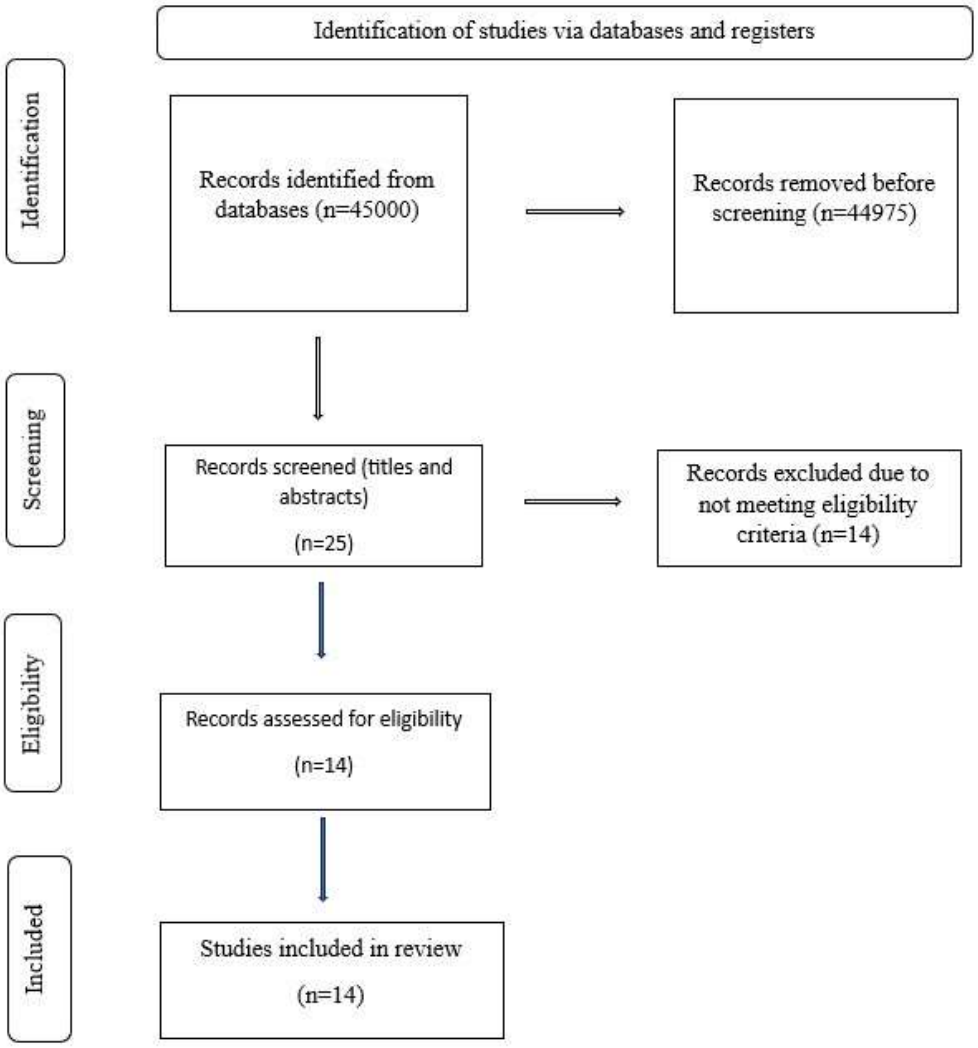
This chapter describes the scoping review methodology. It details the research design, sample, the procedure that was used for the review, and looks at risk of bias, ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

3.1. Research design

This study uses a scoping review as its research design. A scoping review is a prominent method for synthesising existing research (Pham et al., 2014). This strategy seeks to map the existing literature in a given topic in terms of nature, volume, and primary research features (Pham et al., 2014). It is most useful when a topic has not been extensively reviewed, which is the case with the topic of this study. A scoping review can assist with deciding on the worth, breadth, and cost of conducting a thorough systematic review, as well as to synthesise and distribute research findings and explore research gaps that exist in literature (Pham et al., 2014). This study aims to synthesise and disseminate research findings and identify existing gaps in the topic, hence this method is applicable.

3.2. Sample

In the process of selecting the sample of articles to be included in the current study, a search was done on google scholar for articles on work-life conflict among remote workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the result was 45000 articles. However, when applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria most of these articles either looked at work-life balance, did not focus on remote workers or were not focusing on the years stipulated in the criteria. An elimination process took place using the inclusion/exclusion criteria and 25 articles were initially noted to fit the criteria, however, only 14 of the 25 articles were later determined to fully meet the requirements for inclusion (**Table 1)** .The articles included were from databases such Google Scholar, Sage, PubMed, MDPI, Ebsco, Tandfoline, Emerald Insight, and ProQuest. Before selecting the 14 articles, a comprehensive examination of the abstracts and full texts of the articles was conducted. Eleven of the 25 articles were excluded from the sample as they did not meet the criteria (**Appendix C**). Ten of the 14 articles that made up the review were quantitative studies, while four of them were qualitative studies. A mixed method approach was not adopted in any of the studies. Nine of the articles are from 2021, four are from 2022 and one is from 2023.


Identification of studies via databases and registers
Identification
Records identified from databases (n=45000)
Records removed before screening (n=44975)
Screening
Records screened (titles and abstracts)
(n=25)
Records excluded due to not meeting eligibility criteria (n=14)
Eligibility
Records assessed for eligibility
(n=14)
Included
Studies included in review
(n=14)

Selection flowchart of the articles:

3.3. Review process

PRISMA provides a checklist of 27 items that must be satisfied when doing a scoping review report to ensure reliability in the process of analysis and reporting (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA guidelines have been regulated so that they provide explicit instructions on how to complete each task. Following the guidelines will prevent selective reporting and guarantee that all evidence is accurately summarised and presented in the report (Liberati et al., 2009). Hence this checklist was applied to this study.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) developed a framework for scoping reviews which includes five key phases: "(1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results" (Pham et al, 2014, p. 373). This framework is the methodology that will be applied to this study since it is a scoping review.

Step 1- ***Identifying the research question.***

The first step was to identify research questions that will guide the review process. The research questions included above were identified prior to commencing the search to enhance the clarity in the stage of study selection. Furthermore, the questions were kept broad to offer comprehensive coverage (Sucharew & Macaluso, 2019).

Step 2- ***Identifying relevant studies.***

In this stage, relevant literature was identified through a broad and thorough search (Sucharew & Macaluso, 2019). Therefore, different sources were used to find relevant studies for this research, including electronic databases, grey literature (unpublished master's dissertations and doctoral theses), and reference lists. The data bases that were used included Google scholar, Sage, PubMed, MDPI, Ebsco, Tandfoline, Emerald insight, and ProQuest. The search terms used included "remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic", "work-life conflict and Covid-19 pandemic", "Telework and work-life during the pandemic", "the impact of Covid on remote workers", and "work-life interface during the covid-19 pandemic".

*Step 3- **Study selection.***

When doing a scoping review, a researcher needs to select studies that will be used to answer the identified research questions (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). For this study, inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to ensure that relevant studies are included and those that are not relevant are excluded when searching for studies. This study included articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals with empirical evidence on the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic. The specific inclusion and exclusion criteria that was used for this study is as follows:

Table 1-Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	**Exclusion criteria**
1. Articles focusing on employees who were required to work remotely from home during the Covid-19 pandemic due to restrictions that were imposed in response to the pandemic.	Articles focusing on employees working from the office during the Covid-19 pandemic will not be considered.
2. Studies addressing the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict will be included. Articles that include samples of employees working partly from home, and employees working remotely in other spaces away from home such as restaurants will be considered. Moreover, studies from all countries, focusing on both men and women, in different organisational levels will be taken into account.	Studies not addressing the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict will not be considered.
3. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method studies will all be considered in the review.	Scoping or systematic reviews will not be included but their references will be examined for empirical studies that can be used for this research.

4. Studies published in English.	Studies published in a language other than English will not considered.
5. Empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals and grey literature in the form of unpublished master's dissertations and doctoral theses, will be considered for review.	Books, editorials, discursive essays, and non-academic sources (e.g., blogs, newspapers, and magazines) will be excluded from the review because the study will only include empirical academic research.
6. Studies published between 2020 and six weeks before submission of the research report for examination.	Studies published before 2020

Step 4- ***Charting the data.***

The next step in the process was to 'chart' significant information from the primary research papers that will be reviewed (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Sorting, and organising material based on major issues and themes is the process of synthesising and interpreting qualitative data, which is known as charting. (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Therefore, to collect and sort crucial pieces of information from the selected articles, a data-charting excel spreadsheet was created for this study. The spreadsheet includes information such as the article title, author's names, country, aim/s of study, study population, year of publication, nature of design, and inclusion/exclusion status. This chart helped to highlight important information in the articles that were reviewed in this study.

Step 5- ***Collating, summarising, and reporting the results.***

The goal of a scoping research is to offer an overview of the studies reviewed, thus, questions about how to convey this potentially huge volume of data are crucial (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Tables and charts are widely used to display the scope of the literature according to main themes (Sucharew & Macaluso, 2019). Therefore, the current study used this approach as it utilised tables to display the scope of the research.

3.4. Risk of bias

By including publications from a range of journals and databases, the chance of bias across studies was reduced. Moreover, the scoping review approach developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which is outlined above made sure that the reporting process was clear and transparent in order to further reduce bias. This will ensure that people who engage with the research paper are able to identify any bias that the researcher might have missed.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Since this study is a scoping review, no human subjects were used, and no actual data was collected. Instead, the study utilised existing studies taken from the public domain; consequently, no ethical issues or concerns have been discovered, except that the study's research proposal had to obtain ethical clearance for the study to be carried out. Application was made to the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand for an ethics waiver which was granted.

3.6. Trustworthiness, reflexivity, and rigour

A crucial component of rigor even in the early phases of the study is reflexivity—the notion that a researcher's assumptions and biases can impact decisions and behaviours throughout research activities (Johnson et al., 2020). To improve reflexivity and reduce bias, the researcher, throughout the process, sought advice and direction from the research supervisor to confirm the reasoning behind her choices. The researcher was also able to improve scientific rigour and transparency since the scoping review process was closely monitored according to the review process outlined in the methodology section.

Chapter 4-Results

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the 14 articles included in the study and addresses the key research questions outlined in chapter two. Table 2 below synthesises the data obtained from the articles into 8 categories including the author and year, study title and theoretical framework, country, study design and number of participants, independent variables/qualitative themes, dependant variables, moderator/mediator, and key findings.

Table 2-Overview of included studies

No	***Author & year***	***Study title and theoretical framework***	***Country***	***Study design and no of participants***	***Independent variable/qualitative research themes***	***Dependent variable***	***Moderator/ Mediator***	***Key findings***
1	Schieman et al. (2021)	Work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic **Theoretical framework**- Inter-role conflict theory	Canada	Quantitative-Cross-sectional study design (n=2524)	Restricted life spheres, number, and ages of children as countervailing force	Work-life conflict	Moderator-Countervailing force contingencies: Parents' gender and work-home integration	Conflict between work and life lessened for people without children in the home. In contrast, the patterns varied depending on the youngest child's age for those who had children at home. Parents with children under the age of six or those aged six to twelve did not see a reduction in work-life conflict. However, those who had teenagers did not vary from those who had no children. There was no discernible, consistent evidence of notable gender disparities.
2	Garraio et al. (2022)	Work-Life Conflict Among Higher Education Institution Workers' During Covid-19: A Demands-	Portugal	Quantitative-Cross study - sectional design (n=262)	Gender, caring for children on a daily basis, time dedicated to	Work-life conflict	N/A	Teachers and researchers reported greater work-life conflict (WLC) than staff. Additionally, women researchers and teachers displayed higher WLC than men. Role overload was identified as a work-life conflict predictor. Moreover, work-

		Resources Approach **Theoretical framework**- Job demands resource theory			work per day, role overload, work dedication, and family supportive organisation perceptions			commitment was found to negatively impact work-life conflict for staff.
3	Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023)	Negative impact of telework, job insecurity, and work–life conflict on employee behaviour. **Theoretical framework**- theory of resource drain, accommodation, resource conservation, and boundaries,	Romania	Quantitative research- cross-sectional research (n=641)	Telework	Work-life conflict, turnover intentions, job insecurity, professional isolation	N/A	The study has found that one day of teleworking has a detrimental impact on the friction between work and home. The findings of other Covid-19 pandemic-context investigations are consistent with those of this study.
4	Ghislieri et al. (2021)	Work-family conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic: teleworking of administrative and technical staff in healthcare. An Italian study	Italy	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=211 individuals)	Cognitive demands, off-work hours technology assisted job demands, the perception of stress, and	Work-family conflict	N/A	The results revealed a positive association between Work-family conflict (WFC) and perceived ICT stress, a negative relationship with recovery, a positive relationship with off-TAJD and cognitive demands. The findings support the role of invasiveness, technology overload, and cognitive demands as potential WFC predictors. Even in the face of a protracted and required experience with

		Theoretical framework- Role strain theory and the conservation of resources theory			Recovery experiences.			remote work, the results point to the moderating influence of recovery.
5	Graham et al. (2021)	Working at home: The impacts of Covid-19 on health, family-work-life conflict, gender, and parental responsibilities. **Theoretical framework** - No specific theory discussed.	Australia	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=658)	Age; work hours; workspace and chore satisfaction.	General health; musculoskeletal discomfort/ pain frequency and severity; stress; and work-family and family-work conflict.	N/A	Findings indicate that the presence of children increased work-life conflict for both men and women. Less work-family conflict was experienced by women without children than men with children.
6	Xu et al. (2022)	The dark side of remote working during pandemics: Examining its effects on work-family conflict and workplace wellbeing.	China	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=399)	Remote work	Workplace wellbeing	Mediator-work-family conflict Moderators-self-efficacy and autonomy	The findings indicate that remote working during the covid-19 pandemic positively influences work-family conflict. Furthermore, work-family conflict has a negative effect on workplace wellbeing, which is consistent with literature.

		Theoretical framework- work/family border theory						
7	Adisa et al. (2021)	The work–family balance of British working women during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Theoretical framework**- Role theory	United Kingdom	Qualitative research- a narrative approach (thematic analysis) (n=26)	Themes- an increased domestic workload, proliferation of role conflict, rediscovery of family values and closeness and reduced juvenile delinquency.	N/A	N/A	The results show how the Covid-19 lockdown increased the home workload for British women and led to unrestrained role conflict, which was made worse by the structural and interactional roles that women took on, particularly during the lockdown. Role conflict and congestion among women have been exacerbated by remote employment, which also makes it extremely difficult for roles to be differentiated, increasing work-life conflicts.
8	Neo et al. (2022)	The Influence of Covid-19 on Women's Perceptions of Work-Family Conflict in Singapore **Theoretical framework**- No specific theoretical framework discussed.	Singapore	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 754)	Work factors, family factors and the impact of Covid-19	Work-family conflict	N/A	Results indicate that work-family conflict levels increased because of Covid-19's unfavorable effects. Additionally, during Covid-19, it was discovered that elements including job commitment, role overload, parental responsibilities, and family support are important predictors of work-family conflict.

9	Andrade & Lousã (2021)	Telework and Work–Family Conflict during Covid-19 Lockdown in Portugal: The Influence of Job-Related Factors **Theoretical framework**- no specific framework discussed	Portugal	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 213)	Role overload, job autonomy, and after-hours work-related technology use	Work-family conflict	Moderators-supervisor and coworker support	The findings showed that the prediction of work-family conflict was explained by role overload, after-hours work-related technology use, and inadequate job autonomy.
10	Nikmah et al. (2020)	The Effect of Work Demand, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity on Work-Family Conflict (Impact of Work from Home due to The Covid-19 Pandemic). **Theoretical framework**- no specific framework discussed	Indonesia	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 100)	Work demands, role conflict, and role ambiguity	Work-family conflict	N/A	The findings demonstrated that role conflict had the strongest bearing on work-family conflict. The conclusion is that because other responsibilities, such as the mother and wife roles, must also be taken into account, married women suffer many difficulties when juggling their careers.
11	Sedaroglu (2021)	Determinants of work-family conflict in the	Romania	Quantitative Cross-sectional	Job insecurity, autonomy, work	Work-family conflict	Moderator-fear of covid-19	The findings showed that autonomy is a negative predictor of the work-family conflict, but job instability and workplace pressure are positive

		context of the Covid-19 pandemic. **Theoretical frameworks**- Border theory		research design (n=301)	pressure, working from home and not working from home.			predictors. Additionally, the moderating impact of fear of Covid-19 on the association between job insecurity and work-family conflict was examined, however it turned out to be statistically insignificant. Nonetheless, it was discovered that people who work from home during this time have more work-family conflict.
12	Lemos et al. (2021)	Women in home office during the covid-19 pandemic and the work-family conflict configurations. **Theoretical framework-** no specific framework discussed.	Brazil	Qualitative research design (content analysis) (n=14)	Themes- Telework in the quarantine and aggravation of work-family conflict and Telework in the quarantine and mitigation of work-family conflict.	N/A	N/A	All the interviewees mentioned having too much work to do because of organisational obligations, as well as demands from their families and children. Despite this, it is important to note that, contrary to what is asserted in the literature, the testimonies indicate that this job overload did not make the work-family conflict worse for all of them. Some interviewees claimed that working from home increased their bond with their husbands and children and gave them more free time for recreational and physical activities.
13	Kara et al. (2021)	Work-Family Conflict During Working from Home Due to Pandemic: A Qualitative Research on Female Teachers	Turkey	Qualitative research case study design (Thematic analysis) (n=17)	Themes- Home related tasks and children related tasks are the main themes. They also explored the three domains:	N/A	N/A	Most of the female professors who conduct their classes remotely claimed they were unable to obtain administrative help. On the other hand, it was discovered that female teachers experienced emotional exhaustion while working from home, a decline in job satisfaction, stress, low motivation, and worries about juggling their personal and professional lives.

		Theoretical framework- no specific framework discussed			time-based conflict, strain-based conflicts, and behaviour-based conflicts.			
14	Adisa et al. (2022)	Exploring the impact of Covid-19 on employees' boundary management and work–life balance **Theoretical frawework**- border theory	United Kingdom	Qualitative research (thematic data analysis) (n=45)	Boundary blurring, work intensification and boundary management crisis tactics	N/A	N/A	Findings demonstrate that a working arrangement that is typically referred to as "flexible"—working from home—can reduce flexibility in a context of mandatory implementation, along with the removal of supportive structures for both the instrumental and emotional aspects of work, such as childcare and in-person (physical) social interactions. Increased workloads, increased employer scrutiny, social isolation, and a blurring of the lines between work and personal life all contribute to a decrease in employees' perceptions of their flexibility

4.1. What research has been conducted on work-life conflict among employees working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic?

A wide range of research was conducted on remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic. The studies focused on different samples, used different sampling techniques and research designs, focused on different variables, and used different theories. These key differences are addressed in this section.

4.1.1. What samples have been used in the studies?

The studies have used samples with varying demographics, localities, and occupations. There are studies that focused on higher education employees who worked from home during the Covid-19 quarantine period (Garraio et al., 2022; Nikmah et al., 2020; Kara et al, 2021, & Adisa et al., 2022). Garraio et al. (2022) focused on teachers, researchers and staff working remotely for a Portuguese higher institution. Nikmah et al. (2020) focused specifically on married female lecturers of private and public higher institutions in Indonesia working from home during the pandemic. Kara et al. (2021) used a sample of female teachers who are married with children working remotely from home in Istanbul. Adisa et al. (2022) sample also consisted of academics in UK higher education institutions working from home during the pandemic.

Other articles that focused on specific professions include a study by Ghislieri et al. (2021) which focused on administrative and technical staff in the healthcare sector in Italy working remotely from home during the pandemic. Schieman et al. (2021) on the other hand focused on Canadian male and female workers from Angus Reid Forum.

The other studies did not focus on specific professions; however, they used samples of employees from different countries. Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023) focused on Romanian employees who turned to remote work during the pandemic. Graham et al. (2021) focused on men and women working from home in Australia during the pandemic. Xu et al. (2022) focused on Chinese men and women working from home during Covid-19. Adisa et al. (2021) on the other hand focused on British women working remotely from home during the pandemic. Similarly, Neo et al. (2022) focused on married women with children from Singapore working remotely from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Andrade & Lousã (2021) focused on both men and women working from home in Portugal during the Covid-19 lockdown. Sedaroglu's (2021) study consisted of women and man working from home in Romania during the

pandemic. Lastly, Lemos et al. (2021) focused on Brazilian women between the ages of 33- 55 from home during the covid-19 quarantine period.

In summary, a few of the studies focused on employees in academia (lecturers and teachers) in their studies. This may be because it was one of the professions that forced employees to fully transition to working remotely during the pandemic, while other professionals still required employees to go into the office. However, the other studies did explore other professions that required employees to work from home such administrative and technical staff, and other support roles. In terms of location, the studies focused on different countries including Switzerland, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Canada, Portugal, Romania, Australia, China, Singapore, Brazil, and India. This shows that the studies focused on diverse countries, However, there is not much research done in the African continent, this is a gap in research. Nonetheless, a few of the studies focused on women only as their sample, however, a good amount of the studies looked at both men and women. Both people with and without children were included, and other studies focused on women who are married specifically. Overall, diverse samples were used across the sample studies.

4.1.2. What were the sampling techniques and sample sizes of the studies?

Most of the sample studies used the convenience sampling technique (Andrade & Lousã, 2021; Garraio et al., 2022; Ghislieri et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; Nikmah et al. 2020; Xu et al., 2022) . On the other hand, some studies used the snowballing technique to gather their sample (Adisa et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Sedaroglu, 2021). These studies gathered data from a pool of respondents who were easily accessible to them. Schieman et al. (2021) used the stratified sampling technique and Kara et al.(2021) on the other hand used the criterion sampling technique Adisa et al. (2022) used a combination of snowballing and purposive sampling. It is not clear which sampling technique was used in the study by Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023).

Most of the sample studies used non-probability sampling techniques, particularly the convenience sampling technique. This sampling technique is known to be cost and time effective, however, the downside of it is that there is a less chance of producing results that fairly represent the actual population since the sample chosen is not representative (Berndt, 2020; Sharma, 2017). As a result, the generalisability of the findings is affected, meaning that inferences for a larger population cannot be made. However, it is important to note that since probability sampling techniques can be more expensive, researchers are more likely to opt for

the less expensive non-probability techniques. This may be why most of the sample studies used the convenience sampling technique.

The sample size ranges differed across the studies. Some studies had small sample sizes ranging from 14 to 45 (Adisa et al., 2021; Adisa et al., 2022; Kara et al., 202; Lemos et al., 2021). These four studies are all qualitative research studies which could be the reason why the sample sizes are smaller. It is important to note that small sample sizes can threaten generalisability and validity of studies (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Most of the studies included in the sample of the current study are quantitative studies with larger samples (Andrade & Lousã, 2021; Garraio et al., 2022; Ghislieri et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2021; Nemțeanu, & Dabija, 2023; Neo et al., 2022; Sedaroglu, 2021; Xu et al., 2022). The study by Schieman et al. (2021) has the biggest sample size which consists of 2524 individuals. Results from larger samples are more trustworthy. The results' generalisability is further enhanced by the sample's tendency to more accurately represent the whole population (Andrade, 2020).

4.1.3. What research designs were used?

Table 3-Research designs used in the studies

No	***Author & year***	***Study Design and no of participants***
1	Schieman et al. (2021)	Quantitative-Cross-sectional study design (n=2524)
2	Garraio et al. (2022)	Quantitative-Cross sectional study design (n=262)
3	Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023)	Quantitative research-cross-sectional research (n=641)
4	Ghislieri et al. (2021)	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=211 individuals)
5	Graham et al. (2021)	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=658)
6	Xu et al. (2022)	Quantitative Cross-sectional study (n=399)
7	Adisa et al. (2021)	Qualitative research- a narrative approach (thematic analysis) (n=26)
8	Neo et al. (2022)	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 754)
9	Andrade & Lousã (2021)	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 213)
10	Nikmah et al. (2020)	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n= 100)

11	Sedaroglu (2021)	Quantitative Cross-sectional research design (n=301)
12	Lemos et al. (2021)	Qualitative research design (content analysis) (n=14)
13	Kara et al. (2021)	Qualitative research case study design (thematic analysis) (n=17)
14	Adisa et al. (2022)	Qualitative research (thematic data analysis) (n=45)

Out of the 14 studies included in the sample, 4 are qualitative studies (Adisa et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Kara et al.,2021; Adisa et al., 2022). The other 10 articles are quantitative studies (Andrade & Lousã, 2021; Garraio et al. 2022; Ghislieri et al. 2021; Graham et al. 2021; Nemțeanu, & Dabija, 2021; Neo et al. 2022; Nikmah et al., 2020; Xu et al. 2022; Schieman et al., 2021; Sedaroglu, 2021). All the studies that are quantitative used a cross-sectional research design. Of the 4 qualitative studies, three used thematic analysis to analyse data (Adisa et al., 2021; Adisa et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2021) while Lemos et al. (2021) used content analysis.

4.1.4. What descriptor, independent, moderator, mediator and dependant variables have been included in the studies and what were the findings?

The studies included different variables and yielded different results. The study by Schieman et al. (2021) had two independent variables which are restricted life spheres and children as a countervailing force. The dependant variable is work-life conflict, and the moderators are countervailing force contingencies; gender, and work-home integration. This study had a restricted life sphere hypothesis which stated that early in the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a decline in the overall levels of work-life conflict, this hypothesis was found to be true. However, children were found to be countervailing forces. This means that the restricted life sphere hypothesis's prediction of a decrease in work-life conflict was undermined by the presence of children, particularly younger ones, at home. Furthermore, for gender, which was a moderator, the patterns did not yield conclusive evidence of noteworthy gender differences. Another moderator included in the study is work-integration, the findings indicated that work-life conflict dramatically decreased among childless individuals with high work-home integration. However, there had been minimal change in work-life conflict among parents in any of the three age groups during the study period (Schieman et al., 2021).

In the study by Garraio et al. (2022), the independent variables included are gender, caring for children on a daily basis, time dedicated to work per day, role overload, work dedication, and family-supportive organisation perceptions. The dependant variable is work-life conflict. In terms of gender, findings indicate that there was no significant difference between men and women when it came to work-life conflict among general staff, however, for teachers, work-life conflict was higher among women. For general staff, role overload and work commitment were found to be predictors of work-life conflict during this time. However, for teachers and researchers only role conflict was a predictor, not work-commitment. There were no noteworthy findings regarding the amount of time spent on work each day or caring for children, and family-supportive organisation perceptions.

Nemțeanu & Dabija (2023) have telework as their independent variable and work-life conflict, turnover intentions, job insecurity and professional isolation as the dependant variables. For the purpose of this study, the findings worth noting are those between telework and work-life conflict which indicated that telework increased work-life conflict due the pressures between telework and domestic responsibilities. Ghislieri et al. (2021) on the other hand, included Cognitive demands, off-work hours technology assisted job demands, the perception of stress, and Recovery experiences and independent variables. The dependant variable of the study is work-family conflict (WFC). Findings indicate that WFC is positively correlated with off-TAJD and cognitive demands. Results on the impact of perceived stress on using ICT to maintain relationships with others revealed a strong and positive correlation with WFC. Results regarding recovery experiences indicated a negative correlation with WFC (Ghislieri et al., 2021).

Graham et al. (2021) included Age; work hours; workspace and chore satisfaction as independent variables and General health; muscu-loskeletal discomfort/pain frequency and severity; stress; and work-family and family-work conflict. The results relevant to this study indicated that that Work-family conflict is impacted by the presence of children in the home during working hours. Working full-time, working in an environment with interruptions, or working anywhere were linked to increases in work-family conflict. Increasing satisfaction with the distribution of domestic responsibilities reduced work-family conflict (Graham et al., 2021). Furthermore, compared to males with children, it was found that women without children experienced much less work-family conflict.

In a study by Xu et al. (2022) remote work is the independent variable and workplace wellbeing is the dependant variable. The mediator in the study is work-family conflict and the moderators are self-efficacy and autonomy. The findings demonstrate that work interfering with family (WIF) is significantly impacted by remote working. There is no discernible moderating influence of self-efficacy on WIF. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that, at all levels of general self-efficacy and job autonomy, the mediation effect of WIF is not significant (Xu et al., 2022).

Andrade & Lousã (2021) included role overload, job autonomy, and after-hours work-related technology use as their independent variables and work-family conflict as the dependant variable. Supervisor and coworker support were the moderators in the study. There were computed correlations between the demographic and the outcome variable. There was no significant correlation found between work-family conflict and age, gender, or having children. However, role overload, low job autonomy, and using work-related technologies after hours were found to be strongly linked to work-family conflict. The results also showed that work-family conflict is impacted by supervisor support and coworker support family support. These findings imply that although work-family conflict is linked to after-hours technology use for work-related purposes, low job autonomy and role conflict, coworkers and supervisors can play a significant role in mitigating this perception.

Nikmah et al. (2020) included work demands, role conflict, and role ambiguity as independent variables, and work-family conflict as the dependant variable. Findings indicate that work demands and role conflict influence work-life conflict, role conflict has a dominant effect. Role ambiguity, on the other hand, does not impact work-life conflict. The study by Sedaroglu (2021) focused on job insecurity, autonomy, work pressure, working from home and not working from home as independent variables, the present study will only consider results of participants working from home. The dependant variable is work-family conflict, and the moderator is fear of Covid-19. Findings indicate that work-family conflict is significantly positively predicted by job insecurity. The fear of Covid-19 does not moderate work-family conflict and job uncertainty. Work-family conflict is significantly correlated negatively with autonomy. On the other hand, work-family conflict is significantly positively predicted by work pressure. Lastly, it was noted that people working from home experienced greater work-life conflict than people working hybrid or from the office during the pandemic.

Adisa's et al. (2021) study is qualitative, therefore, they focused on key themes including increased domestic workload, proliferation of role conflict, rediscovery of family values and closeness and reduced juvenile delinquency. For the purpose of this study, the relevant themes to unpack are increased domestic workload and proliferation of role conflict. The findings show that employees' role conflict worsened due to the Covid-19 lockdown's increase in work expectations and their family responsibilities. Due to the lockdown, work and family responsibilities were performed at home, which makes it more difficult to distinguish between the two jobs and contributes to the rise in role conflict, and consequently work-life conflict.

Lemos et al. (2021) study is also qualitative, and the themes included are telework in the quarantine and aggravation of work-family conflict and Telework in the quarantine and mitigation of work-family conflict. For the first theme, findings indicate that women with younger children experienced greater work-family conflict. This is a result of the increasing workload associated with their professional job and taking care of the house and children during the quarantine. A few married women also noted increased work-family conflict due increased workload at work and not getting support from their husbands when it comes to childcare and domestic duties (Lemos et al., 2021). However, the findings in the second theme revealed that some women appear to have handled the telework overload during the quarantine better than others, even if their homes are places where responsibilities overlap. This is because they were able to spend time with their family in a way that made their physical proximity to the setting under study conceivable.

The study by Kara et al. (2021) focused on home related tasks and children related tasks as the main themes and they also explored the three domains: time-based conflict, strain-based conflicts, and behaviour-based conflict. In terms of home related tasks, the household duties taken on by female teachers revealed that the majority of participants prioritise tasks pertaining to the home and their kids. Cleaning and meal preparation took up the most time and energy in the house, followed by shopping, laundry, and ironing. Child related tasks on the other hand primarily involved watching the children and helping with their homework. Parents had more childcare responsibilities during the pandemic because school and daycare were closed. In this study, work-life conflict was categorised into time, strain, and behaviour-based conflict. For strain-based conflicts, Female teachers reported a variety of stressors that could contribute to strain-based work-family conflict, such as family arguments, tension, guilt, and bad mood. On the other hand, in the time-based conflict category, the most common complaints included not

spending enough time with the husband and children, not taking care of the children, and losing the feeling of working shifts. Lastly, behavior-based tensions manifested as treating people as housewives and devaluing remote learning (Kara et al., 2021).

Lastly, a study by Adisa et al. (2022) focused on three themes which are boundary blurring, work intensification, and boundary management crisis tactics. For the boundary blurring theme, the results show how the Covid-19 lockdown made it impossible to preserve the current temporal and physical boundaries between work and home, blurred such lines, and caused inter-role (work–life) conflict for most of the participants. In the second theme which is work intensification, The vast majority of participants reported an intensification of work, which worsened boundary blurring. The majority of participants credit the intensification to working above their scheduled hours due to the lockdown. Lastly, in terms of boundary management tactics, most of the participants who were responsible for providing care indicated trying on their own to come up with strategies for managing boundaries so they could balance competing demands from home and work. The effectiveness of the various strategies varied significantly, and this emphasises the importance of individual variations in influencing the results of border management. To keep work and home life apart, some participants created boundaries inside the house (Adisa et al., 2022).

In sum, it is evident that the studies yielded different results which shows that employees experienced work-life conflict differently when working remotely from home during the pandemic.

4.2.Which theoretical approaches were used in the studies?

Table 4-Theoretical approaches used in the studies

No	***Author & year***	***Study title and theoretical framework***
1	Schieman et al. (2021)	Work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic **Theoretical framework**- Inter-role conflict theory
2	Garraio et al. (2022)	Work-Life Conflict Among Higher Education Institution Workers' During COVID-19: A Demands-Resources Approach **Theoretical framework**- Job demands resource theory
3	Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023)	Negative impact of telework, job insecurity, and work–life conflict on employee behavior.

		Theoretical framework- theory of resource drain, accommodation, resource conservation, and boundaries.
4	Ghislieri et al. (2021)	Work-family conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic: teleworking of administrative and technical staff in healthcare. An Italian study **Theoretical framework**- Role strain theory and the conservation of resources theory.
5	Graham et al. (2021)	Working at home: The impacts of COVID 19 on health, family-work-life conflict, gender, and parental responsibilities. **Theoretical framework** - No specific theory discussed.
6	Xu et al. (2022)	The dark side of remote working during pandemics: Examining its effects on work-family conflict and workplace wellbeing. **Theoretical framework**- work/family border theory.
7	Adisa et al. (2021)	The work–family balance of British working women during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Theoretical framework**- Role theory.
8	Neo et al. (2022)	The Influence of COVID-19 on Women's Perceptions of Work-Family Conflict in Singapore **Theoretical framework**- No specific theoretical framework discussed.
9	Andrade & Lousã (2021)	Telework and Work–Family Conflict during COVID-19 Lockdown in Portugal: The Influence of Job-Related Factors **Theoretical framework**- no specific framework discussed.
10	Nikmah et al. (2020)	The Effect of Work Demand, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity on Work-Family Conflict (Impact of Work from Home due to The Covid-19 Pandemic). **Theoretical framework**- no specific framework discussed.
11	Sedaroglu (2021)	Determinants of work-family conflict in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Theoretical frameworks**- Border theory.
12	Lemos et al. (2021)	Women in home office during the covid-19 pandemic and the work-family conflict configurations. **Theoretical framework-** no specific framework discussed.

13	Kara et al. (2021)	Work-Family Conflict During Working from Home Due to Pandemic: A Qualitative Research on Female Teacher **Theoretical framework**- No specific framework discussed.
14	Adisa et al. (2022)	Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on employees' boundary management and work–life balance **Theoretical frawework**- Border theory.

The studies focused on different theoretical frameworks. The study by Schieman et al. (2021) used the inter-role theory to support their findings. They argue that their findings demonstrate the significance of the "life" stresses in the work-life conflict equation for generating role conflict. Based on the theory, the authors argue that the overall, work-life conflict decreased as a result of the pandemic's lockdown, which curtailed most aspects of social life. There was less "life" outside the house that work may get in the way of. Simultaneously, the "family" aspect of the work-life conflict also gained prominence, particularly among employees with small children. They believe that the overall decline in work-life conflict among parents of small children has been somewhat counteracted by this new reality and the role responsibilities that come with it. Garraio et al. (2022) on the other focused on the job demands resource theory. They used the theory to investigate "how job demands, addressed by the perception of role overload (quantitative demand), and job resources, addressed by organisation perceptions (organizational resource) and work dedication (personal resource), may act as predictors of Work-life conflict for staff and teachers/researchers" (Garraio et al.,2022, p. 3).

Nemțeanu & Dabija (2023) focused on various theories including the theory of resource drain, accommodation, resource conservation, social exchange, and self-determination. They used these theories to conceptualise teleworking. The resource drain theory has been used to explain that employees have limited attention, time, and energy, therefore, resources need to be allocated in ways that do not negatively impact employees social and family relations. They also viewed telework from the accommodation theory standpoint, which is based on the idea that the worker will choose to forego some work-related duties in order to better support their family. Using this theory as a basis, they assess how much the demands of work and family (due to heightened work-life conflict) affect employee volition and how much the demands of autonomy, relational capacities, and professional development are met by teleworking as

opposed to office work. This study also makes use of the boundary theory and conservation of resources theory. The conservation of resource hypothesis is predicated on the idea that when resources are depleted, employee wellbeing suffers. the theory of boundaries, on the other hand, holds that borders can become blurry when flexibility is present. The act of teleworking itself creates an environment where the lines separating work and life are blurred and become more flexible (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023).

Ghislieri et al. (2021) used the conservation of resource theory and the role strain theory to conceptualise work-life conflict. They explain that in terms of Conservation of resource theory, people want to preserve their resources to shield themselves from stress and work-family conflict; therefore, work-family conflict may occur if these resources are not safeguarded. The role strain theory on the other hand is used to explain that each role necessitates an "investment" of time and energy; considering the restricted individual resources, handling several roles may result in inter-role conflict, implying an incompatibility between work and family obligations (Ghislieri et al., 2021). Xu et al. (2022) and Adisa et al. (2022) on the other hand focused on the work/family boarder theory to explain why work-life/family conflict occurs. According to the theory, “work and family represent distinct domains influencing each other, and individuals are “border-crossers” conducting activities in these two domains. Here domains refer to “worlds that people have associated with different rules, thought patterns and behaviours” (Xu et al., 2022, p.2). According to Xu et al. (2022) people must modify their behavioural patterns and areas of emphasis while transitioning between different domains in order to meet the varying demands of their personal and professional lives. They might draw boundaries and build connections between these two domains. Work-family balance is attained when people are content with their lives and perform well both at work and at home. Work-family conflict arises otherwise.

The study by Adisa et al. (2021) is underpinned by the role theory. The cultural conventions around the psychological and interpersonal characteristics of members of society, including mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and grandparents, are referred to as role theory. In the context of work-life conflict, this theory is used to understand that when individuals combine paid employment with their natural roles inter-role conflict may occur which increases the likelihood of work-life conflict occurring. On the other hand, Sedaroglu’s (2021) study is founded on the border theory which explains the complex interactions that take place between

cross-border workers and their personal and professional life and helps predict when conflict may arise.

Although some studies used theories to support their findings, many of the sample studies did not use specific theoretical frameworks to support their studies (Andrade & Lousã, 2021; Graham et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; ; Nikmah et al., 2020). This is a gap in their research as theoretical frameworks play a significant role in supporting findings and conceptualising key variables.

4.3. What can be inferred about the connection between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic from the literature that has been published?

The studies that have conducted research on remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic have yielded different results. This could be due to differences in demographics and occupations among the samples used. It was found in some studies that working remotely during the covid-19 pandemic reduced work-life conflict for people without children at home (Graham et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Schieman et al., 2021). However, those with children up to the age of twelve years did not experience a reduction in work-life conflict, while those with teenagers did experience a decrease. This indicates that the patterns of work-life conflict varied depending on the whether there were children or not in the home, and the age of those children was also an important determinant (Schieman et al., 2021).

Graham (2021) found that women without children experienced less work-family conflict in comparison to men with children. This result is not unexpected given that women without children may be more able to fit in their domestic or other care obligations around work demands and, as a result, have less work-family conflicts. The study also discovered that having children at home during working hours, working full-time, and working in an environment with interruptions—regardless of location—increases work-life conflict. However, when domestic chores were divided more satisfactorily, there was less tension between work and family for both men and women (Graham, 2021).

A study by Garraio et al. (2022) found that women experienced greater work-life conflict than men when working remotely during the pandemic. However, it is important to note that some studies found that gender did not have an impact on the experiences of working remotely during the pandemic, instead it was found that level of work-home integration had a greater influence on work-life conflict as employees work from home (Schieman et al., 2021). It is noted that

greater work-life integration can be problematic because it blurs the line between work and personal life which easily results to work conflicting with the life domain.

Several studies that explored the relationship between work-life conflict and remote work during the covid-19 pandemic focused on women only as their sample (Adisa, 2021; Kara et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; Nikmah, 2020). Most of them established that the women had a difficult time balancing their increased professional workload with childcare, cleaning, and cooking which created a conflict between the work and family spheres when working from home (Kara et al., 2021).

However, in a study by Lemos et al. (2021) all the woman reported having work overload because of organisational demands, demands from their families, and demands from their children. However, despite this, some of the women did not experience increased work-life conflict when working from home during the pandemic. Some women stated that working from home allowed them to do their work while being able get closer to children and husband and do other physical and leisure activities (Lemos et al., 2021). This is contrary to popular findings as a lot of women tend to experience greater work-life conflict when there is no clear boundary between work and the life domain. However, the women in the study noted that they started sharing home responsibilities with their husbands which could have contributed to work-life conflict not intensifying (Lemos et al., 2021). Single women with children, on the other hand, experienced greater challenges when it came to work-life conflict.

Nikmah et al. (2021) found different results as they concluded that that married women encounter many challenges in juggling their work since other responsibilities, such as the mother and wife roles, must also be considered. These multiple roles create role conflict and without adequate support from the husband or a paid helper, married women become more prone to work-life conflict which was the case in this study. Similarly, the study by Neo et al. (2022) with a sample of mostly women found that occupational dedication to one's job, role overload, parental demands, and family support were the main predictors of work-family conflict for women.

Adisa et al. (2022) and Xu et al (2022) included both man and women in the sample and found that although working from home is considered “flexible”, in the context of covid, where important support structures such as childcare, helpers, and social interactions are removed coupled with increased workload, and blurring of work and life flexibility, work-life conflict

easily increases. A study by Nemțeanu, & Dabija (2023) also found that working remotely had a negative impact on work-life conflict. This was attributed to the fact that working remotely made it difficult for employees to detach themselves from work at the end of the day resulting in work conflicting with the life domain. Ghislieri et al. (2021) found that cognitive demands and technology overload were predictors of work-family conflict as employees worked from home during the pandemic. Both these factors made it difficult for employees to detach from work when working from home which created conflict between the work and life domains.

Sedaroglu (2021), on the other, hand found that autonomy is a negative predictor of the work-family conflict, but job instability and workplace pressure are positive predictors. Additionally, the moderating impact of fear of Covid-19 on the association between job insecurity and work-family conflict was examined, however it turned out to be statistically insignificant.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that as employees worked remotely from home during the Covid-19 pandemic there was a varying impact on work-life conflict. For some, work-life conflict increased but for others it decreased. This was influenced by factors such as the presence or absence of children in the home, workload (work and life), and support structure from partners in the home.

Chapter 5- Discussion

This chapter provides an interpretation and explanation of the study's findings along with an analysis of how they fit into existing knowledge. Exploring the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict in the context of a pandemic such as Covid-19 is important as it can help us understand employees' experiences, identify their needs, and influence policy making in organisations which will serve as a support structure for employees. A total of 14 studies were included in the sample of the present study. All these studies were analysed to better understand the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As established in the finding's sections, there were conflicting results when it came to examining the relationship between work-life conflict and remote work during the Covid-19 pandemic. As noted above, some studies found that working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic reduced work-life conflict for people without children at home (Graham et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; Schieman et al., 2021). According to Schieman et al. (2021) the pandemic's lockdown curtailed most facets of social life , which decreased overall work-life conflict. There was less "life" outside the house that the job may get in the way of. They saw this underlying pattern which they refer to as 'the restricted life sphere' as reflecting in part the overall decline in work-life conflict for those without children. The inter-role conflict theory supports this phenomenon as it is based on the idea that a person experiences role conflict because of conflicting interests between different domains such as the work and life domains (Jawahar et al., 2012). Therefore, since remote employee's life sphere was restricted during the pandemic due to gyms, restaurants and religious meeting places being closed and social gatherings being restricted, the conflict between the work and life domain did not increase for some people. However, it is important to note that domestic responsibilities and childcare did increase for many during this time, thus, for them, work-life conflict was still an issue. This is because the 'family' aspect of work-life became more prominent.

Graham et al. (2021) also noted that compared to males with children, women without children report less work-family conflict. This finding is explained by the idea that women without children may be less likely to face work-family conflict because they are more flexible in balancing their home or other care responsibilities with work expectations. This is supported by other research which notes that compared to parents, non-parents were more likely to be

able to find time for work, and women with small children may find it more challenging to achieve work-family balance (Chung et al., 2020).

The studies also found that as much as those without children experienced less work-life conflict, those with children experienced an increase in work-life conflict. Schieman et al. (2021) noted that the presence of children at home, particularly younger children (<13) increased the work-life conflict for parents. They explain that as much as the life sphere reduced during the pandemic, the family aspect of the life sphere became more prominent. The closure of schools/daycare increased parental responsibilities, while remote work also increased workload (Neo et al., 2022). This resulted in work interfering with family life for parents during this period. Therefore, given the circumstances, the only people who would have less work-life conflict are those who are not under any obligation to fulfil family responsibilities (Schieman et al., 2021). While it is likely that all parents experienced limited chances in the public domain (just like everyone else), the research by Schieman et al. (2021) indicates that this could have been mitigated by opposing factors resulting from having smaller children at home during the lockdown.

Furthermore, a key takeaway from the study by Schieman et al. (2021) is that the difference between those without children and those with children become even more pronounced among those with strong work-home role integration. Many employees during the pandemic probably had new role constraints as a result of having younger children at home (in their workspaces), who need additional care and attention to education that schools could no longer offer. There were likely role-related difficulties for parents trying to complete their work without offices or other locations outside the home. Work and family responsibilities were pushed together, with many parents juggling their duties while trying to fulfil work obligations.

There were no gender differences noted by Schieman et al. (2021) when exploring the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict. Various factors might have influenced these findings, the authors mainly indicate that the method they used to measure work-life conflict may not have adequately represented the forms of work-life conflict experienced by working women with young children in the early months of the pandemic (Schieman et al., 2021).

Similar to Schieman et al., (2021), Graham et al. (2021) found that work-life conflict rises when there are children living at home during working hours, when an individual works full-

time, and when they operate in an environment where there are disruptions. They did discover, though, that as satisfaction with the distribution of domestic duties increased, work-family conflict decreased. Therefore, the presence of children seemed to be a major predictor of work-life conflict during the pandemic. A study by Lippe (2007) supports the idea that the presence of children increases work-life conflict as their findings demonstrated that over time, employees with children who had flexi time and telecommuting had increased time pressure. This is because flexible work has the disadvantage of blurring the line or boundary between work and life. Furthermore, in terms of domestic responsibilities, a study by Shakil Ahmad et al. (2011) confirmed that domestic responsibilities are strongly correlated to women's work-life conflict. Hence, Graham et al. (2021) found that when domestic responsibilities are shared in the home, work-life conflict reduces. This is because when employees have a high workload from their job and a lot of domestic responsibilities, this can cause conflict between the two domains. Employees might end up focusing on work and meeting their deadlines, neglecting the domestic duties that need to be done, leading to work-life conflict.

As established in the findings, a few of the studies in the sample focused on women only when exploring the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict during the pandemic (Kara et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021, Nikmah et al., 2020; Neo et al., 2022; Adisa, 2021). This may be because there is a common belief that a married woman with children, whether she is a career woman or a stay-at-home mother, should be able to provide for her husband and children (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This belief places a woman in a dual role and often causes her family role and work obligations to clash. Remote work due to the pandemic is believed to create a greater problem because usually, people finish their work at the workplace and do not need to take it home, but due to Covid, all work needed to be completed at home (Dockery et al., 2014 as cited in Nikmah et al., 2020). Government policy encouraged working from home in an attempt to stop the Coronavirus from spreading. This kind of set up creates a challenge for women to divide the time when working as a permanent employee because there are tasks that must be completed and household chores that must be attended to simultaneously. Thus, there is a growing need to understand the implications of this in the context of remote work and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The core findings from studies that focused on women only were that they experienced greater work-family conflict during the pandemic. These studies focused on women with and without children, married and single. According to Nikmah et al. (2020) the women working remotely

from home had a difficult time balancing their workload and increased family responsibilities. The study by Nikmah et al. (2020) found that there was a relationship between work demands and work-life conflict, the item that had the highest level of significance is "I am given entirely too much work to do" (p. 98). This indicates that the women had an increased workload as they were working remotely at home during the pandemic which caused work-family conflict. Research has indicated that excessive work demands might lead to longer workdays as well as increased stress and fatigue which can lead the work-life conflict (Frone et al., 1997). When work demands increase the number of workdays or work hours, this means that women need to use some of the time they would usually use to do their house duties, as a result, work ends up interfering with their family life.

Role conflict was identified by Nikmah et al (2020) and Adisa et al. (2021) as another major predictor of work-family conflict among women working remotely from home. Playing double roles when working from home was a challenge for many women in the study. The increased work demands required more attention while domestic responsibilities also increased, thus trying to meet work demands conflicted with the increased domestic responsibilities (Adisa et al., 2021). This is in line with older research which notes that prioritising work over family can result in work role conflict, this will create an imbalance that will result in the family domain being neglected. This very same imbalance is what caused work-life conflict among women (Javed et al., 2014). It needs to be acknowledged that like men, women can only do so much, therefore, when faced with many competing demands, work-life conflict is likely to occur as established from the findings (Nikmah et al., 2021).

Kara et al. (2021) noted that there are various home and child related task that competed with women's job demands which ultimately resulted to them experiencing work-family conflict. The home task included food preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, shopping, and ironing. The child related tasks included helping children with their schoolwork and general childcare. It is noted that child related task increased for women as they worked from home during the pandemic. This is in line with other research which noted that during their time working from home, women were more responsible for taking care of their children (Del Boca et al., 2020); Farre et al., 2020). As home and child related tasks increased, balancing professional responsibilities with the demands of family and house responsibilities became a problem, resulting to work-life conflict. Additionally, Kara et al. (2021) categorised the work-family conflict experienced by women into three categories namely strain-based, time-based and

behaviour-based conflicts. They established that under time-based conflicts, the issues noted were the inability to care for children, and the inability to spend time with their spouses. This is in line with past research as the model by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) acknowledges that time-based conflicts such as insufficient time for leisure and family are a major work-life conflict sources. These results are consistent with a large body of research on work-life conflict, which has shown that people who are overburdened with work and family obligations may feel stressed and overwhelmed and find it difficult to strike a balance between the two. This, in turn, contributes to work-life conflict (Kara et al., 2021).

In terms of strain-based conflict, Kara et al., (2021) identified that female teachers experienced issues such as stress, feeling of guilt, despondency, and tension. These strains are noted in Green and Beutell's (1985) as they argue that anxiety, and stress contribute to issues of work-life conflict. Research looking at the pandemic period revealed that Covid-19 caused employees to feel cumulative stress (Brown et al., 2020). Other studies revealed that teachers had significant levels of anxiety, with female instructors having even higher levels (Li et al., 2020). These findings are very similar to the findings by Kara et al. (2021), thus their findings are supported. The last category, which is behaviour -based conflicts included issues such as behaving like a housewife and underestimating distance education (Kara et al., 2021). These issues arose because working from home exposed the women to more house and childcare related duties which prompted them to behave more like housewives, this behaviour clashed with their work life. Moreover, underestimating the amount of work that needed to be done when transitioning to teaching online was also a problem because it increased their workload which clashed with their family life. Ultimately, these two issues led to the women experiencing work-life conflict. Green and Beutell (1985) note that conflicting expectations for behavior between work and home results to work-life conflict, hence the women in the study experienced work-life conflict. Overall, the study by Kara et al. (2021) helps us understand that women can experience different types of conflicts when working from home during a pandemic like Covid-19, consequently, these conflicts result to work-life conflict.

Lemos et al. (2021) also focused on women as their sample. Many women in the study expressed that they are quite distressed about working from home as they were overburdened with work, childcare, and housekeeping responsibilities. They also mentioned that they are unable to fulfil their demands at work and at home satisfactorily. This further confirms that working remotely during pandemic indeed caused work-life conflict issues for women as noted

in other studies (Kara et al., 2021, Nikmah et al., 2020 & Neo et al., 2022). However, contrary to popular findings, Lemos et al. (2021) found that not all women who experienced work overload during this time experienced an increase in work-life conflict.

Some women claimed to enjoy the experience of working remotely from home because it has brought them closer to their husbands and children and given them more time for recreational and physical activities. This is supported by previous research which notes that working from home allows teleworkers to spend more time with their families, including more time to spend with them in the morning and evening, attend to family responsibilities, and be there to get the children ready for school or daycare and welcome them home (even though some will stay on the job after) (Tremblay, 2003). Many people view work-hour flexibility as a beneficial factor in achieving work-family balance. It is important to note that having family or spousal support during this time contributed to some of these women experiencing more balance between work and family (Lemos et al., 2021). Those without this kind of support did not experience the same balance, instead more conflict arose for them. This is supported by the study by Neo et al (2022) and Graham et al. (2021) which found that family support played a significant role in reducing work-interfering with family life for women. This indicates that receiving support when it comes to family responsibility plays a significant role in addressing work-life conflict. Previous research also notes that the level of autonomy, and management approach utilised in the organisations also influences the impact of remote work on the work-life interface (Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). This could be why some women experienced differences when it comes to the work life interface, with some seeing more balance while others experienced more conflict.

Keeping with the research that only focused on women, Lemos et al. (2021) also established that women without children experienced less work-life conflict, this finding was explored in the studies comparing parents and non-parents discussed above. Women without children did not have parental responsibilities or increased domestic responsibilities that conflicted with their work. This allowed them to have time for other leisure activities. This is supported by previous research as stated above which argues that non-parents have more time for work and other activities than parents (Chung et al., 2020). Overall, the studies that have focused on women as their sample have helped us to better understand the issues that women experienced when working remotely during the pandemic. For the most part, it is evident that most women

experienced greater work-life conflict while working from home during the pandemic, while only a few experienced reduced work-life conflict.

Other studies had both men and women in their samples and yielded similar results to the studies that focused on women only, but also established new findings (Adisa et al.,2022; Garraio et al., 2022; Ghislieri et al., 2021; Nemțeanu, & Dabija,2023; Sedaroglu, 2021; Xu et al., 2022). The studies by Adisa et al. (2022) and Xu et al (2022) noted that while working from home is seen as "flexible," work-life conflict is more likely to arise in the context of Covid, when crucial support systems like childcare, and social interactions are eliminated along with an increase in workload and a blurring of work and personal boundaries. Adisa et al. (2022) argued that their findings showed that the majority of their participants experienced inter-role (work–life) conflict as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, which removed possibilities to preserve the physical and temporal boundaries between work and home. This is because they had to work from home and perform work and non-work responsibilities simultaneously. Garraio et al. (2022) found similar findings as inter-role conflict was an issue for many of the participants. When the demands of one position are incompatible with those of another, inter-role conflict results, which is detrimental to one's health and well-being as it results to work-life conflict (Borgmann, Rattay & Lampert, 2019). These same findings were established in the studies by Nikmah et al. (2020) and Adisa et al. (2021) who focused on women as their sample. Thus, this indicates that both men and women had similar role conflict issues.

Furthermore, Adisa et al. (2022) found that the vast majority of participants reported an intensification of work, which worsened boundary blurring. The majority of participants credit the intensification to working above their scheduled hours due to the lockdown. Hwaa et al. (2018) argues that work-intensification is problematic because when work demands or expectations at work increase, this can become overwhelming for employees which can then make it difficult for the individuals to get the time for other demands which then results in work conflicting with life. This was the case in the study by Adisa et al. (2022) because when employees experienced work intensification, the boundaries between work and life became blurred even more which resulted in work conflicting with their family lives. It is important to also note that the presence of children at home and the need to assist them with their educational tasks during work hours also contributed to work-intensification (Schieman et al., 2021). Some employees may have worked less hours during the day to assist their children, which required

them to spend longer hours after work to meet their regular workload. As result. They may have found themselves feeling overwhelmed by all the work they had to do.

One of the issues that was noted as boundary blurring was the expectations from managers regarding e-presence (Adisa et al., 2022). The participants felt the pressure to constantly be present online as it seemed like the new norm which resulted to them working longer hours, leading to work interfering with family life. Ghislieri et al. (2021) noted similar results as they found that technological overload and invasion was an issue for many participants as they found themselves constantly online working. Moreover, they noted that Off-work hours technology assisted supplemental work, which refers to "The perception of an employee that their organisation is asking them to perform additional work tasks outside the regular working hours, through the use of technology" was an issue (Ghislieri et al., 2021, P. 232). This perception resulted to employees working longer hours which conflicted with their life. These findings are similar to those of Siegert and Löwstedt's (2019) which found that ICT puts pressure on people to be online and work continuously from home. In addition to the issue of e-presence, other boundary blurring issues that were noted are increased workload and increased parental and domestic duties (Adisa et al., 2022). These issues also resulted to work-life conflict.

Ghislieri et al. (2021) with a sample of both man and women also noted that cognitive demands such as processing information, making decisions, and resolving issues when working remotely during a pandemic led to work-family conflict for male and females. In terms of cognitive demands, other studies explain that high cognitive demands have the potential to cause mental tiredness and energy depletion (Pacheco et al., 2021). This exhaustion may leave employees with little energy for other pursuits, such as hobbies outside of work, which may result in a conflict between work and life (Pacheco et al., 2021). Thus, this explains the relationship between cognitive demands and work-life conflict. Interestingly, the results further indicated that females experienced greater cognitive demands. Ghislieri et al. (2021) suspects that this conclusion may be influenced by a reversion to conventional gender roles. With a reversion to conventional gender roles, woman might feel pressured to prioritise household responsibilities and caregiving over their careers which may lead to an increase in cognitive demands, and as a result, work-life conflict.

Garraio et al. (2022) also observed a gender difference in their study when examining work-life conflict. They found that women had more work-life conflict than men did among teachers

and researchers—but not among other staff members in the higher education institution. This indicates that the pandemic did not only primarily affect women in the general population, but also women academics in the setting of higher education institutions. Teachers and researchers had to adjust to the new way of working which can be stressful. Research confirms that women are typically more distressed by stressful life events, thus the Covid-19 pandemic was no exception (Kessler and McLeod, 1984). The stress and pressure can result in difficulties balancing work and life which appeared to be the issue for women. Conflicting workload was a major motivator of this findings, however, Garraio et al. (2022) also speculate that, in the setting of the pandemic, women's work-life conflict may not have been just motivated by a conflicting workload, but also by their emotional ability to complete each activity. Emotional exhaustion can worsen work-life conflict and make it harder to work on personal tasks. Tumkaya et al. (2006) support this idea as they have found that academicians who work in demanding environments with dynamic educational policies may experience feelings of helplessness and incapacity to manage stress, which may ultimately result to emotional tiredness. With limited emotional capacity, it can become difficult for women to perform other task such as domestic duties, hence, work-life conflict may occur.

In a study by Sedaroglu (2021), it was found that work-family conflict is significantly positively predicted by job insecurity. It is argued that if the likelihood of losing a job is high, it will have a detrimental effect on all important facets of life. There is a possibility that work-life conflict will worsen as a result of the extra strains that the likelihood of losing one's job causes (Sedaroglu, 2021). These findings are supported by previous research that discovered connections between role conflict, especially work-family conflict, and job insecurity (Cooklin et al., 2015; Keim et al., 2014). Workplace pressure was also noted to be a positive predictor of work-family conflict (Sedaroglu, 2022). This is explained by the idea that employees may battle to spend enough time with their families; in fact, they may even neglect them since they are likely stressed out by the amount of work and time limitations allocated to them at the job. According to Balogun et al. (2020), there is a considerable correlation between work-family conflict and job demands including workload and pressure. This indicates that this finding is supported by prior research. This is a very interesting finding because job insecurity was a major issue during the pandemic, as a lot of companies were closing due to loss caused by the lockdown (Sedaroglu, 2021).

Sedaroglu (2021) also found that job autonomy is not a predictor of work-life conflict. Previous research supports this, showing that job autonomy—based on the job demands and resources model—helps people reduce the stress caused by competing duties in their personal and professional lives (Korunka & Kubicek, 2017). It is expected that having a high level of autonomy will provide employees a sense of control over their job and that it will give them the assistance they need to resolve problems, whether they arise at work or in their life domain (Sedaroglu, 2021). One could argue that autonomy is beneficial for striking a balance between one's personal and professional obligations, as it encompasses personal decision-making.

Practical implications

Various practical implications been identified in the research done on work-life conflict and remote work during the Covid-19 pandemic. The present study sheds light on the ways in which working remotely impacts parents and non-parents in different ways. Parents report higher levels of work-life conflict while working from home, while non-parents report lower levels (Graham et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; Schieman et al., 2021). These findings encourage organisations to put in place structures and processes that support employees who are parents to better cope with working remotely. It is also recommended that employees who are parents establish a strong support system to ensure that they receive the necessary assistance to take care of their children and household as they work remotely from home (Neo et al., 2022). This will help employees establish boundaries between their work and other spheres of life.

A few of the studies focused on women only as their sample, and it was established that they experienced increased work-life conflict (Adisa, 2021; Kara et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021; Nikmah et al., 2020; Neo et al., 2022). A gender difference was also highlighted by one of the studies which noted that women experienced greater work-life conflict than men (Garraio et al., 2022). Considering that organisations are actively working to create gender-equal environments—for example, by implementing Gender Equality Plans—the results of this study could be useful in assisting them in creating customised and efficient solutions to deal with work-life conflict among employees (Garraio et al., 2022). It is also important for women to seek out support from their partners and families, communicate in a way that is assertive when they need help, and have conversations about gender equity in both their personal and professional lives. This is important because gender roles and cultural expectations play a significant role in gender disparities influencing work-life conflict.

Remote workers also highlighted the issue of technology overload and invasiveness which puts pressure on them to constantly be working even after hours (Adisa et al., 2022; Ghislieri et al., 2021). Organisations need to put in place guidelines for using technology that respect the right to disconnect and recharge. This is important to ensure that employees do not burnout and experience work-life conflict. It is also crucial for employees to develop and maintain clear boundaries and dedicate specific time for work and life pursuits.

Job insecurity was identified as a predictor of work-life conflict for remote workers. Employees fear of losing their job causes stress which can affect the other spheres of their lives (Sedaroglu, 2021). Therefore, organisations can work towards addressing the negative impact of job insecurity. This can be done by improving communication, giving accurate information. supplying retraining for alternative employment, and teaching employees about coping mechanisms for the stress that comes with job insecurity (Sverke et al., 2006). Taking these steps can assist employees better manage their stress during uncertain times, this in turn, can help mitigate issues of work-life conflict.

Inter-role conflict was a dominant predictor of work-life conflict. A lot of employees had to play multiples roles such as being a parent and, wife/husband simultaneously with their job which caused a lot of conflicts for them (Adisa et al., 2021; Garraio et al., 2022; Nikmah et al., 2020). The intensified work-home integration blurred the boundaries between the work and life domain. Therefore, instead of mandating remote work, organisations could encourage hybrid work which will allow employees to go into the office some days. This will help employees who struggle with maintaining boundaries between work and life when working remotely. They would be able to have days where they are able to separate the two domains by going into the office which can help reduce role conflict.

Job autonomy, on the other hand, was found to reduce work-life (Sedaroglu, 2021). This is because a high degree of autonomy will offer workers a feeling of mastery over their work and give them the support that they need to tackle issues and conflicts (Sedaroglu, 2021). Therefore, organisations and managers need to ensure that employees have a good level of autonomy over their work to promote more control and balance over their lives and reduce work-life conflict when working remotely. However, this does not mean that managers should not support their employees and give them guidance where necessary. Autonomy and manager support can co-exist harmoniously if managers are intentional in their managing approach.

Theoretical implications

Theoretical implications have also been identified in the research done on work-life conflict and remote work during the Covid-19 pandemic. The work/family border theory was commonly used in the studies to explain work-life conflict (Adisa et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). This theory enables us to comprehend that, in order to satisfy the divergent demands of their work and life, people must adapt their behavioural patterns and areas of attention when moving between the different domains. People need to either establish borders (segmentation) or create bridges (integration) in order to maintain balance in their lives, this is dependent on their needs and circumstances. In the case of Covid-19, employees were forced to integrate their work and life. While, this worked for some, many employees with children and other family responsibilities experienced work-life conflict because of this integration (Xu et al., 2022). This is mainly because a lot of structures, such as school and support from helpers were removed due to lockdown restrictions. Remote employees' work demands also increased, and as a result, elements of their work crossed over into the life domain. This necessitated the need for borders to be established to address work-life conflict. Only a few people were able to happily integrate their work and life domains which enabled them to do their work while also spending more time with their families (Lemos et al., 2021). This emphasises the idea that, as remote and hybrid work continues post the pandemic, employees need to either create borders or bridges to achieve satisfaction in their work and life domains. This is highly dependent on their circumstances and what will satisfy them as they work remotely from home.

The inter-role theory used in the study by Schieman et al. (2021) draws attention to the difficulties and complexities involved in juggling many roles at once, such as work and life roles, and how this can lead to conflict. It is, therefore, important for employees and organisations to find ways to navigate possible inter-role conflict issues as remote and hybrid work continues in the future. Similarly, the use of the role theory in the studies also helped demonstrate that when considering working from home, particularly in times of crisis, people's roles will probably impact each other in some way, which then raises the possibility of conflict (Adisa et al., 2021).

One of the studies in the review used the job demand-resource theory to highlight that work-life conflict may be predicted by job demands, which are represented by the sense of role overload (quantitative demand), and job resources, which are represented by organisational perceptions (personal resource) and work dedication (organisational resource) (Garraio et

al.,2022). The conservation of resources theory used by Ghislieri et al. (2021) also makes a meaningful theoretical contribution for future remote and hybrid work. It explains that employees need to preserve their resources to shield themselves from stress and work-life conflict. This is important because work-life conflict may occur if these resources are not safeguarded. A similar contribution was made by the resource theory used in article by Nemțeanu and Dabijan (2023). The theory emphasises the idea that as employees continue to work remotely in the future, they need to be aware that their attention, time, and energy are limited. As a result, resources should be distributed in a way that does not negatively affect their relationships with their families, friends, and personal interests.

Lastly, Nemțeanu and Dabijan (2023) also used the boundary theory which emphasised the idea that the act of working remotely itself fosters a culture in which distinctions between personal and professional life are less rigid and more blurred. When boundaries are blurred, it is easier for work-life conflict to take place. This is something that organisations and employees need to keep in mind as remote and hybrid work continues in the future world of work.

Research Gaps and recommendations

This chapter addresses the gaps that exist in the area of work-life conflict among employees working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first gap identified is that instead of examining work-life conflict, including various facets of the participants' nonwork lives, the majority of studies focused on work-family conflict, which is a subset of work-life conflict. As noted earlier, the term "work-life conflict" is not focused on family only, but other personal interests and spheres in a person's life, such as time with friends, exercising, and recreational time amongst other things (Kossek and Lee, 2017). Thus, focusing on the family aspect only is not sufficient. However, in the context of Covid-19, it is explained by the 'restricted life sphere' concept that the lockdown forced people to remain home which restricted the life domain, except the family part of it (Schieman et al., 2021). With most people at home, the family domain became more prominent, hence, most studies focused on the family aspect. However, to fully understand the impact of remote work on work-life conflict, not just family, future research would need to be conducted during a period where there is no lockdown that limits the life aspect. This way, work-life conflict would be explored holistically in the context of remote work.

Secondly, the research studies included in the sample were mostly quantitative, only four of the 14 studies were qualitative and there were no mixed method studies. Subsequent

investigations ought to incorporate additional qualitative techniques to acquire a deeper understanding of the correlation between remote work and work-life conflict during the pandemic. To strengthen the validity of the conclusions drawn from the quantitative sections of the studies and to contribute to the richness and robustness of the data, mixed methods research should also be carried out. Furthermore, to evaluate the shifts in post-Covid-19 pandemic, longitudinal research approaches should be used in future studies. This will further contribute to the knowledge base around this topic which will further help organisations in the process of developing and implementing appropriate policies.

Thirdly, most of the studies used non-probability sampling techniques. The drawback of this kind of technique is that since the sample selected is not representative, there is a reduced likelihood of obtaining results that accurately reflect the entire population (Berndt, 2020). Therefore, future research should use probability sampling methods to enhance generalisabilty.

Fourthly, some studies did not focus on a theoretical framework to support their findings. This is problematic since in a study, theoretical frameworks aid in clarifying and supporting a certain idea or topic of debate. They also help the researchers validate their results and make inferences (Berndt, 2020). Therefore, researchers who will further explore this topic in the future need to be cognisant of this and make use of theoretical frameworks to support their findings.

Fifthly, most of the studies were conducted in developed countries such as Australia, Canada, China, Russia, Italy among other countries. Future research needs to explore the topic in underdeveloped and developing countries as well so that their findings represent a wider population. Research needs to also be conducted in the African continent as there is not much research done there. This will allow comparisons to be made across the different countries and cultures. It is important to note that the limited research in developing and undeveloped countries, particularly the African continent could be attributed to research priorities and funding allocation, prioritisation of immediate economic issues, and limited research infrastructure among other things.

Sixthly, a lot of the studies focused on individuals in academia as their sample, while other studies did not focus on specific professions, and a few investigated other professions (Adisa et al., 2022; Garraio et al., 2022; Kara et al, 2021; Nikmah et al., 2020). Future studies should concentrate on a wider range of professions, since the pandemic caused many professions to shift to remote employment. Moreover, in some studies, there were not enough cases within

each kind of occupation to accurately assess the types of occupation-specific nuances. This is something future research can address.

Seventhly, most of the studies excluded organisational factors connected to leadership, culture, or the evaluation procedure. This is something future research can explore.

Lastly, some studies focused exclusively on married or single women without children, however, there are no studies that focused exclusively on married man with children or single man with no children. Therefore, future research can be implemented to address this gap.

Research limitations

As with every study, this review has limitations, despite the fact that it followed the suggested methodological framework for scoping reviews presented by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005). Publications written in languages other than English were not included. This means that there are studies on remote work and work-life conflict that were excluded and could have contributed meaningful insights. The researcher might have also missed important publications on the topic. This could be because of various reasons such as an inclusion criteria that is too narrowly defined or certain important publications being inadvertently excluded. Moreover, the search terms, or databases may have not been as comprehensive or exhaustive as they should have been, risking key articles being overlooked.

There are also some biases in the sample of the study. The studies were carried out at different times throughout the pandemic. Some were carried out early, while people were still getting used to things, others later, after adjustments had been made, and some were under strict lockdowns that prevented children from going to school or more relaxed lockdowns that allowed them to go. It is also crucial to remember that different nations had varied lockdown restrictions. All these factors increased the risk of bias in the findings.

Additionally, the present research only looked at studies that were focused on the Covid-19 pandemic conditions. Therefore, it might be assumed that the study's post-pandemic ramifications might not be very significant. However, there have been pandemics before Covid and there are likely to be more in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to understand work-life conflict and remote work in usual circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 6-Conclusion

In conclusion, this scoping review aimed to outline the relationship between remote work and work life conflict under unusual circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The 14 articles examined yielded different results, however, there were also similar findings among the studies.

The results from the studies have indicated that remote work has a different impact on work-life conflict among employees. The key differences that were noted was the presence or absence of children at home, domestic responsibilities, support, and work demands. The findings clearly show that the presence of children at home causes conflict between the work and life domains which results to work-life conflict (Graham et al., 2021; Neo et al., 2022; Schieman et al., 2021). Role conflict and boundary blurring have been identified as key issues that causes this conflict (Nikmah et al., 2020; Adisa et al., 2021). Having to juggle increased work demands and family responsibilities was an issue for many employees which led to role conflict. The increased domestic responsibilities did not make remote work any easier for employees. Unfortunately, since domestic responsibilities tend to fall more on women, a lot of them experienced greater work-life conflict during this time as the increased work responsibilities caused them to neglect the increased domestic or family responsibilities. Only women who received support from their partners or family members during this time did not see an increase in work-life conflict, instead, they were able to spend more time with their families and develop work-life balance (Neo et al., 2022; Graham et al., 2021). Both men and women without children experienced a decrease in work-life conflict. These findings highlight the differences among employees which either influenced an increase or decrease in work-life conflict.

The studies also touched on issues of job insecurity, autonomy, and technology overload and how they influence work-life conflict. These are very important issues that can easily be overlooked when it comes to work-life conflict. The findings from the studies help us to better understand that job insecurity and technology overload can cause more work-life conflict in remote workers lives (Sedaroglu, 2021; Ghislieri et al., 2021). However, job autonomy can play a significant role in in addressing issues of work-life conflict as it gives employees more control over their lives since they are able to make decisions on how to appropriately manage their work.

Although some studies included theoretical frameworks to support the findings mentioned above, other studies did not use theoretical frameworks which is an issue. The frameworks that were used to support the findings included the inter-role conflict theory, job-demands resource theory, resource drain theory, accommodation theory, resource conservation theory, work-family border theory, role theory and boundary theory (Adisa et al., 2022; Garraio et al.,2022; Ghislieri et al, 2021; Kara et al., 2021; Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023; Schieman et al., 2021; Sedaroglu, 2021; Xu et al., 2022). These theories played a significant role in breaking down the findings in an understandable manner. This made it easier to better understand the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict.

This study has also been able to identify various research gaps which prompts the need for further research on this topic. Given that the Covid-19 pandemic has expedited the adoption of remote work, it is critical to comprehend the long-term effects of this practice on work-life conflict. Therefore, future research should continue to work towards unfolding the issues around remote work and work-life conflict but also the factors that could help address these issues and improve the relationship between remote work and work-life conflict for employees. Future investigations should include studies in developing or underdeveloped nations, such as those in Africa. Moreover, they should tackle other mediating and moderating variables that have not been explored. Additionally, more qualitative, and mixed method research approaches should be applied to future studies to help us understand the topic in more depth. Nonetheless, meaningful implications have been identified in the current study.

The findings from this study should be interpreted carefully since the studies were only conducted in certain countries and across only few cultures. Moreover, there are professions that were not explored which means that the findings should not just be generalised but rather interpreted accordingly. Moreover, the studies were conducted when the strict lockdown rules were put in place, most lockdown rules have been removed. As a result, we might anticipate different outcomes now.

Overall, this scoping review contributes significantly to the knowledge base on the impact of remote work on work-life conflict during unprecedented times such as when there is a pandemic. It highlights the significance of considering issues of work-life conflict as employees work remotely or even hybrid during difficult times. It also prompts researchers to explore this topic further by identifying gaps in research which alerts them of the direction they should take as they further unpack this topic. Practically, the present study helps organisations

to better understand issues around remote work and work-life conflict which can influence policy making within organisations. By developing and implementing appropriate policies based on the present study's findings, organisations will address remote workers work-life conflict issues which will in turn enhance productivity and create a healthy work environment for employees.

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Appendices

Appendix A- PRISMA checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	Cover page
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	2
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	7
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	2, 21,22
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	22-25
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	24-25
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	23
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	23-25
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	23-25
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	23
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	N/A
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	25
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	N/A
Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I^2) for each meta-analysis.	23-25

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	N/A
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	N/A
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	22
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	22-44
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	25
Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	27-41
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	27-41
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	N/A
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	N/A
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	27-53
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	59
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	60
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	N/A

Appendix B- List of excluded studies

No.	Author	Year of publication	Title of study
1	Möhring et al.	2021	The COVID-19 pandemic and subjective well-being: longitudinal evidence on satisfaction with work and family
2	Jamal et al.	2021	Work during COVID-19: assessing the influence of job demands and resources on practical and psychological outcomes for employees
3	Vyas et al.	2021	The impact of working from home during COVID-19 on work and life domains: an exploratory study on Hong Kong
4	Rahman et al.	2020	Working from Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Satisfaction, Challenges, and Productivity of Employees
5	Como et al.	2021	An exploration of work-life wellness and remote work during and beyond COVID-19
6	Tayal et al.	2022	The Struggle to Balance Work and Family Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Insights Based on the Situations of Working Women in Delhi
7	Pirzadeh & Lingard	2021	Working from Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Health and Well-Being of Project-Based Construction Workers
8	Sandoval-Reyes et al.	2021	Remote work, work stress, and work–life during pandemic times: A Latin America situation.
9	Shehadeh et al.	2022	Impact of Telework Strategy on Quality of Work Life during COVID-19 Pandemic" A Case Study of Orange Jordanian Telecommunication Company"

Appendix C- Ethics waiver letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

Registration number: REC-101114-044

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ethics clearance / waiver number:

29 June 2022

Re: Lihle Njoli (1744737)

To whom it may concern,

Lihle Njoli (1744737) is currently registered as a MA (Organisational Psychology) student at the School of Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This letter is to confirm that, at the time of writing, Lihle Njoli does not need ethical clearance for her study entitled 'Remote work and work-life conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic: A scoping review'. This decision has been reached based upon a description of the project supplied by Lihle Njoli to the School of Human and Community Development Ethics Committee, constituted as a subcommittee of the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), which has been evaluated by the subcommittee chair. This decision has then been ratified by the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). If, however, Lihle Njoli changes the methods of data collection and analysis for this project, this decision may no longer be valid. If such changes take place, this should be communicated to the School of Human and Community Development Ethics Committee.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Zaytoon Amod

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