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Effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling (Pty) Limited

Submitted by

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A research article submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

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I, Dadirai Patricia Sibanda, declare that this research article is my work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgments. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Dadirai Patricia Sibanda

Signed at - Alberton.

On the **28** day of **February 2023**

Dedication

I dedicate the complete document to my husband Peter and family – I salute you for the immeasurable support on the journey – you were the wind beneath my wings – you enabled me to reach for the sky.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following, without whose support, I would not have completed this audacious task.

To God the Almighty who gave me the strength and wings to fly when quitting seemed easy.

I am eternally grateful to Mr. Dennis Townsend for the financial support – this course would not have seen the light of the day without that financial support.

To Linde Material Handling South Africa Managers – Your contribution made my research possible.

To my work colleagues and friends, whose immense encouragement made this look easy.

To my supervisor, Doctor Manamela – Thank you for the support and direction in completing this document.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling South Africa (Pty) Limited. The study focused on understanding leadership experiences and behaviour toward remote working. In turn, examined the leadership theories to gain insight into how best to improve and attain effective leadership. The data of the study was collected using Phenomenology Theory Methodology. This study was exploratory in nature, as it allowed the flexibility of the researcher to probe for more responses. Interviews were conducted with eight participants from Linde Material Handling, and a thematic analysis was performed. The key findings from the research show that most managers at Linde Material Handling have accepted the norm of virtual working, which has improved their effectiveness. However, challenges with virtual work are still prevalent, and managers still need to overcome them. The research findings also show that effective leadership is supported by different elements of leadership theories and not only isolated to a particular leadership theory. To exploit the full potential of remote working, there should be a balance between enabling employees to operate autonomously and offering interventional help as may be required. Leaders can create a collaborative and supportive work environment that helps employees to thrive in a remote work situation by applying a customized approach to management.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Without agile and adaptive leadership, many organisations will be left behind and will not likely survive in the competitive, evolving world of work. Remote working has increased around the globe over the past years and has been accelerated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Many organisations have reaped many benefits of remote working, which include improved life balance (Delfino & van der Kolk, 2021a); however, they also witnessed the difficulties that come with it, which include leadership control and effectiveness (Delfino & van der Kolk, 2021b). Remote working, which can also be called working from home, is when employees do their job activities from remote locations outside corporate offices using technology to communicate with colleagues (Matli, 2020). In this research, the positive and negative effects of remote working on leadership and employees were examined and discussed. The focus of this study was to understand how remote working affects leadership effectiveness in companies, thereby improving our theoretical and practical understanding of the study of leadership by looking at theories of leadership and developing a conceptual model that helps the situation.

1.2. Background and Related Work

Although remote working is not new in most European countries ((Delfino & van der Kolk, 2021b), the continent also faced similar challenges that saw many organisations forced into implementing remote working when Covid-19 surfaced globally. As the world of work is changing, fuelled by technology, it was estimated in 2017 pre-Covid that, by 2020, 50% of workers in the United Kingdom would be working from home (Oleniuch, 2021). By 2027 the majority of United States employees will be working from home; this potentially reveals that remote working is no longer the future world of work but the work of today. Virtual working seemed to be growing in global corporations since 1992 despite the push of Covid-19 (Neufeld *et al.,* 2010).

For many employees, including leadership in Africa and South Africa, their first contact with remote working was during Covid-19 (Matli, 2020). In South Africa, a very small percentage was working from home, and the number increased significantly in

response to the pandemic (Matli, 2020). Because of these new set-ups, leadership, therefore, was presented with a conundrum as to how to deal with the usually on-site employees to home-based. The biggest challenge, therefore, that scholars are grappling with is how then managers manage offsite employees. It is, therefore, against this background that this study will focus on the application of effective leadership in a distant working environment and what kind of leadership style suits the best new work environment.

1.3. Problem Statement

Due to the increase in the adoption and usage of technology, traditional leadership seems to be outdated, and there is a need to adapt to the new leadership trends and agility. The problem that now exists is that leadership in South Africa is still hung up on the old ways of work and struggling to adapt to the new world of work, which is now remote working (Oleniuch, 2021). According to Neufeld et al. (2010), research on the impact of physical distance on leadership effectiveness is very little, and the effectiveness of leaders depends on their leadership style. Given this background, it is therefore important for the research to explore leadership trends and styles to find the impact of leadership effectiveness on remote working. Literature is also scant on how industry leaders are flexible in adopting new technologies in the South African metal industry (Oleniuch, 2021). Leadership has been too reliant on the traditional working models such that prior to Covid-19, it was almost untenable to even think of a work-from-home model. Managers have been too comfortable with onsite management styles, as fate would have it; Covid-19 disrupted the status quo and perhaps posed the greatest leadership challenges and discomfort.

1.4. Research objectives

- To investigate whether distance or remote working affects leadership effectiveness.
- To investigate the contribution of leadership theories to effective leadership during remote working.
- To recommend strategies for leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling.

1.5. Research questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness in a company in the Metal Industries South Africa. Accordingly, the main research problem is to explore the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness using a case study for Linde Material managers. The research questions will be presented in the following subsection.

Sub-Research questions

1. How does physical distance affect the application of effective leadership in remote working?
2. Do leadership theories contribute to the application of effective leadership?
3. What are the leadership strategies required to apply effective leadership?

1.6. Relevance Overview

Concerns about academic research being less useful for solving practical problems is on the rise (Rynes et al., 2001). To further expatiate the criticism, ideas from academics and practitioners are never used or implemented. Although there is a wealth of information on remote working globally, on the other hand, the existing research has not been exhausted and applicable in the African continent, including South Africa (Oleniuch, 2021), particularly on how it affects leadership effectiveness. There is a shortage of studies on leadership adoption of flexible working in South Africa as a country or metal industry; also, there is too much reliance on the traditional working model. This study, therefore, will add to the body of knowledge and ideas as to how to lead effectively in remote working environments. The target audience in this research is leaders of all ages in a company (Linde Material Handling) in the metal industry.

1.7. Scope

This research will cover the key effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness and employee responses. The study will look at all forms and levels of leadership and how they transition from traditional leadership to current trends of a new world of work.

The document will not focus on the pandemic and its effects, although a referral may be given to it.

1.8 Chapters layout

This study will be structured according to the SCQARE framework, which focuses on scenario analysis, problem identification, and theory development to improve leadership effectiveness in a remote working environment.

The acronym SCQARE stands for the framework's six elements (Ryan, 2008). The acronym is broken down as.

- Situation
- Concern
- Question
- Answer
- Rationale
- Evaluation

Situation

The Situation factor emphasizes how the research process takes place in the framework of an ongoing situation. The research problem itself needs to be placed inside its surroundings. Since every system operates within a system, recognizing the scenario also recognizes that the system under study exists within a situation or environment.

Concern

The Concern with the current quo typically forms the core of the research problem. The researcher's primary goal is changing the situation to intervene; this emphasis area is one of concern which is leadership effectiveness in a remote working environment.

Answer

What is recognized as the Answer is the practical response to the Concern. It is a suggested course of action meant to make the situation better.

Rational

The framework recognizes that a researcher must provide a tenable justification for the solution they propose to solve the concern. This demands that the Rationale, based on the Answer's systemic appropriateness, be given. The Answer's consideration of the system's surroundings while advising appropriate action is justified in the Rationale.

Evaluation

The framework examines the usefulness, utilitarianism, ethical concern, and relevance of the suggested theory. The solution's applicability to the current circumstance serves as the key indicator of relevance. The utility examines the theory's efficacy in addressing the expressed Worry. The degree of dependability of the procedure utilized, the naivety of the data used, the process' conformability, and the transferability of the solution to similar issue areas are all considered as part of the credibility analysis.

1.9 Conclusion

As the world moves more into the realm of remote working that was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, leadership agility is paramount. Therefore, the chapter gives a brief background of the study and problem statement and finally prepares the reader on what to expect in the whole research study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on the impact of remote working on leadership effectiveness. Existing literature is discussed, and a conceptual framework will be provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the analysis of existing leadership theories and how they impact leadership effectiveness and styles.

2.2 Significance of the literature review

The literature review is critical in the sense that it provides a background of the study (Van Zyl, 2014). Literature review helps to highlight that the researcher is not inventing the wheel but instead is building on existing knowledge. All published material in the form of journals undergoes rigorous review before being approved for publishing, and above that, goes through peer review processes; as a result, by building on that knowledge, one is afforded the opportunity to stand on the shoulders of giants whose work has been accepted and forms part of academic material available for use. It is from the literature that one can do the following:

- Formulate both the theoretical and conceptual framework.
- Provide empirical studies of the subject under review.
- Formulate the research methodology for the current study - sometimes, in conducting empirical studies; a researcher may find weaknesses that arose from the research methodology used and may be of the view that a different methodology would have produced different as well as acceptable results.
- Find gaps in the literature that the study itself will attempt to fill.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Azadeh *et al.* (2014) define a theoretical framework as a blueprint upon which various components are knitted together to make the structure and the vision of the study clearer. Grant *et al.* (2014) echo that a theoretical framework is there to provide a

grounding base or an anchor for the literature review, the methods, and the analysis. Considering the above, the researcher will, therefore, focus on two key concepts, which are remote working as well as effective leadership. On effective leadership, the focus will be on defining what leadership is all about, discussing effective leadership traits, and delving into leadership styles (theories), thereby getting into an understanding of how they create leadership effectiveness and perhaps the challenges of remote working.

Remote working is working away from the office in a convenient place or from home by use of information and communication technologies (Flores, 2019). Remote working has gained popularity globally over the yesteryears, and it is no longer an idea of physical location but a state of mind. Seventeen million United States American workforce relies on collaboration that is away from the office, and the trend is increasing internationally (Pierce & St. Amant, 2011). Flores (2019) reasons that besides remote working being accelerated by Covid-19, the advancement of modern technology has also played a major role.

2.3.1 Literature Review - Remote working

Scholars have recently started investigating and writing more about the virtual working space, and as accepted above, this has been accelerated by the sudden emergence of the global pandemic. Ruzgar (2018) suggests that in such an environment, there is a need for the implementation of task-oriented leadership and perhaps relation-oriented. (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016) suggests that these are relevant in handling complex virtual challenges. According to Delfino & van der Kolk (2021a), the complex situation was further complicated by the need to invite the use of complicated digital tools and digital platforms in an attempt to bridge the gap created by the physical distance. Having said that, the researcher takes this opportune moment to discuss task-oriented leadership and relation-oriented leadership as they have been suggested to be ideal for handling a virtual work environment. After exploring these, the researcher will travail in complexities or challenges with virtual working but, more specifically, leadership effectiveness at Linde Material handling, which is in the metal industry.

Although the study around remote working is still starting to gain momentum, those that have been written are of the view that task-oriented leadership could be the best leadership approach to lead in remote working situations. Task-oriented leadership is, according to (Tabernero et al., 2009), a leadership style that is goal oriented. In other words, it focuses more on outcomes rather than processes. The following characteristics are considered critical for the implementation and success of task-oriented leadership,

- Setting clear objectives – to avoid ambiguity.
- Offering guidance -subordinates perform better when mentored or coached.
- Implementation of a rewards system - a way of motivating employees
- Issuing of deadlines and time frames for delivery
- Delegation of assignments

For employees, it is critical to create a social contract, a phenomenon advanced by (Hardwick, 2011) in his social contract theory. To borrow from this theory, effective leadership may be achieved if the leader and employee relationship is intact.

According to Flores (2019, pp 134-138), “modern technology has been a major player in flourishing the competitive environment of workplaces.” In addition, the modern workforce is increasingly mobile, collaborative, and dynamic and comprised of multi-generations, all with different communication preferences. This advancement in technology has become an enabler of work from home environment. Flores (2019) adds that working from home presents several advantages, but this comes at a cost. In as much as there are advantages to working from home, there are disadvantages, some of which are directly linked to effective leadership.

According to Flores (2019), working from home has a negative effect on employees. Being isolated because of the absence of work colleagues that one on one may be used to interacting with may, cause loneliness and depression due to the absence of the usual face-to-face interactions that normally happen in a normal work environment. In addition to this, because the concept of remote working is not a very common phenomenon with leaders or managers, there is still a level of discomfort and mistrust on the side of leaders. Because the study of remote working is still in its infancy, the researcher will explore other challenges that come with remote working.

2.3.2 Literature Review on Leadership and Leadership Theories

The subject of leadership has been a subject of debate over time since it started in the early 1800s (Klingborg et al., 2006). The writer adds that the debate has always been on the best way to define what it is and perhaps what it is not and that early leadership perceptions centered on control and centralization of power and nothing more. Sharma and Jain (2013:309), cited in (Makhmoor, 2018), suggests that leadership is the ability to influence the accomplishment of an objective. However, the researcher will, in this study, lean more toward the definition of Cronin & Genovese (Cronin & Genovese, 2020). The reason is that the writers, in their definition of leadership, integrate almost all facets or traits expected in an effective leader by suggesting that leadership is maximising follower potential, influencing followers, and communicating effectively and efficiently to achieve a common goal. This definition speaks to the quality or nature of leadership pedigree required to manage a remote working environment. Various leadership styles or theories that are critical to remote working will be discussed, which are transformational, servant, authentic, transactional, and spiritual leadership.

2. 3.2.1 Transformational leadership,

sometimes known as charismatic leadership, possess two critical traits that produce what is called effective leadership. The two critical traits are, according to (Klingborg et al., 2006), better decision-making and fostering teamwork. Ostapenko et al. (2022) add that transactional leadership being one of the most prominent leadership styles, helps to enhance motivation, morale, and performance of followers. Adding to the discussion, García-Morales et al. (García-Morales et al., 2008) echo that a transformational leader stimulates and transforms followers to achieve extraordinary goals. To be able to achieve leadership effectiveness in this context, (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013) suggests an effective transformational leader must possess the following,

I. Charisma – refers to the behaviour of the leaders that makes followers identify with the leader based on their stand on moral values.
II. Inspirational motivation – refers to the ability to instill and carry the vision to the extent that followers buy into it.
III. Intellectual stimulation – refers to the ability to challenge difficult situations and be able to encourage followers, and keep a team spirit flowing.
IV. Personal and individual attention –a leader's ability to give attention to his followers and be able to help them when they are in need.

2.3.3.2 Servant leadership

Servant leadership theory is another leadership theory that is critical in remote working environments. First coined by Greenleaf in 1977, cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016), it was predicated on the concept of servanthood. According to (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016), "servant leaders put the needs, well-being, and welfare of followers first." Liden (2008), cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016), adds that servant leadership identifies integrity as central to servant leadership. The following traits are prevalent in servant leadership, and scholars believe that these traits are a necessary ingredient to achieving effective leadership Liden (2008) cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016)

- Emotional healing refers to the act of exhibiting compassion for followers' issues.
- Empowering includes being able to encourage followers.
- Creating value for the community refers to the idea of corporate citizenship,
- Assisting followers to grow through being amenable to suggestions.
- Servanthood refers to a desire to be known by followers as an individual who serves others first.
- Leaders should have concrete skills to assist followers.
- A servant leader needs to assist as well as be able to be of assistance to followers.
- Being able to adhere to ethical values and morals.
- Leaders must be able to meet the needs of subordinates.

2.3.3.3 Authentic Leadership

Another leadership style that is important for the effective implementation of remote working is called authentic leadership. Emuwa (2011) and Yasir & Mohamad (2016) note that authentic leadership is a recent phenomenon that emerged due to an emergency or as a response to unending corporate scandals. Marsh (2013) asserts that authentic leaders must act in a way that considers values and morals to gain the trust of followers. As defined by Avolio & Gardner (2005, pp 120-132), authentic leadership is "the root construct that serves as the base for all forms of effective leadership." According to Walumbwa (2008), as a pattern of leadership that draws upon and promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive climate. Critically important are the following components of servant leadership that ground servant leaders (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016).

- Self-awareness – being aware of oneself and how one's moral standing would affect those that follow them (Marsh, 2013).
- Relational transparency – refers to the ability to be an open book and be able to share information with followers.
- Balanced processing -leaders should be able to objectively analyse all relevant information before making any decisions (Walumbwa, 2008) cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016).
- The internal moral standing of a leader is informed by the leader's personal moral convictions and values (Gill and Caza, 2015) cited in (Marsh, 2013)

2.3.3.4 Ethical leadership

This is also a leadership style or theory that adds to leadership effectiveness. According to Brown and Trevino (2005), cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016), ethical leadership is anchored on two components. These are the moral person and the moral manager. In addition, ethical leaders have a positive influence on followers and have the following characteristics to be effective (Shah, 2018).

- The leader must exhibit the culture, mission, and vision of the organization.
- The leader must not be selfish and avoid the temptation of advancing personal agendas.
- The leader's call for ethical behaviour ought to be a lived experience. In other words, leaders must practice what they purport to stand for.

- Provide solutions to conflicts - it is a common cause that, repeatedly, conflicts arise, and leaders must have the ability to resolve them expeditiously and fairly.

Ethical leadership is very critical in fostering organizational success. Although there is debate about whether an ethical leader can also be effective, it is noteworthy to advance that effective leadership is vital for the success of virtual teams (Shah, 2018).

Added to the above leadership styles are **transactional leadership and spiritual leadership,** which the researcher considers to be saturated with critical characteristics that inform effective leadership.

2.3.3.5 Transactional Leadership

According to Odumeru & Ifeanyi (2013), transactional leadership, also known as managerial leadership, “focuses on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance. The leader in transactional leadership focuses on compliance and maintaining the status quo and does not seek to make any changes to existing systems. Characteristics of transactional leadership are,

- Leaders work within the organizational culture.
- Employees achieve objectives through rewards and punishment.
- Leaders motivate employees by appealing to their self-interest.
- Maintenance of the status quo.

Although criticized for being too rigid, it does make a substantial contribution to the organizational effectiveness of leaders.

2.3.3.6 Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership makes a valuable contribution to effective leadership. According to Fry et al. (2017, pp. 64-72), spiritual leadership “includes the values, attitudes, and the behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership.” (Brown & Treviño, 2006) add that spiritual leadership includes religious aspects and value-based

approaches, and such leaders are ethical, compassionate, and treat others with respect.

Although all the discussed leadership styles converge in approach to make an effective leader, they are not without weaknesses. For transformational leadership, Yukl, 1999, cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016) points out that its greatest weakness is that proponents of the theory do not explicitly identify any situation where this type of leadership is detrimental. Stevens (1995), cited in (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013), added that there is a form of bias in favor of top management that this style exhibits. As mentioned earlier, transactional leadership is said to be too rigid in maintaining organizational status quo. Spiritual leadership has been criticised for not being explicitly clear about the relationship between membership commitment and productivity (Fry et al., 2017), while Walumbwa (2008), cited in (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016), suggests that authentic leadership tends to focus more on the leader behaviour without the organization. Despite these weaknesses, these leadership styles remain critical in informing effective leadership and can be used as a bedrock upon which future developments of effective leadership can be built on, and the researcher will in this study make use of these leadership styles to create a model for effective leadership during remote working.

Although there is some overlapping that happens between characteristics of the different ethical leadership styles and characteristics of effective leadership, it is necessary for this study that the said characteristics be explored as they speak directly to the requirements of an effective leader, and in this context one leading in a remote environment.

Patten & Newhart (2017) characterizes effective leadership as:

Confidence	The act of self-belief
Skills and ability	Being knowledgeable with problem-solving abilities
Commitment and passion	Being dedicated to a cause
accountability	Taking responsibility

Delegation and Empowerment	Being able to trust the team to make decisions
Creativity and innovation	Ability to create or come up with ideas
Empathy	The ability to understand other people's feelings
Honesty and integrity	Being honest, consistent, and uncompromising
Empathy	Ability to understand other people's feelings
Resilience	Ability to withstand pressure
Emotional intelligence	Ability to monitor one's emotions and others
Humility	Sense of self unworthy, modest, not holding self in high regard
Transparency	Has nothing to hide

2.3.3.7 Connected Leadership (Hayward, 2016)

Recently, a researcher Simon Hayward, writer of the book Connected Leadership, has come up with the theory or concept of connected leadership. According to Hayward (2016), this leadership approach is meant to deal with present-day complex and volatile business environments. Hayward (2016, pp 44-49) notes that "Connected leadership marks a pronounced shift from the old model of hierarchical command and control to a new model of leading through influence. It relies on effective communication and connection across the organization based on a consistent set of assumptions and beliefs".

Listed below are factors or components of connected leadership that are critical in achieving desired results, and in this case, these will assist Linde Material Handling in inculcating effective leadership. According to Hayward, there is a need for,

- Purpose and direction - the need for a shared common vision and goals within the business ensures that all and sundry are pulling in one direction with a unity of purpose.

- Authenticity – the need for leaders who are true to themselves and to their followers leads to encouragement among followers and, in return, creates trust in the business.
- Dissolved decision-making -in old traditional leadership or management, one of the criticisms was that of bureaucracy that tends to slower decision-making due to centralization of power, but this theory decentralizes decision-making, which enables leaders to be effective in their roles.
- Collaborative ability -allows close working of teams to complete tasks due to the ability to share information, ideas, and knowledge.
- Agility - flexibility in today's complex environment is critical. An organization that can easily adapt to changing environments or technology has the edge over others, and this makes leaders of such organizations effective.

A closer look at this concept suggests that connected leadership is the in thing. However, the researcher will approach this study with a view of consolidating the good of all leadership theories discussed, as the believer believes the field of leadership is still evolving, and it will be suicidal to rely on one concept when it comes to effective leadership.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

According to Adom et al. (2018), a conceptual framework is a synthesis of how to present a phenomenon and helps with mapping out the actions required in carrying out the study. Below is a conceptual framework showing the concepts that are critical in assisting the researcher in achieving stated objectives. The framework reveals the cause and effect of remote working.

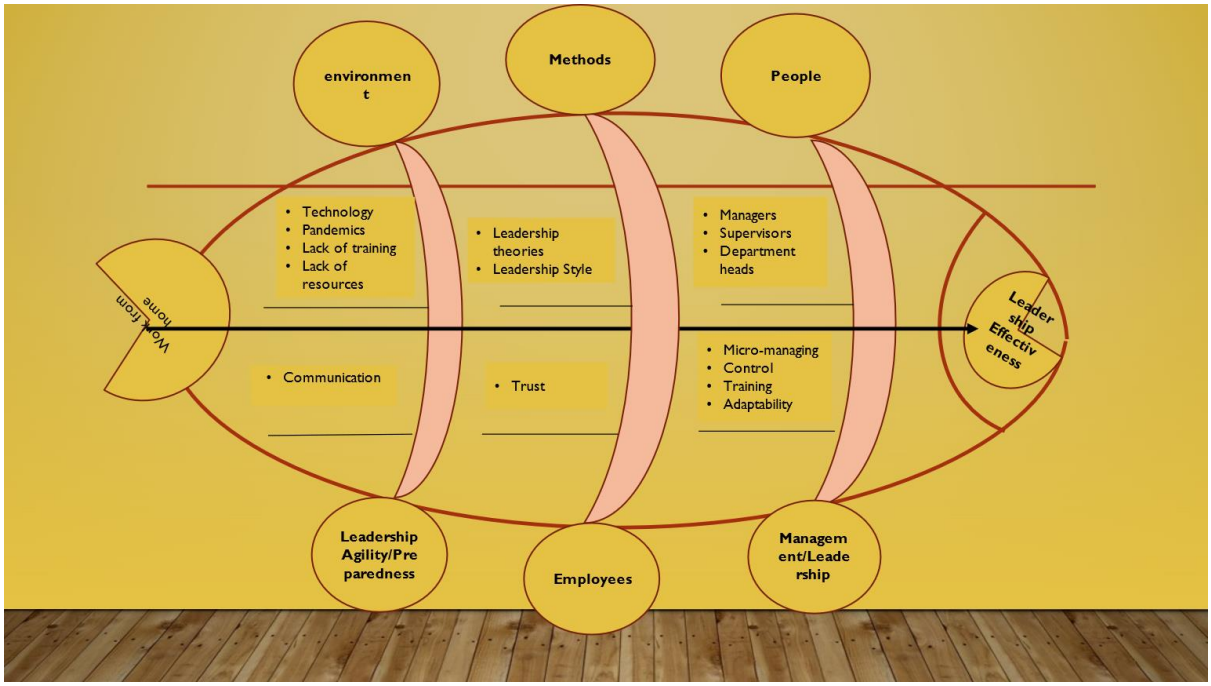


Figure 1 - ***Fish Bone Presentation of the Conceptual Framework, Adom et al. (2018)***

The fishbone diagram looks like a skeletal fish; it was invented by Kaoru Ishikawa in 1960 (Juran, 1999). The concept is that of cause and effect, which helps identify possible root causes of a particular problem. The fishbone does not give us solutions, but it gives us ideas on where to look. In the framework above, our study is about leadership effectiveness, possible causes of leadership ineffectiveness towards remote working, and how leadership effectiveness can be improved. The framework of various theories of leadership was examined to assess their relevance in improving leadership effectiveness. Drivers of remote working, such as environment and technology, were considered in the literature review, also how these contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, literature relevant to the subject has been reviewed in general. Although there is a vast amount of literature on effective leadership in general, there

is little in the direction of effective leadership in this specific context of remote working on leadership effectiveness. Because of the general approach that writers have taken on the subject under study – it has become evident that a generalized approach to effective leadership in remote working relationships will not assist us in providing a more succinct solution and the institutional framework under review, that is, the metal industry. The goal, therefore, of the conceptual framework given is to provide a multi-pronged approach grounded on theoretical understanding of the specific industry with a strong appreciation of existing institutional realities within the metal industry. Lastly, in this chapter, leadership definitions have been explored, and the study will use all meaningful contributions of many scholars to zoom into the type of leadership styles available in the literature.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks and looks at various concepts that are related to remote working and leadership effectiveness. The sections also discussed the research paradigm; research approaches or strategies, research design, data collection, data analysis, research quality ethics, limitations, and delimitation of the study.

3.2 Research Methodology

Research is a systematic activity that investigates and studies the work of others to establish new ideas and reach new conclusions (Van Zyl, 2014). Zyl further explains that high-quality research can also be based on many attributes; for example, among others, it is doable, incremental, connected to logical rationale, and tied to theory.

3.3 Research Paradigm

There has been a paradigm shift with time in research methodology approaches, according to Kuhn; the shift is from positivism to post-positivism. Kuhn (1962 cited in (Ridha, 2017) described the word paradigm as meaning a philosophical way of thinking; the word describes the researcher's basic assumption and worldview. Dammak (2015) concurs with Kuhn about the researcher's worldview, that paradigm reflects beliefs about the world one lives in. He further adds that it is important for a researcher to explain and describe three aspects of the paradigm elements: ontology (How the nature of reality is), epistemology (ways of the researcher knowing the reality), and methodology (data collection methods).

There are mainly two research paradigms that are mainly used in research which are the positivist and the interpretive research paradigm. According to Rahi (2017), the

positivist paradigm uses scientific methods and experiments in order to produce knowledge, while an interpretive paradigm deals with understanding concepts and endeavoring to understand the meaning of social phenomena and conversations with people. It is through these conversations that research interprets in an interpretive paradigm, a social setting, and makes meanings and ideas. This research used the interpretive paradigm, as the researcher sought to understand lived experiences and, out of them, be able to understand and possibly draw meanings and theories. Summarized, therefore interpretive paradigm uses an inductive approach, otherwise known as inferences, while positivist uses a deductive approach, and as indicated earlier, a deductive approach was not appropriate for this study.

3.4 Research Approaches

There are three approaches to research, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. The most used of the above are qualitative and quantitative research approaches, while mixed methods are a combination of the latter (Patten & Newhart, 2017).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research stresses the focuses on the constructed nature of reality and the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. On the other hand, quantitative studies deal with the

measurement of the relationship between variables

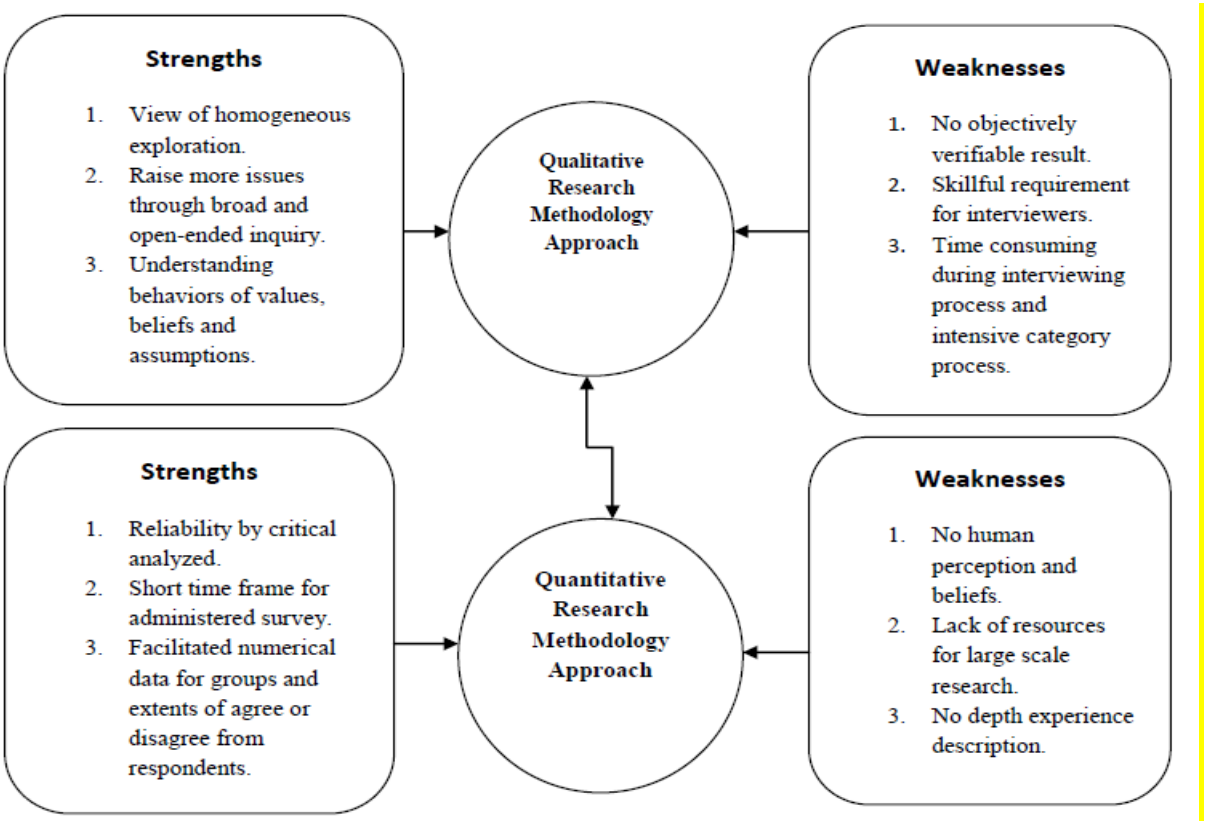


Figure 2: (Choy, 2014) :101

This study adopted or made use of the qualitative approach mainly because the researcher wished to establish meanings out of the data collected. It is from the data collected that the research was able to socially construct a reality of the situation and formulate a theory from the study, unlike a positivist approach, which looks at objective reality.

3.4.1 Research Design

According to Dantzker M L (2012), a design is a plan or strategy used to gather information or data. The study followed an exploratory approach rather than a descriptive or explanatory approach due to the fact exploratory research is more flexible and allows research questions of all types to deepen understanding of a social construct.

3.4.2 Target Population

A target population is a more refined group of people extracted from a larger population (Asiamah et al., 2017). The studied group was made up of participants with attributes of importance and significance. This study targeted senior and middle managers that managed employees that worked virtually at Linde Material handling.

3.4.3 Sampling

Sampling means selecting a subset of the population (Asiamah et al., 2017); this selected subset of the population represents the larger population. A non-probability sampling strategy was used for this study. According to Rahi (2017), it is “the sampling approach in which the chance or probability of each unit selected is not known or confirmed.” The researcher made use of convenience sampling, as this has a cost advantage, and the participants were in proximity (Rahi, 2017). The researcher used a sample of 8 senior and middle managers out of 35 employees at Linde Material Handling.

3.4.4. Data collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured interviews, because they are more powerful in probing participants for further answers. An interview guide will be used to guide participants to mirror on challenges of effectively leading in remote working environments.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study utilized qualitative inquiry, specifically using thematic analysis. This method was used to analyse data in seeking to understand leadership experiences, thoughts, and behaviours (Kiger & Varpio, 2020) towards remote working. A six-step was used in the thematic analysis: familiarising with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and lastly, report writing.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

The instrument used for analysis is semi-structured interviews; the focus was given to themes that satisfy research objectives and understanding remote working and leadership effectiveness. An interview guide was handed out to participants.

Thematic analysis is a tool used to analyse qualitative data. It analyses present themes or patterns that pertain to the data in question (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). This method of analysis is not simply summarising data but interpreting and making sense of it; the goal is to identify themes, for example, patterns in the data that are important and interesting. Therefore, thematic analysis was the best method of analysis for this study because, from the set of data, it was able to analyse opinions, behaviours, and experiences by detecting and identifying factors and issues that were caused by participants. The analysis was done by closely analysing the present data and identifying topics, ideas, and patterns that were repeated in the data, thereby developing common themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), cited in Kiger & Varpio (2020), there are two levels of themes, namely Semantic and Latent. The semantic approach disregards the underlying meaning of data and focuses on identifying data and focuses on identifying themes that are clearly stated and written. Themes are identified at a semantic level and nothing beyond that. In contrast, the Latent level derives meaning from underlying ideas and assumptions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The writer used both levels of themes to analyse data critically.

The researcher adopted the six steps of TA (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Step 1

Familiarisation – The researcher must deeply understand their data and have a thorough understanding of the overview of it, just like any other qualitative analysis. Data was deeply understood.

Step 2

Coding – The researcher highlighted certain important and interesting information or sentences of text in the data to describe views. Codes helped the researcher to record both a conceptual and a semantic reading of the data. After reading the text, the researcher compiled all the information into groups that were coded. With the help of these codes, the researcher quickly summarized the key ideas and terminologies that were present throughout the data.

Step 3

Identifying and Generating Themes - The researcher analysed the codes created and looked for meaningful patterns that would draw themes that were relevant to the research questions. Codes were combined to make themes because themes were broader. Irrelevant and vague codes were removed at this stage, and only helpful themes were recorded.

Step 4

Reviewing Themes – The researcher checked themes against the coded information and entire data. The researcher also checked for any missing clues and if there was a need to change them. At this stage, there is a possibility of splitting, combining, and discarding themes.

Step 5

Defining and Naming Themes – This step requires the researcher to analyse each theme and articulate how it brings meaning to the data. Clear and understandable defining and naming of themes were done.

Step 6

Writing up – In the last step, the researcher put up data analysis at the end. Writing up a theme analysis involves an introduction that lays out the study topic, goals, and strategy, just like any other academic text. Lastly, the researcher described how the themes came up and how often. In conclusion, takeaways were given to show whether the analysis had answered the research questions.

3.6. Validity and Reliability of Methodology

Research must meet certain minimum requirements to be acceptable. It must pass the test of Validity and reliability. Validity refers to the test of accuracy and truthfulness (Brink, 1993). This is because a conclusion must be drawn from the research findings; as a result, the processes leading to the findings must not be questionable. The research was conducted based on findings of genuine critical investigation of all data. Not only is validity and reliability critical, but also credibility. Credibility is the true value of the information derived from the study (Smith & Ragan, 2005). To mitigate the risk associated with credibility, the researcher did the following:

- Accounted for personal bias.
- Was meticulous in record keeping.
- Engaged with other researchers.
- Solicited participant comments on whether their responses were captured correctly according to the way they wanted them to be captured.

3.6.1 Validity and Reliability Trustworthiness

Research Quality issues

A study must pass the test of credibility and authenticity to achieve the minimal criteria for being deemed good research with results that are acceptable. According to Lincoln and Guba cited in Maxwell, (1992), qualitative research has sufficient guiding principles to guard against, misrepresentation and fallacious conclusions. These criterions are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

To achieve trustworthiness in this research, the following criteria was considered:

1. **Credibility** – Lincoln and Guba 1995, cited in Whittemore et al., (2001) refers credibility as an effort to establish confidence in the truth of the findings. The method of investigation in this study was recorded interviews, the researcher ensured that the outcome of the investigation is true interpretation of participants meaning. Sample size was adequate for the size of the business and the number of managers, although investigations could have been done on a larger scale including more companies in the sample size.

2. **Transferability** – According to Bryman et al., (1988) transferability is the degree to which similar outcomes can be discovered by unaffiliated researchers. For conduct and experiences to have significance for any other reader, the researcher must go beyond simply describing behaviour and experiences and instead focus on context. This is significant because, even if other managers at LMH chose not to participate in the study, the study's conclusions should still meet that criterion.

3. **Dependability** – According to Maxwell, (1992), dependability has to do with the capacity to arrive at the same conclusions in related conditions. According to (Brown, 2008), this is the degree to which research findings can be duplicated using comparable people in comparable settings. The supply of an audit trail, which discloses documents, procedures, and conclusions, might increase dependability. The researcher understands results are subject to change as situations change. The world of work continues to evolve, thereby people's views are forced to change.

4. **Confirmability -** The degree to which the results of research endeavour can be corroborated by experts in the subject is referred to as the confirmability criterion. This criterion's main objective is to make sure that your biases are kept to a minimum, and ideally removed, so they don't taint the outcomes of the data analysis. The researcher made effort to ensure that the work's conclusions reflect the manager's experiences and ideas rather than his or her own traits and preferences. According to Glaser, (2004), this criterion encapsulates the researcher's attempts to make sure that readers of their results can apply the research's findings to their own contexts by providing sufficient contextual information about it.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical behavior is very critical in research. The research aid paid attention to issues of bias in sample selection, collection of data, and population representation. The researcher ensured the following:

- Voluntary participation -participants were not forced.
- Informed concern – participants had knowledge of the purpose of the research.
- The researcher was honest and trustworthy.
- Guaranteed participants' privacy and confidentiality of information obtained.

3.8. Limitations of the Study

- The study was supposed to involve 11 managers out of 45 employees. Ten employees were retrenched during the study, in which two managers were included. Therefore, only eight managers were interviewed out of 35 employees.

3.9 Delimitations

- The researcher used multiple people to code data to maintain objectivity and avoid bias in the analysis.
- Participants were asked to review the results to eliminate bias.
- Consideration of alternative explanations was done to ensure stronger interpretations.

3.10 Conclusion

The full study involved (eight) senior and middle managers interviewed, lasting about 10 minutes. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim. This was helpful as a frame of reference for the interview. The discussion focused on experiences, trust, management style, and how they managed employees. Participants understood the subject of the study and that the recorded interviews were for the purposes of the study only. The study was ethically approved by WITS University.

Chapter 4 Discussion and Analysis of Findings

4.1. Introduction

The rise of virtual work has become a common trend in many organisations in recent times. With the global pandemic and the need for social distancing, many organisations have been forced to adopt virtual work models to remain operational. Working remotely has become an essential aspect of the modern workforce, and as such, understanding the intricacies of virtual work has become an integral part of organisational research. The transition from traditional work models to virtual work has created significant changes in workplace dynamics, communication, and employee management, thus creating new challenges and opportunities for leaders.

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with virtual work, specifically in the context of leadership effectiveness. The study focused on a company in the metal industry of South Africa as a case study. Through semi-structured interviews with the personnel in managerial roles, the study aimed to explore the perception of the effectiveness of leadership in virtual work environments, as well as the strategies used to monitor and manage remote workers. The study will provide valuable insights into the role of leadership in virtual work environments and contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of virtual work. The findings of this study may be useful for organisations looking to improve their virtual work practices and for researchers interested in exploring leadership effectiveness in virtual work environments.

The research employed a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews to gather data. The data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and themes in the data to draw conclusions and make recommendations. To ensure that the study fully addresses its objectives, the study objectives will again be reiterated.

The study questions are:

- To investigate whether distance or remote working affects leadership effectiveness?

- To investigate the contribution of leadership theories to effective leadership during remote working.
- To recommend strategies for leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling.

4.2. Backgrounds of the participants

The initial inquiry in the interview guide asked about the participant's job title and departmental role. Bitsch (2014), Suggests that providing biographical information about participants enhances the transferability of the study, allowing interested parties to relate to the information presented. The inclusion of such information also helps in assessing the extent to which the study reflects real-life circumstances (Ndwandwa, 2016)

For this study, senior and line managers from Linde Material Handling (Pty) Ltd metal industry in South Africa were selected as participants. These individuals were chosen because of their involvement in decision-making processes in their respective departments. While some participants had less than five years of experience with the company, the majority had more than five years of managerial experience throughout their careers. This was significant as it indicated their level of involvement in the decision-making processes of the company. The inclusion of participants from various business units was important as it added value to the research by providing insights from a diverse range of experiences.

4.3. Findings regarding the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness in a company in the metal industry of South Africa

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at a company in the metal industry of South Africa. The main question of the study asked if remote working affects leadership effectiveness. The findings of the primary objective are as follows:

4.3.1. Findings regarding the primary objective of the study

The study used both the semantic and the latent approaches to derive the themes. Using these two approaches, six themes were identified, which are:

i. Benefits of remote working
ii. Concerns about remote working
iii. Remote working is a new norm
iv. Management of remote working
v. The mixed impact of remote working
vi. Acceptance of remote working

Theme 1: Benefits of remote working

The theme was derived from the responses given by participants 1, 6, and 8. The excerpts from the participants' statements that are linked to the theme are provided below:

Participant 1: "Personally, I feel that currently, we are getting more work done at home."

Participant 6: "It helps certain people with work-life balance, less stressed."

Participant 8: "Working from home allows me the freedom to work comfortably and gives me family life balance."

From these excerpts, the participants perceive a positive correlation between remote working and leadership effectiveness. The finding is consistent with the views of (García-Morales et al., 2008), who find that remote working has led to improvements in solving problems and virtual cultures of trust.

Theme 2: Concerns about remote working

The study also finds that although there are positive aspects of working from home, nonetheless, it also comes with its own pitfalls – the negative aspects. The theme was derived from the responses that were given by participants 2 and 6. The excerpts below provide the participants' statements linked to the themes:

Participant 2: "Working from home permanently is not a good idea."

Participant 6: "There could be a lot of distractions working from home and a breakdown in communication."

The participants in the discussion expressed their worries about the prospect of working from home. However, it appears that these concerns may not have a significant or lasting impact on leadership effectiveness. One participant, Participant 2, expressed concerns about the idea of permanently working from home. This suggests that if the option to work from home were removed, the participant would see improvements in the way work is done and would no longer have concerns. Meanwhile, the sixth participant talked about issues related to distractions and communication breakdowns while working from home. This is a common theme found in studies like the one conducted by (Giguari, 2020).

Overall, it seems that although some participants are worried about working from home, these concerns are not necessarily permanent or insurmountable. Additionally, the issues raised by the participants regarding communication and distractions are not new and have been documented in prior studies like the one done by (Al- Rfou, 2021). Nonetheless, it is important to address these concerns to ensure that leadership effectiveness is not negatively impacted by the shift to remote work.

Theme 3: Remote working as a new norm

The participants also admitted that remote working might be the norm that employees and employers should get used to going forward. The theme was derived from the responses of participants 1, 3, and 7, as illustrated in the excerpt below.

Participant 1: "It actually became a norm of life."

Participant 3: "Most of the staff at Linde have been working from home since the COVID times."

Participant 7: "Working from home is the world of work today."

The participants concede that working from home has become a “norm of life” since Covid-19 times. The participants, who are in managerial posts, have generally accepted that remote working is the new norm, which may lead to an increase in their effectiveness in the discharge of their duties. Studies such as (Buckley et al., 2003), (Ely & Thomas, 2020), as well as (Newman & Ford, 2021) found empirical evidence

that should leaders accept certain actions as the new norm, their effectiveness increases.

Theme 4: Management of remote working

Although working from home may be the new norm since Covid-19 times, however, there are reservations that we cannot apply a blanket approach. Instead, there are only certain people who can work from home depending on seniority and nature of work, which one reports to, the managers approach as well as self-autonomy. The theme was derived from responses by participants 2, 5, and 8, with excerpts shown below.

Participant 2: "Only certain people are able to work from home."

Participant 5: "It depends on the people who are reporting to you and how you try to manage them."

Participant 8: "Freedom to work comfortably" (implies self-management)

The second participant objects to the idea of everyone working from home. Only certain people can work from home. The participant brought up the issue of the ability to work from home, which may be capacitated by skills and proficiency in the ability to work from home. There is also an issue of being able to work comfortably, which may, by latent approach, imply the ability to apply self-management. The participants feel that those employees with a degree of autonomy are better suited for remote work compared to those who lack self-autonomy. The theme corroborates with findings from the works of (Gazit, Zaidman, & Van Dijk, 2021).

Theme 5: Mixed impact of remote working

Remote working has a mixed impact on leadership effectiveness. The theme was derived from findings by participants 1, 5, and 6. The excerpts below illustrate the responses.

Participant 1: "The phone interrupts you, but still, you've got that contact. But the normal office gossip? Nothing about that."

Participant 5: "It does have a negative impact and also have a positive impact as well."

Participant 6: "Remote working has its pros and cons."

As the adage goes, “nothing is perfect under the sun”; the same applies to remote working. Every coin has two sides. Remote working has a positive impact as well as a negative impact on effectiveness, just as (Gigi & Sangeetha, 2021) explains. The informal groups at work, which may be distracted by informal conversations, are given no room under remote working, which may be the positive side.

Theme 6: Acceptance of remote working

Since the employees started remote working during the Covid-19 times, it seems there is acceptance of remote working among them. The theme was derived from the responses of participants 3, 4, and 7, which are shown in the following excerpts.

Participant 3: "Linde Material Handling hasn't got an issue at all, with staff members working from home."

Participant 4: "In a nutshell. No problem whatsoever."

Participant 7: "We cannot run away from it. Working from home is the world of work today."

There are no issues arising from the staff members working from home, and there is an admittance that working from home is the world of work today. This is also supported by a literature review by (Oleniuchi, 2021).

4.3.1.1. Summary finding(s) regarding the main objective.

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at a company in the metal industry of South Africa. The themes led to a number of findings regarding the primary objective of the study.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the way people work, with the themes leading to the conclusion that remote working has become a new norm. The participants conceded that remote working had become a “norm of life” since the pandemic hit. The study focused on managers, who have had to adjust to a new way of working, and how this has affected their effectiveness in their respective positions.

The study found that managers have generally accepted remote working as the new norm, which may lead to an increase in their effectiveness in the discharge of their duties. Empirical evidence from studies and also in the literature review supports this finding, showing that when leaders accept certain actions as the new norm, their effectiveness increases.

While some participants expressed concerns about working from home, these concerns may not have a long-lasting impact on leadership effectiveness. For instance, one participant expressed concern about working from home “permanently,” implying that if working-from-home schedules were withdrawn, they would see an improvement in the discharge of their duties and therefore have no concerns.

Despite these concerns, the study notes that most participants were generally accepting of remote working as the new norm. This acceptance has led to a change in the way managers approach their work, with many reporting increased efficiency and productivity. The study also notes that managers who were already accustomed to remote working before the pandemic had an advantage, as they were able to adapt more quickly to the new norm.

In addition to the benefits of remote working, the study highlights some of the challenges that managers face in this new working environment. One of the main challenges is the need for effective communication and collaboration among team members. Managers must find new ways to communicate with their teams and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Another challenge is maintaining a work-life balance, as remote working can blur the boundaries between work and home life. Participants in the study noted the importance of setting boundaries and creating a dedicated workspace to help maintain work-life balance.

The study also stresses the need for managers to be more flexible and adaptive in their leadership style when working remotely. They need to be able to manage their teams effectively without being physically present and must be willing to try new approaches to motivate and engage their teams. This kind of adaptiveness is supported in the literature review with one of the leadership theories, Connected Leadership, written by (Hayward, 2016).

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a new norm of remote working for many industries. While there may be some concerns about remote working, most managers have accepted it as the new norm, which has led to an increase in their effectiveness in the discharge of their duties. However, there are still challenges that managers need to overcome, such as effective communication and maintaining work-life balance. By being flexible and adaptive in their leadership style, managers can successfully lead their teams in this new working environment.

4.3.2. Findings regarding the secondary research questions of the study

The study's secondary research questions read:

- How does physical distance affect the application of effective leadership in remote working?
- Do leadership theories contribute to the application of effective leadership?
- What are the leadership strategies required to apply effective leadership?

In line with the secondary objectives, several questions were asked in relation to the objectives. The following sub-sections discuss the findings regarding each of the research questions.

4.3.2.1. How does physical distance affect the application of effective leadership in remote working?

The first secondary research question was linked to questions 5, 9, and 10. Question 5 asked about the manager's awareness of how their employees carry out their job when working virtually, while question 9 asked how distance affects the effectiveness of the leaders in the discharge of their duties. Question 10 asked if working virtually disconnects employees from their duties and the organisation. Of these questions, only question 9 was more explicitly asked in relation to the question, which justified the use of the semantic approach in deriving the themes. Since questions 5 and 10 were implicitly related to the research question, the latent approach was then used to derive the themes. Four themes were obtained in line with this research question.

Theme 1: Social Isolation

The social isolation theme was derived through the latent approach from responses to questions 10, and 5 and the semantic approach from question 9. Several responses to question 10 mentioned the feeling of social isolation that can come with remote work, highlighting the importance of socialisation and team-building events. Social isolation was mentioned as one of the virtual working challenges (Al- Rfou, 2021). Some participants mentioned that working virtually can lead to social isolation and a lack of opportunities for social interaction, such as Friday bars or informal chats with colleagues. This lack of social interaction can make it difficult to build relationships and foster team spirit, which is often critical to the success of the organisation. This suggests that addressing social isolation should be a consideration in remote work policies. One writer seems to disagree with their research on social isolation (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020) found a negative relationship between social isolation and remote working during Covid-19, clarifying that employees were more concerned about contracting the disease, which was the leading cause of stress and depression. One can also argue that in the absence of Covid-19, the results could have been different.

Employing the semantic approach to question 9, participants 5 and 7 mentioned the negative effects of distance on social relationships and lack of face-to-face contact. The following excerpts denote the responses which bring out the issue of social isolation.

Participant 5: "…because of distance, sometimes we're not in contact, we're not in the eye contact with that kind of a person. And sometimes I realise that when we meet them once, after a while in the office, you can see that everyone wants to go and sit on his own or he doesn't want to sit together, meaning that that relationship is not there, because you're no longer working together for most of the times."

Participant 7: "… and negative, I'll just say lack of social relationship."

Remote work may have torn the social fabric among colleagues within companies. Through social isolation, it may become difficult for managers to use their influence on the work teams.

Theme 2: Autonomy

Some participants believed that distance encouraged more independent thinking and accountability, which improved their effectiveness as leaders. For instance, the second participant reasoned that "…distance can sometimes encourage a little bit more independent thinking, as when you're in the office all the time, it's too easy to ask the question and get an answer from somebody else. It makes you take a little bit more accountability for what you're doing." Social isolation, identified in theme 1, breeds autonomy, where managers become more autonomous in the discharge of their duties. This makes them more proficient through the individual experiences gained. Also, the third participant mentioned that there is no time to sit around tables for discussions, which may contribute to independence in thinking in discharging duties. A Self Determination Theory explained by (Ryan & Deci, 2000) support autonomy in that if people are left to be independent, they develop inner resources, thereby improving their behavioral self-regulation.

Autonomy also breeds independence and accountability. The second participant mentioned the positive effects of distance on encouraging independent thinking and accountability.

Theme 3: Remote work gets rid of traffic and physical work challenges.

Participants 1 and 6, in response to question 9, responded that distance traveling to work comes with its own challenges. The following excerpts show the responses from participant 1.

Participant 1: "…coming to work down peak hour traffic, traffic is now back to normal, you will actually sound irritated and worked up some mornings when you get to work, that it takes you a good while to just calm yourself down and to start your daily process because of traffic."

Physical work challenges can pose significant obstacles to the productivity of workers, especially when the work environment is overcrowded or undergoing renovations. Overcrowding can lead to limited workspace, causing workers to feel cramped and uncomfortable. This can be a major source of stress and fatigue, which can ultimately impact work quality and productivity. Renovations, on the other hand, can be disruptive to workers due to noise, dust, and other inconveniences that come with construction. This can lead to distractions and interruptions in the workplace, causing delays and

inefficiencies in completing tasks. Furthermore, the presence of construction workers can pose a potential safety risk to office workers, increasing the need for precautions and safety measures.

Theme 4: Productivity and Communication

Participants 3, 4, and 8 mentioned the positive effects of distance on productivity and communication due to the use of technology and online meetings. Online meetings have become shorter than the time physical meetings take, which has increased effectiveness. Also the distance has also encouraged the harnessing of different modes of technology.

4.3.2.2. Do leadership theories contribute to the application of effective leadership?

The second research question asked if leadership theories contribute to the application of effective leadership. Question 6 of the interview was asked in line with the second research question of the study. Question 6 read, “How does your leadership style contribute to how well people work remotely?” Although the participants did not explicitly mention their leadership styles, however, their responses were interpreted in terms of various leadership styles. Four themes were obtained, which are trust, individual management, regular check-ins, and meeting deadlines.

Theme 1: Trust

The theme of trust emerged as a key aspect of effective leadership for remote workers. Participants emphasized the importance of trust in building solid relationships between leaders and workers, enabling workers to feel empowered and autonomous, and ensuring that work is completed to a high standard. These types of traits are found in the servant leadership theory.

Participant 4 highlighted the importance of honesty, stating that remote workers must be honest in their reporting in order to build trust with their manager. Honesty is essential in remote work situations, as managers often cannot see the work being done in person. By being transparent and honest in their reporting, remote workers can demonstrate to their managers that they can be trusted to work independently.

Participant 8 similarly emphasized the importance of trust in allowing for independence and self-direction. Leaders who trust their workers can allow them more freedom to work on their own without the need for constant supervision. This autonomy can be motivating for workers, as it allows them to feel a sense of ownership over their work and can lead to increased job satisfaction.

Other participants mentioned the importance of regular communication in building trust with remote workers. Participant 6 mentioned the need for regular phone calls to check in with workers, while participant 5 highlighted the importance of daily team meetings to ensure that everyone is awake and starting their workday. By communicating regularly with workers, leaders can build a sense of connection and accountability that can help to foster trust.

Trust is also important for leaders in holding workers accountable for their work. Participant 4 noted that leaders must be able to trust their workers' reporting to hold them accountable for the work they are doing. This accountability is important for ensuring that work is completed to a high standard and deadlines are met.

Finally, participant 7 emphasised the need for support and trust to work together. Workers need to feel supported by their leaders to feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things. Leaders who demonstrate trust and support can help workers to feel more confident in their work and can enable them to take ownership of their projects.

Overall, the theme of trust emerged as a critical aspect of effective leadership for remote workers. Trust enables workers to feel empowered and autonomous, builds a sense of connection and accountability, and allows leaders to hold workers accountable for their work. By emphasising trust in their leadership style, leaders can create a supportive and collaborative work environment that enables workers to thrive in a remote work setting.

Theme 2: Individual Management

The theme of individual management emerged as an important factor in effective leadership for remote workers. Participants emphasized the importance of understanding each worker's individual strengths, weaknesses, and working style to provide appropriate guidance and support.

Participant 1 noted that managers must know their staff well to understand who needs to be managed closely and who can work more independently. This understanding of individual needs is critical in a remote work setting, where managers may not be able to see their workers in person and must rely on communication and feedback to understand their needs.

Participant 2 similarly emphasized the importance of empowering workers and providing individualized support. By showing workers that they are trusted and valued, leaders can help to build their confidence and enable them to work more autonomously. However, participant 2 also noted that some workers might not be suited to working independently, and it is crucial for leaders to recognize and address these issues. This trait is found in authentic leadership theory, as mentioned (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016)

Participant 3 emphasized a more hands-off approach to leadership, noting that they trust their managers to control the work environment and get the work done. However, this approach still requires an understanding of individual needs, as managers must be able to provide appropriate support and guidance to each worker.

Participant 5 highlighted the importance of tracking workers' progress and checking in on their work. This individualized approach can help managers to identify areas where workers may need additional support or guidance and can help to ensure that workers are staying on track and meeting their deadlines.

Finally, participant 8 emphasized the importance of allowing for individual self-direction and self-management. By providing workers with the flexibility to work in a way that suits their individual needs, leaders can enable workers to be more productive and motivated. However, this approach still requires a level of personal management, as leaders must be able to provide appropriate guidance and support as needed.

Overall, the theme of individual management highlights the importance of understanding each worker's individual needs and providing appropriate support and guidance. Effective leadership for remote workers requires a balance between empowering workers to work independently and providing individualized support as needed. By taking an individualized approach to management, leaders can help to

build a supportive and collaborative work environment that enables workers to thrive in a remote work setting.

Theme 3: Regular check-ins

The theme of regular check-ins emerged as an important factor in effective leadership for remote workers. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication and regularly checking in on workers to ensure that they are staying on track and have the support they need.

Participant 1 noted that in a remote work setting, it could be challenging to know when workers are struggling or need additional support. Regular check-ins can help managers to identify these issues and provide appropriate guidance and support.

Participant 5 highlighted the importance of starting each day with a team meeting to ensure that everyone is awake and ready to work. This daily check-in can help to establish a sense of routine and accountability and can help to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Participant 6 emphasized the importance of open communication and trust between managers and workers. Regular phone calls can help to maintain this communication and ensure that workers have the support they need to be productive and successful.

Participant 7 similarly noted that regular check-ins could help to build trust and support between managers and workers. By demonstrating a level of trust and support for their workers, leaders can help to create a positive and collaborative work environment.

Overall, the theme of regular check-ins highlights the importance of maintaining open lines of communication and providing regular support and guidance to remote workers. By checking in on workers regularly, leaders can help to identify issues and provide appropriate support before they become major problems. Regular check-ins can also help to build trust and accountability and can help to ensure that everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goals.

However, it is essential to note that there is a balance to be struck when it comes to regular check-ins. While regular communication and support are crucial, it is also important to avoid micromanaging or overwhelming workers with too many check-ins

or too much communication. Effective leadership for remote workers requires a level of flexibility and adaptability, and leaders must be able to adjust their approach based on the needs and preferences of their individual workers. By taking a balanced approach to regular check-ins, leaders can help to build a supportive and collaborative work environment that enables remote workers to thrive.

Theme 4: Emphasis on meeting deadlines

The theme of meeting deadlines emerged as an essential aspect of effective leadership in a remote work setting. Participants emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations and holding workers accountable for meeting deadlines while also providing support and guidance as needed.

Participant 2 noted that if workers are empowered and shown that they are trustworthy, they are likely to respond well and meet deadlines effectively. However, if workers are given autonomy and support but still struggle to meet deadlines, it may indicate that they are not suited to working remotely.

Participant 3 highlighted the importance of relying on managers to control the work environment and ensure that deadlines are being met. By delegating responsibility to managers and trusting them to manage their teams effectively, leaders can help to ensure that everyone is working together toward the same goals and deadlines.

Participant 4 emphasized the importance of honesty and accountability in meeting deadlines. In a remote work setting, it can be challenging to verify that workers are meeting their deadlines, so it is essential to establish a level of trust and accountability between workers and managers. By being honest and transparent in their reporting, workers can help to build trust with their managers and ensure that deadlines are being met effectively.

Participant 7 similarly emphasized the importance of trust in meeting deadlines. By demonstrating a level of trust in their workers and supporting them as needed, leaders can help to build a positive and collaborative work environment that enables workers to meet deadlines effectively.

Overall, the theme of meeting deadlines highlights the importance of setting clear expectations and holding workers accountable for their work while also providing support and guidance as needed. Effective leadership in a remote work setting requires a level of trust and accountability, as well as a willingness to delegate responsibility and rely on managers to control the work environment.

It is also important to note that meeting deadlines in a remote work setting can be challenging, particularly given the potential for distractions and interruptions. Effective leadership requires a level of flexibility and adaptability, as well as a willingness to provide support and guidance to workers as needed to help them stay on track and meet their deadlines effectively.

In conclusion, the theme of meeting deadlines highlights the importance of clear communication, accountability, and support in a remote work setting. By setting clear expectations, delegating responsibility to managers, and building trust with workers, leaders can help to create a collaborative work environment that enables everyone to work together toward shared goals and meet deadlines effectively.

4.3.2.3. What are the leadership strategies required to apply effective leadership?

The third and last research question sought to bring leadership strategies that are applied for effective leadership. The research question was aligned to question 6, together with question 7. Seven themes were derived from the responses, which are:

i. Monitoring and reporting progress
ii. Communication
iii. Regular meetings
iv. Methods of communication
v. Technology tools for monitoring
vi. System for tracking work
vii. HRM system for issue identification.

Theme 1: Monitoring and reporting progress

The first theme that emerged from the interview responses was "Monitoring and reporting progress." This theme refers to the strategies that leaders use to keep track

of the progress of their team members and ensure that they are meeting their objectives.

The theme was derived from responses from multiple participants who talked about the importance of monitoring progress, such as Participant 1, who said, "it's monitoring with reporting, checking the daily progress on the jobs, distance traveled." Similarly, Participant 3 mentioned that they have "regular meetings" and use various communication methods to ensure that managers are meeting deadlines. These responses highlight the significance of monitoring progress and tracking the work of team members to ensure that objectives are met.

This theme answers the research question by providing insight into the leadership strategies required for effective leadership. Monitoring and reporting progress are essential components of effective leadership, as they allow leaders to identify issues and address them before they become more significant problems. By monitoring progress, leaders can also identify areas where team members may need additional support or training to improve their performance. This theme, therefore, highlights the importance of effective communication and regular check-ins to ensure that team members are on track and meeting objectives.

Overall, the theme of "Monitoring and reporting progress" emphasizes the importance of leaders keeping track of their team's progress to ensure that objectives are being met. It highlights the need for regular communication and check-ins to identify any issues early and take appropriate action. This theme underscores the significance of effective leadership and the importance of utilizing strategies such as monitoring and reporting progress to achieve success.

Theme 2: Communication

Communication was derived from the interview responses of participants 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, who discussed the importance of communication in effective leadership. Participant 2 emphasized that communication needs to be better and that leaders need to keep closer contact with their team members to ensure that they are engaged and switched on. Participant 3 highlighted that regular virtual team meetings are held where staff members and managers report back by meeting the deadlines, and various communication methods are used, including WhatsApp groups, telephone calls, and

Microsoft Teams meetings. Participant 4 also mentioned using WhatsApp, emails, and telephone calls to communicate with the team, while Participant 5 discussed how they use Microsoft Teams to monitor their team's work progress. Lastly, Participant 6 stated that they use various communication methods, including Teams, WhatsApp, emails, and telephone calls.

The theme of communication is relevant to the research question as effective communication is a critical component of leadership strategies. Effective leaders must communicate effectively with their team members to ensure that they understand their goals, objectives, and expectations. They need to keep their team members informed of changes in the organization, provide feedback and support, and listen to their concerns and ideas.

Leadership is not just about giving orders and directives but also about building strong relationships with team members. Communication is essential for building these relationships and establishing trust and respect. Effective leaders need to communicate clearly and effectively to ensure that their team members understand their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. They must also be able to listen actively to their team members' feedback, concerns, and suggestions.

In conclusion, communication is a critical leadership strategy that is essential for effective leadership. The interview responses indicate that effective leaders need to use various communication methods, including virtual team meetings, WhatsApp groups, telephone calls, and Microsoft Teams meetings. Effective communication helps build strong relationships with team members, establish trust and respect, and keep everyone informed and engaged.

Theme 3: Regular meetings

Theme 2 is "Regular meetings," and it was derived from the responses of participants 3, 6, and 7. They mentioned using virtual team meetings, such as Microsoft Teams, to communicate and report progress. Participant 3 specifically mentioned regular virtual team meetings where staff members and managers report back by meeting deadlines.

This theme relates to effective leadership strategies because regular meetings can help ensure that everyone is on the same page and that progress is being made

toward goals. Leaders who hold regular meetings can use them to establish clear objectives, provide updates on progress, and identify and address any issues that arise. This can help to keep team members engaged, motivated, and focused on their work.

Regular meetings can also help to foster communication and collaboration among team members. By providing opportunities for team members to share their ideas, experiences, and perspectives, leaders can create a culture of open communication and teamwork that can lead to better outcomes.

Overall, the theme of regular meetings is a vital leadership strategy for ensuring that everyone is working towards the same goals and that progress is being made. Effective leaders understand the importance of regular communication and collaboration, and they use meetings as a tool to foster these qualities within their teams.

Theme 4: Methods of communication

The theme of "methods of communication" was derived from the responses of the interview participants, who discussed various communication methods that they use to lead their teams effectively. These methods included WhatsApp groups, emails, telephone calls, and virtual team meetings using platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

Participant 4 stated that they use social media, such as WhatsApp, to communicate with their team members. Participant 6 mentioned that they use WhatsApp, emails, and telephone calls to stay in touch with their team. The use of various communication methods highlights the importance of having multiple channels to ensure effective communication with team members.

Moreover, Participant 3 emphasized the importance of regular virtual team meetings as a key method of communication for reporting progress and meeting deadlines. This demonstrates that leaders need to be intentional about creating opportunities for their team members to communicate effectively, especially in virtual work environments. Participant 5 explained that their team uses Microsoft Teams to monitor the online presence of team members and identify when they are unavailable, which helps to ensure that everyone is reachable when necessary.

The theme of "methods of communication" answers the research question by highlighting the importance of effective communication as a key leadership strategy. Leaders need to be intentional about creating opportunities for their team members to communicate effectively, especially in virtual work environments. The use of various communication methods and regular team meetings are crucial in ensuring that everyone is on the same page, progress is being tracked and reported, and deadlines are met.

Effective communication also helps to build trust and strengthen relationships between leaders and team members. It creates an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns, which can lead to improved problem-solving and decision-making. Leaders who prioritize effective communication can also improve employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the theme of "methods of communication" underscores the importance of effective communication in leadership. Leaders must be intentional about creating opportunities for their team members to communicate effectively, especially in virtual work environments. The use of various communication methods and regular team meetings are crucial in ensuring that everyone is on the same page, progress is being tracked and reported, and deadlines are met. Effective communication also helps to build trust and strengthen relationships between leaders and team members, improving employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Theme 5: Technology tools for monitoring

The theme of "technology tools for monitoring" emerged from the responses of the interview participants in relation to effective leadership strategies. Participants spoke about the use of technology to monitor the progress of tasks and the performance of their teams.

Specifically, participant 5 mentioned the use of Microsoft Teams to monitor whether employees are working or away from their laptops. The system automatically indicates if an employee is online, offline, or away from their computer for more than 10 minutes. This type of monitoring allows for real-time tracking of employee activity and can help leaders to identify potential issues with productivity or engagement.

Participant 7 also spoke about the use of a system that shows how work is being done and automatically pushes for deadlines. This type of system provides real-time data on employee progress and can help leaders to identify potential issues or areas for improvement. It also offers a structured approach to managing deadlines and ensures that employees are aware of what is expected of them.

Overall, the theme of technology tools for monitoring highlights the importance of using technology to support effective leadership. Technology tools can provide real-time data on employee activity, which can help leaders to identify potential issues and make informed decisions about how to manage their teams. Additionally, technology tools can help leaders to set and manage deadlines, which can improve productivity and ensure that work is completed on time.

The use of technology in leadership is becoming increasingly important, mainly as more and more employees work remotely or in geographically dispersed teams. Technology tools can help to bridge the gap between remote employees and their managers, providing real-time data and communication channels that support effective leadership.

In conclusion, the theme of technology tools for monitoring provides insight into the importance of using technology to support effective leadership. By leveraging technology tools, leaders can better monitor the progress of tasks and the performance of their teams, which can lead to improved productivity and better outcomes. Effective leadership requires a range of strategies, and the use of technology tools is an integral part of the toolkit for modern leaders.

Theme 6: System for tracking work

The theme of "system for tracking work" was derived from the interview responses of the participants, who discussed various ways and methods that were used to track and monitor the progress of work within their organizations. These systems ranged from HRM systems to technology tools like Microsoft Teams, which allowed for accessible communication and tracking of work progress.

Participant 7, for example, stated that the system in place would automatically inform them when work was completed and push for deadlines. This indicates that they had

a well-structured and automated system that helped them to track and manage the progress of work.

Similarly, participant 8 mentioned the use of an HRM system that allowed them to pick up on issues as they arose. This suggests that their organization had put in place a system that could help them to identify and address problems in a timely manner.

Overall, the theme of "system for tracking work" highlights the importance of having a well-defined system for monitoring and tracking work progress. Such systems can help leaders to identify potential issues early on and take corrective action, which can ultimately lead to improved performance and outcomes.

Furthermore, this theme underscores the need for leaders to adopt technology tools and systems that can facilitate accessible communication and collaboration among team members, especially in the context of remote work. As noted by participants, technology tools like Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp can be instrumental in monitoring and tracking work progress, as they allow for accessible communication and collaboration among team members.

In terms of how this theme answers the research question, it suggests that effective leadership requires the implementation of a well-structured system for tracking and monitoring work progress. Leaders who adopt such strategies can better manage their teams and resources, as well as identify and address potential issues before they escalate. Moreover, the use of technology tools like Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp can help leaders to stay connected with their team members and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

In conclusion, the theme of "system for tracking work" highlights the importance of having a well-defined system for monitoring and tracking work progress. It also emphasizes the need for leaders to adopt technology tools and strategies that can facilitate accessible communication and collaboration among team members, especially in the context of remote work. Overall, this theme provides valuable insights into the leadership strategies required to apply effective leadership in today's fast-paced and dynamic work environments.

Theme 7: HRM system for issue identification

The theme of "HRM system for issue identification" was derived from one of the interview responses where a participant mentioned that their organization has an HRM system that allows them to pick up where issues arise. This system is likely used for identifying and tracking employee issues, such as poor performance, conflicts, and other HR-related matters.

Effective leadership requires not only identifying problems but also finding practical solutions to address them. Therefore, having an HRM system for issue identification can be an essential tool for effective leadership. Such a system can help leaders to monitor employee performance and detect any issues that may be affecting productivity and performance.

One of the primary roles of a leader is to identify and address problems before they escalate into more significant issues. With an HRM system for issue identification, leaders can identify potential problems early and take appropriate action to resolve them. This can lead to improved performance, greater job satisfaction, and a more positive work environment.

An HRM system can also help leaders to track progress on performance issues and determine if the corrective actions taken are working. This feedback loop is crucial for the continuous improvement and ongoing development of employees. It also ensures that the organization is meeting its objectives and goals and that employees are working towards the organization's vision.

Moreover, an HRM system can be used to gather data on employee performance, which can be analysed to identify patterns or trends. Leaders can use this information to make informed decisions about how to allocate resources, provide training and development opportunities, and create a more effective work environment.

In summary, the theme of an HRM system for issue identification provides insight into the importance of having a system in place to monitor and identify employee issues. It also highlights the role of leaders in using this system to address these issues and create a more positive work environment. Effective leadership requires a proactive approach to problem-solving, and an HRM system can be a valuable tool for achieving this goal.

4.4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the research questions using a thematic approach, it can be concluded that remote working has affected leadership effectiveness. The physical distance created by remote working presents a challenge to the application of effective leadership. Therefore, leaders must adapt their leadership strategies to ensure they remain effective in a remote working environment. Leadership theories can contribute to the application of effective leadership in remote working, but they must be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of remote work. The leadership strategies required for effective leadership in remote working include communication, trust-building, goal-setting, and employee empowerment. Overall, remote working presents an opportunity for leaders to develop new skills and adapt their leadership styles to suit the needs of a remote team better.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations around the world to implement remote working practices to maintain business operations. This has resulted in a significant shift in the way work is done, with employees having to adapt to new forms of communication and collaboration and leaders having to adjust their leadership styles to manage remote teams effectively. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness in Linde Material Handling (Pty) Limited, a multinational company in the metal industry.

The study aimed to answer three research questions: (1) how physical distance affects the application of effective leadership in remote working, (2) whether leadership theories contribute to the application of effective leadership, and (3) what leadership strategies are required to apply effective leadership during remote working. To answer these questions, a thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected from semi-structured interviews with eight personnel in managerial positions from Linde Material Handling.

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings of the study. The first section summarizes the main findings, including insights into the impact of remote working on leadership effectiveness and the contribution of leadership theories to effective leadership during remote working. The second section discusses the implications of the findings for Linde Material Handling and analyses the challenges and opportunities for effective leadership during remote working. The third section presents specific strategies for leadership effectiveness in remote working, with a discussion of the potential benefits and risks associated with the recommended methods. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Key findings

1. Remote working has been accepted as the norm of life:

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced organizations to adopt remote working practices to ensure business continuity. As a result, remote working has become the new norm

for many employees. The leaders interviewed for this study indicated that remote working has become an acceptable practice, and they expect it to continue in the future. This trend is expected to have a significant impact on the way organizations operate and interact with their employees.

2. Some managers are still expressing concerns about working from home:

While many managers have adapted to remote working, some still express concerns about this practice. Some managers do not prefer working from home permanently but draw a schedule for working at home and working from the office to strike a balance between the two. These concerns are mainly due to the difficulties in monitoring employee performance and communication challenges.

3. Remote working has led to independence and autonomy, but it has also brought social isolation:

Working from home has provided employees with increased autonomy and independence. Remote working has also enabled employees to save time and money by eliminating the need for travel. However, remote working has led to social isolation, which can negatively affect employee mental health and productivity. The lack of face-to-face interactions can also make it difficult for employees to build and maintain social relationships with their colleagues.

4. There is a mixture of leaders with different leadership styles:

The leaders interviewed for this study exhibited a mixture of leadership styles, ranging from democratic to autocratic. Democratic leaders are more open to remote working and encourage employee participation in decision-making. Autocratic leaders, on the other hand, tend to express reservations about remote working and prefer to control their employees closely. The findings suggest that leadership style plays a significant role in how leaders approach remote working.

5. Managers use various strategies to ensure effective leadership:

The leaders interviewed for this study reported using various strategies to ensure effective leadership during remote working. These strategies include designing systems for tracking work, using technology for monitoring and enhancing

communication, and setting clear expectations and goals for employees. Managers also emphasized the importance of regular check-ins and providing feedback to employees to maintain a sense of connection and ensure that they are meeting expectations.

Overall, the findings suggest that remote working has become an acceptable practice, and it is likely to continue in the future. However, there are concerns and challenges associated with this practice, and organizations and leaders need to develop strategies to address these challenges effectively. The leadership style adopted by managers is critical in determining the success of remote working. To ensure effective leadership during remote working, managers need to embrace the use of technology, communicate effectively with their employees, and provide regular feedback and support to maintain a sense of connection and motivation among employees. Organizations can also consider adopting a hybrid model, where employees work from home and the office, to strike a balance between the benefits and challenges of remote working.

5.3. Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for Linde Material Handling and its leaders regarding remote working and leadership effectiveness. These implications are discussed below:

A. Embrace remote working as the new norm:

Linde Material Handling should embrace remote working as the new norm to stay competitive in the current business environment. This can help the company reduce its overhead costs, improve employee satisfaction and productivity, and expand its talent pool. However, the company needs to be aware of the potential challenges associated with remote working and develop strategies to address them effectively.

B. Foster a supportive culture for remote working:

Linde Material Handling needs to foster a supportive culture for remote working to ensure that its employees feel connected and motivated. Leaders need to encourage open communication and collaboration, provide regular feedback and support, and recognize and reward employees' efforts to maintain a sense of connection and

motivation among employees. The company can also invest in technology to facilitate remote working and enhance employee communication and collaboration.

C. Adapt leadership style to remote working:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling need to adapt their leadership style to remote working to ensure effective leadership. The findings of this study suggest that democratic leaders are more likely to embrace remote working and encourage employee participation in decision-making. On the other hand, autocratic leaders tend to express reservations about remote working and prefer to control their employees closely. To ensure effective leadership, leaders need to be open to remote working, communicate effectively with their employees, and provide regular feedback and support.

D. Develop strategies for monitoring employee performance:

Remote working can make it difficult for managers to monitor employee performance. To ensure that employees are meeting their goals and objectives, managers at Linde Material Handling need to develop strategies for tracking work effectively. This can involve setting clear expectations and goals for employees, creating systems for tracking work, and providing regular feedback and support to maintain a sense of connection and motivation among employees.

E. Address social isolation:

Remote working can lead to social isolation, which can negatively affect employee mental health and productivity. To address social isolation, managers at Linde Material Handling need to provide opportunities for employees to connect and socialize with their colleagues. This can involve organizing virtual team-building activities, creating online communities for employees to share their experiences and insights, and encouraging open communication and collaboration.

F. Consider adopting a hybrid model:

Linde Material Handling can consider adopting a hybrid model, where employees work from home and the office, to strike a balance between the benefits and challenges of remote working. This can provide employees with the flexibility to choose the work

environment that best suits their needs while ensuring that they have access to the resources and support they need to perform their work effectively.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that remote working has become an acceptable practice, and it is likely to continue in the future. However, there are concerns and challenges associated with this practice, and Linde Material Handling and its leaders need to develop strategies to address these challenges effectively. By addressing these challenges, the company can unlock the benefits of remote working while ensuring that its employees are connected, motivated, and productive.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications discussed above, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance leadership effectiveness in remote working at Linde Material Handling:

A. Emphasize communication:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling should prioritize communication to ensure effective leadership in remote working. This involves using multiple channels of communication, such as email, video conferencing, and instant messaging, to stay connected with employees. Regular check-ins should be scheduled to provide employees with feedback and support to maintain a sense of connection and motivation. The benefits of emphasizing communication include increased productivity, improved work quality, and better employee engagement.

B. Foster a culture of trust:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling need to foster a culture of trust to ensure effective leadership in remote working. This can involve providing employees with autonomy and flexibility to make decisions and manage their work schedules. Managers should avoid micromanaging employees and instead trust them to work independently. This approach can help improve employee satisfaction, reduce stress levels, and increase productivity.

C. Provide training and development opportunities:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling should provide training and development opportunities to employees to enhance their skills and knowledge. This can involve offering online training courses, webinars, and workshops to help employees adapt to remote working and acquire new skills. By providing such opportunities, employees can remain motivated and engaged, and the company can enhance its competitiveness.

D. Set clear expectations and goals:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling need to set clear expectations and goals to ensure that employees remain focused and productive. This can involve developing performance metrics and benchmarks to measure employee performance and provide feedback. Goals should be realistic, achievable, and aligned with the company's overall objectives. This approach can help improve employee motivation and engagement and ensure that the company is on track to achieve its goals.

E. Monitor and track employee performance:

Leaders at Linde Material Handling need to develop strategies for monitoring and tracking employee performance effectively. This can involve using technology to track employee progress, setting up virtual dashboards to monitor employee activity, and providing regular feedback and support. By monitoring and tracking employee performance, managers can identify areas for improvement and provide targeted support to enhance employee productivity.

Potential benefits of these recommendations include improved employee engagement, increased productivity, and better work quality. However, there are potential risks associated with the recommendations, such as possible resistance from employees, raised costs related to training and development, and potential data security risks associated with using technology.

The key stakeholders in implementing these recommendations include the company's leaders, managers, employees, and the IT department. Leaders need to communicate the importance of these recommendations and provide the necessary resources and support to implement them effectively. Managers need to oversee the implementation of these recommendations and provide feedback and support to employees.

Employees need to be willing to adapt to these changes and participate in training and development opportunities. The IT department needs to ensure that the technology used to implement these recommendations is secure and reliable.

In conclusion, the recommendations proposed in this study can help enhance leadership effectiveness in remote working at Linde Material Handling. By implementing these recommendations, the company can ensure that its employees remain connected, motivated, and productive, and it can enhance its competitiveness in the current business environment.

5.5. Limitations and Future Research put in limitations.

While this study provides valuable insights into the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. These limitations include the following:

A. Sample size:

The sample size used in this study was relatively small, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could consider using larger samples to enhance the reliability and validity of the results.

B. Self-report bias:

The study relied on self-report data from participants, which may be subject to bias. Future studies could consider using multiple sources of data, such as performance metrics or observational data, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness.

C. Single-case study:

This study focused on a single case study of Linde Material Handling, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other companies or industries. Future studies could consider conducting comparative analysis across multiple companies and industries to provide a broader understanding of the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness.

Given these limitations, future research could explore the following areas:

A. Investigating the impact of remote working on different leadership styles:

Future studies could explore how different leadership styles, such as autocratic or democratic, are affected by remote working. This could provide a more nuanced understanding of the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness.

B. Examining the impact of remote working on employee well-being:

Future studies could investigate how remote working affects employee well-being, including factors such as stress levels, social isolation, and work-life balance. This could provide valuable insights into how companies can support their employees in remote working environments.

C. Exploring the role of technology in remote working:

Future studies could explore how technology can be used to enhance leadership effectiveness in remote working environments. This could include investigating the use of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, or other emerging technologies to support remote working.

Overall, despite the limitations of this study, it provides valuable insights into the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness at Linde Material Handling. The findings and recommendations presented in this study could inform future research and guide companies in their efforts to enhance leadership effectiveness in remote working environments.

5.6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid shift towards remote working, which has had significant implications for leadership effectiveness in companies such as Linde Material Handling. This study aimed to investigate the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness and to recommend strategies for enhancing leadership in this context.

The findings of this study indicate that remote working has become the norm of life, and workers are enjoying the independence and autonomy it provides. However, there are concerns about social isolation and lack of communication that need to be

addressed. Additionally, leaders who are more democratic in nature are more likely to embrace remote working than those who are more autocratic.

The strategies used by leaders to ensure effective leadership during remote working include designing systems for tracking work, using technology to enhance communication, and monitoring employee performance. These strategies can help to mitigate the challenges of remote working and promote effective leadership.

The implications of these findings for Linde Material Handling include the need to embrace remote working as a viable option for employees, support the use of technology to enhance communication and collaboration, and provide training and support for leaders to adapt their leadership style to remote working environments.

The recommended strategies for enhancing leadership effectiveness in remote working environments include promoting communication and collaboration, setting clear expectations and goals, and providing regular feedback to employees. While implementing these strategies may come with some risks, such as potential loss of control, the benefits of enhanced leadership effectiveness and employee engagement far outweigh the risks.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the effects of remote working on leadership effectiveness and recommends strategies for enhancing leadership in this context. While there are some limitations to this study, future research could build on these findings to explore other aspects of remote working, such as its impact on employee well-being, and to investigate the use of emerging technologies to support remote working.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interviews as an Instrument

1. Are you a manager or leader of a department? Please describe your role in this Department.
2. Please tell me about working from home.
3. Do people that report to you sometimes work from home?
4. What is your feeling towards working from home for people that report to you?
5. How do you know your employees carry out their job well when working virtually?
6. How does your leadership style contribute to how well people work remotely?
7. What methods do you use to monitor your employees virtually? Please describe the methods.
8. Do you feel your employees can work autonomously and why? Please explain.
9. How does distance affect your effectiveness as the leader (positive or negative)? Please explain.
10. Do you think working virtually disconnects employees from their duties and the organisation? Please explain.
11. What methods do you use to communicate effectively with your employees as their manager? Please describe the methods in detail.