

## **REMOTE WORK SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE**

### **KEBERLANJUTAN KERJA JARAK JAUH DAN PENGARUHNYA TERHADAP KETERLIBATAN KARYAWAN DAN KESEIMBANGAN KEHIDUPAN KERJA**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze remote work sustainability and its influence on employee engagement and work–life balance. The transformation of work patterns driven by digital technological advancement and the increasing implementation of flexible work systems has positioned remote work as a long-term organizational strategy. However, sustaining such systems requires attention to employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. This study employs a literature review method by examining various scientific articles, journals, and relevant academic sources related to remote work, employee engagement, and work–life balance. Research data were collected from indexed scholarly publications and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns, relationships, and major findings from previous studies. The findings indicate that remote work sustainability positively influences employee engagement by increasing flexibility, autonomy, and job satisfaction. In addition, remote work systems can improve work–life balance through reduced commuting time and greater flexibility in time management. Nevertheless, challenges such as social isolation, blurred work boundaries, and stress caused by excessive digital connectivity remain significant concerns. Therefore, organizations need to develop effective strategies to support sustainable remote work implementation.*

**Keywords:** Remote work sustainability, employee engagement, work–life balance, work flexibility, literature review

#### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis keberlanjutan kerja jarak jauh (*remote work sustainability*) serta pengaruhnya terhadap *employee engagement* dan *work–life balance*. Perubahan pola kerja akibat perkembangan teknologi digital dan meningkatnya penerapan sistem kerja fleksibel telah menjadikan kerja jarak jauh sebagai strategi organisasi jangka panjang. Namun, keberlanjutan sistem tersebut memerlukan perhatian terhadap aspek kesejahteraan karyawan dan efektivitas organisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka (*literature review*) dengan mengkaji berbagai artikel ilmiah, jurnal, dan sumber akademik yang relevan terkait kerja jarak jauh, keterikatan karyawan, dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja. Data penelitian diperoleh dari publikasi ilmiah yang terindeks dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola, hubungan, dan temuan utama dari penelitian sebelumnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberlanjutan kerja jarak jauh memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap *employee engagement* melalui peningkatan fleksibilitas, otonomi, dan kepuasan kerja. Selain itu, sistem kerja jarak jauh juga dapat meningkatkan *work–life balance* melalui pengurangan waktu perjalanan dan fleksibilitas pengelolaan waktu. Namun demikian, tantangan seperti isolasi sosial, batas kerja yang kabur, dan stres akibat konektivitas digital yang berlebihan masih menjadi perhatian utama. Oleh karena itu, organisasi perlu mengembangkan strategi yang mendukung keberlanjutan kerja jarak jauh secara efektif. Kata kunci: *Remote work sustainability, employee engagement, work–life balance, fleksibilitas kerja, tinjauan pustaka.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The transformation of work arrangements has become one of the

most significant organizational changes in the contemporary business environment. The rapid advancement of

digital technologies, globalization, and changes in employee expectations have accelerated the adoption of flexible working systems, particularly remote work. While remote work initially emerged as an alternative work arrangement for selected professions and industries, its implementation expanded considerably following the global COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations across various sectors were compelled to adapt to remote working systems to maintain operational continuity while ensuring employee safety. Consequently, remote work has evolved from a temporary response mechanism into a long-term organizational strategy that continues to shape workplace practices worldwide (Kniffin et al., 2021).

The increasing implementation of remote work has generated substantial academic and managerial interest regarding its sustainability. Remote work sustainability refers to the ability of organizations to maintain remote working arrangements effectively over the long term while ensuring organizational productivity, employee well-being, and operational efficiency. Sustainable remote work practices involve creating a work environment that supports employees' psychological, social, and professional needs without causing negative long-term consequences. Sustainability in this context extends beyond technological infrastructure and includes organizational culture, management support, communication effectiveness, and employee adaptability (Allen et al., 2015).

Organizations increasingly recognize that sustainable remote work practices may provide several advantages. Remote work can reduce operational costs, increase flexibility, improve access to a wider talent pool, and minimize commuting-related stress.

Employees often perceive remote work as beneficial because it offers greater autonomy and flexibility in managing professional and personal responsibilities. Such flexibility may lead to improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, despite these advantages, sustaining remote work over extended periods presents significant challenges related to employee engagement and work-life balance.

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical issue in human resource management and organizational behavior literature. Employee engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connection employees establish with their work and organization. Engaged employees typically demonstrate higher levels of motivation, enthusiasm, productivity, and commitment toward organizational goals (Kahn, 1990). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), engagement consists of three primary dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor reflects high levels of energy and resilience; dedication represents strong involvement and a sense of significance; while absorption indicates full concentration and immersion in work activities.

Remote work arrangements may significantly affect employee engagement in both positive and negative ways. On one hand, flexible work systems may empower employees by increasing autonomy and reducing workplace stress. Greater autonomy often enhances employees' sense of control over their work processes, which can strengthen engagement levels. On the other hand, prolonged remote work can reduce face-to-face interactions and limit social connections among colleagues. The absence of direct interpersonal communication may lead

to feelings of isolation, reduced collaboration, and weakened organizational attachment (Golden et al., 2008). Employees who experience social isolation may gradually lose motivation and emotional connection with their organizations.

The sustainability of remote work becomes increasingly important because engagement levels can influence organizational performance significantly. Engaged employees are generally associated with improved productivity, lower turnover intentions, stronger organizational citizenship behaviors, and greater innovation capabilities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Therefore, organizations must understand how sustainable remote work arrangements contribute to maintaining or improving employee engagement over time.

Another important issue associated with remote work sustainability is work–life balance. Work–life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage work responsibilities alongside personal and family obligations without substantial conflict between these domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The concept has gained considerable attention in recent years because employees increasingly prioritize personal well-being and quality of life in their career decisions.

Remote work has the potential to improve work–life balance by eliminating commuting time and offering flexible schedules. Employees may use the additional time gained from remote work arrangements to engage in family activities, personal development, or leisure activities. Such conditions can enhance psychological well-being and reduce work-related stress. Studies have indicated that flexible work arrangements often contribute positively

to employee satisfaction and work-life integration (Allen et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, remote work can also create challenges that threaten work–life balance. One of the major concerns is the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life. Employees working remotely often experience difficulties separating work responsibilities from family obligations because both activities occur within the same physical environment. The increasing use of digital communication technologies may also encourage constant connectivity, leading employees to remain available beyond regular working hours (Derks & Bakker, 2014). This phenomenon may increase emotional exhaustion, stress, and work-family conflict.

The challenge of maintaining boundaries between work and personal life has become particularly evident in long-term remote working arrangements. Employees may struggle with increased workloads, interruptions at home, and difficulties disconnecting from work-related activities. Consequently, the expected benefits of flexibility may not always materialize. Instead, remote work may create additional pressures that negatively influence employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

Several previous studies have examined the relationships among remote work, employee engagement, and work–life balance. However, existing findings remain inconsistent. Some studies suggest that remote work enhances employee engagement and improves work–life balance due to increased flexibility and autonomy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Conversely, other studies indicate that prolonged remote work can reduce engagement because of social isolation and communication barriers while

simultaneously creating work–family conflicts (Wang et al., 2021). These contradictory findings indicate the need for further investigation into the sustainability aspect of remote work.

Additionally, many previous studies primarily focused on the immediate effects of remote work during emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited research has examined remote work sustainability as a long-term organizational strategy and its broader implications for employee engagement and work–life balance in post-pandemic work environments. Understanding these relationships becomes increasingly important as organizations continue implementing hybrid and remote work models as permanent practices.

From a practical perspective, organizations require evidence-based strategies to sustain remote work arrangements effectively. Human resource managers need to understand the factors that support employee engagement and maintain healthy work–life boundaries in remote settings. Organizations that fail to address these issues may experience reduced productivity, increased employee dissatisfaction, and higher turnover rates. Therefore, identifying the influence of remote work sustainability on employee engagement and work–life balance can provide valuable insights for organizational policy development.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the influence of remote work sustainability on employee engagement and work–life balance. The findings are expected to contribute to theoretical development within human resource management literature and provide practical recommendations for organizations seeking to establish sustainable and employee-centered remote work practices.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a literature review research method to systematically examine and synthesize previous studies related to remote work sustainability and its influence on employee engagement and work–life balance. A literature review method is considered appropriate because it allows researchers to identify, evaluate, and integrate findings from various empirical and theoretical studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon. Literature review research aims to summarize existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and provide a conceptual foundation for future investigations (Snyder, 2019). Through this approach, the study seeks to explore existing evidence regarding the relationship between sustainable remote work practices, employee engagement, and work–life balance.

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from academic publications and scientific sources relevant to the research topic. The literature sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and scholarly publications indexed in recognized databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Emerald Insight. The selection of sources focuses on studies discussing remote work, telecommuting, employee engagement, work–life balance, and organizational sustainability. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), secondary data in literature-based research provide rich information that can support theoretical understanding and facilitate broader interpretation of research issues.

The literature collection process was conducted through several systematic stages. First, keywords relevant to the research topic were identified, including “remote work

sustainability,” “telecommuting,” “employee engagement,” “work–life balance,” and “flexible working arrangements.” Second, studies were selected based on inclusion criteria such as publication relevance, research quality, publication period, and accessibility of full-text documents. Priority was given to studies published within the last ten years to ensure that the findings reflect recent developments in work practices and organizational environments. However, seminal theories and foundational studies were also included to strengthen the theoretical framework (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The analysis of literature in this study applies a thematic analysis approach. The selected studies were reviewed and categorized according to recurring themes and patterns related to the variables under investigation. Similar concepts, research findings, and theoretical perspectives were compared and synthesized to identify relationships and inconsistencies across previous studies. Thematic analysis enables researchers to organize complex information into meaningful categories and facilitates the interpretation of broader trends and relationships within the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, this study emphasizes the use of credible and authoritative academic sources. Sources were critically evaluated based on their methodological rigor, relevance to the research objectives, and contribution to theoretical and practical understanding. Furthermore, the synthesis process aimed to minimize researcher bias by incorporating diverse perspectives and findings from multiple studies. Therefore, the literature review method used in this research is expected to

provide a comprehensive and objective understanding of the influence of remote work sustainability on employee engagement and work–life balance.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the literature review method described previously, the researcher collected and analyzed studies related to remote work sustainability, employee engagement, and work–life balance from peer-reviewed journal articles and systematic reviews. The literature selection process focused on studies published mainly between 2020 and 2025 because remote working practices became substantially more widespread after the COVID-19 pandemic and continued into long-term organizational strategies. The review findings indicate that sustainable remote work implementation has both beneficial and challenging implications for employees and organizations. Several studies demonstrate that flexible work arrangements contribute positively to employee well-being, productivity, and organizational commitment; however, negative outcomes such as social isolation, technostress, and boundary conflicts remain important concerns.

The literature analysis identified three dominant themes: (1) sustainability of remote work practices, (2) employee engagement under remote working conditions, and (3) work–life balance in remote work environments. These themes emerged repeatedly across empirical studies and systematic reviews and demonstrate interrelated relationships among variables. Sustainable remote work systems require not only technological support but also organizational mechanisms capable of maintaining employee motivation and personal well-being.

**Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles**

No	Authors	Year	Research Method	Variables	Main Findings
1	Wang et al.	2021	Quantitative review	Remote work effectiveness	Remote work effectiveness depends on work design, communication quality, and organizational support
2	Wells et al.	2023	Systematic literature review	Remote work and health outcomes	Remote work influences physical and psychological health and affects work-life flow positively and negatively
3	Shirmohammadi et al.	2022	Literature review	Work-from-home and work-life balance	Work-life balance improves when employees have adequate resources and organizational support
4	Choudhary & Jain	2025	Systematic literature review	Remote work and employee engagement	Employee engagement is influenced by communication quality, trust, and organizational support
5	Çivilidağ & Durmaz	2026	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Flexible work arrangements and work-life balance	Flexible work systems positively influence work-life balance and organizational outcomes
6	Gajendran & Harrison	2007	Meta-analysis	Telecommuting and employee outcomes	Telecommuting improves autonomy and job satisfaction but may increase isolation
7	Golden et al.	2008	Quantitative study	Professional isolation and telework	Professional isolation negatively affects employee engagement and performance

## Discussion

### Remote Work Sustainability and Employee Engagement

The literature synthesis demonstrates that remote work sustainability significantly influences employee engagement. Employee engagement represents employees' psychological attachment and emotional commitment toward organizational goals. Remote work environments provide greater flexibility and autonomy, which frequently increase employee motivation and job satisfaction. Employees with greater control over their work schedules often report stronger engagement because they perceive higher trust and empowerment from their organizations.

The findings from Choudhary and Jain indicate that employee engagement among remote workers is strongly influenced by several antecedents, including communication quality, leadership support, organizational trust, and digital collaboration systems. Effective communication mechanisms help reduce feelings of isolation and

improve employee interaction despite physical separation.

Similarly, previous research suggests that remote work allows employees to experience greater flexibility in organizing work activities and personal responsibilities, contributing to stronger psychological attachment to work tasks. Employees who perceive flexibility as an organizational benefit tend to demonstrate greater organizational commitment and stronger work engagement behaviors. However, sustainable remote work depends heavily on organizational practices and managerial support. Without proper management systems, employees may experience declining engagement levels.

Despite positive outcomes, literature findings also reveal challenges associated with long-term remote work arrangements. One significant concern is social and professional isolation. Golden et al. found that reduced face-to-face interactions can weaken employees' social relationships and reduce their sense of organizational belonging. Employees who experience prolonged

isolation may report reduced enthusiasm and motivation. This condition can gradually affect organizational performance because employee engagement directly influences productivity and innovation.

Recent evidence also indicates that fully remote workers may experience stronger emotional burdens than hybrid employees. Research findings suggest that although remote workers can maintain high engagement levels, they frequently report stress, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion when organizations fail to provide adequate support systems.

### **Remote Work Sustainability and Work–Life Balance**

The second major theme emerging from the literature concerns the influence of remote work sustainability on work–life balance. Remote work arrangements are frequently associated with increased flexibility because employees gain more control over work schedules and avoid commuting activities. Reduced commuting time creates additional opportunities for family interactions, personal activities, and leisure.

The reviewed studies suggest that flexible working systems generally improve employees' perceptions of work–life balance. Employees working remotely often experience increased satisfaction because they can distribute responsibilities more effectively between work and personal domains. Flexible work arrangements allow individuals to better integrate family obligations and professional responsibilities.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal contradictory effects. Although remote work creates flexibility, it may simultaneously blur boundaries between professional and personal life. Shirmohammadi et al. identified several

factors contributing to work-life imbalance among remote employees, including work intensity, technological stress, workspace limitations, and family responsibilities. Employees frequently struggle to separate work time from personal time because work activities occur within the same physical setting.

The concept of an "always-on" work culture also appears repeatedly in reviewed studies. Remote workers often remain digitally connected outside official working hours due to increased communication through technological platforms. This constant connectivity can create emotional exhaustion and reduce psychological recovery opportunities. The long-term consequence may be decreased employee well-being and higher burnout risks.

However, several studies indicate that hybrid work arrangements may provide more balanced outcomes than fully remote systems. Hybrid systems combine the flexibility benefits of remote work with opportunities for direct interaction and social connection in office environments. Employees participating in hybrid arrangements often report lower burnout levels, stronger motivation, and improved work–life balance.

### **Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Work–Life Balance**

The literature review also demonstrates an interconnected relationship between employee engagement and work–life balance under sustainable remote work conditions. Employees who experience healthier work-life boundaries generally demonstrate higher levels of engagement because they face lower stress levels and greater psychological well-being.

When employees perceive that organizations support work-life balance

initiatives, they tend to respond positively through greater commitment and participation in organizational activities. Work-life balance functions as an important mechanism that supports engagement by reducing emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict.

Conversely, poor work-life balance negatively affects employee engagement. Excessive workloads, lack of personal time, and continuous work-related interruptions may reduce employees' motivation and weaken organizational attachment. Therefore, organizations implementing sustainable remote work systems must establish policies that simultaneously promote employee engagement and protect work-life boundaries.

Overall, the findings of this literature review indicate that remote work sustainability positively influences employee engagement and work-life balance when organizations provide adequate technological resources, communication support, flexible policies, and employee-centered management practices. Nevertheless, ineffective remote work implementation may generate negative consequences such as isolation, stress, and role conflicts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the literature review, it can be concluded that remote work sustainability plays a significant role in influencing employee engagement and work-life balance. Sustainable remote work is not merely related to the implementation of technology or flexible working arrangements; rather, it involves comprehensive organizational support systems, including communication effectiveness, leadership practices, organizational culture, and employee-centered policies. Organizations that

successfully establish sustainable remote work systems can create positive working environments that support both organizational performance and employee well-being.

The findings indicate that remote work sustainability positively contributes to employee engagement when employees are provided with flexibility, autonomy, and adequate organizational support. Flexible work arrangements allow employees to experience greater control over their work processes, which can increase motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment toward organizational goals. However, the literature also demonstrates that ineffective remote work implementation may negatively affect employee engagement due to reduced social interaction, communication barriers, and professional isolation. Consequently, organizations need to establish strategies that maintain interpersonal relationships and strengthen employees' emotional connection with the organization.

In relation to work-life balance, the reviewed studies suggest that sustainable remote work arrangements provide opportunities for employees to better manage professional responsibilities and personal obligations. Flexible schedules and reduced commuting time may improve employee well-being and increase satisfaction with work-life integration. Nevertheless, several studies also reveal that long-term remote work can create challenges such as blurred work-family boundaries, constant digital connectivity, and increased stress levels. These issues may reduce the effectiveness of remote work and negatively influence employees' quality of life if not managed appropriately.

Furthermore, the literature review indicates that employee engagement and

work–life balance are interconnected variables within remote work environments. Employees who experience balanced personal and professional lives tend to demonstrate stronger engagement and higher organizational commitment. Conversely, poor work–life balance may increase emotional exhaustion and reduce employees’ psychological attachment to work. Therefore, organizations should consider both factors simultaneously in developing sustainable remote work policies.

Overall, this study concludes that remote work sustainability has the potential to generate positive outcomes for both employees and organizations when implemented strategically and supported by appropriate organizational mechanisms. Sustainable remote work practices should focus on balancing productivity objectives with employee well-being to ensure long-term organizational success and workforce sustainability.

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