The Long-Term Impact of Remote Work on the Psychological Well-being in the IT Industry: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract The widespread adoption of remote work has significantly reshaped employment structures, particularly in the Information Technology (IT) industry. Catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has transitioned from an emergency response to a long-term model. While it offers benefits such as flexibility and improved work–life integration, it also presents psychological challenges including isolation, stress, and blurred personal-professional boundaries. This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) synthesizes findings from 53 peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025 to examine psychological outcomes of remote work in the IT sector. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, the review spans diverse global contexts and highlights both negative outcomes such as burnout, digital fatigue, and social isolation and moderating factors like leadership support, digital infrastructure, and role clarity. While some professionals report enhanced well-being due to autonomy and reduced commuting, others experience cognitive overload and reduced emotional resilience. Cultural and contextual variables, particularly in South Asia, further shape these outcomes through factors such as shared living arrangements and infrastructural limitations. The review identifies key methodological limitations, including inconsistent use of validated mental health measures and limited focus on hybrid work models. Based on the synthesized evidence, it recommends organizational strategies such as trust-based management, clearer work-hour boundaries, and targeted support for caregivers and women managing dual roles. Investment in digital resources and culturally sensitive practices is also emphasized. Finally, the review calls for future research employing longitudinal designs and standardized tools like the WHO-5 Well-Being Index and Maslach Burnout Inventory to deepen understanding of long-term psychological effects and include underrepresented populations and hybrid work settings.

Keywords: Remote Work, Psychological Well-being, Mental Health, IT Industry

Introduction

Remote work also referred to as telework or virtual work has become a defining feature of the modern employment landscape, especially following the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Oakman et al., 2020; Vacchiano, 2024). What initially emerged as a reactive strategy to ensure business continuity has since evolved into a standard practice for many industries. In particular, the Information Technology (IT) Industry has led the transition due to its inherent reliance on digital systems, cloud-based infrastructure, and flexible project-based workflows (Prasad et al., 2020; Itam et al., 2022). As a result, remote work has become a long-term and embedded component of organizational operations worldwide.The early benefits of remote work are widely acknowledged. These include increased scheduling flexibility, reduced commuting time, and enhanced integration of work with personal life (Rusdha, 2021; Safira, 2023). Many IT professionals have reported improved job satisfaction, productivity, and autonomy, particularly when given control over their work environment and hours. Employers, meanwhile, have benefited from cost savings, broader talent pools, and increased workforce availability across time zones. However, it is important to note that these benefits are not uniformly experienced studies drawing on convenience samples of IT employees in high-income countries may overrepresent positive outcomes, while experiences in under-resourced or collectivist settings remain comparatively understudied (Biju et al., 2022; Hettiarachchi, 2022).

However, as remote work has extended into a long-term model, concerns regarding its psychological consequences have grown. Emerging literature points to a number of challenges that may counterbalance its initial benefits, including increased social isolation, difficulty establishing work–life boundaries, and digital fatigue (Friedrich, 2022; Singh et al., 2022). These conditions can manifest as stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Gualano et al., 2022; Pasupuleti, 2024). Critically, findings across studies are not consistent: while some document significant psychological strain under remote conditions (Prasad et al., 2020; Costin et al., 2023), others report stable or even improved well-being (Giovanis, 2021; Shimura et al., 2021). These contradictions suggest that remote work's psychological impact is not inherently negative or positive, but is instead shaped by a complex set of mediating and moderating variables. Three theoretical frameworks help interpret this complexity. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model posits that psychological outcomes depend on the balance between job demands such as digital overload and available resources such as autonomy and supervisory support (Singh et al., 2022; Itam et al., 2022). Boundary Theory explains how the physical and temporal dissolution of work–home boundaries amplify role conflict and cognitive fatigue in remote settings (Fan & Moen, 2023; Saran, 2021). The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory further explains how prolonged remote work depletes personal and professional resources over time, increasing vulnerability to burnout and disengagement (Costin et al., 2023; Pasupuleti, 2024). Together, these frameworks provide the conceptual anchor for interpreting the synthesized findings in this review.

It is also increasingly evident that the psychological impact of remote work is not uniform across all individuals or organizations. Several studies suggest that outcomes are heavily influenced by moderating variables such as job role, technological infrastructure, access to resources, and personal coping strategies (Shimura et al., 2021; Hettiarachchi, 2022). Employees with structured routines, leadership support, and wellness initiatives are more likely to report positive experiences. In contrast, those who face unclear expectations, poor digital infrastructure, or conflicting household responsibilities are more prone to mental health difficulties. These mixed findings highlight the complexity of remote work's psychological footprint and emphasize the importance of organizational and contextual factors.

In developing nations such as Sri Lanka, these complexities are further compounded by socio-cultural and infrastructural dynamics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lanka's IT Industry rapidly adopted remote work models without substantial preparation or prior experience (Weerasekara, 2022; Rusdha, 2021). The nation's cultural norms such as collectivist family structures and multigenerational living arrangements introduce both support mechanisms and stressors for remote employees (Dias, 2023). These challenges are not unique to Sri Lanka; comparable dynamics have been documented in India, where extended family structures, gender role expectations, and urban density similarly shape remote work experiences (Prasad et al., 2020; Vijayalakshmi, 2023; Biju et al., 2022), and in other developing economies where digital infrastructure constraints compound psychological strain (Sarangi et al., 2022). This cross-regional pattern underscores that findings from Western, high-income contexts cannot be uncritically generalized to collectivist or resource-constrained settings, and that culturally sensitive analysis is essential for a complete understanding of remote work's psychological impact.

Despite the surge in research on remote work, critical evaluation of the available evidence reveals significant gaps and methodological weaknesses. Most studies remain short-term, cross-sectional, and focused on pandemic-era conditions, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn about sustained long-term effects (Sarangi et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2022). Contradictions further complicate interpretation: for instance, some studies find that remote work increases burnout and anxiety (Costin et al., 2023; Prasad et al., 2020), while others report no significant deterioration or even improvement in well-being (Giovanis, 2021; Shimura et al., 2021). These discrepancies may reflect sampling biases, contextual variation, or the absence of standardized measurement tools very few studies employ validated instruments such as the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12),

WHO-5 Well-Being Index, or Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), which limits cross-study comparability (Pasupuleti, 2024). Hybrid work models, which are increasingly preferred globally, also remain underexplored, leaving a critical gap in understanding how blended arrangements moderate psychological outcomes over time.

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) addresses these gaps by consolidating findings from 53 peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on five key psychological dimensions: occupational stress and burnout, social isolation and loneliness, work–life boundary erosion, digital fatigue and technostress, and job satisfaction and emotional resilience. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework and interpreted through the JD-R Model and Boundary Theory, the review analyzes trends, challenges, and contextual variations in how remote work affects mental health in the IT Industry, with particular emphasis on organizational support systems, gender roles, and cultural contexts including comparisons between developing and high-income settings.

Methodology

Search Strategy

This systematic literature review adopted the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework as a reporting guideline to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability in documenting the review process. It is important to acknowledge, however, that PRISMA primarily serves as a reporting checklist rather than a comprehensive methodological protocol. To complement PRISMA and address the interdisciplinary nature of this review which spans information technology, occupational psychology, and management science the study also drew on principles from qualitative thematic synthesis and the SALSA (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis) framework, which are widely recommended for IT and social science systematic reviews (Wells, 2023; Charalampous et al., 2021). The objective was to identify, organize, and synthesize high-quality academic literature addressing the psychological dimensions of long-term remote work within the IT Industry, given the accelerated and widespread shift toward virtual work environments following the COVID-19 pandemic.

To capture a broad and diverse sample of studies, a comprehensive search was conducted across four major digital databases and scholarly repositories: Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, and SciSpace. These platforms were selected due to their extensive and complementary coverage of both technical computing literature and behavioral/social science research. IEEE Xplore was specifically included to capture IT-focused empirical work, while ScienceDirect and SciSpace provided broader access to occupational psychology and management journals. It is acknowledged that databases such as Scopus and PubMed were not included, which may represent a limitation in coverage of medical and multidisciplinary perspectives.

A structured Boolean query was developed to include all four major conceptual domains central to the review: long-term impact, remote work, psychological well-being, and the IT workforce. The following search string was consistently applied across all platforms:

("long-term impact" OR "long term effect") AND ("remote work" OR "working from home") AND ("psychological well-being" OR "mental health" OR "mental well-being") AND ("Information Technology" OR "IT Industry")

To ensure relevance and currency, the search was restricted to scholarly works published between January 2020 and July 2025. This period captures the rapid evolution of remote work from a crisis-driven necessity to a stable operating model. Only English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles and recognized conference papers were considered eligible. Non-scholarly outputs such as white papers, dissertations, blogs, and editorials were excluded to maintain academic rigor and reliability.

Screening and Selection Process

The screening process followed a four-stage model based on PRISMA: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. This ensured a transparent, unbiased pathway for refining a large body of search results down to a final set suitable for qualitative synthesis.

The initial search yielded 1,196 records. After removing 322 duplicates, the remaining titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Studies were retained if they appeared to focus on remote work, psychological outcomes, and the IT workforce. This first-pass screening reduced the pool significantly, eliminating papers that focused on non-IT industries, non-remote work environments, or outcomes unrelated to mental health.

In the second stage, full-text screening was performed on the remaining set. This involved reviewing each article in detail against predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Particular attention was paid to methodological quality, study context, clarity of psychological focus, and whether the study pertained to long-term or sustained remote work not just short-term emergency measures during lockdowns

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria (IC)	IC1	Published between 2020–2025
	IC2	Peer-reviewed journal or conference papers
	IC3	Focus on remote or hybrid work in IT-related roles
	IC4	Examines psychological well-being or mental health
	IC5	Available in full-text and written in English
Exclusion Criteria (EC)	EC1	Publications before 2020
	EC2	Not peer-reviewed
	EC3	Focus on non-IT industries
	EC4	Lacks focus on psychological or mental well-being
	EC5	Not available in English or full-text

All studies meeting the inclusion criteria and not falling under any exclusion category were selected for the review. Quality appraisal was conducted by evaluating each included study against three criteria: methodological rigor (clarity of research design and sampling), contextual relevance (focus on IT professionals in remote settings), and measurement validity (use of recognized psychological instruments). Studies relying solely on unvalidated instruments or lacking clear sampling rationale were flagged as methodologically weaker and their findings interpreted with appropriate caution (Sarangi et al., 2022; Wells, 2023). Screening decisions were double-checked to minimize bias, and the review incorporated the SALSA framework alongside PRISMA to enhance methodological robustness for ICT and social science research.

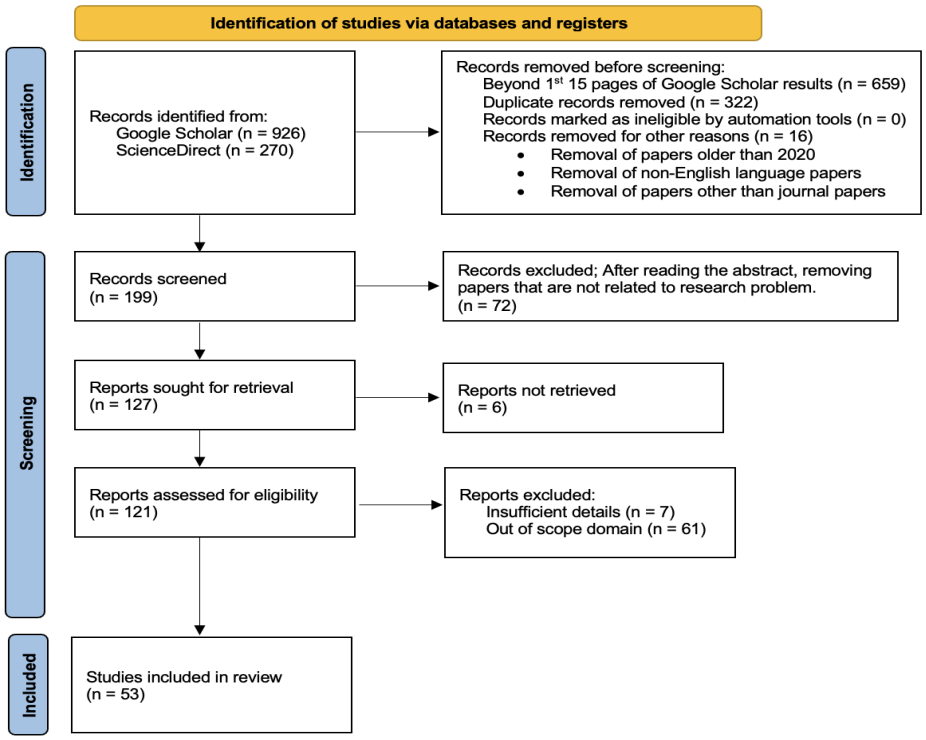

Figure 1: Study Selection Process

Synthesis of Results

Following the final selection process, all included studies were analyzed using a qualitative thematic synthesis approach guided by Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis method. Each publication was carefully reviewed to identify recurring psychological dimensions associated with long-term remote work in the IT Industry. Codes were derived inductively through free line-by-line coding of key psychological constructs and contextual factors from each study, grouped into descriptive themes through iterative cross-study comparison, and finally developed into analytical themes that moved beyond description toward interpretive insight (Charalampous et al., 2021; Wells, 2023). Rather than relying on statistical aggregation, which was unsuitable given the methodological diversity of the literature, this descriptive synthesis allowed for comparison of studies based on common themes, population characteristics, and outcome categories.

The review identified a wide spectrum of psychological constructs examined across the selected studies, including but not limited to: stress, burnout, anxiety, work–life balance, job satisfaction, autonomy, motivation, and social isolation. These outcomes were often studied in relation to moderating variables such as gender, age, family responsibilities, organizational policies, and national culture. While some articles focused on narrowly defined constructs (e.g., digital fatigue), others adopted broader mental health frameworks rooted in occupational psychology.

To enhance comparability, the studies were grouped thematically based on the psychological outcomes they addressed. These categories later informed the structure of the Results and Discussion section. Attention was also paid to contextual variations in findings such as differences between full-time remote and hybrid work settings, regional disparities (e.g., Sri Lanka vs. Western nations), and disparities between senior and junior employees. The analysis further highlighted how organizational support mechanisms, leadership engagement, and digital infrastructure quality intersected with psychological well-being outcomes.

Where applicable, the review noted the use of psychometric instruments, though these were inconsistently reported across studies. Standardized tools such as the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), WHO-5 Well-Being

Index, and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were referenced in the broader literature but not consistently used, limiting cross-study comparability. Several methodological limitations of this review must also be acknowledged: as a single-reviewer study, coding decisions were subject to individual interpretation, which may affect reproducibility. The restriction to English-language publications may have excluded relevant research from non-English-speaking contexts, particularly from developing regions. Publication bias is also a consideration, as studies reporting significant findings are more likely to be indexed in the searched databases. These limitations, along with the prevalence of cross-sectional designs, point to the need for more rigorous, longitudinal investigations in future research.

The synthesized insights from this body of work are presented thematically in the next section, offering a detailed account of how long-term remote work arrangements affect psychological well-being in IT-focused professional environments.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Included Studies

In total, 53 studies were reviewed, providing a comprehensive look at remote work's psychological impacts in the IT Industry. These studies span from 2020 through 2024, with a clear surge in publications during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 2).

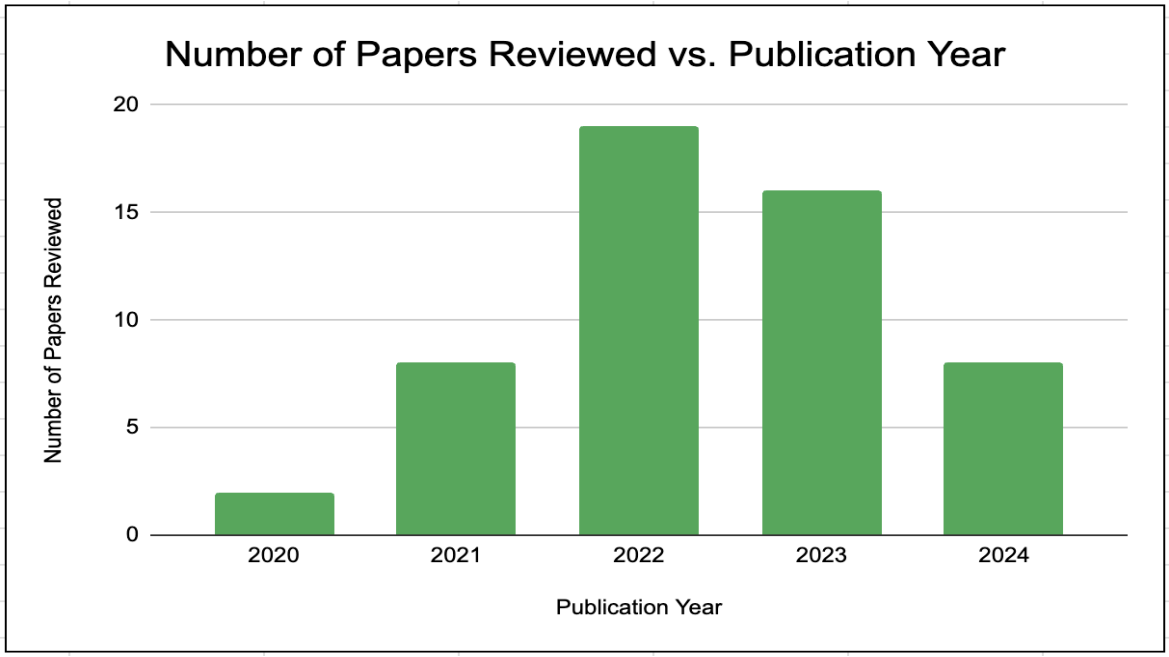

Figure 2: Publication Distribution by Year

In fact, most studies appeared in 2022–2023, reflecting heightened research interest as remote work became mainstream. This temporal distribution suggests that the pandemic catalyzed scholarly examination of remote work's long-term effects on well-being. However, it is important to critically note that the concentration of studies in the early pandemic period means that much of the evidence base captures crisis-driven remote work characterized by sudden transitions, school closures, and social restrictions rather than voluntary, stable long-term arrangements (Prasad et al., 2020; Yurchynska, 2024). This distinction matters significantly for interpretation: psychological outcomes observed under enforced pandemic conditions may not accurately represent the experience of remote work as a normalized, chosen work model. Correspondingly, many studies focused on the sudden shift to remote work under lockdown conditions, though a growing number also consider post-pandemic or voluntary remote arrangements in recent years (Yurchynska, 2024).

Methodologically, the literature is dominated by quantitative approaches. As

shown in Figure3, approximately half of the studies employed cross-sectional survey designs, often using convenience samples of IT employees.

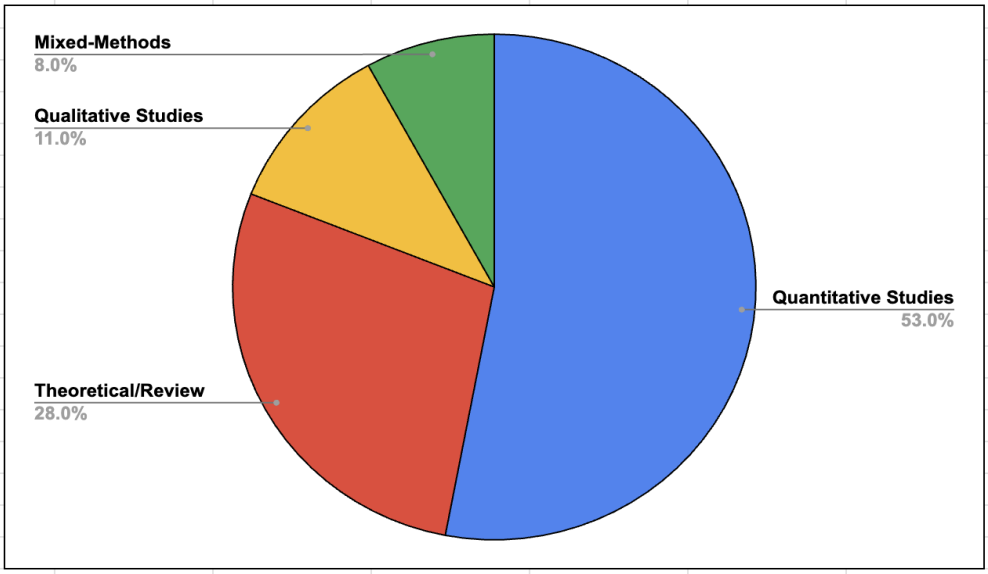

Figure 3: Distribution of Studies

While this approach enabled rapid data collection during the pandemic, it carries important validity limitations. Cross-sectional surveys capture a single point in time and cannot establish causation; self-reported stress or well-being measures are further susceptible to social desirability bias and recall error, potentially inflating positive outcomes or underreporting psychological strain (Sarangi et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2022). These limitations must be borne in mind when interpreting the findings synthesized in this review. Another sizable portion (around one-third) used qualitative methods such as

interviews and case studies, aiming to capture in-depth personal experiences (Safira, 2023; Charalampous et al., 2021). A smaller subset adopted mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, which while fewer in number generally offer stronger evidence for causal and temporal claims.

The psychological outcomes examined across studies are varied, though certain themes recur frequently (Figure 4)

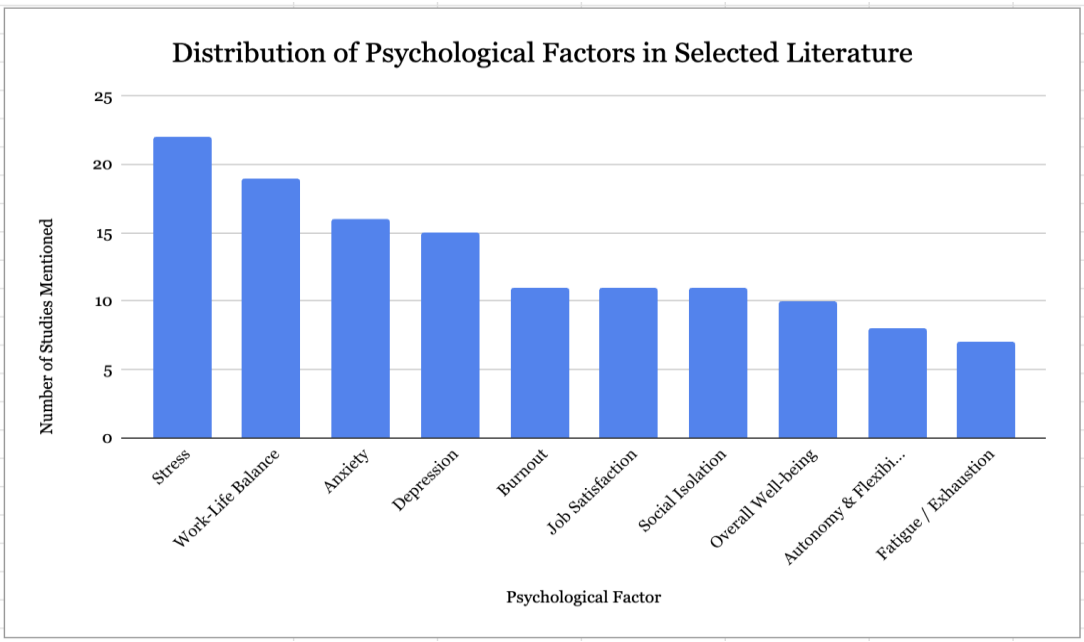

Figure 4: Frequency of Psychological Factors Studied

Stress-related outcomes are the most frequently studied, appearing in well over 60% of papers, followed by work-life balance issues and classic mental health indicators such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Positive constructs such as job satisfaction and engagement received comparatively less attention, reflecting the field's emphasis on identifying and responding to harm rather than fostering flourishing. This imbalance itself represents a methodological tendency worth noting a literature dominated by negative outcome measurement may produce a systematically skewed picture of remote work's overall psychological impact (Wells, 2023).

The majority of reviewed papers (roughly 70%) examined general IT employees across varied roles, while fewer studies targeted specific subgroups such as women, software engineers, or managers (Figure 5)

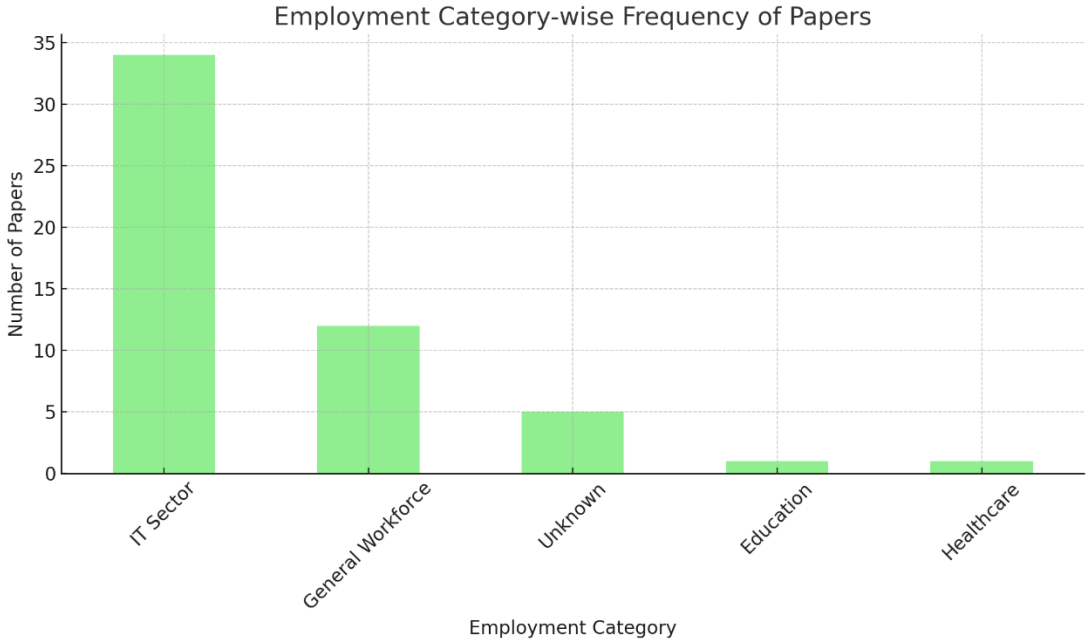

Figure 5: Frequency of Employment Category-wise

Geographically, South Asia particularly India and Europe contribute the largest share of studies (Figure 6), with developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia remaining underrepresented. This geographic skew limits the generalizability of findings: the experiences of IT professionals in infrastructure-constrained or collectivist cultural settings are not fully captured by the dominant evidence base, and conclusions drawn from Indian or European samples may not transfer to contexts such as Sri Lanka without careful qualification (Hettiarachchi, 2022; Weerasekara, 2022).

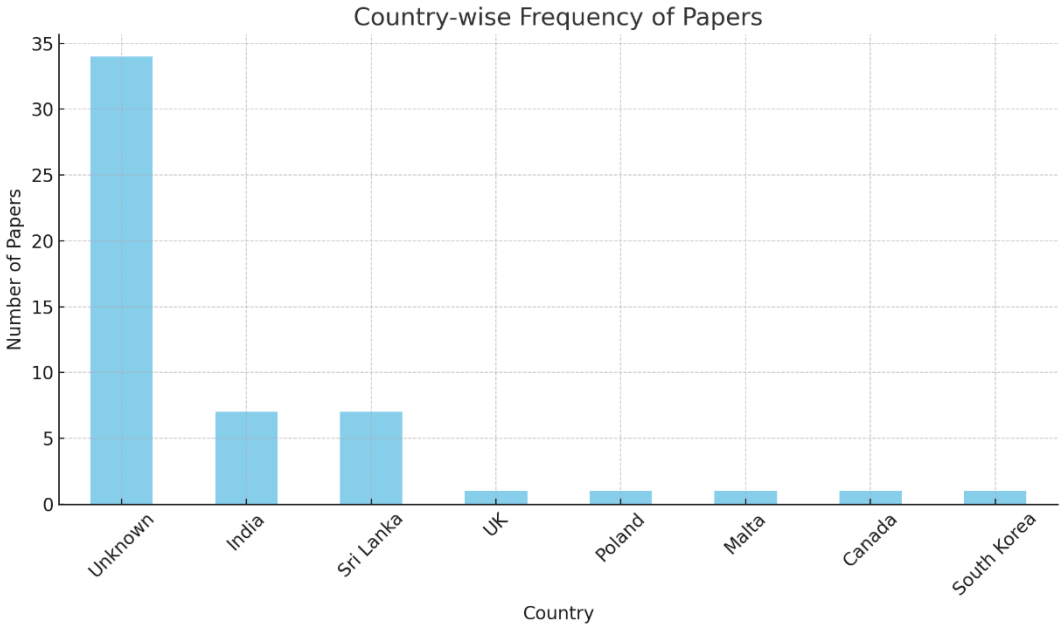

Figure 6: Frequency of Country-wise

Positive Psychological Outcomes of Remote Work

A number of studies documented positive effects of remote work on IT employees' psychological well-being. Chief among these benefits is the improvement in work-life integration made possible by flexible scheduling and the elimination of commuting. Employees who work from home often gain extra time that would otherwise be spent in traffic, and they can more fluidly attend to personal or family needs factors which have been linked to reduced stress and better overall life satisfaction (Oakman et al., 2020; Shimura et al., 2021). For instance, a study of Japanese IT professionals found that partial remote work arrangements led to lower psychological stress levels compared to fully in-office schedules, largely due to reduced commuting exhaustion and more time for personal care (Shimura et al., 2021). Similarly, an Australian rapid review noted that remote work gives many employees greater autonomy over their work environment and daily routine, which can alleviate work-related pressures and improve mental well-being (Oakman et al., 2020).

However, it is critical to interpret these positive findings with caution. Many of the studies reporting well-being improvements relied on cross-sectional self-report surveys conducted during the early phases of remote work adoption, when the novelty of working from home may have temporarily elevated satisfaction scores (Recchi et al., 2022). Longitudinal evidence suggests a more complex trajectory: Recchi et al. (2022) observed an initial improvement in well-being during the first weeks of remote work, followed by a gradual decline as isolation and fatigue accumulated over subsequent months. This dynamic pattern cannot be captured by single-point surveys, meaning that studies reporting positive outcomes may be measuring a temporary adjustment effect rather than a stable long-term benefit. Furthermore, from a JD-R Model perspective, positive outcomes tend to

emerge primarily when job resources such as autonomy, managerial support, and flexible scheduling are sufficiently available to offset job demands (Singh et al., 2022; Itam et al., 2022). When these resources are absent or unevenly distributed, the same remote work arrangement that benefits one employee may harm another, which explains the contradictory findings observed across studies.

Another commonly reported positive outcome is enhanced work-life balance and personal well-being. Multiple studies found that working from home allowed employees to spend more quality time with family and pursue personal interests, contributing to greater work-life harmony (Pujitha, 2023; Itam et al., 2022). Biju et al. (2022) observed that IT employees in India experienced significant increases in job satisfaction and family time after transitioning to remote work. Pujitha (2023) similarly found that employees with supportive remote work policies and good time management exhibited higher scores on psychological well-being indices. The comfortable and personalized home office environment was cited as a positive factor by some workers, who reported improved focus and morale when able to customize their workspace (Gross-Gołacka et al., 2022). Additionally, for certain personality types particularly introverted or autonomy-seeking individuals remote work was inherently less stressful and more psychologically rewarding (Charalampous et al., 2021).

It is important to note, however, that these positive outcomes tend to emerge when remote work is well-managed and voluntarily adopted. When employees choose remote work and have adequate support structures, they reap meaningful benefits; but if remote arrangements are chaotic or imposed without choice, these advantages are significantly diminished (Fan & Moen, 2023; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Overall, the literature affirms that remote work can offer genuine well-being advantages in many cases but the evidence for sustained, long-term positive outcomes remains methodologically thin, and future longitudinal research using validated instruments is needed to confirm whether initial benefits persist over time (Wells, 2023)

Negative Psychological Outcomes and Challenges

Counterbalancing the benefits, the review found robust evidence of negative psychological outcomes associated with extended remote work in the IT Industry. Foremost among these is the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness reported by remote workers. Because remote work inherently reduces face-to-face interactions, many employees described feelings of disconnection from colleagues and the workplace community (Ferrara et al., 2022; Safira, 2023). Several studies noted that IT professionals "felt left out" or experienced a diminished sense of belonging when working remotely for long periods, especially if their team's communication practices were limited (Chan et al., 2022; Charalampous et al., 2021). In a qualitative study, fully remote employees recounted experiencing emotional loneliness despite virtual communication tools, as online meetings could not fully replace the informal social support of an office environment (Safira, 2023). Sarinastiti (2022) further corroborated this through biomarker-based evaluation, finding that remote workers reporting stronger loneliness also exhibited elevated stress indicators and self-rated anxiety lending physiological credibility to what many self-report studies measure only subjectively. This distinction is methodologically significant: studies relying solely on self-report scales may underestimate the true psychological burden of isolation, as employees may normalize or underreport loneliness over time.

Critically, however, findings on social isolation are not entirely consistent across the literature. Some studies found that employees living with family mitigated loneliness through household companionship (Itam et al., 2022), while others noted that even those with family at home felt professionally isolated, missing out on networking and team cohesion. This contradiction highlights that social isolation in remote work is not simply a function of physical solitude but is shaped by the quality of virtual team communication and organizational culture a nuance that cross-sectional surveys often fail to capture adequately (Charalampous et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2022).

Another major challenge identified is the blurring of work-life boundaries and the tendency toward overwork in remote settings. While remote work offers flexibility, it also dissolves the physical separation between work and home, which in many cases led employees to work longer hours and find it difficult to "switch off" after work (van Zoonen et al., 2021; Gualano et al., 2022). In one survey of IT staff, 74% of respondents admitted to working beyond their normal office hours when at home, often extending into evenings or weekends (Saran, 2021). Boundary Theory offers a useful explanatory lens here: when the spatial and temporal boundaries between work and personal life are removed, role conflict intensifies and cognitive recovery becomes increasingly difficult, contributing to chronic stress and burnout over time (Fan & Moen, 2023; Saran, 2021). Costin et al. (2023) empirically documented increased rates of emotional exhaustion among employees who had been working from home for extended periods, consistent with this theoretical prediction. Female employees with young children were especially vulnerable, as they often shouldered childcare or homeschooling while juggling job duties a pattern observed consistently across studies from India, Romania, and Brazil (Vijayalakshmi, 2023; Singg, 2024; Mendonça et al., 2022). That said, it is worth noting that boundary erosion was more pronounced in studies conducted during mandatory pandemic lockdowns, when employees had little choice over their work arrangements. Whether the same degree of boundary blurring persists in post-pandemic, voluntary remote work remains less well evidenced, pointing to a gap that future longitudinal research should address (Yurchynska, 2024).

In line with the above, many researchers observed heightened stress, anxiety, and mental distress in remote employees. Prasad et al. (2020) found that IT professionals forced into sudden work-from-home arrangements exhibited increased anxiety and depressive symptoms compared to pre-pandemic baselines. A study in Brazil similarly noted rising self-reported stress levels and feelings of helplessness among remote employees (Mendonça et al., 2022). Technostress emerged as a particularly prominent stressor: Singh et al. (2022) demonstrated that heavy dependence on digital platforms led to fatigue from constant video meetings, difficulty with new software, and the pressure of being perpetually online all of which were linked to lower job satisfaction and increased irritability. From a Conservation of Resources perspective, this continuous digital demand depletes cognitive and emotional resources faster than they can be replenished, particularly when organizational support is insufficient (Costin et al., 2023; Pasupuleti, 2024). It is important, however, to acknowledge a key contradictory finding: Giovanis (2021), drawing on longitudinal European data, reported no significant deterioration in mental health among remote workers over time, suggesting that adaptation and habituation may moderate negative outcomes for some populations. This contradiction likely reflects differences in national welfare systems, cultural attitudes toward work, and the availability of organizational resources variables that many studies do not adequately control for, limiting the comparability of findings across contexts (Blank et al., 2023; Wells, 2023).

Influence of Demographic Factors on Well-Being

The impact of remote work on psychological well-being is not uniform across all individuals; demographic and personal factors significantly moderate how people experience remote arrangements. A prominent finding in this review is the differing effect of remote work by gender and family status. Several studies specifically focusing on women in IT found that female employees often faced greater difficulties during remote work, largely due to disproportionate caregiving and household responsibilities. Vijayalakshmi (2023) reported that working mothers in the Indian IT Industry experienced significantly higher stress and challenges in work-life balance when working from home, as compared to male colleagues. The blurring of boundaries hit women harder; many felt they were "always on double duty," simultaneously attending to office tasks and family needs, which heightened burnout and reduced their mental well-being (Vijayalakshmi, 2023). Singg (2024) similarly highlighted family-related stressors, noting that remote working women reported more anxiety and depressive symptoms attributable to the

pressure of balancing multiple roles. On the other hand, men in these studies did not report the same level of increase in domestic pressure, suggesting a gendered disparity in remote work's psychological toll.

From a theoretical standpoint, these gendered disparities are well explained by Boundary Theory: women in collectivist and traditionally structured households face structurally weaker work-home boundaries, as domestic responsibilities do not pause during work hours (Fan & Moen, 2023; Dias, 2023). The JD-R Model further illuminates this dynamic female IT professionals in caregiving roles experience higher job demands without a proportional increase in job resources such as dedicated workspace, uninterrupted work time, or institutional childcare support, creating conditions that are particularly conducive to burnout (Vijayalakshmi, 2023; Singg, 2024). Critically, however, most studies examining gender differences relied on self-report surveys with relatively small, convenience-based samples, which limits the generalizability of these findings. Moreover, intersectional factors such as socioeconomic status, household size, and cultural expectations were rarely controlled for simultaneously, meaning the observed gender effects may partly reflect broader structural inequalities rather than remote work per se (Blank et al., 2023).

Family composition and living situation also emerged as important moderating factors. Employees living alone during remote work tended to struggle more with loneliness, whereas those living with family were more prone to distractions and privacy challenges each scenario carrying distinct psychological consequences (Singg, 2024; Oakman et al., 2020). One study noted that individuals living alone often sought out virtual social interactions to cope, but still reported a sense of emptiness outside work hours (Crawford et al., 2022). In contrast, employees with family at home expressed gratitude for extra time with loved ones but simultaneously felt frustration when family obligations interfered with work (Fan & Moen, 2023). These contrasting patterns suggest that no single remote work arrangement is universally optimal, and that organizations must develop differentiated support strategies that account for employees' home contexts rather than applying blanket policies.

Beyond gender and family, age and career stage offer additional moderating dimensions, though the evidence here is comparatively thin and inconsistent. Some studies suggest that younger professionals adapted more readily to remote technologies but missed the social learning and mentorship of office life, potentially affecting their professional growth and emotional health (Recchi et al., 2022; Gorshkova & Lebedeva, 2023). Older workers, while sometimes less tech-savvy, may appreciate the convenience of remote work but face difficulties with ergonomics and the blurring of retirement-age routines (Oakman et al., 2020). However, these age-related observations are drawn from a limited number of studies that did not isolate age as a primary variable, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions. As Blank et al. (2023) explicitly note in their scoping review, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding how factors such as age, ethnicity, and personality systematically moderate remote work's psychological impact. This gap is itself a methodological limitation of the field: the predominance of undifferentiated general IT employee samples means that subgroup effects are frequently averaged out rather than examined a design choice that reduces statistical noise but sacrifices important nuance about who remote work helps and who it harms.

Comparing Hybrid and Fully Remote Work Models

An important contextual factor in the reviewed studies is the work model itself specifically, whether employees were entirely remote or in a hybrid arrangement. A number of studies explicitly compared these modes, and a tentative consensus is emerging that hybrid models can alleviate some psychological costs of full remote work. However, it is critical to acknowledge upfront that this conclusion rests on a relatively thin and methodologically weak evidence base: most studies examining hybrid work relied on qualitative interviews or small convenience samples, and very few employed standardized psychological measurement instruments to directly compare well-being outcomes across the two conditions (Shaholli et al., 2024; Wells, 2023). The definition of "hybrid work" also varies considerably across

studies some define it as two days per week in office, others as occasional or flexible attendance making direct cross-study comparisons problematic. These inconsistencies represent a significant gap that future research must address through standardized definitions, matched-sample designs, and validated psychometric tools before firm conclusions about hybrid work's superiority can be drawn.

With these limitations in mind, the available evidence does suggest that hybrid arrangements offer meaningful psychological advantages over purely remote setups, primarily through their capacity to preserve social connection. Safira (2023), who conducted interviews with IT HR professionals, found that fully remote workers tend to enjoy greater flexibility but suffer more pronounced social isolation, whereas hybrid workers reported better team cohesion and a stronger sense of organizational belonging. Participants on a full-remote schedule described feeling "cut off" from colleagues and company culture a finding consistent with the broader isolation theme documented across the negative outcomes' literature. From a JD-R Model perspective, this is theoretically predictable: fully remote arrangements systematically reduce a critical job resource interpersonal social support which, when not compensated by other resources such as strong virtual communication practices, increases vulnerability to stress and disengagement (Itam et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2022). Hybrid models, by contrast, periodically restore this resource through in-person contact, helping to rebalance the demands-resources equation.

Shaholli et al. (2024) further corroborated this in a systematic review finding that employees generally reported higher well-being and job satisfaction under hybrid arrangements. Charalampous et al. (2021) similarly noted from qualitative data that employees seek "the right blend" valuing remote autonomy while craving periodic face-to-face engagement. However, these positive findings must be interpreted cautiously: both studies relied heavily on self-reported satisfaction measures, which are subject to social desirability bias and may not capture subtler psychological costs such as increased cognitive load from environment-switching or the anxiety of maintaining visibility in a partially in-person team (Crawford et al., 2022; Blank et al., 2023). The possibility that hybrid workers report higher satisfaction partly because they feel more organizationally secure rather than because hybrid work is inherently less psychologically demanding cannot be ruled out without more controlled experimental designs.

Hybrid work also introduces its own distinct psychological stressors that the literature has not yet fully examined. Safira (2023) noted that hybrid workers experienced logistical strains from commuting on certain days and adapting to changing work environments. Some employees reported that shifting between home and office routines was mentally taxing, disrupting consistent rhythms and requiring constant readjustment a pattern consistent with Boundary Theory, which predicts that frequent boundary crossing between work and home domains increases role ambiguity and cognitive fatigue (Fan & Moen, 2023). Furthermore, hybrid arrangements can create new forms of inequality within teams: employees who attend the office more frequently may gain informal visibility advantages over those who remain predominantly remote, potentially generating anxiety about career progression among the latter group (Gamage et al., 2022; Ferrara et al., 2022). This "proximity bias" dynamic is largely absent from the current literature, representing an important unresolved debate that future research must engage. In summary, while hybrid models appear to offer net psychological benefits over purely remote setups under current evidence, the field lacks the longitudinal, standardized, and comparative data needed to prescribe hybrid work as a universal solution and organizations should implement it thoughtfully rather than as an automatic remedy for remote work's psychological costs.

Role of Organizational Support and Policies

Across the reviewed literature, one of the clearest determinants of remote work well-being outcomes is the level of organizational and managerial support provided to employees. Numerous studies emphasized that the negative impacts of remote work can be buffered or the positives amplified by supportive

organizational practices. Itam et al. (2022) demonstrated that supervisory support has a significant positive effect on remote employees' psychological well-being: those who felt their managers were accessible, empathetic, and responsive reported higher morale, lower stress, and greater job satisfaction than those who felt unsupported. Concrete actions such as regular check-in calls, feedback sessions, and mentorship gave remote workers a sense that they were valued and not "invisible" despite the physical distance. Similarly, Prabagaran (2023) found that trust-based organizational cultures, transparent communication, and flexibility in work hours drove better well-being outcomes for remote staff.

From a JD-R Model perspective, these findings are theoretically coherent: organizational support functions as a critical job resource that directly offsets the psychological demands of remote work including digital overload, isolation, and boundary erosion (Singh et al., 2022; Itam et al., 2022). When resources such as managerial accessibility, clear role expectations, and wellness provisions are present, employees are better equipped to cope with the inherent demands of remote arrangements. Conversely, when organizational support is absent, the same demands become overwhelming, accelerating burnout and disengagement. This theoretical alignment strengthens confidence in the empirical findings the consistency between what JD-R Model predicts and what studies observe across diverse cultural contexts suggests that organizational support is not merely a contextual moderator but a fundamental psychological necessity for sustainable remote work (Prabagaran, 2023; Gualano et al., 2022).

However, it is important to critically examine the methodological basis of these conclusions. The majority of studies measuring organizational support relied on employee self-report surveys, raising the possibility of common method bias where employees' perceptions of both support and well-being are simultaneously influenced by their general mood or dispositional optimism at the time of survey (Sarangi et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2022). Very few studies objectively measured organizational practices such as actual check-in frequency, documented wellness program participation, or HR intervention uptake meaning the field largely captures perceived rather than actual support. This distinction matters because perceived support and actual support do not always align, and interventions designed based on perception data alone may miss structural organizational deficits. Future research should incorporate objective organizational measures alongside self-report data to strengthen causal claims about support's role in remote work well-being.

Beyond managerial behavior, specific policies and resources provided by organizations were frequently cited as crucial. Several studies called on employers to institute guidelines and programs to support remote employees' mental health (Oakman et al., 2020; Gualano et al., 2022). Effective measures documented in the literature include: offering scheduling flexibility to accommodate caregiving or peak productivity periods; providing ergonomic equipment or home office stipends; ensuring reliable IT support for technical difficulties; and organizing virtual team-building activities to maintain camaraderie (Charalampous et al., 2021; Crawford et al., 2022). Oakman et al. (2020) specifically noted that clear delineation of work expectations such as defined work hours and response-time norms is an important policy to prevent work from encroaching into personal life. Confidential employee assistance programs and remote counseling services were also associated with better coping among employees facing anxiety or burnout (Gualano et al., 2022). Training programs for both managers and employees on effective remote work practices were recommended by multiple researchers (Sharma, 2024; Prasad et al., 2020).

A critical gap in this subsection of the literature, however, is the near-complete absence of studies from developing country organizational contexts. Most evidence on effective organizational support comes from studies conducted in high-income countries with mature HR infrastructure, strong labor protections, and reliable digital connectivity (Oakman et al., 2020; Itam et al., 2022). In contexts such as Sri Lanka, where organizational HR capacity may be more limited and digital infrastructure less reliable, the same support mechanisms may be structurally difficult to implement (Weerasekara, 2022; Gamage et al., 2022). This

geographic and structural gap means that the organizational support recommendations emerging from this literature may not be directly transferable to developing-country IT organizations without significant contextual adaptation an important unresolved debate that the field has not yet adequately engaged (Hettiarachchi, 2022; Rusdha, 2021).

In summary, the literature strongly indicates that organizational intervention can make or break the remote work experience. Supportive actions whether through empathetic leadership, formal policies, or wellness resources significantly mitigate the psychological risks of remote work. However, the predominantly self-report, high-income-country evidence base limits the generalizability of these conclusions, and future research should prioritize objective measurement of organizational practices and extend inquiry to underrepresented developing-country contexts.

Assessment and Measurement of Psychological Well-Being

A final important theme emerging from this review is the substantial variation in how studies defined and measured "psychological well-being" and critically, how this variation undermines the comparability and interpretability of findings across the literature. Different researchers operationalized well-being in fundamentally different ways. Some studies focused exclusively on negative mental health indicators measuring stress levels, anxiety symptoms, or burnout scores as proxies for diminished well-being (Sarangi et al., 2022; Costin et al., 2023). These studies often employed validated scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) or depression and anxiety inventories to quantify adverse psychological states associated with remote work. In contrast, other studies assessed well-being in a positive sense, using measures of life satisfaction, job satisfaction, or general psychological well-being scales (Pujitha, 2023; Gross-Gołacka et al., 2022). Yet others took a holistic approach, using work-life balance satisfaction or overall quality of life as indicators of psychological well-being (Biju et al., 2022; Fan & Moen, 2023). Qualitative studies added a further layer of complexity by capturing self-described well-being through interviews rather than numeric scales (Charalampous et al., 2021).

This conceptual heterogeneity has direct and serious consequences for what conclusions can be drawn from the literature. As Charalampous et al. (2021) explicitly noted, where well-being means absence of ill-being in one paper and presence of positive flourishing in another, direct comparisons become methodologically indefensible. A study reporting that remote work "improves well-being" using a job satisfaction scale is measuring something categorically different from a study reporting that remote work "worsens well-being" using a burnout inventory yet both findings are routinely cited side by side in narrative reviews as if they address the same construct. This conflation artificially inflates the appearance of contradictory findings in the literature: what may look like a genuine empirical disagreement between studies is sometimes simply a reflection of incompatible measurement approaches rather than genuinely different psychological realities (Wells, 2023; Pasupuleti, 2024). Future reviews and primary studies must therefore be explicit about which dimension of well-being they are measuring and ensure that comparisons are made only between studies using conceptually equivalent operationalizations.

Compounding the measurement heterogeneity problem is the overwhelming reliance on self-report data across the reviewed studies. Almost all studies relied exclusively on employees' own perceptions of their stress, happiness, or burnout a methodological choice that, while appropriate for capturing subjective experience, introduces systematic biases. Social desirability bias may lead employees to underreport psychological distress, particularly when surveys are administered through or associated with their employer (Crawford et al., 2022; Sarangi et al., 2022). Mood-state effects at the time of survey completion can produce transient responses that do not reflect stable psychological states. And self-report measures of complex constructs such as "emotional resilience" or "work-life balance" are highly sensitive to individual differences in how respondents interpret and anchor scale items. Very few studies in this review incorporated objective or physiological indicators of

psychological stress an exception being Sarinastiti (2022), who used biomarker-based evaluation to corroborate self-reported loneliness and anxiety. The near-universal reliance on self-report data therefore means that the evidence base for remote work's psychological impact, while broad, is methodologically shallow in ways that significantly constrain causal inference.

A further critical limitation is the predominance of cross-sectional designs, which capture psychological well-being at a single point in time and cannot track how outcomes evolve as remote work continues. This is particularly problematic for a review concerned with long-term psychological impact by definition, cross-sectional studies cannot answer the central question this review addresses. Longitudinal evidence, while scarce, suggests that psychological outcomes follow dynamic rather than static trajectories: Recchi et al. (2022) observed initial well-being improvements in the early weeks of remote work followed by gradual decline as isolation and fatigue accumulated, while Yurchynska (2024) documented patterns of stress adaptation in post-pandemic technology firms that would be invisible to cross-sectional measurement. These longitudinal insights fundamentally challenge conclusions drawn from snapshot surveys and underscore the urgent need for repeated-measures and longitudinal designs in future research. Going forward, the field would benefit enormously from the adoption of common standardized instruments such as the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, Maslach Burnout Inventory, or GHQ-12 applied consistently across studies to enable meaningful aggregation and meta-analytic synthesis (Shaholli et al., 2024; Charalampous et al., 2021). Without this harmonization of measurement, the evidence base will continue to grow in volume while remaining fragmented in its capacity to generate definitive, actionable conclusions about the long-term psychological impact of remote work in the IT Industry.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review has synthesized a diverse body of scholarship exploring the long-term psychological impact of remote work within the IT Industry. Drawing upon 53 peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical studies published between 2020 and 2025, the review reveals a nuanced and multifaceted picture of how sustained remote work arrangements influence employee well-being. While many professionals benefit from increased autonomy, flexible scheduling, and the elimination of commute-related stressors, others grapple with heightened emotional fatigue, isolation, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Critically, these divergent outcomes are not random they are systematically shaped by the interplay of organizational support quality, individual coping resources, job role characteristics, home environment conditions, and broader cultural contexts, as interpreted through the Job Demands–Resources Model and Boundary Theory frameworks applied throughout this review.

The literature highlights that remote work is not inherently beneficial or detrimental; rather, its psychological effects are mediated by a complex interplay of factors. Notably, women particularly in collectivist societies frequently report greater emotional burdens, reflecting underlying social dynamics and domestic expectations that structurally weaken work-home boundaries (Vijayalakshmi, 2023; Dias, 2023). Similarly, junior employees, those in cramped or under-resourced home settings, and individuals with fewer organizational support systems tend to experience more pronounced negative outcomes (Recchi et al., 2022; Weerasekara, 2022). These subgroup differences are not merely descriptive observations they carry direct implications for how remote work policies should be designed. A one-size-fits-all approach to remote work is insufficient; organizations must develop differentiated support strategies that recognize and respond to the distinct vulnerabilities of different employee groups rather than assuming uniform experiences across their workforce.

One of the most critical themes emerging from this review is the extent to which methodological weaknesses in the existing literature limit the conclusions that can be drawn and this limitation must be confronted directly rather than merely noted in passing. The predominance of cross-sectional, self-report survey designs means that most of the available evidence captures psychological states at a single point in time, often during the

acute disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than tracking how well-being evolves as remote work becomes a normalized long-term arrangement (Sarangi et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2022). This has profound implications for validity: findings from pandemic-era studies may significantly overestimate psychological strain by conflating the stress of crisis conditions with the stress of remote work per se. Conversely, studies reporting positive outcomes during early remote work adoption may be capturing a temporary novelty effect rather than a stable improvement (Recchi et al., 2022). The reliance on unvalidated, self-designed measurement instruments further undermine comparability across studies when different studies measure "well-being" using incompatible operationalizations, the apparent contradictions in the literature may reflect measurement artifacts rather than genuine empirical disagreements (Wells, 2023; Pasupuleti, 2024). These methodological weaknesses collectively mean that the current evidence base, while broad, cannot yet support strong causal claims about remote work's long-term psychological impact a sobering conclusion that should temper both optimistic and pessimistic narratives about remote work's effects.

Hybrid work models, though increasingly common in practice, remain critically underexplored in the academic literature and the review's findings suggest this gap is more consequential than previously acknowledged. The limited comparative evidence available tentatively favors hybrid arrangements over fully remote setups in terms of psychological well-being, primarily through their capacity to restore social connection and organizational belonging (Shaholli et al., 2024; Charalampous et al., 2021). However, this conclusion is based on qualitative and small-sample evidence that cannot yet be considered definitive. Future research addressing this gap should adopt specific comparative frameworks: longitudinal cohort designs that follow matched groups of fully remote and hybrid workers over at least 12 months; standardized well-being measurement using instruments such as the WHO-5 Well-Being Index or Maslach Burnout Inventory applied consistently across both conditions; and multilevel analytical approaches that simultaneously account for individual, team, and organizational factors. Without such methodological rigor, the field risks prescribing hybrid work as a universal solution on the basis of insufficient evidence.

In light of these insights, this review advocates for a more intentional and evidence-based approach to designing remote and hybrid work environments, with recommendations tailored to specific employee subgroups rather than applied uniformly. For working parents and caregivers particularly women who bear disproportionate domestic responsibilities organizations should implement explicit boundary-setting policies such as defined work hours, no after-hours communication norms, and access to childcare support, as evidenced by findings from Vijayalakshmi (2023), Singg (2024), and Fan and Moen (2023). For junior or early-career employees who miss the mentorship and social learning of office environments, structured virtual mentoring programs and deliberate team engagement activities are recommended (Recchi et al., 2022; Itam et al., 2022). For employees in developing-country contexts such as Sri Lanka, where digital infrastructure and organizational HR capacity may be limited, investment in reliable connectivity and basic ergonomic resources represents a foundational prerequisite before higher-order well-being interventions can be effective (Weerasekara, 2022; Rusdha, 2021). For all remote workers regardless of context, trust-based management practices, regular check-ins, and access to confidential mental health support have been consistently identified as protective factors against burnout and disengagement (Prabagaran, 2023; Gualano et al., 2022).

Ultimately, as remote work transitions from an emergency measure to a long-term norm, the central challenge for both scholars and practitioners is to build an evidence base that is rigorous enough to guide consequential organizational decisions. This review has mapped the current state of that evidence its breadth, its patterns, and critically, its limitations and in doing so has identified the methodological and conceptual work that remains to be done. The path forward requires longitudinal designs, validated and standardized measurement tools, greater attention to underrepresented populations and cultural contexts, and a willingness to engage critically with contradictory findings rather

than simply cataloguing them. Only through such rigorous inquiry can the field move from documenting remote work's psychological complexity to genuinely understanding and addressing it.

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Author Contributions

The corresponding author takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission. All authors listed on the manuscript must have made significant contributions to the study. An author statement indicating the specific details of the contribution from each author (must be listed using their initials only) for the manuscript based on the relevant CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) roles should be included: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, review and editing.

Hasanka Jeewantha - Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Resource collection, writing original draft, review and editing.

Ruwan Wickramaarachchi - Supervision, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest

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