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Aligning human resource practices with remote work demands to enhance employee performance and engagement

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ABSTRACT

Despite the rapid expansion of remote work, traditional human resource practices remain largely designed for office-based environments and are insufficiently aligned with the unique demands of remote work. Furthermore, existing theoretical approaches do not clearly explain how HR practices can be systematically designed as organisational resources that mitigate remote work demands and enhance employee engagement and performance. This conceptual paper proposes a multi-dimensional human resource management framework to enhance employee engagement and performance in a remote work environment. The study seeks to bridge the gap in human resource practices by offering practices suitable for remote workers. Guided by the Job Demands-Resources model and the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity framework, this study employed a conceptual methodology that combined theory adaptation and model-building. A systematic literature review using Boolean operators was conducted across Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Scopus. Twenty-five peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2026 were identified and thematically analysed. Furthermore, the review revealed five job demands: social isolation, blurred work-life balance, communication complexity, technological strain, and performance visibility. Consequently, these job demands can be mitigated by implementing strategic human resources practices, such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, compensation, and work-life balance. By proposing a human resource management framework that may enable efficient remote work practices, promotes sustainable development and the evolving business ecosystem. The framework contributes to SDGs 3 and 8 by promoting employee well-being and productive work practices. The study also offers useful information for businesses looking to create robust HRM plans that maintain worker performance and engagement in a digitally connected business ecosystem.

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Introduction

Remote work has gained significant traction since 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Nikolić, 2023; Sin & Kathiarayan, 2023). Employees were compelled to transition to remote work during the pandemic without sufficient organisational preparation (Van Zoonen et al., 2021). When the pandemic subsided, to preserve organisational culture and improve collaboration, some organisations called for a return to the office (Gibson et al., 2023). While some implemented hybrid arrangements to provide flexibility and boost employee satisfaction (Munyeka, 2024). However, some organisations have established remote work as the "new normal" (Capone et al., 2024; Mahomed et al., 2023). In this regard, remote work offers advantages such as flexibility and autonomy. It also entails a unique set of "job demands" physically, psychologically, and socially that can impact workers negatively, leading to burnout (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). This is because HR practices remained based on the traditional, centralised office model (Luan, 2025; Matej & Amadeja, 2025). The flexible, digitally mediated nature of remote work does not align with policies intended for in-person supervision and strict 9-5 schedules (Kess-Momoh et al., 2024; Mat et al., 2025). This misalignment results in a "misfit" and lowers employee engagement and performance (Matej & Amadeja, 2025).

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Literature highlights a disconnection between traditional HRM configurations and the "distributed, fragmented, and fluid" era of modern work (Matej & Amadeja, 2025). While traditional HR relies on physical presence as a proxy for productivity, remote work demands new managerial work, specifically "visibility management" and the regulation of "digital exhaustion" (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025; Junsteen & Plesner, 2023). There is a lack of integrated frameworks that explain how specific HR practices can be strategically deployed as organisational resources to buffer "technostress" and "collegial isolation" essential in remote settings (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Pengfei et al., 2026).

Therefore, the aim of the study was to develop an integrated conceptual framework that aligns HR practices with remote work demands using Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity models (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024; Bos-Nehles et al., 2023). By synthesizing current literature (2020 -2026), this study identified how HR can change from administrative oversight to strategic resource building. In this regard, the study may help HR practitioners and managers with insights for maintaining long-term employee engagement and performance in the post-digital workplace through aligning HR practices, such as outcome-based performance management and digital upskilling, acting as "shields against technostress and blurred boundaries (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Jia & Hou, 2024; Pengfei et al., 2026).

Therefore, to achieve the aim, the study was guided by the following research questions;

i. What are the key job demands in remote work that influence employee performance and engagement?
ii. In what ways are traditional HR practices misaligned with remote work demands?
iii. How can HR practices be reconfigured through the JD-R and AMO models to serve as effective organisational resources for remote employees?

Literature Review

This section of the study focuses on work demands in remote work environments, their impact on employee performance and engagement, and the HR practices that can be adopted to address these demands.

Work Demands in Remote Work Environment and Their Impact on Performance and Engagement

In the remote work setting, job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained effort and entail physiological and cognitive costs (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024; Choudhary & Jain, 2025). High job demands in remote work environments tend to reduce engagement and performance when not supported by adequate resources (Capone et al., 2024). Remote workers face job demands such as social isolation, blurred work-life balance, communication complexity, technological strain, and performance visibility.

Social isolation

Social isolation is now a structural requirement rather than a choice, resulting in severe "professional isolation" (Aguillon & Croin-Gilmore, 2024). According to Toscano & Zappalà (2020), loneliness and a lack of social support are powerful indicators of elevated stress and decreased job satisfaction. In contrast to the office environment, remote work can lead to a feeling of "collegial isolation," which impairs contextual job performance by lowering the social motivation and relatedness required for high engagement (Saurombe et al., 2022).

Blurred work-life balance

According to Seeber and Erhardt (2023) and Žiedelis et al. (2022), the removal of physical barriers between professional and home environments has rendered boundaries more "permeable," frequently leading to work tasks carrying over into the private sphere. This shift complicates psychological separation from work, particularly for employees who prefer clear role segmentation (Allen et al., 2021). The resulting expectation of constant digital connectivity often exacerbates work-family conflict and can lead to "career shock," especially as the lines between personal and professional life weaken (Munyeka, 2024). Research by Sonnentag et al. (2022) further indicates that the blurring of these boundaries hinders psychological detachment, a process essential for restoring the mental and energetic resources consumed by work demands. This inability to effectively detach and recover leads to increased stress and can hamper an individual's boundary management and well-being at work (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025). Consequently, insufficient recovery time and family-work conflict negatively affect both employee productivity and work engagement (Munyeka, 2024).

Communication complexity

The transition to remote work has substituted face-to-face conversations with digitally mediated interactions, thereby increasing communication complexity (Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore, 2024). On this note, Yang et al. (2021) observed that remote work often makes collaboration networks more "static and siloed," with employees spending less time bridging different departments. This reduces employees' time spent on cross-group connections by 25%, leading to less dynamic collaboration and potentially lower employee performance. Furthermore, this difficulty leads to fragmented schedules and delayed feedback loops, which can diminish the quality of interpersonal relationships and organisational resilience (Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore, 2024).

Technological strain

Technological strain arises from the continuous need to learn new digital tools and the "techno-overload" associated with a high volume of digital tasks (Capone et al., 2024). In remote work environments, employees often experience additional job demands, including cognitive strain from navigating multiple collaboration platforms and frustration caused by hardware or connectivity failures (Wang et al., 2021; Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024; Murugan & Rashadh, 2024). These demands can accumulate over time, leading to digital exhaustion, which reduces employees' capacity to sustain long-term engagement and performance (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025; Murugan & Rashadh, 2024).

Performance visibility

"Visibility management" has emerged as a key managerial and staff requirement in the absence of physical presence (Kalischko & Riedl, 2024). Many organisations have implemented electronic performance monitoring (EPM) to address the lack of direct supervision. Recent data suggested that around 80% of businesses currently employ digital tracking systems (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021). This creates a demand for "digital presenteeism," in which employees feel pressured to remain constantly online to signal productivity (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021). The use of EPM may undermine trust, increase stress, increase privacy invasion, and decrease productivity in remote workers (Kalischko & Riedl, 2024).

In summary, social isolation, technological strain, and blurred work-life boundaries characterise important job demands that require sustained psychological effort. When these demands are coupled with insufficient job resources, they can lead to increased stress and decreased employee motivation and engagement (Demerouti, 2023). Additionally, the coordination complexity of virtual teams, reduced social cues, and increased performance visibility pressures while increasing cognitive load, and may contribute to performance variability (George, 2025; Vu, 2025).

Together, these interrelated social, technological, and psychological demands characterised remote work as a resource-intensive context that directly shapes employee engagement and performance outcomes. This emphasises the need for HR practices designed for remote workers to mitigate strain, preserve work-life boundaries, and sustain employee engagement and performance.

HR Practices to Respond to Remote Work Demands

The Job-Demands-Resources (JD-R) model highlights the need to align job demands with organisational resources to sustain employee engagement and performance (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). In remote work environments, aligned HR practices act as the primary resources that build employee Ability (A), Motivation (M), and Opportunity (O), thereby buffering the psychological costs of decentralised work (Bos-Nenhles et al., 2023; Jia & Hou, 2024).

Recruitment and selection: Sourcing digital ability

According to Bos-Nehles et al. (2023) and Mat et al. (2025), the AMO framework reviews recruitment and selection as an important strategy for sourcing talent that can flourish in a remote environment. A "misfit" between candidate traits and digital reality results from traditional recruitment's heavy reliance on in-person interviews and "cultural fit" based on physical presence, which ignores remote-specific demands such as isolation and the need for high self-discipline (Kess-Momoh et al., 2024; Matej & Amadeja, 2025).

Therefore, Matej and Amadeja (2025) emphasise that organisations recruiting remote workers should use algorithmic platforms for sourcing. While digital simulations, virtual 'job tryouts', and structured online interviews may be used to evaluate remote communication skills, self-discipline, and tech-savviness (Babalola & Kolawole, 2021; Luan, 2025). On digital simulations, organisations can use job-related scenarios in a virtual environment to test decision-making and adaptability. Moreover, virtual 'job-tryouts' applicants will be allowed to experience day-to-day tasks, helping gauge interest and skill alignment. These virtual-specific assessments ensure the right skills and job-person fit and streamline integration into digital work environments (Dube & Marnewick, 2016). The long-term efficacy of these digital selection methods in predicting sustained performance across various cultural contexts with the JD-R framework, however, remains a crucial research need.

Training and development: Enhancing digital competency

The JD-R model states that enhancing employee capacity is important for fulfilling job demands (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). Traditional in-person training fails to address the "technological strain" of navigating complicated, asynchronous digital workspaces (Luan, 2025). Therefore, training should focus on digital upskilling and virtual onboarding through self-directed platforms in the current remote settings (Luan, 2025; Surianto et al., 2024). Training must emphasize "team emotional management," including technical proficiency, to address virtual communication issues and avoid "digital exhaustion" (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025). Although the AMO model acknowledges training as an ability-enhancer, it often overlooks how customised learning pathways serve as a long-term employment resource that mitigates the specific challenges of isolation (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023). Research on how training programs might support proactive digital well-being, psychological health, and technical skills is desperately needed, as this will also aid employee performance.

Performance management: Providing the opportunity to perform

In the JD-R model, performance management systems should serve as resource and demand mitigators (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). Traditional systems relying on annual reviews and "live supervision" are misaligned with remote work and often devolve into invasive electronic monitoring (Alfaf, 2025). Such monitoring is used by nearly 80% of firms, but it often increases job demand, eroding trust and psychological safety (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021).

Strategic alignment requires a shift towards outcome-based performance metrics (Kess-Momoh et al., 2024). By leveraging "digital trace data" and "online dashboards" to focus on tangible results rather than hours logged, HR provides employees with the opportunity to work autonomously (Alfaf, 2025; Matej & Amadeja, 2025). This shift fosters engagement by providing timely support and fair acknowledgement without the stress of constant digital visibility (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Saurombe et al., 2022). A research gap remains in understanding how to design regular feedback, context-aware systems that effectively address the varied requirements of remote workers across multiple sectors.

Compensation: Driving motivation through strategic support

Compensation is an organisational resource that enhances motivation and mitigates the adverse effects of high job demands (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). In the remote work context, there is a need for innovative practices, including customised compensation, such as stipends for ICT infrastructure and home-office utilities, to reduce the strain caused by technical malfunctions (Lord, 2020; Mani & Mishra, 2020).

Furthermore, motivation is enhanced by holistic well-being benefits and mental health support, which serve as job resources that help protect employees from burnout (Kess-Momoh et al, 2024). Traditional pay frameworks typically overlook the "hidden costs" of remote work and the greater need for contextual performance in virtual teams (Lord, 2020). While flexible and remote-specific benefits (e.g., wellness stipends and technological allowances) link resources with digital demands, there remains a gap in designing frameworks that ensure equity for remote workers across diverse organisational and cultural landscapes.

Work-life balance: Managing boundaries as a resource

Challenges to work-life balance, such as blurred boundaries and prolonged connectivity, are conceptualised in the JD-R model as high job demands (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025; Seeber & Erhardt, 2023). Without appropriate resources, these pressures lead to "digital exhaustion" and adverse work attitudes (Capone et al., 2024; Huusko & Sivunen, 2025).

From an AMO perspective, formalised work-life balance regulations, such as boundary control policies and the "right to disconnect," augment the opportunity dimension by allowing employees to psychologically detach from work (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Luan, 2025). Adaptive HR serves as a "shield" by personalising flexible work arrangements based on individual needs, which is an important predictor of sustained engagement (Huang et al., 2023; Molnár & Papp, 2023). Despite the recognition of these challenges, a significant research gap remains regarding how the variability in these policy interventions affects long-term performance across different employee demographics and job functions.

Research and Methodology

This conceptual paper employs a theory adaptation and model-building design to propose a comprehensive human resource management framework for managing remote workers. The aim is to generate valuable insights by synthesising carefully selected literature and aligning it with theoretical principles to address the evolving demands of remote work. The research is grounded in an integration of domain and method theory (MacInnis, 2011). The domain theory in this study is human resource management, specifically focusing on five key HR practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, compensation, and work-life balance in relation to remote workers. These key HR practices directly influence employee performance and engagement, especially in the context of remote work, where unique challenges arise (Ferrara et al., 2022). The method theory guiding this paper is the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) and the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) framework (Marín García & Martinez Tomas, 2016). The Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) Model offers a structured lens to conceptualise how job demands (social isolation, blurred work-life balance, communication complexity, technological strain, and performance visibility) and job resources (work-life balance, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development, and compensation) interact to influence employee engagement and performance.

Search Strategy

This study employed a systematic review approach to guide literature selection and ensure analytical rigour. Boolean operators (e.g., "AND," "OR," "NOT") were used to refine searches and identify relevant studies (Alharbi & Stevenson, 2020). The search strategy included the combination of keywords such as "working from home," "remote work," "virtual work," "telecommuting," "distributed teams," and "digital collaboration" combined with outcome-focused terms such as "employee performance," "job performance," "work engagement," "employee engagement," "motivation," and "productivity." The databases used included Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Scopus. Google Scholar was selected for its broad coverage of academic sources; ResearchGate was used for access to peer-reviewed work; Scopus was chosen for its comprehensive indexing of high-impact, peer-reviewed journals.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 1 below presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the conceptual paper. The conceptual paper reviewed literature from 2020 to 2026 to reflect the shift of virtual work from a marginal employment option to an integral organisational practice.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Inclusion criteria required studies that,	Exclusion criteria removed studies that,
i. Investigated in remote, virtual, or telework contexts	i. Were not related to employee outcomes under review
ii. Addressed human resource management practices and work design relating to remote settings	ii. Addressed non-work-related virtual contexts, eg. online education without employment focus
iii. Empirically or theoretically analysing employee outcomes for performance, engagement, and motivation	iii. Were not published in English
iv. Have been published in peer-reviewed academic journals between 2020 and 2025, and where applicable, report compliance with recognised ethical research standards	iv. Did not provide sufficient methodological transparency
v. Were written in English	

Source: Author compilation

The initial database search produced 350 records. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts for relevance, articles were assessed for alignment with the study's research questions. A total of 242 articles were retained for full-text review. Following the eligibility assessment, twenty-five (25) articles met the final inclusion criteria and were used to inform the development of the conceptual framework (Page et al., 2021). The article selection process is illustrated in Figure 1.

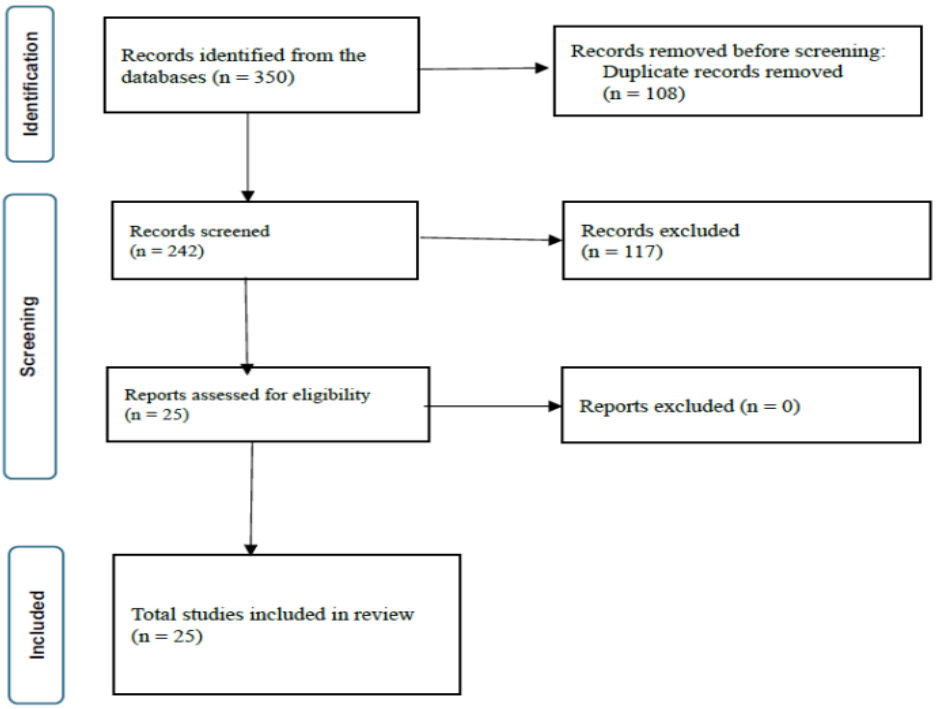


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram *Source*: Author Compilation

Critical Appraisal

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) was used to assess methodological quality across the range of study designs included in this review (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and systematic reviews) (Hong et al., 2018). The MMAT provides structured criteria for evaluating the applicability, rigor, and credibility of diverse research designs within a single appraisal framework, ensuring consistent and transparent quality assessment across included studies (Page et al., 2021).

Data extraction and analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to systematically organise and synthesise findings across included studies. A structured data extraction matrix was developed to capture the author (s), year of publication, research design, sample characteristics, original aim of the study, findings related to remote work, HR practices, job demands for remote work, engagement, and performance outcomes (see Table 2).

The study documented the original research aims and contextual scope to ensure that findings are interpreted within their intended theoretical and empirical boundaries. The review followed a thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008), consistent with integrative literature review methodology (Snyder, 2019), enabling transparent cross-study comparison and theory-driven categorisation while maintaining alignment with the original intent of the included research.

Ethical considerations

This study used secondary data and publicly available peer-reviewed publications and did not involve direct interaction with human participants. Nonetheless, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of South Africa in accordance with institutional research governance requirements. The study was conducted in compliance with UNISA's research ethics guidelines that ensure integrity, transparency, and responsible scholarship throughout the review process.

Table 2: Summary of Studies Included in the Study

Author(s) Year	Sample	Design	Aim	Findings	MMAT
Saurombe, Rayners, Mokgobu & Manka (2022)	102 remote workers	Quantitative	The study investigated the perceived influence of working remotely on employee productivity and performance management in South Africa.	Remote work led to increased isolation and longer working hours than in the office. This was driven by a desire to demonstrate their productivity to line managers and employers, ultimately hindering their social lives.	High
Wang, Liu, Qian & Parker (2021)	561 remote workers	Mixed	To explore the challenges experienced by remote workers at this time, as well as what virtual work characteristics and individual differences affect these challenges.	Challenges associated with remote work include work-home interference, ineffective communication, procrastination, and loneliness. Remote work characteristics that shape the experience of these challenges are social support, job autonomy, monitoring, and workload. The findings suggested that remote work characteristics are associated with workers' performance and well-being, and that these associations are influenced by the challenges they encounter.	Moderate
Toscano & Zappala (2020)	265 remote workers	Quantitative	To investigate the correlations of social isolation, including stress, perceived remote work productivity, and remote work satisfaction.	The findings indicated the impact of social isolation on stress levels, which subsequently leads to a decrease in perceived productivity in remote work. This reduction in productivity is associated with lower levels of satisfaction with remote work.	High
Allen, Merlo, Lawrence, Stutsky, Gray (2021)	155 remote workers	Quantitative	To investigate boundary management between work and nonwork among workers who transitioned to remote work.	The study found that having a dedicated home office and fewer household members were associated with better work-life balance.	High
Huusko & Sivunen (2025)	20 remote employees	Qualitative	This study focuses on connectivity and its related well-being experiences, adopting and developing the conceptualisation of connectivity regulation	Employees manage their digital connectivity proactively and reactively, influenced by boundary management, task priorities, and role demands. Both pre-planned and flexible connectivity strategies can yield similar outcomes, potentially leading to either digital exhaustion or a maintained digital balance.	Moderate
Seeber & Erhardt (2023)	202 information workers	Quantitative	To investigate the effects of flexible and permeable boundaries on job satisfaction, with DWP use frequency as a moderator.	Flexible, permeable work-home boundaries for information workers affect their job satisfaction; the extent of this influence varies with the frequency of digital workplace use.	High
Sonnentag, Cheng & Parker (2022)	41 articles	Scoping review	To summarises research on recovery during work breaks, leisure-time evenings, weekends, and	The absence of clear physical separation can lead to prolonged working hours, role conflicts, and difficulties in psychological detachment from work.	High

			vacations. Focusing on day-level and longitudinal field studies, the article describes predictors and outcomes of recovery across different settings and addresses potential between-group and cross-cultural differences.		
Capone, Schettino, Marino, Camerlingo, Smith, Depolo (2024)	374 technical administrative staff	Quantitative	To investigate the relationships between remote working self-efficacy, organizational support, techno-complexity, mental well-being, and job performance among technical administrative staff during remote working	Individual job performance was positively influenced by job satisfaction and impacted by techno-complexity.	High
Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili (2024)	23 articles	Systematic Review	To identify challenges and opportunities to reimagine educational management in higher education after the pandemic, guiding decisions related to work location	Remote work increased job demands, including workload and role ambiguity, along with a dearth of job resources, such as infrastructure, training, and support.	High
Murugan & Rashadh (2024)	40 remote workers	Mixed	To examine the causes and symptoms of digital fatigue in remote work environments, including extended screen time, frequent virtual meetings, and unclear work-life boundaries.	Excessive screen time, meeting overload, and poor break management contribute to employee fatigue. To mitigate fatigue, there is a need for regular breaks, limiting virtual meetings, and offering mental health support. These measures will enhance employee productivity and promote sustained engagement.	Moderate
Kalischko & Riedl (2021)	132 articles	Systematic review	To investigate EPM to better understand the development, adoption, and impact of EPM systems in organizations.	Electronic Performance Monitoring negatively impacts stress levels and job satisfaction, even though it is associated with increased performance.	High
Kalischko & Riedl (2024)	1119 remote workers	Quantitative	To examine the influence of EPM on individual performance, considering the aspects of privacy invasion, organizational trust, and individual stress within an organization.	The perceptions of EPM significantly heighten feelings of privacy invasion, diminish organisational trust, increase individual stress, and lead to decreased performance. Also, privacy invasions negatively affect organisational trust, which, in turn, contributes to increased individual stress.	High
Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore (2024)	13 remote workers	Qualitative	To explore the impact of remote work on communication in the professional sphere.	Remote work introduces complexities to communication by heightening reliance on technology, increasing wait times, testing trust levels, and reducing visual and auditory cues. As a result, remote work tends to foster predominantly professional interpersonal relationships, often lacking personal connections.	Moderate
Yang, Holtz, Jaffe, Suri, Sinha,	61 182 Microsoft employees	Qualitative	To explore how remote work fundamentally shifts collaboration patterns	Company-wide remote work led to more siloed collaboration structures and reduced real-time interaction, increasing reliance on asynchronous	High

Weston, & Teevan (2022).				communication and limiting knowledge exchange.	
Legentil, Martins, da Silva Abbad, Mourão, Damascena, & Miranda, (2024)	2409 remote workers	Quantitative	To identify the hard and soft skills necessary for effective teleworking.	Mastering technological tools for remote communication, productivity management, and time management is important.	High
Matej & Amadeja (2025)	35 articles	Conceptual	To address the growing misalignment between traditional human resource management (HRM) systems and the realities of distributed, fluid, and fragmented work.	Organisations with remote workers can use algorithmic platforms for sourcing, asynchronous recognition systems for rewards, and flexible development approaches such as microlearning, open learning sprints, and asynchronous cohort-based learning.	Moderate
Kess-Momoh, Tula, Bello, Omotoye, & Daraojimba, (2024)	45 articles	Systematic review	To examine emerging trends in SHRM, focusing on the integration of technology into HR processes, the growth of remote work, and the enhanced emphasis on employee well-being in shaping effective HR strategies.	SHRM can leverage digital technologies to enable virtual onboarding, adopt outcome-based performance measures, promote regular feedback, and strengthen connectivity through collaboration tools.	Moderate
Babalola & Kolawole (2021)	104 faculty members	Quantitative	To explore the new set of employability skills required in the post-COVID world of work.	When universities promote remote, digital, and online learning, students can readily acquire the skills and competencies necessary to secure and create jobs in the post-pandemic job market. Additionally, remote workers should possess skills in technology, time management, problem-solving, decision-making, and supervision.	Moderate
Surianto, Badaruddin, Firman (2024)	31 articles	Systematic review	To explore human resource management (HRM) strategies to enhance organizational adaptability in the digital age, focusing on digital skills enhancement and work flexibility.	Digital upskilling, encompassing digital literacy and the application of technologies such as AI and big data, is crucial for addressing rapid technological change and enhancing organisational performance.	Moderate
Luan (2025)	48 articles	Scoping review	To outline strategic directions for reorienting HR practices to effectively support flexibility while preserving organisational engagement, equity, and performance.	Remote work requires recruiting employees with strong digital literacy, self-discipline, and time management, alongside performance systems that emphasise outcome-based evaluation, behaviour-based evaluation, and regular virtual check-ins.	Moderate
Varshney (2022)	15 articles	Scoping review	To analyse the strategic significance, key components, and best practices of Virtual Employee Onboarding (VEO) programs.	3-5 days of virtual onboarding, which consists of technological and platform access, orientation videos, and presentations on the company background, culture, core values, and a virtual team welcome. Virtual shadowing.	High

Junn, Whitman, Wasnik, Wang, Guelfguat, Goodman, & Middlebrooks (2023).	35 articles	Systematic review	To highlight challenges in mentorship during the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategies we implemented to address them.	The fabric of mentorship is evolving from the traditional one-on-one mentor-mentee relationship to encompass formats such as peer, group, speed, and virtual mentoring.	High
Paigude, Pangarkar, Majajan, Jadhay, Shirkande & Shelke (2023)	20 articles	Scoping review	To critically examine the evolving patterns of workplace health in remote work settings, focusing on how technology, human behaviour, and organisational policies interact to influence employee well-being.	Organisations with remote workers should have policies and guidelines indicating defined acceptable working hours, data security, collaboration tools, training and awareness programs, and employee assistance programs.	Moderate
Pengfei, Imran & Hye (2026)	350 lecturers	Quantitative	To assess employee performance among remote workers, considering the mediating role of digital literacy and the moderating influence of technostress in public universities in Malaysia.	Work-from-home does not directly impact employee performance, but it does have an indirect relationship mediated by digital literacy. But technostress negatively affects the relationship between digital literacy and employee performance, also moderating the indirect relationship between WFH and performance.	High

Source*:* Author compilation

Findings and Discussion

Thematic Analysis of Remote Work Demands and HR Resources

The thematic analysis identified that remote work success is not merely a function of technology, but of the strategic alignment between job demands and organisational resources. The synthesized literature identified two themes: remote job demands (social isolation, blurred work-life balance, technological strain, performance visibility, and communication complexity) and HR practices responding to these demands (recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, compensation, and work-life balance), as shown in Table 3.

Remote job demands

The synthesized literature confirms that remote work is characterised by specific job demands that differ significantly from those in traditional office environments (Capone et al., 2024; Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024). These demands serve as stressors that, if left unmanaged, can trigger a "health-impairment process" leading to burnout, reduced engagement, and employee performance (Al-Naabi & Al-Shukaili, 2024; Al-Aawareh, 2025).

First, in social isolation, there was "collegial isolation," which reduces relatedness required for engagement and contextual performance (Saurombe et al., 2022). This shows that remote workers are affected by a lack of informal communication, as these enable them to support each other on both work and personal issues. Second, blurred work-life balance due to a lack of boundaries between work and family life leads to detachment and triggers digital exhaustion (Allen et al., 2021; Huusko & Sivunen, 2025; Sonnentag et al., 2022). This result highlights that remote workers tend to work even when they are supposed to be with their families, and sometimes work long hours, leading to exhaustion due to insufficient time to rest. This can negatively impact employee engagement and performance. Third, there is technological strain due to cognitive strain of managing high volumes and complex virtual toolsets (Capone et al., 2024; Murugan & Rashadh, 2024). This highlights the growing cognitive burden associated with remote work environments, triggered by managing numerous platforms and limited technological resources, and which, in turn, impacts employee performance. Fourth, there was performance visibility due to the implementation of Electronic Performance Monitoring (EPM) systems, leading to "digital presenteeism," which increases stress, invades privacy, and decreases employee productivity (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021; Kalischko & Riedl, 2024). This implies that employees may feel forced to remain visible online to show productivity, even when they are tired; at the same time, visibility does not guarantee productivity. The last demand was the communication complexity. Remote work has substituted face-to-face conversations for digitally mediated interactions, thereby increasing communication complexity and leading remote workers to rely on asynchronous communication (Aguillon &

Cronin-Gilmore, 2024; Yang et al., 2021). This may increase the effort required to coordinate work and ensure mutual understanding, potentially affecting task efficiency and collaboration.

Table 3: Summary of Themes

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Exemplar studies
Remote job demands	Social isolation	The loss of social reciprocity and "spontaneous interaction" leads to "collegial isolation," which reduces relatedness required for engagement and contextual performance.	Saurombe et al. (2022), Toscano & Zappalà (2020), Wang et al. (2021)
	Blurred work-life balance	The "blurring" of work and family life, where a lack of detachment leads to digital exhaustion. Psychological detachment lowers engagement and increases exhaustion, ultimately affecting sustained performance.	Allen et al. (2021), Huusko & Sivunen (2025, Seeber & Erhardt (2023), Sonnentag et al. (2022)
	Technological strain	The cognitive strain of managing high volumes and complex virtual toolsets. Techno complexity negatively affects job performance. Employees' capacity to maintain long-term engagement and performance declines due to "digital exhaustion."	Capone et al. (2024), Murugan & Rashadh (2024), Huusko & Sivunen (2025)
	Performance visibility	EPM undermines trust, increases stress, increases privacy invasions, and decreases productivity among remote workers due to the demand for "digital presenteeism."	Kalischko & Riedl (2021), Kalischko & Riedl (2024).
	Communication complexity	Remote work complicates communication by increasing reliance on technology, extending response times, eroding trust, and diminishing visual and auditory cues.	Aguillon & Cronin-Gilmore (2024, Yang et al. (2021)
HR practices responding to job demands	Recruitment and selection	Focusing on "digital savvy" and "self-management" rather than just physical presence. Use algorithmic platforms For selection, organisations can use digital simulations, virtual 'job tryouts', and structured online interviews to evaluate remote communication skills, self-discipline, and tech-savviness	Kess-Momoh et al. (2024), Matej & Amadeja (2025), Babalola & Kolawole (2021), Luan (2025)
	Training and development	Remote environment needs continuous digital upskilling, e-training, virtual mentorship, and the implementation of wellness apps to mitigate exhaustion	Varshney (2022), Junn et al. (2023), Paigude et al. (2023), Luan (2025), Legentil (2024)
	Performance Management	Shifting to "outcome-based metrics" to foster autonomy and fairness. Promote regular feedback. Strengthen connectivity through collaboration tools.	Al-Naabi & Al Shukaili (2024, Luan (2025), Kess-Momoh et al. (2024)
	Compensation	Providing infrastructure, customised stipends, and holistic well-being benefits.	Al-Fawareh (2025), Kess-Momoh et al. (2024), Matej & Amadeja (2025)
	Work-life balance	Implementing "right to disconnect" and boundary control policies.	Al-Fawareh (2025), Luan (2025), Capone et al. (2024), Seeber & Erhardt (2023).

Source: Author compilation

HR practices responding to job demands

The literature indicates a need for policies that meet the demands of remote workers, as these policies will drive the implementation of HR practices that foster employee engagement and performance (Wang et al., 2021; Kess-Momoh et al., 2024).

First, the review confirms a significant "misfit" when traditional recruitment relies on physical "cultural fit" rather than "digital savvy" (Kess-Momoh et al., 2024; Matej & Amadeja, 2025). Hence, authors such as Matej and Amadeja (2025) have suggested using algorithmic platforms for recruitment. These platforms can streamline candidate sourcing by leveraging data analytics and machine learning to match applicants with job specifications, thereby enhancing the efficiency of talent acquisition. While Babalola and Kolawole (2021) focused on the selection process, they emphasized the skills needed by remote workers, which can be assessed

through digital simulations, virtual 'job tryouts', and structured online interviews. These methods enable employers to assess candidates' competencies remotely, ensuring organisational fit.

Second, training and development are critical HR practices in remote work environments, directly supporting both the JD-R model and the AMO framework. Within the JD-R perspective, structured training initiatives function as valuable job resources, helping employees manage the demands of remote work, such as rapid technological change, while boosting their ability to adapt and thrive (Mat et al., 2025; Legentil, 2024). While with the AMO framework, these practices are designed to enhance ability (through digital and soft skills development), motivation (by fostering a growth mindset and career progression), and opportunity (by enabling participation in learning and mentoring). In a remote environment, Varshney (2022) emphasises structured, continuous digital upskilling, virtual onboarding, mentorship, and peer learning initiatives to improve employee competence and adaptability. Continuous digital upskilling may be facilitated through access to Coursera, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning, and tailored learning management system (LMS) modules (Paigude et al., 2023). Virtual mentorship may be implemented by pairing junior employees with experienced staff through structured check-ins and formal mentorship platforms (Junn et al., 2023). In addition, wellness apps may be introduced to educate staff on managing screen fatigue, maintaining proper posture, and setting healthy online boundaries (Paigude et al., 2023). In summary, the active role of training and development will bridge skill gaps and empower employees, promote self-directed growth, mitigate exhaustion and technostress, and support sustained performance, engagement, and long-term development.

Third, a critical finding was that traditional performance systems often devolve into invasive monitoring, which acts as a job demand that erodes trust (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021). Aligning HR involves shifting to regular feedback, behaviour-based evaluation, and implementing outcome-based performance measures, leveraging "digital trace data" to focus on results rather than hours worked (Luan, 2025; Kee-Momoh et al., 2024). This shift provides employees with the opportunity to work autonomously, thereby fostering engagement with the stress of constant digital visibility (Al-Fawareh, 2025; Saurombe et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that not all online jobs can use outcome-based performance measures. Some roles involve collaborative, process-oriented tasks for which performance is difficult to quantify solely by output (Wang et al., 2021), indicating a gap in how performance management systems should be designed for these roles.

Fourth, compensation must change to include infrastructure stipends and holistic well-being benefits to mitigate the hidden costs of remote work and protect against burnout (Lord, 2020). Standardised benefits packages often fail to meet specific remote work needs, such as covering home-office expenses or supporting trade-offs in work-life balance. To address these issues, the proposed framework advocates for flexible and inclusive compensation strategies, including infrastructure allowances, family-inclusive health insurance, and recognition-based rewards (Mani & Mishra, 2020). A key recommendation is to provide monthly stipends for infrastructure support, enabling employees to cover essential expenses such as internet, electricity, and equipment upgrades. In addition, family-inclusive health insurance should be expanded to address both the physical and mental health needs of employees and their dependents, promoting holistic well-being (Mani & Mishra, 2020). By implementing these tailored compensation resources, organisations can enhance job satisfaction, organisational commitment, engagement, and productivity, ensuring that remote employees feel valued and supported in a virtual work environment.

Finally, the literature highlighted that blurred boundaries are a significant demand that requires formalised resources (Huusko & Sivunen, 2025; Seeber & Erhardt, 2023). Adaptive HR functions as a shield by implementing boundary control policies and the "right to disconnect," allowing employees the opportunity to psychologically detach (Luan, 2025). This personalisation of flexible work arrangements is a primary predictor of sustained engagement and digital resilience (Marín et al., 2021; Molnár & Papp, 2023). Authors like (Renk & Sutter, 2025; Belkin et al., 2020) recommend implementing communication curfews, such as prohibiting emails, phone calls, and online meetings after 6 p.m., to support work-life separation. It also emphasises the importance of flexible scheduling, enabling asynchronous work to accommodate diverse routines.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual approach combines the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model with the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework to explain how HRM policies affect employee outcomes in remote work settings. According to the JD-R perspective, working remotely creates unique job demands that may negatively affect workers' productivity and well-being. These demands include social isolation, blurred work-life boundaries, communication complexity, technology strain, and performance visibility. The study suggests that strategic HRM practices, such as recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance management, and work-life balance, serve as job resources that support employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform well in remote settings based on the AMO framework. These HR practices are positioned as moderating tools that both improve and mitigate the drawbacks of remote work, thereby achieving positive outcomes. Therefore, when proper HR practices are put in place, they may help reduce job stress and improve employee engagement and performance, which are the study's main dependent variables. This is demonstrated by Figure 2 below.

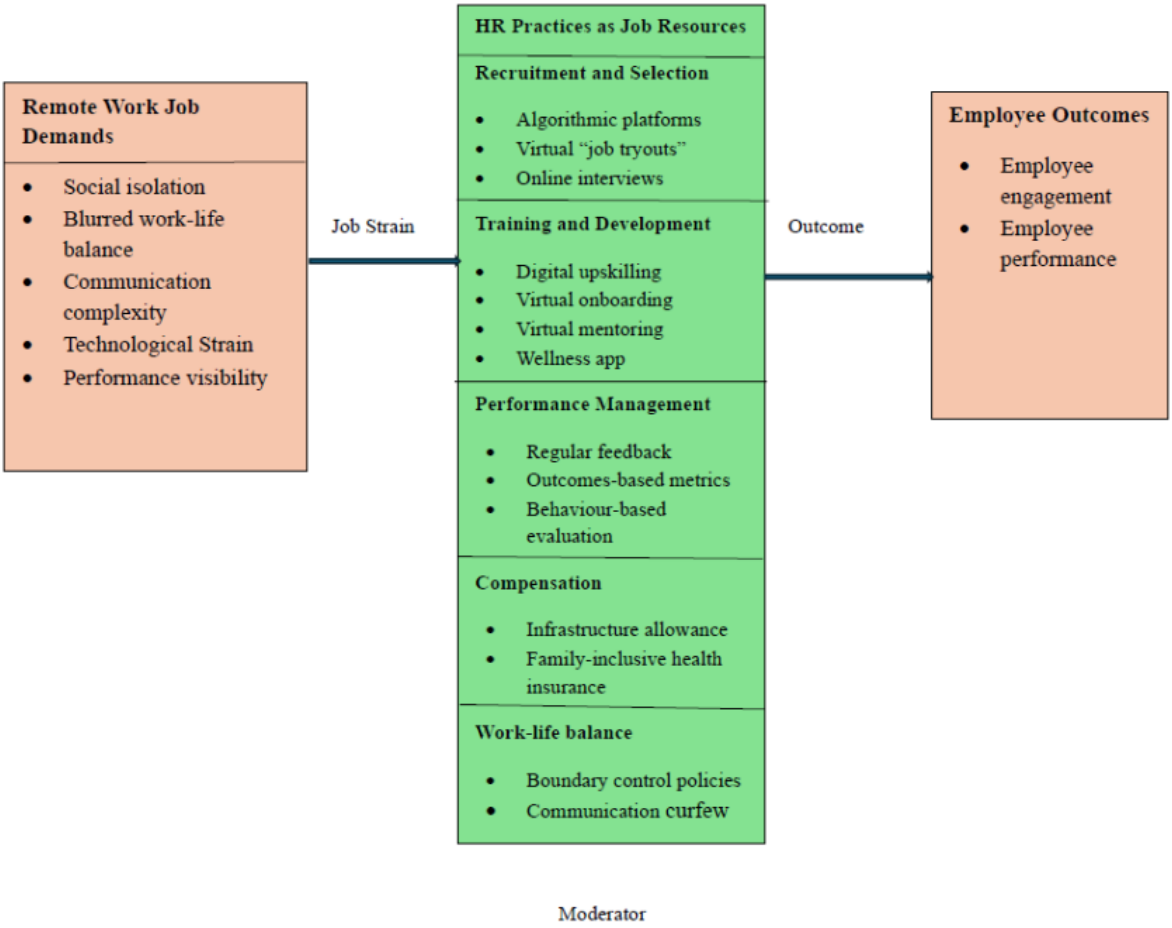


Figure 2: Human Resources Management Framework for Managing Remote Workers (*Source*: Author compilation)

Implications

The proposed multidimensional human resource management framework, grounded in the JD-R and AMO models, offers theoretical, practical, and policy implications.

First, the study integrates the JD-R model and the AMO framework by applying them to the context of remote work, where traditional job demands are compounded by digital-age challenges. It further enriches the literature on the JD-R and AMO frameworks by linking social cohesion and digital adaptability to employee engagement and performance. It offers a more holistic view of well-being, engagement, and productivity in remote environments.

Second, this framework may serve as a diagnostic and design tool for human resource professionals and managers, providing actionable guidance on buffering digital-age job demands through targeted human resource practices. Organisations can use the framework to assess existing practices and identify resource gaps that hinder employee performance and engagement.

Third, the framework emphasises the need for formalised remote work regulations that reflect the new realities of work. Policies must account for remote work recruitment and selection, training and development, work-life boundaries, and equitable access to digital infrastructure.

Conclusion

As remote work has become a "new normal" in the modern workforce, traditional HR practices require significant adaptation to remain relevant and effective. This paper responds to this need by offering a conceptual framework that applies the Job Demand-Resource and the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity frameworks to optimise human resource management functions, specifically recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, compensation, and work-life balance for remote workers. By identifying and addressing gaps in the current literature, this study emphasises the need to design HR policies that are responsive to the increased demands of remote work and to provide the necessary resources to foster employee engagement and performance. Future research should empirically validate this model and explore how these human resource practices perform across different industries and demographics in an African context. Respectively, this framework provides a foundation for organisations to

rethink how they manage their virtual workforce, not as an emergency adaptation but as a strategic imperative for sustainable employee performance and engagement.

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