

## Remote Work, Motivation, and Organizational Communication: Post-Pandemic Lived Experiences in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This phenomenological study explores how employees perceive and navigate the shifts in motivation and organizational communication within Indonesia's post-pandemic remote and hybrid work settings. By exploring the lived experiences of ten professionals across various sectors, the research applies Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to examine how remote and hybrid work environments shape the fulfilment of employees' basic psychological needs. The originality of this research lies in its exploration of how Indonesian cultural dimensions, specifically collectivism and high-context communication, shape these basic psychological needs in a remote work environment. Thematic analysis revealed three primary themes: Autonomy, characterized by environmental flexibility and improved work-life integration, but often challenged by blurred professional boundaries; Relatedness, highlighting the conflict between digital efficiency and the cultural need for 'rich' interpersonal interaction and informal inclusion; and Competence, focused on digital tool mastery and adaptive performance. Distinct from global trends, the findings reveal that in Indonesia's high-context culture, the 'lean' nature of digital communication often leads to a sense of emotional distance. Consequently, this study offers a nuanced framework for organizations to sustain intrinsic motivation by balancing modern flexibility with the cultural necessity for social harmony.*

*Keywords: employee motivation, hybrid work, organizational communication, post-pandemic workplace, self-determination theory*

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant disruptions to work systems worldwide, including in Indonesia, with one major adaptive strategy being the mass adoption of work-from-home (WFH) policies, introduced as part of public health measures to support physical distancing. Prior to the pandemic, remote work in Indonesia already existed but was largely concentrated in specific sectors such as technology and creative industries. In general, even before the pandemic, WFH practices had been adopted only minimally at the global level, despite the fact that many types of jobs were already technically feasible to perform remotely (Brown & Tousey, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic forced many organizations to rapidly

transition to remote work, leading to substantial structural and cultural changes in how work was organized and carried out (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

With organizations starting to transition past the emergency stage of the pandemic, many are adopting or transitioning to hybrid work models, which combine remote and in-office setups. This shift in work design is not merely operational but affects how members communicate, collaborate for knowledge sharing, and construct meaning in daily interactions, primarily because remote setups disrupt informal communication channels, limit spontaneous interactions, and challenge conventional leadership and feedback mechanisms. This disruption is bound to transform the nature of organizational communication, extending its implications for staff engagement beyond simple information exchange flow to include trust, cohesion, and overall employee well-being (Wang et al., 2021).

Within this context of structural and communicational transformation, there is growing interest in how remote work has shaped employees' psychological experiences. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a robust framework for analyzing remote workers' psychological experiences, as it emphasizes that motivation depends on meeting needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in organizational contexts (Gagné et al., 2022). In Indonesian context, remote work studies mostly look at how technology boosts productivity and job satisfaction, while paying little attention to psychological factors like intrinsic motivation (Alam & Dewi, 2024).

At the same time, limited attention has been paid to how these shifts have influenced workers' intrinsic motivation and interpersonal communication in Indonesian remote workplaces. Despite the shift, little research has addressed how these changes affect motivation and communication, particularly as organizations adopt hybrid or on-site models with limited empirical guidance. This is consistent with findings by Berces (2023), who emphasized that dimensions of employer branding, such as organizational culture, work-life balance, and ethics, significantly influence employee satisfaction and engagement.

This study addresses that gap by exploring how Indonesian workers experience remote and hybrid work arrangements; it looks into the reflections of employees on their experience of remote and hybrid work and how these considerations translate into their motivation and future work arrangement expectations. However, instead of approaching remote work as a strictly operational shift, this study emphasizes the psychological and communicational changes that it has prompted. These dynamics are especially pressing to understand by organizations

that are interested in sustaining a motivated workforce and culture of effective communication in an ever more hybrid environment.

Understanding these dynamics is not only academically valuable but also practically essential for organizations seeking to navigate hybrid work effectively in the Indonesian socio-cultural context, where high power distance and collectivism shape workforce expectations for hierarchical direction and group harmony, challenging virtual leadership and relationship-building (Artina et al., 2020). Through this inquiry, the study contributes to the ongoing academic and professional discourse on the human dimensions of organizational change and offers insight into how motivation and communication practices are evolving in tandem within the post-pandemic Indonesian work environment. Accordingly, the research questions of the present study are as follows: “How have remote and hybrid working experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced employee motivation and expectations in Indonesia”, and “What do they reveal about the future of organizational communication?”

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Remote Work: Definition and Post-Pandemic Landscape***

The concept of remote work has existed for decades under different terms: telecommuting, telework, or distributed work (Messenger, 2019). However, the concept of work from home (WFH) gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a turning point in the organization of work in the whole world. WFH typically refers to work arrangements where employees perform their tasks outside centralized offices using digital communication tools, without being physically tied to a specific workplace (Boyras & Gilbert, 2024). Although before the pandemic, remote work was more prevalent in technological and creative sectors, the pandemic situation compelled all types of organizations to implement remote work as one of the health and safety measures (Brown & Tousey, 2023).

Existing literature points to both the benefits and limitations of WFH. Good work-life balance, less time spent on commuting, and enhanced autonomy are frequently listed among the associated benefits (Sokolić, 2022). Cost reduction and access to talent are regarded as significant benefits on the side of employers (Wang et al., 2021). Nevertheless, social isolation, lack of career advancement opportunities, and lack of clear boundaries between work and home life (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). The situation is complicated in the Indonesian setting by technological infrastructure, unclear metrics of performance, and psychological pressures on the workers (Fadhila & Wicaksana, 2020).

With hybrid work feeling more permanent after the pandemic, research indicates that remote work is not a temporary change but a prolonged reorganization of the workplace. Nevertheless, cultural, structural, and communicational consequences of such a change are under-researched, particularly in the Indonesian context.

### ***Applying Self-Determination Theory to Remote Work***

In the efforts to gain more insights into the psychological processes behind the changes in employee motivation and expectations, this research utilizes Self-Determination Theory (SDT). While traditionally rooted in developmental psychology, SDT has become a predominant framework in organizational behavior to explain how work contexts optimize worker motivation, performance, and well-being (Gagné et al., 2022). SDT proposes that satisfying three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is essential for fostering high-quality autonomous motivation, which is superior to controlled motivation in predicting long-term employee persistence and mental health (Gagné et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

As technological innovations transform work into more remote and hybrid formats, SDT provides critical insights into how the resulting uncertainty and digital interdependence influence these psychological needs (Gagné et al., 2022). By applying this framework, the study explores how Indonesian workers navigate their motivational needs within the post-pandemic digital landscape, where traditional physical supervision is replaced by mediated communication.

In line with Boyraz & Gilbert (2024) study, the application of SDT in remote work environments centers on the dynamic fulfillment of its three core components, which are uniquely reshaped by Indonesian cultural contexts:

- (1) **Autonomy:** In Indonesia's high power distance culture, autonomy extends beyond simple scheduling flexibility. As Gagné et al. (2022) explain, autonomy involves perceived volition, which refers to the feeling that one's actions are self-endorsed. In this study, autonomy is understood as the tension between the flexibility offered by working from home and the cultural tendency to rely on hierarchical guidance.
- (2) **Competence:** This reflects an employee's sense of mastery amidst digital interdependence. Gagné et al. (2022) emphasize that technological shifts require workers to maintain effectiveness amidst digital interdependence. For Indonesian professionals, competence is not just about digital literacy, but about the ability to maintain performance standards while navigating the blurred lines between domestic and professional responsibilities.
- (3) **Relatedness:** This component is particularly critical in Indonesia's collectivist society. While Gagné et al. (2022) highlight the role of digital tools in fostering

connection, the 'lean' nature of digital communication often fails to satisfy the Indonesian cultural need for 'rich' interpersonal interaction. Consequently, relatedness in this context is heavily influenced by how effectively digital mediation can replicate the informal social inclusion and group harmony typically found in physical office settings.

While global studies suggest teleworking can be more effective in meeting psychological needs than traditional offices (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021), the adoption of this framework in the Indonesian digital landscape remains notably limited. This gap highlights the need to explore how these underlying dynamics unfold when modern flexibility meets deeply-rooted communal values. Against this background, the current study seeks to uncover the lived experiences of Indonesian workers regarding the satisfaction of their psychological needs and their resulting motivation.

### ***Employee Motivation in Hybrid Contexts***

Motivation of employees is an important psychological force that determines the level of productivity, satisfaction, and commitment. Motivation can be categorized into intrinsic, driven by internal satisfaction, and extrinsic, driven by external rewards or pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The remote working environment has come up with new dynamics that affect both types of motivation. As an example, intrinsic motivation can be improved by applying more flexibility, yet insufficient social feedback or recognition can decrease it (Fischer et al., 2019)

Motivation does not just apply to individual performance but also to how workers can adapt to changing work arrangements. One of the studies reveals that motivated employees are more likely to show resilience and adaptability to changing into a hybrid or remote system (Safri et al., 2024). Especially millennials and Gen Z employees have revealed their inclination toward independence and purposeful work more than the usual reward systems, and it is redefining the way motivation strategies need to be shaped by organizations (Nina Chala et al., 2022).

In addition to that, the pandemic has added urgency to the consideration of motivation regarding mental health outcomes, including burnout, stress, and disengagement (Mousa & Samara, 2022). Therefore, the question of what keeps people motivated in a post-pandemic, hybrid work environment becomes essential for employee retention and organizational resilience.

### ***Organizational Communication Shifts in Remote Work***

When physical interaction is substituted by the digital realm, organizational communication experiences essential changes. Although it is possible to recreate formal communication with the help of such tools as email, Zoom, or Slack, informal

communication, spontaneous collaboration, and non-verbal cues tend to be undermined in remote settings (Waizenegger et al., 2020). This lack of informal interactions limits the possibilities of trust-building and makes organizational cohesion decrease (Marlow et al., 2017; Van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2022). It has been generally recognized that communication is a key driver of employee engagement, psychological safety, and social presence (Kang & Sung, 2017). Finally, the asymmetries created in hybrid environments by the inequity between in-office and remote workers can also create information or visibility advantages to present workers over their remote counterparts physically (Choudhury et al., 2021).

Recent studies in the Indonesian setting reveal that communication in remote or hybrid working situations is usually unable to preserve the same degree of interpersonal richness found in face-to-face communication. Parlindungan (2022) discovered that although informational and regulatory roles of communication may largely remain effective in WFH environments, persuasive and integrative ones are often undermined, restricting emotional engagement and team cohesion. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in the cultural nature of Indonesian communication.

Specifically, the disruption of non-verbal cues becomes particularly significant in high-context cultures such as Indonesia. According to Hall (1976), in high-context communication, the meaning of a message is not only found in explicit words but is deeply embedded in the physical context, social status, and non-verbal signals such as tone of voice and facial expressions. When communication shifts to text based digital platforms, these important layers of meaning that support integrative communication are significantly reduced. As a result, ambiguity and interpersonal tension tend to occur more frequently than in low-context Western cultures, where communication is generally more direct and less dependent on situational cues.

This study addresses this gap by exploring how the loss of these cultural communication nuances in remote and hybrid work experiences shape employee motivation and organizational communication through the SDT framework. By examining Indonesian workers lived experiences, it reveals how psychological needs satisfaction influences adaptation to post-pandemic work arrangements. These insights offer practical guidance for organizations aiming to sustain motivated, cohesive teams amid Indonesia's evolving hybrid landscape, while contributing to global SDT applications in collectivist contexts.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative descriptive design with a phenomenological approach explores the lived experiences of employees who had experienced remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection was through in-depth, semi-structured

interviews guided by open-ended questions focusing on experiences, motivation, and expectations regarding remote work. The reason for selecting the phenomenological approach was to go deeper behind the superficial stories and establish the fundamental senses of the experience of participants (Mulyana, 2024). By using this approach, it is possible to comprehend better the subjective views of the employees in similar organizational and social conditions.

The participants were recruited through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) they had to be currently working professionals whose age is 28 or older; (2) they had to have remote work experience at any point since March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began in Indonesia; and (3) they had to be able to consciously articulate their lived experiences of working during the WFH period. Ten key informants took part in this research between May and June 2025, either in person or online.

All participants were based in Jakarta and selected to represent diversity in roles, organizational backgrounds, age, and gender to capture a wide range of insights. Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained, and pseudonyms were assigned to ensure anonymity. (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographics of Key Informants Across Organizations

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Industry</b>
<b>RD</b>	29	Male	Creative Officer	Digital Creative Agency
<b>DP</b>	45	Male	Public Relations Manager	Consumer Electronics Manufacturing
<b>HH</b>	31	Male	Corporate Communications Assistant Manager	Distribution and retail companies
<b>VA</b>	29	Female	Learning & Developer Assistant Manager	Digital Banking
<b>YA</b>	35	Male	Accounting Senior Staff	Renewable Energy Startup
<b>GI</b>	36	Male	Head of Business IT Process	Renewable Energy Startup
<b>SS</b>	36	Female	Head of Accounting & Finance	Renewable Energy Startup
<b>MK</b>	34	Female	Corporate Communications Assistant Manager	Distribution and retail companies
<b>QA</b>	30	Female	Product Owner Specialist	Financial Services Firm
<b>HA</b>	29	Female	KOL Specialist	Digital Agency

During the interviews, several key areas were consistently explored, including how the attitude and expectation of the participants towards Work from Home (WFH) changed, how it has affected their work-life balance, how communication patterns changed, etc. The data were analyzed after gathering information from the key informants, applying inductive thematic analysis, which is a technique applied to

discover patterns and themes in data that are applicable to the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Through iterative reading and re-reading, data-driven codes were generated to capture both manifest (surface-level) and latent (underlying) meanings. These codes were then organized into themes that reflect patterns in participants experiences of remote and hybrid work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An inductive thematic analysis was conducted on narratives from 10 key informants through repeated coding. This process generated first order concepts that were subsequently grouped into higher order categories and subthemes (See Table 2). Interestingly, the three emergent themes aligned with the core psychological needs identified in Self Determination Theory, namely autonomy, relatedness, and competence. This alignment highlights the cross-cultural relevance of SDT while also revealing context specific manifestations within post pandemic hybrid work settings in Indonesia. Drawing on lived experiences across diverse organizations in Jakarta, these findings are interpreted in relation to existing literature to further explain the contextual nuances.

**Table 2. Qualitative Data Analysis**

<b>Illustrative Quotation</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<i>"Working from home offers me the autonomy and flexibility to organize my workflow..."</i>	Time autonomy; Self-regulated work	Flexibility	Autonomy
<i>"I have control over how and when I work..."</i>	Control over work rhythm; Personal work environment	Control over environment	Autonomy
<i>"Through the services provided by the office, I can communicate intensely with colleagues..."</i>	Remote communication; Shallow social bonding	Quality of work relationships	Relatedness
<i>"Every week, we hold virtual weekly meetings..."</i>	Voice; Participation; Team support	Support and inclusion	Relatedness
<i>"I feel more productive during WFH..."</i>	Productivity; Energy efficiency	Work performance	Competence
<i>"If there aren't many distractions, I'm definitely more productive..."</i>	Productivity conditions; Distraction	Conditional effectiveness	Competence
<i>"But sometimes I get distracted by my children..."</i>	Technical/infrastructural barriers; Domestic distraction	Environmental limitations	Competence

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a turning point regarding the perception of remote work among employees, reconsidering the viability and effects of remote work. A few respondents mentioned a marked change in their feelings about

working at home, particularly when the temporary setups were extended into a long-term work policy.

*“Since the pandemic, my view on working from home changed significantly. At first, I doubted whether WFH could be as effective as working from the office, but with discipline and good communication, productivity can still be maintained”* (HH, Male, 31)

This consideration concurs with the new data in the organizational communication literature. As an example, mixed-method research conducted by Wang et al. (2021) reveals the importance of job autonomy, clear communication, and individual discipline, allowing remote workers to coordinate their initial challenges. These results indicate that as organizations are able to provide employees with an orderly routine and clarity of communication, they tend to slowly transition their employees who are initially skeptical of remote work to trust it. In addition to work habits, other informant also emphasized how their physical home surroundings changed, which illustrates the more fundamental shifts in lifestyle remote work required.

*“The home culture changed as well- at first, I didn’t believe that I would ever require a special desk and a separate room to work in”* (GI, Male, 36)

This remark indicates the fact that remote work not only changes the work process but also reshapes domestic space, supporting the lack of boundaries between personal and professional life. This experience is consistent with broader global findings. A study by Toivonen et al. (2025) found that among 137,446 knowledge workers across 88 countries, 70% reported that they were able to work effectively from home when supported by adequate physical and social infrastructure, such as dedicated workspaces and family cooperation that minimizes distractions. These findings indicate that establishing spatial separations in the house, by establishing a desk or a separate room, not only enables one to be productive but also can assist in creating the appropriate psychological shift between home and work identities.

The reality replaced the skepticism of employees, and with its long-term introduction, the use of remote work became accepted. They evolved with time, creating new habits, modifying their home environments, and enhancing digital communication skills. The changes made them understand the advantages of working at home. More to the point, the experience also showed the importance of autonomy; having a chance to manage their time and workflows was one of the

decisive factors that contributed to the maintenance of motivation, satisfaction, and long-term interest.

### **Autonomy – Navigating Flexibility and Environmental Control**

Autonomy was one of the most frequently mentioned themes across the interviews; it reflects employees' perception of having control over how, when, and where they work. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) which states that autonomy is one of the fundamental psychological needs underlying intrinsic motivation and well-being. The ability to determine the work schedules and workplaces is one of the most distinct signs of autonomy in the hybrid working environment. The majority of participants in the sample explained that they had a level of flexibility within definite boundaries, even though not every organization provides full autonomy.

*“It is set to three days in the office, and the days are fixed—Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for the finance team. However, we have the freedom to swap days as long as it totals three days per week in the office” (YA, Male, 35)*

*“Yes, we can choose, because our team has a high degree of flexibility, as long as we inform the supervisor at least one week in advance” (SS, Female, 36)*

These responses reflect varying levels of what Spreitzer et al. (2017) call structured flexibility, the balance between organizational control and employee agency in the sense that it can adapt and be consistent in operations. Indeed, studies have revealed that letting employees have the freedom to regulate the time and place of work is not only an effective way of satisfying employees but also creates psychological empowerment and better performance (Jaiswal et al., 2024). Flexibility in negotiating work arrangements within established frameworks enhanced autonomy and perceived fairness in hybrid environments. Besides scheduling arrangements, autonomy also manifested in controlling task flow and prioritization of daily activities. One key indicator of autonomy in WFH was the freedom in time management and decide how to approach their work.

*“Yes, WFH gives employees the freedom to manage their time and prioritize which tasks need to be completed first. At the same time, there is more free time for other things” (DP, Male, 45)*

*“Of course, WFH gives me the flexibility to manage my time. Especially the time usually spent commuting during WFO can be used for other productive things while WFH” (QH, Female, 30)*

These thoughts are representative of how freedom in the sense of task organization and time can enhance the feeling of personal agency. It is consistent with the recent findings demonstrating that teleworkers with the choice of the work schedule and sequence of tasks to perform perceive their productivity to be increased and experience less work-family conflict (Pabilonia & Vernon, 2020). Not only to gain efficiency by reclaiming the commuting time that is most of the time lost and directing it to work or other personal endeavors, employees also psychologically augment their basic ownership of the workday, an effect that is reflected in the study of autonomy as a performance and well-being determinant.

Although remote work may encourage autonomy, it transforms the character of managerial control. Throughout the interviews, the informants reported a variety of levels of supervisory surveillance, which indicated diverse leadership and organizational cultures. Other respondents reported having stricter supervision in working remotely.

*“During WFH, control is stricter because they do not know whether we are working or not. We must always stay online and reachable at any time due to the flexible setup. In contrast, in the office, it is not that strict because we are physically present.” (RD, Male, 29)*

Others, however, reported a more trust-based dynamic.

*“My supervisor gives full trust to the team to complete the work and be responsible. It is similar to being in the office, except we are expected to respond quickly during working hours or let the team know if we will be slow to respond.” (MK, Female, 34)*

*“Our team has always been target-based, so supervision is not strict. We already have daily or weekly reports to keep the workflow controlled.” (GI, Male, 36)*

Such a range of supervision styles indicates what Wang et al. (2021) term the shift from behavior-based supervision to outcomes-based supervision in remote settings. According to the literature, perceived trust and goal clarity are crucial factors in remote environments because an overload of monitoring will lead to a loss of motivation (Contreras et al., 2020). On the other hand, autonomy-supportive leadership is less task-centered and more focused on performance, and less

concerned with the presence of the employees and was found to increase employee engagement and productivity (Wang et al., 2021).

In general, the results show that remote and hybrid work autonomy is formed with the participation of structural flexibilities, including control over time and place, as well as functional independence of task and priority management. Such a sense of autonomy, strengthened by the trust of the management, will facilitate intrinsic motivation according to the Self-Determination Theory. Nevertheless, this occurs through the organizational culture, leadership pattern, and company regulation. The aspect of autonomy is also associated with the need for employees to associate socially and belong, which are the key elements in work motivation.

### **Relatedness – Sustaining Connection and Inclusion in Remote Work**

The other fundamental psychological need identified in Self-Determination Theory is relatedness, which is the need to feel connected, supported, and valued in one's social context (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This need is becoming especially hard to meet in terms of remote and hybrid employment. Social distance and lack of physical contact can create a degraded social connection, reduced team cohesion, and feelings of isolation. However, such effects can be reduced by organizational efforts to keep the channel of communication open, foster participation, and develop the feeling of inclusion.

While discussions around relatedness often center on workplace connections, remote work has also allowed employees to strengthen their sense of connection within their personal and familial domains. Participants highlighted how working from home enabled them to be more present and engaged with their families while still fulfilling professional responsibilities.

*“I can carry out my duties as an employee and a mother simultaneously. I can attend meetings while picking up my child from school, or work while accompanying them at home.” (MK, Female, 34)*

These stories emphasize the realization that work at home does not only resolve logistical issues but also initiates more emotional bonds at home. This concurs with other researchers on remote working, as work-life integration and relational well-being are improved by remote working. A meta-analysis by Abiddin et al. (2022) identified that formal work-life balance and job satisfaction increased with telecommuting in Indonesia and Malaysia. Such results accentuate the contribution of WFH in empowering the employees to feel belonging and emotional attachment as they have a better progression of negotiating themselves both professionally and in their personal lives.

It is backed by the fact that recent research findings in the Indonesian case have demonstrated that working at home has a positive effect on the well-being of employees because it allows a more effective balance of work and personal life and also leads to higher job satisfaction and a decrease in the occurrence of role conflict (Elnanto & Suharti, 2021; Susena et al., 2023). These results demonstrate that WFH is not only logical because it addresses logistical requirements but also emotionally and socially beneficial in terms of strengthening relational ties and social and emotional well-being.

One of the elements of relatedness in the organizational context is the quality of work relationships in terms of supportiveness of communication and clarity in work relations between employees and their supervisors. Some participants underlined the importance of mutual understanding and adaptive communication practice as the key aspects of ensuring strong relational dynamics in the case of physical separation.

*“There were no issues during WFH because we both understood each other’s communication style, so it wasn’t a barrier.” (VA, Female, 29)*

Such experiences indicate the degree of confidence and responsiveness that maintains the quality of relationships and offsets the communication limitation that is usual in remote work. Some of the participants indicated respectful communication with their superiors that implies mutual respect and understanding that is facilitated by familiarity and allows creating the same level of coordination even at a distance. However, the experience of all respondents was not quite similar.

*“The distance makes it harder to understand each other’s intentions. Even though communication flows smoothly, misunderstandings still occur due to text-based exchanges.” (RD, Male, 29)*

This contrast can be used to emphasize the point that although remote communication can be effectively used due to its functionality, it can, at times, hinder the level at which people understand each other inter-personally, especially where there are no non-verbal cues. Expanding on this issue, a number of participants pointed to the fact that the transition to remote channels of communication, in particular text-based messaging, brought the problems of communicating and receiving instructions.

*“Because there are no face-to-face interactions, nearly all conversations happen through text or audio. This requires us to ensure*

*the directions we receive are clear, including the expectations.” (DP, Male, 45)*

*“Differences in communication styles over text often create misunderstandings, requiring ongoing coordination to prevent missed messages.” (HA, Female, 29)*

These insights indicate one of the general issues about remote work: the lack of non-verbal communication raises the chances of misunderstanding, which might impact teamwork and efficiency. Recent studies have echoed these concerns, with the authors highlighting that, although digital tools help to complete tasks, they might be insufficient to help understand people with nuances (Irawanto et al., 2021). Unless active measures are taken to address the issue, remote work environments may increase the communication distance between supervisors and subordinates since communication between them may be less frequent than in a physical workplace, and psychological safety may be adversely affected as a result (Carillo et al., 2021).

The feeling of belonging and being cared about in remote working environments is usually mediated by the availability of employees to express their thoughts and be listened to during group meetings. There were positive experiences, as reported by the respondents.

*“Yes, certainly during weekly or regular meetings. I often present ideas to ensure objectives are met or to suggest ways to improve implementation.” (DP, Male, 45)*

*“Yes, we always hold monthly meetings to discuss completed work and upcoming tasks. These sessions also address challenges we face, everyone is heard, and solutions are offered.” (SS, Female, 36)*

These descriptions indicate participative communication patterns that lead to a feeling of belongingness and inclusion in the situation of remote work. According to empirical studies, this kind of inclusive leadership, where people actively listen to each other and where employees are allowed to contribute to the work, is not only effective in making teams unite but also creates psychological safety and trust in remote teams (Contreras et al., 2020). These results support the idea that a participatory role and responsiveness of managers are instrumental in meeting the need for relatedness even online. Although digital tools allow us to communicate consistently even in remote environments, it does not necessarily make a difference when it comes to the emotional contexts we have in in-person contexts.

*“Because there is no face-to-face interaction, the bonding feels less strong unlike in-person settings where we can talk about anything and engage in shared activities” (QA, Female, 30)*

On the same note, Informant MK highlighted a critical paradox in digital collaboration, describing communication as 'intense but unemotional.' While the frequency of interaction remains high, the nature of these exchanges is strictly task-oriented, leaving minimal space for the informal, relationship-building dialogues that characterize the Indonesian workplace. This 'emotional thinning' of communication poses a significant threat to the future of mutual cooperation within Indonesian firms. Traditionally, mutual cooperation is not merely a functional coordination of tasks, but a culturally embedded practice of collective solidarity built on deep interpersonal 'warmth' and shared presence.

Research by Handke et al. (2020) and Gibbs et al. (2021) suggest, while digital tools maintain functional collaboration, they often fail to foster the affective connections paramount to relatedness. In the Indonesian context, when communication becomes purely transactional and lacks emotional resonance, the spirit of voluntary mutual aid risks being replaced by a mechanical, compliance-based cooperation. This suggests that without intentional efforts to reintegrate informal social cues into virtual workflows, the communal fabric that sustains long-term organizational cohesion in Indonesia may gradually weaken.

The general conclusion is that relatedness in remote and hybrid work depends on the efficiency of communication as well as the presence of emotional and social support. Whereas planned contacts create a feeling of belonging to some individuals, a lack of informal communication may result in an emotional distance among others. It confirms the earlier studies pointing out that although digital tools are functional, they might not be as effective in deepening interpersonal relationships (Handke et al., 2020; Gibbs et al., 2021). Therefore, a remote environment needs special attention to foster not only teamwork but also belonging to create and maintain motivation and well-being.

### **Competence – Balancing Performance, Conditions, and Environmental Challenges**

The issue of competence, namely, the ability to work successfully and at the same time feel confident about your role (Ryan & Deci, 2020), is also a crucial factor that motivates employees to be productive in remote and hybrid environments. Interview evidence showed how the participants controlled the expectation of performance in a changing work structure between productivity/situational requirements and environmental conditions. The task effectiveness perceptions

were also varied and, in most incidences, based on job characteristics. These technical or knowledge-based jobs seemed to be an ideal working setup due to the concentration and independence that the home environment offered.

*“As someone who works in an IT-related role, I find that if the task can be done individually, it’s more effective at home because I can focus better.”* (GI, Male, 36)

In contrast, informant MK, who is in the field of public relations, discovered that the concept of WFH inhibited her effectiveness in connecting to the external stakeholders.

*“There are limitations when I can’t meet people face-to-face, especially new journalists who may not respond well to chat messages.”* (MK, Female, 34)

This comparison demonstrates that the integration of tasks and communication density is a major factor that determines the performance of the remote working environment. This distinction is backed by research as it was found that although remote working has the potential to increase productivity in jobs of high autonomy and low coordination requirements, it decreases effectiveness in jobs that require high levels of frequent interaction with other people (Alfes et al., 2022). Similarly, Beauregard et al. (2019) stress that the effectiveness of remote work may depend on the communicative needs and relational needs of the position.

Increased productivity is another significant feature of perceived competence in a remote environment. Some of the respondents said that working at home made them more productive mainly because of increased time efficiency and less commuting.

*“I feel more productive because I have more time. If I want to continue working into the evening after official hours, I can just do it, without worrying about going home late from the office.”* (QH, Female, 30)

These experiences explain why remote work is capable of alleviating time burden and logistical pressure on individuals, thus enabling them to concentrate more directly on the accomplishment of their work. This aligns with Boyraz and Gilbert (2024), who discovered that telecommuting increases perceived autonomy and work-life conflict, which is correlated to productivity. Similarly, Ipsen et al. (2021) also reported that remote employees tend to believe that they are more productive without the external nuisances of being in the office and being tired after the commute. In the Indonesian context, Elnanto and Suharti (2021) also found that WFH makes people more satisfied with their jobs and more productive, allowing

them to more accurately manage their time and prevent physical fatigue in the Indonesian context.

The other significant aspect of competency in remote working is the ability of its employees to adapt their working hours to their personal and professional demands. Numerous respondents talked about how the mobility of WFH helped them to reorganize their daily plans in order to become more balanced and have more control over their lives.

*“Indeed, my schedule has changed. In the morning, I spend more time with my family before starting work at 9 a.m. During lunch break, I gather with my family again and in the evening, I can resume activities with other family members.”* (DP, Male, 45)

This is an indication of how remote work enabled patterns that support productivity in both careers and relationships. Nevertheless, there were trade-offs for flexibility as well.

*“My work schedule changed because I could work according to my own timing. But during WFH, I often worked beyond official hours, especially when coordinating with my supervisor who is mostly based abroad.”* (GI, Male, 36)

Such insights indicate that the temporal independence in remote work can blur work-life boundaries, particularly in cases involving coordination over distances across time zones. Boyraz and Gilbert (2024) note that remote work success depends on the fit between flexible arrangements and personal preferences. Similarly, Brunelle and Fortin (2021) found that time sovereignty enhances perceived competence and job satisfaction when workers align schedules with their personal preferences and obligations.

Another critical aspect of competence in remote work is the perception of the employees and their ability to adjust to working in a digital and autonomous setting. Some of the participants observed that hybrid work prompted them to shape or improve the skills necessary to work efficiently, including technical skills, virtual workflow management efficiencies, and others. These changes are signs of a greater experience of self-efficacy in managing the requirements of remote working.

*“My digital skills improved, such as handling projects through online applications, setting up effective virtual meetings, and responding to growing digital demands during remote work.” (VA, Female, 29)*

Such experiences correspond to the results offered by Waizenegger et al. (2020), stating that remote work also requires the establishment of new competencies, especially digital literacy, time management, and self-discipline, to remain productive and psychologically engaged. Furthermore, Irawanto et al. (2021) revealed that Indonesian remote workers perceived as digitally competent had better job performance and the capability to adapt to the work environments in the post-pandemic era.

In summary, the experience of remote work has led to the fact that employees begin to reevaluate their abilities and approaches to working and managing time. Some had problems, but a lot of them noticed higher productivity, improved digital skills, and more individual approaches to the organization of their work. These trends indicate that remote and hybrid work, when adequately assisted, has the potential to provide knowledge workers with a sense of competence.

### **Looking Ahead: Hybrid Work and Communication**

Hybrid work has become prominent as organizations move into the post-pandemic world that still requires teamwork but is flexible at the same time. Respondents to our study had great expectations that the hybrid arrangements would be kept and improved upon by the companies, especially in those positions that are mobile or do not require a physical office. Moreover, this is why equity in performance evaluation schemes is essential in hybrid environments, which can help create equity and accountability on both sides of remote and in-office teams.

*“Companies should provide space for certain functions to work remotely or in hybrid mode if their role requires them to frequently be outside. At the same time, they need to develop fair evaluation mechanisms for remote employees so they do not feel disadvantaged compared to those working from the office.” (DP, Male, 45)*

The perceived advantages of remote and hybrid work go further than logistic convenience and flexibility- they also affect organizational communication and employee well-being, and they affect productivity in the end. This view is an expression of a deeper realization of the fact that communication effectiveness and individual health within flexible working schemes are organically interconnected with organizational performance.

*“WFH offers many advantages, such as saving time and money, avoiding traffic, and reducing stress. Commuting can be exhausting and affect performance, while working from home supports employee wellness, which in turn boosts productivity and helps the company achieve its goals.” (GI, Male, 36)*

Finally, these reflections indicate that the future of organizational communication will rely on the adoption of hybridity by institutions not only as a logistical necessity but also as a strategic way to create motivation, a sense of trust, and lucidity. By integrating employee needs and communication patterns in the framework of workflow organization, the companies will be able to develop a sustainable work environment that will both facilitate the personal development of all the employees and enhance the overall group performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thematic analysis revealed distinct patterns SDT needs in Indonesian remote or hybrid work contexts. Autonomy thrived through flexible scheduling and environmental control, shaped by organizational structures and leadership approaches. Relatedness faced significant challenges from limited informal interactions despite digital communication. Competence was maintained in task-focused roles with adequate digital infrastructure, though job type and home conditions presented notable barriers. These trade-offs underscore the need for hybrid work policies that balance flexibility with social connection and technical support to sustain employee motivation across Indonesia’s evolving work landscape.

While research on SDT and motivation exists globally, its application to hybrid work in Indonesia remains limited, particularly given the country’s collectivist and hierarchical cultural dynamics. This study addresses this gap by thematically mapping SDT needs, namely autonomy, relatedness, and competence, within post-pandemic workplaces in Jakarta, offering localized insights that remain largely absent from Western centric literature.

Ultimately, this study concludes that while digital flexibility supports autonomy, it poses a significant risk to the cultural fabric of Indonesian organizations. The transition to 'lean' digital communication has created an emotional void that threatens the spirit of mutual cooperation, potentially shifting it from a voluntary act of collective solidarity into a mere transactional coordination. Therefore, to sustain intrinsic motivation, Indonesian organizations must go beyond providing digital tools and intentionally design 'high-touch' virtual environments that bridge the gap between modern flexibility and the cultural necessity for social harmony.

This qualitative inquiry is limited to 10 informants from eight industries in Greater Jakarta, which may not fully represent broader sectoral perspectives. The diversity of roles, primarily mid-level professionals, may not capture the experiences of C suite executives or entry level employees. In addition, the cross-sectional design does not allow the study to examine longitudinal patterns of adaptation over time.

Future research could employ longitudinal designs to track the evolution of SDT needs over time, incorporate quantitative measures of need satisfaction, and examine cross generational differences between Gen Z and Millennials to strengthen generalizability. In addition, industry specific analyses, such as comparisons between manufacturing and creative sectors, may help reveal contextual variations in hybrid work experiences.

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