



Redefining Engagement: How Remote Work Is Reshaping Organizational Culture and Employee Commitment.

Dr. Neeraja Kalluri

Visiting Faculty

Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai

Abstract

The widespread shift to remote and hybrid working arrangements has profound implications for organizational culture and employee commitment. This paper develops a conceptual model of how remote work reshapes cultural norms, communication, trust, and identity, and in turn influences employees' engagement, affective commitment, and discretionary effort. We propose that remote work introduces both enabling and constraining mechanisms for example, increased autonomy and flexibility enhance intrinsic motivation, but physical distance and weaker social cues may erode shared values and belonging. We integrate insights from organizational culture theory, social identity theory, and engagement/commitment literature to articulate moderating boundary conditions (e.g. leadership style, technology affordances, trust, boundary management). Implications for managers and future empirical research directions are discussed.

Keywords: Remote work, organizational culture, employee engagement, commitment, trust, social identity, virtual teams

1. Introduction

The concept of employee engagement has emerged as a cornerstone of organizational success, influencing productivity, innovation, and overall sustainability. Traditionally, engagement was nurtured through direct interpersonal interactions, shared physical spaces, and embedded organizational values that were experienced in daily work life. However, the global shift towards remote and hybrid work models accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered how employees connect with their organizations, colleagues, and work environments (Pougajendy, Mathiazhagan, & Karunamurthy, 2024). The remote work paradigm, once viewed as an exception, has now become a defining feature of the modern workplace, demanding a re-evaluation of engagement strategies, organizational culture, and commitment mechanisms.

Organizational culture, long recognized as the “social glue” that binds employees together, faces new challenges in virtual environments. Physical distance, asynchronous communication, and reliance on digital tools have redefined how employees experience belonging, purpose, and shared meaning within their organizations (Arif, 2025). As a result, engagement can no longer be sustained solely through conventional mechanisms such as physical team-building, on-site collaboration, or direct supervision; it must now be cultivated through culture-driven virtual practices, trust, and digital connectivity.

The shift to remote and hybrid work models has not only changed *where* people work but also *how* organizational relationships and cultural dynamics are maintained. Studies have begun to explore the implications of this shift on engagement and culture, revealing both opportunities and challenges. Maheshwari (2022) emphasized that remote engagement has led to a new form of “social transformation,” particularly among startups in post-COVID India, where flexibility, autonomy, and technological integration became key engagement drivers. Similarly, Ogbu, Ozowe, and Ikevuje (2024) highlighted how remote work practices in the oil and gas sector reshaped organizational norms, requiring leaders to consciously rebuild culture through digital

collaboration and virtual leadership. However, despite the growing discourse, the literature remains fragmented in understanding *how* remote work restructures organizational culture and the extent to which this transformation influences employee commitment. As Doumbia (2025) notes, perceptions of culture and commitment have become increasingly diverse during the pandemic, with employees' sense of belonging and loyalty fluctuating due to limited social interaction and visibility.

The topic of employee engagement in remote work environments is gaining momentum within organizational behaviour and human resource management research. Scholars such as Lartey et al. (2025) and Tawalbeh (2025) argue that remote and hybrid models are not temporary responses but long-term transformations necessitating a redefinition of engagement frameworks. The rise of digital communication platforms, virtual performance management systems, and online collaboration tools has introduced new norms for sustaining productivity and connection. Moreover, Yusuf (2024) points out that remote work policies have forced HR practitioners to redesign strategies for inclusion, culture transmission, and digital well-being. In this evolving landscape, engagement is no longer confined to physical visibility or office presence but is mediated by digital culture shaped through virtual rituals, communication tone, and leadership authenticity. Organizational culture, once transmitted through physical cues, must now be experienced symbolically and digitally to preserve commitment and identity.

Despite the proliferation of research on remote work and engagement, significant theoretical and practical gaps persist. Most existing studies focus on either technological adaptation or employee satisfaction but overlook the cultural mechanisms that underpin sustained engagement and commitment in virtual environments. While Maheshwari (2022) and King (2024) address engagement trends in distributed work settings, few scholars have examined the *interdependence between organizational culture evolution and commitment formation* under remote conditions.

Furthermore, the literature lacks integrative models that explain how digital communication patterns, leadership behaviours, and trust-based relationships jointly reshape organizational culture. There is also limited empirical understanding of how virtual engagement practices influence affective and normative commitment, particularly in non-Western contexts like India, where collectivist values historically underpin engagement.

The present study seeks to fill this gap by developing a conceptual framework that connects remote work characteristics to organizational culture transformation and employee commitment. By integrating perspectives from organizational culture theory, social identity theory, and engagement models, this paper aims to explain the cultural mechanisms trust, communication norms, and organizational identification that mediate the relationship between remote work and employee commitment. This study emphasizes that remote work is not merely a logistical adjustment but a profound cultural reengineering process. The central research problem addressed here is: *How does remote work reshape organizational culture, and in turn, how does this redefined culture affect employee engagement and commitment?* The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does remote work alter organizational culture and social interaction within organizations? RQ2: What are the key cultural mechanisms that sustain employee engagement in remote work settings? RQ3: How does a redefined culture influence organizational commitment among remote employees? RQ4: What managerial practices can reinforce engagement and commitment in hybrid and fully remote environments?

This conceptual paper holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it extends organizational culture and engagement literature by introducing a digital-cultural lens, elucidating how symbolic and technological elements co-create engagement in remote contexts. It provides a unified framework linking cultural adaptation with commitment a connection that remains underexplored in post-pandemic research. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for HR leaders, managers, and policymakers on how to maintain organizational identity, sustain motivation, and build digital trust among remote teams. It supports organizations in designing strategies that enhance engagement and reduce attrition in an increasingly virtual workplace.

2. Literature Review

Remote Work, Engagement, and Commitment

The transition from traditional office-based work to remote and hybrid models represents one of the most significant transformations in modern organizational life. Initially accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has evolved from an emergency response to a sustainable working arrangement across industries (Maheshwari, 2022; Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Early research observed that remote work disrupted conventional managerial practices and challenged organizations to maintain cohesion, motivation, and engagement in virtual

settings (Benjamin, 2020). The rapid digitalization of work processes, enabled by e-HRM systems and virtual communication tools, became instrumental in preserving productivity and connection among dispersed employees (Mamatha & Sudheer, 2022). While remote work offers flexibility and autonomy, it simultaneously introduces new complexities in maintaining employee engagement and organizational commitment. Doumbia (2025) observed that employees' perceptions of organizational culture and commitment during the pandemic were shaped by factors such as digital leadership, communication transparency, and perceived support. Similarly, Ogbu, Ozowe, and Ikevuje (2024) noted in their study of the oil and gas sector that organizational culture had to be deliberately reconstructed through virtual platforms to sustain engagement. This aligns with Yusuf (2024), who emphasized that remote work policies are redefining HR practices by prioritizing inclusion, empathy, and digital well-being in the post-pandemic workplace.

Employee engagement refers to the psychological and emotional investment individuals make toward their work and organization. Traditionally nurtured through interpersonal interactions, engagement is now being redefined by virtual connectivity and digital socialization. Maheshwari (2022) highlighted that remote engagement in Indian startups has evolved into a socio-technological phenomenon characterized by flexibility, empowerment, and value alignment. Lartey et al. (2025) further assert that employee engagement must now be viewed as a transformative driver of organizational resilience, emphasizing emotional connection, purpose, and adaptability.

Research also points to engagement as a mediating factor between remote work and performance outcomes. Wijaya and Sari (2025) found that engagement significantly influences organizational commitment in remote environments, with communication quality and digital leadership emerging as strong predictors. Similarly, Mubarak and Mabkhot (2024) examined the enduring appeal of remote work, finding that engagement mediates the relationship between flexibility and commitment. However, disengagement risks remain prevalent when employees face technological fatigue, isolation, or poor managerial support (Çakır, 2022; Tawalbeh, 2025). From a human resource perspective, e-HRM initiatives have been instrumental in enhancing engagement by streamlining virtual collaboration and recognition systems (Mamatha & Sudheer, 2022). King (2024) and Choudhary and Jain (2025) observed that engagement antecedents such as autonomy, feedback, and digital communication need to be restructured to fit distributed work realities. Their systematic reviews concluded that engagement in remote settings is no longer solely dependent on job design but on the organization's ability to create a shared digital culture that sustains belongingness.

Organizational commitment, defined as the psychological attachment an employee feels toward their organization, has undergone a profound transformation in the era of remote work. Commitment is no longer reinforced through physical visibility or social embeddedness but through perceived trust, fairness, and alignment with organizational values (Chauhan, Howe, & Nachmias, 2023). Studies by Wang, Albert, and Sun (2020) demonstrated that employee isolation negatively affects telecommuter commitment, underscoring the need for relational and cultural interventions. Kim (2024) examined "distance dilemmas" and found that commitment in remote settings is highly contingent on leadership visibility and the perceived authenticity of organizational communication. Höyhty (2025) further emphasized that commitment beyond proximity depends on how organizations create digital spaces for connection, collaboration, and recognition. Gašić et al. (2024) empirically validated that flexible work arrangements can positively influence commitment when trust and role clarity are established. Their study in *Sustainability* highlights the mediating role of commitment in fostering positive employee behaviours and reducing turnover intentions. In a similar vein, Findik and Arslan (2025) explored the moderating role of self-efficacy on affective commitment, concluding that employees with higher self-regulatory capabilities exhibit stronger attachment to their organizations despite physical distance. Likewise, Yu and Regua (2024) found emotional intelligence to be a key predictor of both engagement and commitment in remote contexts. These findings collectively suggest that commitment in remote work is dynamic and multifaceted driven by psychological safety, trust, leadership, and digital emotional literacy.

A growing body of research emphasizes that engagement and commitment in remote settings are fundamentally mediated by organizational culture. Doumbia (2025) and Ogbu et al. (2024) both underscore that remote work challenges traditional cultural constructs, requiring deliberate efforts to sustain shared values, trust, and belonging. Maheshwari (2022) conceptualized this as "social transformation," where engagement is sustained not through physical proximity but through digital alignment with organizational purpose. Choudhary and Jain (2025), in a systematic review, identified cultural adaptability, leadership empathy, and virtual collaboration as dominant antecedents of engagement in remote contexts. Similarly, Hajjami and Crocco (2024) compared antecedents of engagement between remote and traditional workplaces and found that culture-based variables trust, empowerment, and inclusion are more critical in remote setups. Moreover, recent doctoral work by Jie (n.d.) and Phillips (2021) revealed that organizational commitment among remote employees is closely tied to

cultural continuity and change readiness. When employees perceive that organizational values and communication remain consistent, commitment tends to remain stable. Conversely, cultural fragmentation manifested through inconsistent communication or lack of recognition can quickly erode both engagement and loyalty. These findings align with Lartey et al. (2025), who advocate that culture-driven engagement initiatives, such as virtual town halls, digital storytelling, and value-based leadership, play a crucial role in maintaining commitment in distributed teams. As such, remote work demands that organizations not merely replicate culture digitally but re-engineer it to foster inclusivity, trust, and psychological connectivity.

Although remote work provides undeniable flexibility, it also creates new managerial challenges. Employee isolation, blurred work–life boundaries, and digital fatigue can undermine engagement and commitment (Wang et al., 2020; Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Research indicates that these challenges are particularly acute in roles demanding high collaboration or emotional labor. Kim (2024) and Höyhty (2025) emphasize that organizations must prioritize digital well-being and psychological safety to sustain commitment in long-term remote work arrangements. Moreover, emerging evidence highlights the importance of emotional and cognitive resources. Emotional intelligence (Yu & Regua, 2024), self-efficacy (Findik & Arslan, 2025), and intrinsic motivation (Çakır, 2022) serve as resilience factors that buffer employees from disengagement. From a strategic standpoint, Tawalbeh (2025) and Yusuf (2024) suggest that hybrid work models offer a balanced solution preserving flexibility while enabling cultural reinforcement through periodic physical interaction. Importantly, Gašić et al. (2024) argue that flexible work and employee commitment share a reciprocal relationship: when organizations demonstrate trust and flexibility, employees reciprocate through enhanced engagement and discretionary effort. This “social exchange” perspective reinforces that engagement and commitment are relational rather than transactional outcomes.

Despite the expanding literature, several critical gaps remain. First, most studies have examined engagement and commitment independently, with limited exploration of how organizational culture mediates their relationship in remote work contexts (Maheshwari, 2022; Doumbia, 2025). Second, research tends to focus on short-term pandemic responses rather than the long-term sustainability of engagement strategies in digital-first organizations (Choudhary & Jain, 2025; Chauhan et al., 2023). Third, there is a paucity of comparative studies examining cross-cultural differences in remote engagement, particularly between collectivist and individualist societies. Conceptually, this review reveals the need for an integrative framework that captures how remote work characteristics (autonomy, flexibility, digital communication) interact with cultural mechanisms (trust, shared meaning, leadership empathy) to influence engagement and commitment outcomes. Addressing these gaps will enrich both theory and practice in understanding how organizations can maintain high-performing, committed workforces in increasingly virtual environments.

Organizational Culture in Remote Settings

Organizational culture traditionally encompasses shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors that guide how employees interact and perform within an organization. Culture forms the foundation of identity and cohesion, often reinforced through physical proximity, informal communication, and shared rituals. However, the rise of remote work has disrupted these traditional mechanisms, requiring a redefinition of how culture is built, transmitted, and sustained in virtual environments (Eriksson & Santesson, 2021). Eriksson and Santesson (2021), in their qualitative study, found that physical distance weakens spontaneous interactions and informal exchanges that traditionally sustain cultural continuity. Their findings revealed that remote settings compel organizations to rely on intentional, structured communication to convey values and expectations. This shift has necessitated the emergence of a *digitally mediated culture*, where symbolic representations, virtual rituals, and digital communication norms replace physical cues such as office spaces and interpersonal dynamics.

Raghuram (2021) emphasized that remote work changes not only the structural aspects of organizations but also the *socio-cognitive underpinnings* of culture. In remote contexts, employees experience organizational values through digital behaviors email tone, responsiveness, inclusivity in virtual meetings, and accessibility of leadership rather than through traditional physical artifacts or in-person leadership presence. Thus, culture in remote settings becomes increasingly dependent on technology-mediated interactions, communication transparency, and leadership authenticity.

Remote work challenges the traditional mechanisms of cultural reinforcement, including storytelling, mentoring, and symbolic physical spaces. Nkandu and Karatsivos (2022), studying the technology sector, noted that innovation-oriented cultures have had to adapt by developing *virtual socialization practices* to maintain creative collaboration and shared identity. Without informal networks and “water cooler” conversations, the

transmission of tacit knowledge becomes difficult, weakening shared sense-making among employees. Similarly, Rogers (2022) examined how external social support and digital communication can mitigate the social isolation often experienced in remote work. The study demonstrated that organizations with strong digital communication structures and empathetic leadership preserved cohesion and belonging despite physical separation. The findings underscore that *social connectedness and perceived inclusion* act as substitutes for physical presence in sustaining cultural engagement. Tanskala (2025) further argued that the long-term impact of remote work on culture depends on the organization's capacity for *cultural adaptation*. When organizations consciously integrate digital value such as openness, flexibility, and asynchronous collaboration into their core culture, they develop resilience and inclusivity. Conversely, when cultural adaptation is neglected, remote work may lead to fragmentation, misalignment of values, and declining organizational identification.

Empirical research across sectors reveals diverse cultural transformations triggered by remote work. Lamin, Eboli, and Lima (2024) conducted a case study in a high-complexity hospital in Brazil and discovered that remote work redefined hierarchical relationships, decision-making, and informal mentorship within healthcare teams. Despite initial resistance, remote work fostered greater flexibility, empowerment, and trust-based collaboration, highlighting culture's dynamic nature. The study concluded that leadership adaptability and technological readiness were pivotal in maintaining a cohesive culture in remote contexts.

Similarly, Vladimirovich (2024) explored how remote work influences cultural development in modern organizations, finding that digital communication tools both facilitate and hinder culture building. While virtual tools promote inclusivity and democratized participation, they may also depersonalize interactions, eroding emotional bonds among employees. The study underscores that *emotional connection and symbolic communication* are crucial for preserving organizational identity in dispersed teams. Mozammel and Irum (2024) examined the dual impact of remote work on organizational culture and employee performance. They found that culture acts as a mediating factor: strong, adaptive cultures can convert remote work challenges into engagement opportunities, while weak cultures exacerbate disconnection and performance decline. This finding aligns with Zimmerman (2025), whose research at Benedictine University showed that leadership style and control mechanisms significantly affect how culture evolves in remote work environments. In organizations with participative and trust-based leadership, employees reported higher cultural alignment and job satisfaction.

Leadership has emerged as a central factor in maintaining and reshaping organizational culture during the shift to remote work. As Zimmerman (2025) highlights, leadership behaviours particularly communication frequency, empathy, and empowerment serve as symbolic anchors for organizational culture when physical artifacts are absent. Leaders who intentionally communicate values, recognize efforts publicly in digital forums, and model desired behaviours reinforce cultural cohesion in virtual teams. Raghuram (2021) also emphasized the *multi-level nature* of cultural adaptation, wherein leadership at multiple organizational levels top management, middle managers, and team leaders collectively shape the remote work culture. When alignment across leadership levels weakens, inconsistencies emerge between the espoused and enacted culture, leading to confusion and disengagement. Similarly, Rogers (2022) demonstrated that external and internal social support systems (e.g., peer mentoring, online communities, virtual check-ins) mitigate the isolating effects of remote work and strengthen relational culture. The research highlights that fostering *psychological safety* and open digital communication are critical for cultural stability and engagement retention. In this vein, Tanskala (2025) contends that culture in remote work settings must be "intentional rather than incidental." Organizations can no longer rely on spontaneous interactions to transmit culture; instead, they must design explicit rituals, such as virtual onboarding, online recognition ceremonies, and digital storytelling platforms, to reinforce cultural values and belongingness.

the literature suggests that organizational culture in remote settings is increasingly defined by adaptability and innovation. Nkandu and Karatsivos (2022) observed that remote work environments can enhance innovation if culture encourages autonomy, experimentation, and open communication. Technology-sector organizations, in particular, leveraged digital tools to foster creative collaboration and collective intelligence. However, innovation suffers in cultures dominated by rigid control systems or low trust (Zimmerman, 2025). Vladimirovich (2024) and Lamin et al. (2024) highlight that successful cultural reconfiguration in remote settings depends on how organizations balance control and flexibility. Overemphasis on surveillance or performance metrics can signal distrust and weaken culture, while empowering leadership builds psychological ownership and commitment. The emerging paradigm is one of "*digital trust culture*" a culture that thrives on transparency, shared accountability, and inclusivity rather than oversight. Moreover, Mozammel and Irum (2024) found that performance outcomes in remote work are mediated by culture's adaptability: organizations

that align their digital norms with employee well-being and inclusion report stronger engagement, collaboration, and innovation. Thus, culture becomes both a driver and a consequence of effective remote work management.

Despite growing scholarly attention, several gaps remain in understanding organizational culture in remote settings. First, much of the current research focuses on short-term adaptation during or immediately after the pandemic, leaving the *long-term evolution* of remote work culture underexplored (Tanskala, 2025). Second, empirical studies tend to examine culture from an individual or departmental perspective rather than as an *organizational-level construct* shaped by multi-level leadership and technological systems (Raghuram, 2021). Third, most existing work is context-specific, lacking comparative insights across industries or national cultures (Nkandu & Karatsivos, 2022; Lamin et al., 2024). Finally, there remains limited theoretical integration explaining *how organizational culture interacts with engagement and commitment* in remote work environments a gap this paper seeks to conceptually bridge.

3. Methodology

This study employs a conceptual research design grounded in an extensive systematic literature review of peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases (Saqib, 2020, Saqib, 2023). The process involved identifying, analysing, and synthesizing scholarly works on remote work, organizational culture, employee engagement, and commitment published between 2010 and 2025. Following the principles of theory-driven conceptualization, we first mapped key constructs and theoretical foundations particularly Organizational Culture Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Employee Engagement and Commitment Models to understand how remote work environments reshape employee experiences and cultural dynamics. We then adopted an integrative approach to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and conceptual linkages across the literature. These insights guided the development of the conceptual framework, which depicts the pathways through which remote work influences organizational culture and employee commitment. Based on the synthesized evidence, propositions were formulated to reflect theoretical relationships and moderating factors such as leadership style, technology affordances, trust, and boundary management. This approach ensures conceptual rigor and provides a foundation for future empirical validation.

4. Conceptual Model and Propositions

The conceptual model developed in this study explains how remote work reshapes organizational culture and, in turn, influences employee engagement and commitment. Drawing from Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2010), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the model proposes that remote work characteristics directly influence cultural mechanisms that mediate engagement and commitment. Furthermore, leadership style, technological affordances, individual boundary management, and organizational/national contexts are proposed as moderators shaping these relationships.

1. Remote Work Characteristics

Remote work fundamentally alters the structural and social architecture of work. It introduces autonomy and flexibility, allows employees to manage their tasks asynchronously, and reduces physical interaction and spatial proximity. While these changes can enhance intrinsic motivation and work–life balance, they can also reduce social cohesion and weaken the informal reinforcement of organizational culture (Eriksson & Santesson, 2021; Maheshwari, 2022).

The defining features of remote work include:

- **Autonomy and Flexibility:** Employees have greater discretion over how, when, and where they complete their tasks. This autonomy can foster engagement through empowerment but may lead to disengagement if it results in isolation or ambiguity (Wimbley, 2022).
- **Spatial and Temporal Dispersion:** The absence of shared physical space and synchronous interaction challenges the continuity of shared norms and team identity (Nkandu & Karatsivos, 2022).
- **Reliance on Digital Media:** Digital platforms act as both enablers and barriers facilitating communication but also reducing richness, spontaneity, and emotional cues critical for trust and belonging (Raghuram, 2021).
- **Boundary Blurring:** The convergence of personal and professional domains in remote work creates stress and identity conflict, influencing both engagement and commitment (Chauhan et al., 2023).

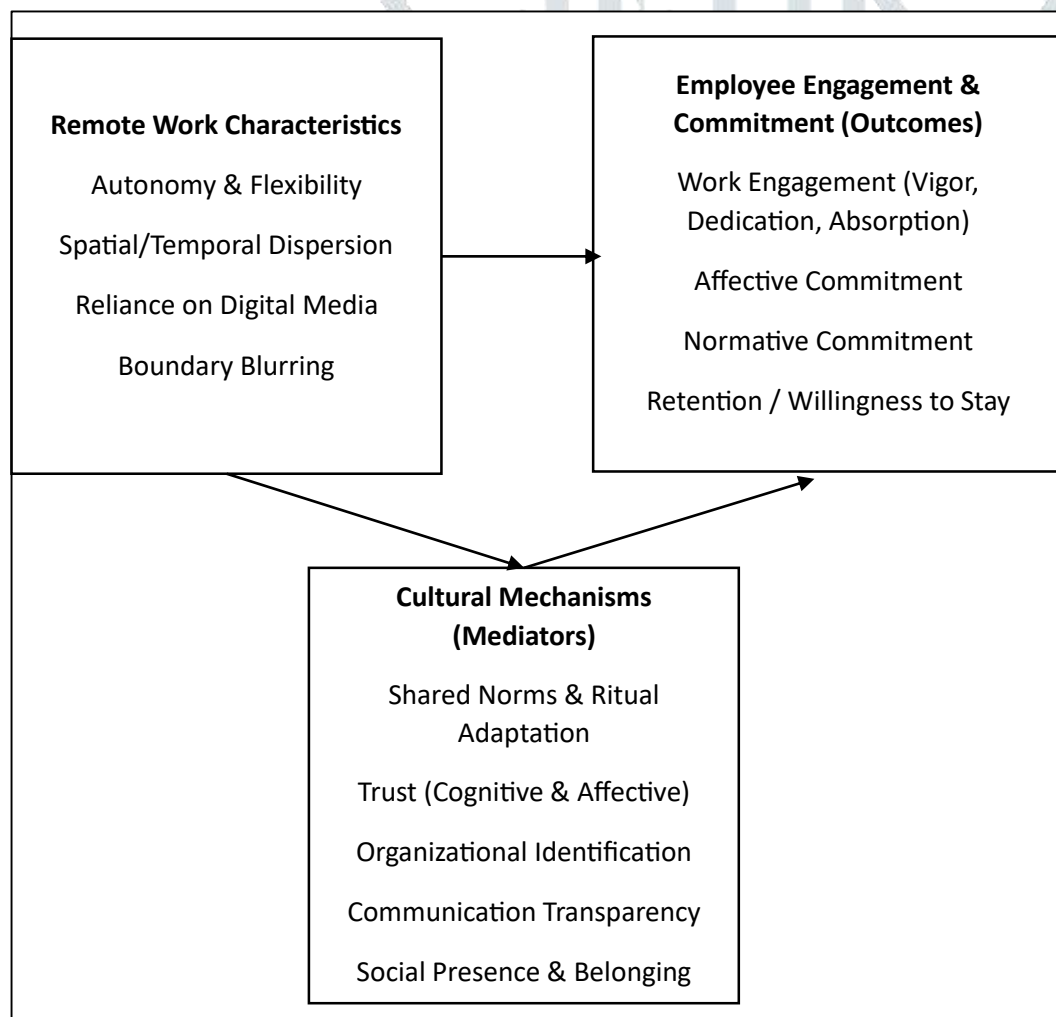
These characteristics collectively reshape the ways in which culture is transmitted, trust is built, and engagement is sustained within organizations.

2. Cultural Mechanisms as Mediators

In remote settings, the traditional, organically transmitted elements of culture are weakened. Instead, culture must be intentionally mediated through virtual rituals, digital communication norms, and leadership behaviours. The following mechanisms form the mediating bridge between remote work and employee outcomes:

- **Shared Norms and Ritual Adaptation:** Remote organizations must redefine rituals such as online recognition events, virtual town halls, and digital storytelling to sustain cultural continuity (Tanskala, 2025).
- **Trust (Cognitive and Affective):** Trust serves as a linchpin of engagement in remote environments. *Cognitive trust* is grounded in perceptions of competence and reliability, while *affective trust* stems from emotional bonds and psychological safety (Rogers, 2022; Vladimirovich, 2024).
- **Organizational Identification:** When employees internalize organizational values, they develop a sense of belonging even in dispersed contexts. Identification acts as a psychological anchor for commitment (Doubbia, 2025).
- **Communication Transparency:** Open, consistent, and empathetic digital communication reinforces credibility, inclusion, and cultural alignment (Zimmerman, 2025).
- **Social Presence and Belonging:** Virtual interactions must simulate “presence” to foster belonging; high-quality digital communication compensates for the absence of physical cues (Raghuram, 2021).

These cultural mechanisms are pivotal in maintaining engagement and commitment. When they are strong, remote work enhances motivation and connection; when weak, it results in fragmentation, alienation, and turnover risk.



3. Employee Engagement and Commitment

Employee engagement refers to an individual’s emotional, cognitive, and behavioral investment in work (Kahn, 1990). It is reflected through vigor, dedication, and absorption in tasks. Organizational commitment, on the other hand, comprises affective (emotional attachment), normative (sense of obligation), and continuance (cost-based) components (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

In remote contexts, engagement and commitment depend less on physical supervision and more on cultural resonance and relational quality. Engaged remote employees tend to perceive their organizations as supportive, trustworthy, and communicative. Commitment, therefore, becomes an outcome of both cultural alignment and relational trust.

The conceptual model posits that engagement mediates the link between remote work and commitment: when remote work is culturally supported and trust-laden, engagement enhances affective and normative commitment. Conversely, when remote work is culturally fragmented, disengagement fosters emotional detachment and turnover intentions (Kim, 2024; Höyhty, 2025).

4. Moderating Factors (Boundary Conditions)

The effects of remote work on culture and commitment are not uniform; they vary depending on contextual and individual moderators.

- **Leadership Style (Transformational, Inclusive, and Digital):** Transformational and inclusive leaders play a crucial role in articulating vision, demonstrating empathy, and reinforcing shared purpose through digital platforms. Leaders who exhibit transparency and accessibility in virtual spaces strengthen identification and engagement (Zimmerman, 2025). Conversely, transactional or autocratic leadership styles weaken trust and cohesion.
- **Technology Affordances (Richness, Synchronicity, Ease of Use):** Technological tools determine the extent to which employees can perceive social presence and emotional nuance in communication. Rich media (video calls, interactive forums) enhance cultural embedding and engagement, while low-richness media (emails, chat) may foster detachment (Nkandu & Karatsivos, 2022).
- **Individual Boundary Management Capability:** Employees who can psychologically and temporally separate work from home roles experience less stress and higher engagement (Wang et al., 2020). This self-regulatory capability acts as a personal buffer against burnout and disengagement.
- **Organizational Support and Policies:** Supportive HR practices such as digital wellness programs, flexible scheduling, and inclusive communication mediate the negative effects of remote isolation and enhance affective commitment (Yusuf, 2024).
- **Industry and National Culture:** Cultural context influences how employees interpret autonomy and social connectedness. For example, collectivist cultures may prioritize relational cohesion, while individualistic cultures emphasize autonomy (Maheshwari, 2022).

Propositions

Based on theoretical reasoning and prior empirical evidence, the following propositions are formulated:

P1. Remote work, through spatial and temporal dispersion, weakens implicit cultural reinforcement mechanisms (e.g., rituals, informal cues), thereby reducing organizational identification unless compensated by deliberate cultural practices.

This proposition aligns with Eriksson and Santesson (2021), who argue that culture in remote settings requires intentional reinforcement. Without digital substitutes for informal interactions, employees experience diminished belonging.

P2. The positive effects of autonomy and flexibility inherent in remote work on engagement are mediated by trust: when trust is high, autonomy enhances engagement; when trust is low, autonomy leads to isolation and disengagement.

This reflects findings by Rogers (2022) and Vladimirovich (2024), suggesting that trust functions as a socio-emotional moderator. Autonomy is a double-edged sword empowering when paired with trust, alienating when absent.

P3. Leadership style moderates the relationship between cultural mechanisms and commitment such that inclusive, transformational, and digitally fluent leadership strengthens the positive link between culture and commitment

Zimmerman (2025) and Tanskala (2025) provide evidence that leadership behaviors are pivotal cultural cues in virtual environments. Leadership visibility and authenticity enhance identification and affective attachment.

P4. *The effectiveness of cultural adaptation (e.g., virtual rituals, symbolic enactments, shared narratives) is contingent on technology affordances: richer, synchronous media better support cultural embedding than asynchronous or low-richness media.*

Technological design shapes cultural experience. Rich media foster emotional engagement, immediacy, and shared understanding, while minimal media reduce affective connection (Nkandu & Karatsivos, 2022; Raghuram, 2021).

P5. *Individual boundary management capability positively moderates the relationship between remote work and engagement by reducing work–life conflict and psychological strain.*

Employees who can manage temporal and emotional boundaries maintain higher engagement levels. This echoes the findings of Wang et al. (2020), who noted that boundary control enhances satisfaction and reduces burnout in telecommuters.

P6. *Organizational support and digital inclusion policies moderate the relationship between remote work and commitment, such that perceived organizational support strengthens affective and normative commitment.*

Employees who perceive organizational care and inclusion in remote contexts reciprocate with stronger emotional attachment and lower turnover intention (Gašić et al., 2024).

P7. *National cultural orientation moderates the effect of remote work on engagement and commitment; collectivist contexts amplify the role of relational culture, while individualistic contexts enhance autonomy-driven engagement.*

This proposition highlights contextual variation in cultural mechanisms (Maheshwari, 2022). Cultural dimensions influence how employees interpret digital interactions and organizational belonging.

In essence, the model proposes that remote work does not inherently undermine or enhance commitment; rather, its effects depend on how effectively organizations sustain and adapt their cultural mechanisms through leadership, technology, and trust. Engagement and commitment in the digital workplace emerge as *culturally embedded psychological states* nurtured through intentional connection, transparent communication, and empathetic leadership.

5. Conclusion

The present conceptual study, “*Redefining Engagement: How Remote Work is Reshaping Organizational Culture and Employee Commitment*,” provides a comprehensive understanding of how the global shift to remote and hybrid work has redefined the very foundations of organizational life. By integrating insights from organizational culture theory, social identity theory, and social exchange theory, the paper highlights that remote work is not simply a logistical or technological transformation it is a cultural and psychological evolution that reshapes how employees connect, identify, and commit to their organizations.

The study establishes that remote work introduces both opportunities and challenges for engagement and commitment. On one hand, increased autonomy, flexibility, and access to digital collaboration tools can enhance motivation, empowerment, and productivity. On the other hand, the loss of physical proximity, reduced informal interactions, and potential social isolation threaten to weaken organizational identification and belonging. Consequently, engagement and commitment in remote contexts are contingent on how effectively organizations reconstruct culture through trust, communication transparency, and digital inclusion.

A central argument of this paper is that organizational culture must be actively rematerialized in virtual forms rather than passively assumed to persist in digital environments. Culture in remote settings is no longer transmitted through spatial artifacts or face-to-face rituals but through intentional practices virtual rituals, transparent leadership, shared narratives, and technological empathy. Trust and identification emerge as pivotal cultural mechanisms that mediate the relationship between remote work and employee outcomes. The conceptual framework therefore positions culture not as a static background element, but as a dynamic, adaptive system that both shapes and is shaped by remote work.

The propositions developed in this paper emphasize that remote work’s influence on engagement and commitment depends on how organizations manage contextual and relational boundaries. Leadership style, technology affordances, boundary management capability, and perceived organizational support act as key moderating forces. Effective leadership transformational, inclusive, and digitally fluent serves as a symbolic

anchor that preserves cultural cohesion and reinforces emotional commitment in distributed work environments. Similarly, organizations that adopt rich, interactive communication technologies and supportive HR policies foster stronger engagement and lower turnover intentions.

In conclusion, remote work represents both a disruption and an opportunity: a disruption to established cultural norms and managerial practices, and an opportunity to design more flexible, inclusive, and human-centered organizations. The sustainability of engagement and commitment in this new era will depend on how well organizations balance autonomy with connection, technology with empathy, and performance with purpose. By redefining engagement through a cultural lens, this paper lays the foundation for future empirical research and offers actionable insights for leaders seeking to cultivate trust, belonging, and shared meaning in the post-pandemic digital workplace.

6. Implications

Theoretical Implications: This conceptual study makes several theoretical advancements to the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management.

First, it extends existing theories of culture and engagement by articulating how cultural mechanisms specifically trust, organizational identification, shared norms, and communication transparency mediate the relationship between remote work and employee commitment. Traditional engagement models largely assume co-located work environments where culture is reinforced through physical proximity and informal socialization. By contrast, this study conceptualizes culture in remote work as a digitally mediated construct, sustained through virtual rituals, symbolic communication, and leadership authenticity.

Second, the paper provides a nuanced understanding of the “remote work paradox”, where increased autonomy and flexibility coexist with potential disconnection and cultural erosion. While autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation, it may simultaneously reduce shared meaning and belonging if not balanced by strong cultural mechanisms. The proposed model thus reconciles conflicting findings in prior literature by identifying boundary conditions such as leadership style, technology richness, and boundary management capability that determine whether autonomy leads to engagement or alienation.

Third, this study advances the notion that organizational culture in digital contexts must be actively “rematerialized” rather than passively inherited. Physical symbols, spontaneous interactions, and spatial cues long regarded as carriers of culture lose salience in remote environments. Hence, culture must be intentionally designed, articulated, and enacted through digital channels and shared narratives. This reconceptualization contributes to the emerging literature on *digital organizational culture* and highlights how virtual workspaces can host meaningful cultural interactions that sustain collective identity.

Fourth, the conceptual model enriches social identity theory by demonstrating how identification and belonging can persist without physical presence. In virtual settings, identification is driven not by proximity but by symbolic resonance employees’ perception that the organization’s values, communication style, and leadership behaviors align with their own. This adaptation of identity theory to remote work provides a foundation for future empirical research on “virtual belongingness” and its effects on commitment.

Finally, the integration of boundary theory and social exchange theory enhances the understanding of engagement and commitment as relational constructs. The model proposes that employees’ commitment to remote organizations depends not only on instrumental rewards but on perceived trust, reciprocity, and organizational support. When organizations demonstrate flexibility, empathy, and fairness, employees reciprocate with loyalty and discretionary effort even in the absence of physical supervision.

Managerial Implications: The study also offers several practical implications for managers, HR professionals, and organizational leaders navigating the complexities of remote and hybrid work environments.

First, organizations must recognize that remote work does not inherently sustain engagement or culture. The physical office once served as a social anchor where values and norms were reinforced through presence and shared experiences. In its absence, managers must intentionally invest in cultural maintenance through digital storytelling, virtual rituals, and transparent communication. These symbolic acts such as online recognition programs, shared value statements, and team-building sessions help maintain cohesion and identity among dispersed employees.

Second, leadership capability is pivotal in shaping cultural continuity in remote settings. Leaders must be trained in digital fluency, inclusive communication, and empathy to effectively manage distributed teams.

Transformational and inclusive leadership styles are particularly valuable because they promote trust, psychological safety, and shared purpose. Leaders who demonstrate visibility and authenticity in digital spaces signal reliability and reinforce cultural consistency, thereby strengthening affective commitment.

Third, technology strategy should align with cultural goals rather than being treated as a purely operational choice. The selection of communication platforms, collaboration tools, and digital media should prioritize social richness, interactivity, and transparency. Tools that allow for synchronous communication such as video conferencing or collaborative platforms help replicate the immediacy and emotional engagement of face-to-face interactions. At the same time, organizations must guard against technology overload by setting clear norms for digital communication and work-life boundaries.

Fourth, organizations should prioritize training in boundary management and digital well-being. Remote work blurs the lines between professional and personal life, increasing the risk of burnout and disengagement. HR departments should implement programs that educate employees on managing digital fatigue, structuring work hours, and maintaining psychological detachment after work. Such interventions not only support employee well-being but also reinforce long-term engagement and commitment.

Fifth, the research emphasizes the strategic value of hybrid work models as “culture anchors.” Periodic in-person gatherings, workshops, and retreats can serve as tangible reinforcements of organizational identity and values. These hybrid rituals reconnect employees to the organization’s symbolic and emotional roots while maintaining the flexibility of remote work. By blending physical and digital touchpoints, organizations can sustain cultural coherence and trust across diverse work arrangements.

Finally, managers must approach culture as a strategic resource rather than a background variable. In remote settings, culture becomes a deliberate design element that can either enhance or undermine performance and retention. Organizations that succeed in digital cultural transformation will likely enjoy stronger engagement, lower turnover, and enhanced innovation capacity in the evolving landscape of work.

7. Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework presented in this study opens up multiple avenues for future research on how remote work reshapes organizational culture, engagement, and commitment. As the world of work continues to evolve toward hybrid and flexible models, scholars must move beyond pandemic-era observations to develop longitudinal, context-sensitive, and multi-level insights. The following directions are proposed for future inquiry:

Future studies should empirically validate the proposed model across diverse cultural and industrial contexts. Cultural orientations such as collectivism versus individualism can shape how employees interpret autonomy, trust, and belonging in remote settings. For instance, collectivist societies may rely more heavily on social and relational mechanisms of engagement, while individualistic cultures may emphasize autonomy and performance. Similarly, different industries (e.g., service, manufacturing, technology, healthcare) experience varying levels of digital dependency and teamwork intensity. Cross-sectoral and cross-national comparative research will deepen our understanding of how national culture, institutional context, and digital infrastructure interact with remote work to influence organizational culture and commitment.

There is a pressing need to study the temporal evolution of cultural adaptation and erosion in remote work environments. Most current research focuses on short-term adjustments during or shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Longitudinal designs could reveal tipping points moments when organizational culture either stabilizes, transforms, or deteriorates. Tracking employees over several years would illuminate how commitment, identification, and engagement fluctuate as remote work practices mature. Understanding these temporal patterns is essential to designing interventions that sustain engagement over time rather than merely responding to crisis-driven transitions.

Remote work blurs traditional boundaries between work and home, often leading to identity conflict and role strain. Future research should explore how individuals negotiate multiple role identities (e.g., employee, parent, caregiver) and how these negotiations influence engagement and commitment. The application of boundary theory and identity integration frameworks could reveal whether employees who achieve effective role segmentation or integration experience higher levels of well-being and organizational loyalty. Moreover, examining gender differences in boundary management could yield valuable insights into inclusion and equity in remote workplaces.

An intriguing research frontier lies in studying the emergence of digital-native organizational cultures those formed entirely through virtual interaction. As remote work persists, organizations may develop new forms of rituals, symbols, and communication patterns unique to digital environments (e.g., virtual celebrations, emoji-based recognition, asynchronous storytelling). Ethnographic and discourse-based studies could document how such “virtual microcultures” evolve, spread, and influence collective identity and performance. This line of inquiry will advance theory by capturing how culture is not merely transferred online but co-created through digital affordances.

The distinction between hybrid and fully remote models deserves systematic exploration. While hybrid models provide opportunities for physical reconnection, they may also introduce inequalities between on-site and remote employees. Future studies should examine how “culture anchors” such as periodic in-person events interact with virtual rituals to maintain cohesion. Comparative analyses could reveal which combinations of physical and virtual practices most effectively sustain engagement, belonging, and innovation. Such studies could also address whether hybrid work reinforces or mitigates issues of proximity bias, leadership visibility, and team cohesion.

While this study focuses on engagement and commitment, remote work’s implications extend to a broader set of organizational outcomes. Future research should examine how cultural adaptation in remote settings influences innovation, knowledge sharing, collaboration, burnout, and retention. Investigating these outcomes could provide a multidimensional view of how culture serves as a strategic resource in distributed organizations. Moreover, integrating constructs such as psychological safety, creativity, and learning orientation would enrich the theoretical understanding of remote work’s long-term organizational consequences.

Building on the insights of Hu et al. (2022) and others, future research should differentiate between intra-team culture (within teams) and inter-team culture (across departments or organizational units) in remote settings. While intra-team culture shapes daily collaboration and trust, inter-team cultural alignment affects innovation diffusion, strategic coherence, and organizational agility. Large-scale network analyses and social mapping techniques could be employed to examine how “cultural distance” between remote teams affects coordination, creativity, and conflict resolution. Understanding these multi-level dynamics will be critical for designing cohesive hybrid organizations with shared values and aligned practices.

Finally, researchers should consider adopting multi-method and interdisciplinary approaches to study remote work culture. Combining qualitative ethnography, digital trace analysis, and quantitative modeling can capture both the symbolic and behavioral dimensions of virtual culture. Theoretically, integrating perspectives from organizational learning, digital transformation, and emotional intelligence could yield richer models of engagement in virtual environments. Furthermore, applying AI-driven sentiment and communication analytics to study virtual team interactions may open new pathways for empirical validation of culture-related constructs.

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