

Exploring the Recreational Needs of Work from Home Employees: A Qualitative Perspective on Job Satisfaction

AUTHORS: Rachna Soni¹

AFFILIATIONS:

¹Rachna Soni, Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Baba Mastnath University, Rohtak, Haryana, India, rachna.soni33@gmail.com

Abstract

The shift to remote work has transformed traditional workplace dynamics, significantly altering employees' daily routines, social interactions, and work-life balance. This study aims to explore the recreational needs of remote workers and how these needs influence their job satisfaction. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 remote employees from diverse industries and roles across India. The interviews explored the types of recreational activities employees engage in, perceived barriers to such engagement, and the psychological outcomes associated with recreational practices during remote work. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed three dominant themes: (1) Blurring of work-life boundaries reduces recreational time, (2) Need for personalized, flexible, and home-based recreational options, and (3) Recreational engagement as a key contributor to emotional well-being and job satisfaction. Participants reported that regular involvement in recreational activities ranging from physical exercise and creative hobbies to digital socialization helped reduce monotony and increased motivation, ultimately improving satisfaction with their job roles. However, many also cited a lack of organizational support and overwork as limiting factors. The study highlights the need for organizations to actively promote and facilitate recreational opportunities even in virtual work settings. Tailored wellness initiatives, flexible work hours, and regular check-ins could serve as practical interventions. This research contributes to understanding the evolving nature of work and suggests a strong link between recreation, and job satisfaction in the digital era.

Keywords: Remote work, Recreational activities, Job satisfaction, Employee well-being, Work-life balance, Qualitative study

Introduction

The profound disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic have catalyzed a rapid shift toward remote and hybrid work models across diverse industries globally. As millions of employees abruptly transitioned to working from home (WFH), discussions around job satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee well-being gained renewed urgency. Central to this transformation is a heightened focus on addressing the unique recreational needs of remote employees, whose increasingly blurred boundaries between professional and personal domains pose both significant opportunities and challenges for sustaining long-term satisfaction and productivity (Orešković et al., 2023).

While WFH arrangements provide potential benefits including increased flexibility, greater autonomy, and often improved work-life balance they also present distinct psychosocial challenges that can offset these gains. Remote workers frequently contend with social isolation, digital fatigue, and diminished opportunities for informal interactions or spontaneous recreations what might traditionally be labeled as “water-cooler” moments that foster camaraderie, creativity, and emotional respite in conventional office settings (Wood et al., 2022; Buonomo et al., 2023). Research indicates that although remote employees often report comparable or even heightened job satisfaction relative to their on-site counterparts, this advantage is heavily contingent on multiple intersecting factors. These include the extent of organizational

support, the quality of supervisory relationships, clarity regarding job roles, and critically, access to meaningful recreational activities that align with remote work conditions (Esposito et al., 2024; Schwoerer & Micic, 2024; Wood et al., 2022).

Modern organizations are consequently faced with the dual imperative of nurturing employee engagement and sustaining job satisfaction within the virtual work environment. This necessitates a thoughtful reimagining of recreational opportunities tailored to the WFH context, expanding beyond conventional wellness programs to actively promote hobbies, fitness, virtual social interactions, structured breaks, and creative outlets that emulate the psychological and social benefits of office-based recreation.

Work-from-Home (WFH) Employees: Work-from-home employees also known as remote workers or telecommuters are individuals who perform the majority or the entirety of their professional responsibilities from their homes rather than centralized office locations. This definition gains recognition in academic and industry literature, including formal acknowledgment by the World Health Organization, which categorizes remote work as an officially sanctioned arrangement between employers and employees to work outside traditional workplace environments.

Recreational Needs: Recreational needs refer to the intrinsic psychological and social requirements for leisure, relaxation, physical activity, and creative engagement that

underpin employees' well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. Such needs encompass a broad array of activities, including exercise, socializing, hobbies, mindfulness practices, and entertainment, whether structured or spontaneous, all of which enable remote employees to decompress and rejuvenate during the workday. Within the unique context of remote work, these needs are often fulfilled through short breaks, personal hobbies, social exchanges, or physical movements undertaken during work hours. Viewed through the lens of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), these recreational activities function as vital job resources, mitigating the psychological and physical strain imposed by workload demands and reducing emotional exhaustion. Empirical studies further corroborate the critical role of recreational resources in WFH settings in preventing burnout and sustaining employee well-being (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015; Almalki, 2024).

Job Satisfaction: This encompasses the degree to which individuals hold positive or negative feelings about their jobs, encapsulating affective, cognitive, and behavioural outcomes related to work experiences. Locke's (1976) classic definition frames job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." Recent investigations reveal that factors such as autonomy, performance feedback, and a sense of organizational community substantially predict job satisfaction for remote employees (Kashive et

al., 2023; Irawanto et al., 2023).

As Work From Home solidifies its status as a lasting workplace modality, organizations must not only recognize but actively engage with the evolving recreational needs of remote employees. This qualitative inquiry highlights recreation's central role in fostering job satisfaction while offering actionable insights to design supportive, health-promoting, and engaging remote work cultures. A growing corpus of literature underscores the necessity for organizations to provide structured recreational opportunities and tailored support systems suited to the remote work context (Petrou & Bakker, 2016; Schwoerer & Micic, 2024). Such interventions encompass "leisure crafting," where employees intentionally engage in restorative hobbies during or beyond working hours, alongside initiatives promoting virtual social events, wellness programs, and mindfulness practices. These measures markedly reduce emotional exhaustion and constitute a critical foundation for sustainable job satisfaction and employee engagement (Buonomo et al., 2023).

Moreover, emerging research emphasizes the importance of employee autonomy and personalization in recreational activities to optimize their psychological benefits (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Aligning recreational resources with individuals' unique home environments, cultural contexts, and work rhythms further enhances their efficacy and sustainability. Additionally, fostering a sense of psychological safety and community through virtual socialization can compensate for the lack of

informal office interactions, thus supporting emotional well-being and organizational commitment in hybrid and remote work models (Plester & Lloyd, 2023, 2024).

In sum, recreation should be conceptualized not as a peripheral perk but as an integral organizational strategy and job resource that interacts dynamically with job demands, work design, and individual coping mechanisms. Addressing recreational needs effectively not only mitigates the psychosocial risks inherent in remote work but also promotes holistic employee well-being and productivity. This study seeks to deepen understanding of these themes through qualitative exploration, offering empirically grounded insights to guide the development of robust, flexible, and employee-centered recreational interventions in the evolving world of work.

Review of literature

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented surge in remote and hybrid work, fundamentally altering the landscape of job satisfaction, employee well-being, and the role of fun and socialization in the workplace. Qualitative and quantitative research consistently showed that flexibility and autonomy inherent in remote work arrangements enhanced job satisfaction for many employees (Gillet et al., 2022; Rohwer et al., 2024; Berger Ploszaj et al., 2025). However, this shift also underscored the simultaneous loss of spontaneous social interaction and in-person recreational activities, which had historically played a major part in fostering

workplace engagement and satisfaction (Rohwer et al., 2024; Plester & Lloyd, 2024).

Rohwer, Harth, and Mache (2024) conducted in-depth interviews and revealed that employees and managers faced unique job demands such as digital communication dilemmas and reduced social exchange yet valued the increased flexibility and improved work-life balance. Leadership behaviours, particularly trust-building and consistent communication, became vital, while creative coping strategies for home office setups emerged as employees adapted to new routines. This research expanded our knowledge by specifying demands, resources, and coping strategies unique to the remote context, laying the groundwork for healthier telework design and collaboration.

The importance and transformation of fun at work for remote employees became especially poignant. Michel, Tews, and Allen (2019) reviewed expansive evidence that fun at work, encompassing both spontaneous and structured activities, boosted camaraderie, morale, and engagement. Their review emphasized that fun in the workplace contributes to interpersonal bonds and creativity, which are vital for both individual and organizational performance. Yang and Chen (2023) further demonstrated through large-scale survey data that workplace fun is not merely an “add-on” but can serve as a powerful antidote to emotional exhaustion and routine-induced fatigue. Their findings established that both the perception of a “fun climate” and actual participation in fun

activities were associated with increased creative behaviour, trust, and job performance. Critically, they highlighted the role of managerial support in enabling fun as a component of a productive and engaged workplace. This positive relationship between fun and job satisfaction has also been corroborated across cultural contexts and work settings. Chan (2016) found that fun activities, socialization, and enjoyment at work attracted talent, heightened employee engagement, and strengthened organizational loyalty. Tews et al. (2025), focusing on the hospitality sector, reinforced that while fun enhanced workplace satisfaction and internship experiences, it needed to be well integrated with other critical work elements for lasting benefit.

Remote work's impact on these phenomena was profound. Plester and Lloyd (2023, 2024) applied interpretive and ethnographic methods to demonstrate that in hybrid and virtual settings, opportunities for fun had to be purposefully created whether through virtual activities, gamified tasks, or shared digital rituals. These reformulations of fun contributed not only to psychological safety but also to the development of inclusive team cultures and the reduction of isolation. Ghosh, Sinha, and Sharma (2023) elaborated on the concept of "virtual fun," conceptualizing and modelling the impact of digital engagement activities on virtual socialization and the formation of professional ties in geographically separated teams. The interplay between fun, structural support, and engagement has also been explored in remote work studies targeting

different sectors and demographics. For instance, Buonomo et al. (2023) used international multi-country data to demonstrate that perceived support, including opportunities for informal connection, strongly mediated job satisfaction during remote work periods. Benjamin (2020) reported that clear communication, interpersonal relationships, and a sense of autonomy increased engagement and organizational commitment for virtual employees, highlighting the enduring necessity of meaningful social interaction even outside the physical office.

Amid these advances, research urged caution regarding "one-size-fits-all" approaches. Berger Ploszaj et al. (2025), Podsakoff et al. (2023), and Haun et al. (2021) illustrated that gender, role conflict, segmentation preferences, and the specific nature of job demands all shaped individual experiences and the efficacy of fun or recreational interventions. Work-life balance remained both a benefit and a challenge of remote work. Studies such as those by de Oliveira da Silva Scaranni et al. (2023) highlighted increased sedentary risk for remote employees, supporting the need for structured breaks and integrated wellness activities. Studies like Ropponen et al. (2025) and Raj et al. (2023) identified that psychological well-being and job satisfaction were most robust when flexibility allowed for personal recovery and meaningful non-work activities during the remote workday.

Finally, empirical research like that of Ueasangkomsate and Srimasittikul (2024) and Primescholars (2024) found that the positive

effects of remote work on satisfaction and effectiveness were maximized when organizations provided intentional support, recognized shifting employee needs, and encouraged both wellness and social connection through virtual or hybrid formats. Furthermore, additional research has explored organizational identification, psychological isolation, and design factors that influence effective remote collaboration and knowledge sharing. Bartel, Wrzesniewski, and Wiesenfeld (2012) demonstrated that physical isolation among virtual employees led to feelings of reduced respect and weakened identification with the organization unless counterbalanced by fostering respect and social connectedness. Minbaeva (2019) pointed out that credible knowledge-sharing and inter-unit social interactions are important for remote work organizations' effectiveness. Wang et al. (2021) discussed how work design, clarity, autonomy, and supportive leadership can offset remote work challenges and support both engagement and satisfaction. These insights highlight that remote job satisfaction is closely linked with the design of work, social identity, and engagement mechanisms, all intertwined with opportunities for recreation and socialization.

In conclusion, the literature revealed that fun and recreation are more than supplementary elements they are central to the social, emotional, and creative processes that underlie satisfaction and engagement in remote and hybrid work. As digital workspaces and flexible arrangements become a permanent part of organizational life, the deliberate cultivation

of fun, structural support, positive leadership, and meaningful socialization will remain foundational to future workplace well-being.

Theoretical Frameworks

Understanding the complex dynamics of remote work, employee recreation, and job satisfaction benefits from several key theoretical models that explicate how individuals manage their work and personal lives, sustain motivation, and recover from occupational stressors.

Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) offers critical insights into how employees delineate and negotiate the boundaries between work and non-work domains. In remote work contexts, the dissolution of clear temporal and spatial boundaries creates challenges for psychological detachment and recovery, as work and home environments increasingly overlap. This boundary permeability aggravates role conflict and interferes with opportunities for restorative recreation, which can precipitate emotional exhaustion and diminished job satisfaction (Haun et al., 2021; Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023). Effective boundary management through organizational policies and individual strategies is therefore essential to fostering work-life balance and well-being in the WFH setting.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes the fundamental human psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which drive intrinsic motivation and well-being. The

flexibility inherent in remote work arrangements can support greater autonomy, enabling employees to choose recreational activities that align with their preferences and contexts. Autonomy-supportive environments are conducive to sustained engagement in recreation, which in turn enhances emotional well-being and job satisfaction. However, the theory cautions against one-size-fits-all interventions; personalized, contextually relevant recreational opportunities optimize motivational outcomes in remote workers (Brunelle & Fortin, 2023; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Recovery Experience Model (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007) identifies four essential recovery experiences: psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control that facilitate restoration of depleted psychological resources. In remote-work contexts, where physical separation from job demands is limited, engaging in meaningful recreational activities becomes crucial to enable these recovery experiences. Structured breaks and leisure activities enhance resource replenishment, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being and job satisfaction (Gillet et al., 2022; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) frames job demands as aspects requiring sustained effort that may lead to strain, while job resources, including autonomy, social support, and access to recreation, buffer these demands and foster engagement. In remote work, job resources that facilitate recreational engagement and boundary management are

vital in mitigating the adverse effects of workload and connectivity demands. They promote motivation, resilience, and positive work outcomes, making the availability and encouragement of recreational activities central to sustainable remote work design (Haun et al., 2021; Schwoerer & Micic, 2024).

Taken together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive understanding of how recreational needs, job design, boundary management, and psychological motivation intertwine to shape remote workers' well-being and job satisfaction. They provide a robust conceptual foundation for examining the qualitative experiences of WFH employees and formulating effective organizational interventions that support recreation as a key job resource in digital work environments.

Research Gap

Despite growing research on remote work's benefits and challenges, there remains a significant gap in understanding how work-from-home employees define, experience, and benefit from fun and recreation in their daily routines. Current studies provide limited qualitative insight into the lived realities and diverse needs of remote workers when it comes to social connection, well-being, and leadership support for enjoyable work environments. Thus, this study is needed to uncover in-depth, employee-driven perspectives and provide actionable strategies for integrating meaningful fun and recreation into remote and hybrid work cultures, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction and well-being.

Objectives

1.To explore the recreational needs of work-from-home (WFH) employees, including preferred activities, barriers to engagement, and individual preferences.

2.To investigate how recreational needs impacts the job satisfaction of work-from-home (WFH) employees

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine the recreational needs of employees working from home (WFH) and to explore how these needs influence job satisfaction. Qualitative research was deemed most appropriate for this enquiry because it facilitates the in-depth examination of complex, contextually embedded issues where the aim is to understand and interpret human experiences rather than to measure or predict them statistically (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the phenomenon under investigation the role of recreation in remote work environments was considered multifaceted and insufficiently theorized in the existing literature. Hence, a qualitative approach offered the flexibility to generate nuanced, data-rich accounts that could capture both commonalities and differences in employee experiences across diverse industries and personal circumstances.

The study was underpinned by interpretivist and constructivist philosophical paradigms, which recognize that meanings are socially and culturally constructed through interaction, rather than existing as fixed and universal truths (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An interpretivist

stance ensured the primacy of participants' voices, enabling the research to probe the subjective meanings attached to recreational activities in the context of remote work. Constructivist perspectives further guided the analysis toward exploring how employees actively shape and reshape their recreational practices in response to personal needs, organizational cultures, and external constraints.

To access participants with relevant insights, a non-probability purposive sampling strategy was employed. Inclusion criteria required participants to have a minimum of one year of continuous full-time remote work experience, ensuring they possessed sufficient familiarity with the rhythms, challenges, and adaptations of WFH environments. This purposive selection strategy was consistent with Patton's (2015) view that qualitative studies benefit from information-rich cases that contribute depth rather than numerical representativeness. The final participant pool was intentionally diverse in terms of industry, occupational roles, career stage, and demographic profile, thereby supporting the generation of findings with broader analytical transferability beyond a single occupational niche.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via secure video conferencing platforms. 20 remote employees from diverse industries, job roles, and demographic backgrounds across India were invited for in-depth interviews. Interview guide included open-ended questions about

participants' engagement in recreational activities during remote work, perceived barriers, and their impact on emotional well-being and job satisfaction. Interviews lasted approximately 30-50 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis.

All respondents were asked a set of twelve semi-structured interview questions grouped into three thematic areas. The first set of questions probed participants' recreational needs and practices, exploring which activities they preferred during work breaks, how they scheduled those breaks, and what personal or environmental factors helped or hindered their engagement. The second set investigated the impact of recreational engagement on job satisfaction, asking participants to reflect on specific instances when recreation influenced their motivation, concentration, or overall contentment with their role. The final set examined organizational support for recreation, querying what, if any, initiatives or resources their employer provided to facilitate healthy work-life balance such as wellness programs, flexible scheduling, or virtual social events. Each question invited detailed narratives to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of WFH employees.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the systematic six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is particularly suited for identifying recurrent patterns within qualitative narratives while maintaining theoretical

flexibility. Thematic analysis was selected because it works effectively across a wide range of epistemological positions, and its structured yet adaptable process allows both inductive data-driven coding and deductive theory-informed interpretation.

In the familiarization phase, the researcher immersed themselves in the dataset by reading and re-reading transcripts, listening to the original audio where necessary, and noting down initial observations. The coding phase involved generating concise, meaningful labels for data segments relevant to the study's aims, combining inductive insights with sensitizing concepts derived from prior research on workplace recovery and well-being. NVivo (version 15) qualitative data management software was used to organize and store codes systematically.

Once initial codes were developed, theme construction began by grouping related codes into broader conceptual categories. These preliminary themes were refined through iterative comparison against the full dataset to ensure they represented coherent and distinct aspects of participants' experiences. In the theme review phase, candidate themes were examined for internal consistency and adjusted if overlaps or ambiguities were detected. The defining and naming phase focused on articulating each theme's scope, meaning, and relationship to the overarching research question, with supporting evidence drawn directly from participants' verbatim accounts to retain authenticity.

Finally, the reporting phase involved weaving

the themes into a coherent, interpretive account that situated findings within wider debates on remote work, employee well-being, and organizational support mechanisms.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts generated three principal themes that collectively addressed the research objectives: (1) the blurring of work–life boundaries and its constraining effect on recreational engagement, (2) the need for personalised, flexible, home-based recreational options, and (3) the role of recreational engagement as a determinant of emotional well-being and job satisfaction. These themes are discussed in detail below, with interpretive commentary that situates the empirical findings within established theoretical and empirical research.

Blurring of Work–Life Boundaries and Its Effect on Recreational Engagement

Across the dataset, participants consistently reported that the gradual erosion of temporal and spatial boundaries between work and personal life during remote work arrangements significantly curtailed both the frequency and quality of recreational activities. Several respondents noted that their workdays had taken on an “always-on” quality, punctuated by back-to-back virtual meetings, extended email correspondence, and the frequent intrusion of professional obligations into evenings and weekends. Unlike the pre-pandemic scenario, in which physical commuting and the tangible transition between office and home clearly

demarcated role boundaries, many participants described remote work as an unbroken continuum in which professional and domestic domains were constantly overlapping. “The line between home and office has completely disappeared,” one respondent remarked, while another observed that “the moment I switch off from a meeting, I’m already thinking about the next task. There’s no mental space left to unwind.” This absence of separation made psychological detachment a key prerequisite for effective recovery substantially more challenging.

Participants indicated that even when opportunities for short breaks did arise, they often felt compelled to remain in front of their devices to monitor messages or respond to urgent work queries. This “connectivity pressure” resulted in guilt or anxiety when disengaging from work, even briefly, thus further diminishing recreational engagement. These findings closely align with boundary theory and the concept of role blurring, which posit that when segmentation between life domains is weakened, individuals experience higher work–home interference and lower recovery opportunities (Ashforth et al., 2000; Haun et al., 2021). In the present study, the inability to consistently engage in restorative leisure activities emerged as a direct constraint on employees’ psychosocial resources, undermining motivation, energy replenishment, and overall job satisfaction. The implication is that without deliberate organisational and individual strategies to manage boundary permeability, even well-intentioned work-from-home policies may inadvertently contribute to reduced well-being.

Need for Personalised, Flexible, and Home-Based Recreational Options

A strong and recurring theme in participants' accounts was the emphasis on recreational activities that could be customised to their individual preferences, physical environments, and domestic schedules. Respondents identified a wide spectrum of such practices, ranging from low-intensity physical exercise such as yoga, stretching, and walking to creative outlets like painting, cooking, gardening, and casual reading, as well as interactive digital socialisation through online games or informal virtual coffee sessions with colleagues or friends.

Importantly, there was consensus among participants that the perceived value of recreational engagement was enhanced when activities could be self-selected, self-timed, and adapted to varying levels of energy and motivation throughout the day. As one respondent explained, "I enjoy yoga or reading in small bursts whenever I feel mentally tired, it works only when I can decide the timing myself". Another participant added, "I don't want another scheduled activity in my calendar; flexibility is what makes recreation feel real, not like another meeting". While some workplaces attempted to provide structured group interventions such as scheduled exercise classes or online wellness events, these were not universally welcomed. Inflexible scheduling often clashed with individual productivity cycles or domestic responsibilities, rendering such activities less effective or, in some cases, an additional source of stress.

This preference for autonomy echoes findings from self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan,

2000), which highlights the central role of autonomy and contextual fit in sustaining motivation for non-mandatory activities. Similarly, the notion of "fit" between job resources and personal preferences often referred to in person-environment fit literature suggests that interventions are most beneficial when they align with employees' existing patterns and values (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The implication here is that one-size-fits-all recreational initiatives may not only fail to meet their intended goals, but may also be actively counterproductive if participation is experienced as an imposed obligation rather than a voluntary choice.

Recreational Engagement as a Driver of Emotional Well-Being and Job Satisfaction

The engagement in regular, personally meaningful recreational activities was widely perceived by participants as a significant contributor to improved emotional well-being, heightened energy levels, and enhanced job satisfaction. Respondents highlighted that short but consistent breaks devoted to physically or mentally engaging hobbies such as a brisk walk, practicing a musical instrument, or tending to plants helped interrupt the monotony of prolonged screen exposure, refresh concentration, and restore enthusiasm for work tasks. Several participants described these intervals as "mental reset points" that enabled them to return to their professional responsibilities with renewed focus and resilience. One participant described these moments as "a small reset button that clears my mind before the next round of meetings". Another noted, "Even ten minutes of guitar

playing changes my entire mood it reminds me that there's life beyond emails".

Conversely, those reporting irregular or absent recreational practices frequently described their daily experience as monotonous and draining, leading to feelings of diminished engagement, reduced creativity, and in some cases, an erosion of overall job commitment. These accounts align with empirical research indicating that recovery experiences including relaxation, mastery, and psychological detachment are important mediators of the relationship between work demands and well-being outcomes such as satisfaction and performance (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Michel et al., 2019). In this study, consistent recreational engagement not only appeared to buffer stress but also to foster positive affective states, which have been linked to higher organisational commitment and reduced turnover intentions. Moreover, the qualitative evidence supports the contention that emotional well-being is not merely an incidental outcome of work-life balance but a foundational driver of sustained job satisfaction in remote contexts. This insight reinforces calls in the occupational health literature for employers to embed recreation and recovery into broader well-being strategies, making them integral rather than supplementary to workforce policy.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that recreational needs among WFH employees are deeply embedded in the intersecting structures of the workday, organisational design, and home environment.

The blurring of work-life boundaries operates as a structural barrier, while the availability and autonomy of recreational engagement act as critical resources that mediate its impact on well-being and satisfaction. The evidence indicates that the most effective organisational strategies will not only address the structural inhibitors by establishing clearer boundaries and reducing constant connectivity but also promote personalised recreational opportunities that respect employees' autonomy, environmental constraints, and diverse preferences.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support and extend existing frameworks such as boundary theory, self-determination theory, and the recovery experiences model, while offering a context-specific understanding of these concepts within remote work arrangements in the Indian socio-cultural context. Organisationally, the study underscores the potential of tailored, autonomy-supportive recreational policies as both a preventive and promotive well-being measure, directly contributing to the sustainability of remote work practices.

In this respect, emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies can offer promising avenues to enhance the development, delivery, and personalization of recreational activities for remote employees. AI-enhanced recreational program development can leverage machine learning algorithms to analyze individual employee preferences, work patterns, and well-being data to design personalized recreational schedules that fit diverse lifestyles and energy levels. For example, AI-powered

virtual platforms incorporating gamification, virtual reality, and augmented reality can create immersive, engaging recreational experiences that overcome the physical distance inherent in remote work and foster social connection and team cohesion.

Furthermore, AI can enable real-time sentiment and engagement analysis through natural language processing and facial recognition technologies, allowing HR and wellness teams to monitor employees' moods and stress levels continuously. This data facilitates timely and tailored interventions, such as recommending specific recreational breaks, mindfulness exercises, or virtual social events that align with employees' current states. Integration with wearable devices and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies further enriches AI's capacity to suggest optimal physical activities, stretching routines, or relaxation techniques tailored to individual health metrics and job demands.

While these AI-enabled recreational tools hold great promise, it is critical to address ethical and privacy considerations, ensuring data transparency, informed consent, and respect for employee autonomy. By thoughtfully integrating AI into recreational policy and wellness strategies, organizations can transform recreation from an optional benefit into a strategic, data-driven lever that supports sustained well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity in the evolving landscape of remote and hybrid work.

Limitations

This study did not focus on any single industry

or sector; instead, participants were drawn from a variety of organizational contexts and job roles. While this diversity provided a broad range of perspectives, it may limit the depth of sector-specific insights. Future studies could focus on a particular sector to allow for more targeted analysis and comparison within industry-specific contexts.

Future Scope and Directions

The scope for further research in the area of recreational needs of work-from-home (WFH) employees and their impact on job satisfaction remains broad and significant. Firstly, there is a need for longitudinal and sector-specific studies to better understand how recreational needs and related job satisfaction evolve over time and within different industries, as current research often lacks targeted focus or temporal depth. Further research could examine how organizational policies and leadership styles influence the integration and encouragement of recreation in diverse remote work environments.

Although Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Human Resource Management is gaining traction particularly in areas such as recruitment, learning, and performance management little is known about its potential role in employee wellness and recreation. There is minimal empirical or conceptual work exploring how AI tools could be integrated into HR strategies to assess, design, personalize, and evaluate recreational programs for remote employees. The use of mixed methods and objective data sources like wearable technologies, integrated with AI analytics, offers a promising avenue for richer understanding of the physical and psychological benefits of recreation in remote

work settings. Finally, further research on technology mediated recreation such as AI-enhanced virtual socialization and gamified recreational experiences can shed light on how these tools sustain team cohesion, mitigate social isolation, and foster engagement in hybrid and fully remote work environments. Finally, research on the role of technology-mediated fun and socialization in sustaining team cohesion and mitigating isolation in hybrid or fully remote settings is an emerging and important frontier deserving further scholarly attention. This expanded research agenda would address existing gaps identified in the literature, support evidence-based organizational practices, and enhance our understanding of how recreation contributes to employee engagement and satisfaction in evolving work contexts.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained in the study.

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