

How does remote work impact the social connectivity and sense of team belonging of young people remote working in the finance industry in Jersey?

University College Jersey: BSc (Hons) Social Science Dissertation Project

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Abstract

The research investigated the experience of young professionals working remotely in Jersey's finance sector. It explored their experience of social connectivity and sense of belonging. While existing literature highlights the importance of colleague support and structured communication in fostering belonging, it does not address these dynamics in the specific context of Jersey's finance sector.

A phenomenological methodology using semi-structured interviews was used. Through analysing interview data, key themes emerged, including communication and connectivity, work-life balance, team dynamics, well-being, productivity, and the challenges of remote work.

This research revealed that while digital tools can help maintain connectivity, they may not fully replace the informal interactions typical of an office environment. The findings also highlight the need for tailored hybrid work models that consider the unique needs of young finance professionals. This study contributes to the literature by providing a localised perspective on remote work in a highly structured and competitive industry, challenging the assumption that remote work is universally beneficial.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed workplace practices, pushing many into remote work (Hobbs & Mutebi, 2022). In Jersey's finance sector, young adults have been notably affected. Remote work, once slow to gain momentum, became essential during lockdowns (Lund et al., 2020), yet its long-term impact on social connectivity and team belonging among younger employees remains unclear.

Large UK employers like PwC, Santander, and ASDA are now advocating a 'return to office' model to rebuild corporate culture and engagement (WTW, 2024). ASDA's Chair argued remote work reduces efficiency, and Amazon now mandates five office days weekly (Cerullo, 2024). While these moves aim to foster collaboration, there are concerns about damaging work-life balance and increasing staff turnover (Partridge, 2024).

Obordo (2025) found that while returning to the office disrupted work-life balance for accountants, some welcomed social interaction. This mixed response highlights the complexity of modern working preferences. Young professionals today, many of whom also spent their formative years studying remotely and now in a remote working environment, may find it more difficult to build social connections (Hansen-Brown et al., 2022). Studies suggest remote work may negatively impact social bonds and belonging (Vacchiano et al., 2024; El-Sakran et al., 2022).

There is no current published research available that specifically focuses on young finance professionals in Jersey and this justifies this study.

Aims and Objectives

Aim: To explore the impact of remote work on social connectivity and sense of belonging among young adults remote working.

Objectives:

- to explore the impact of remote working on social connectivity and sense of belonging among young adults remote working,
- to explore the impact of remote working on professional relationships among young people working remotely,
- to explore young adults' perceptions and experiences of social connectivity in Jersey, and
- to identify the effectiveness of company strategies aimed at enhancing social connectivity in young adults working remotely.

Methodology

Research Philosophy

Interpretivism underpinned this study, drawing from the ideas of Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey, who stressed understanding human experiences in context (Bergstraesser, 1947). This philosophy supports the aim of exploring the lived experiences of young professionals working remotely.

Research Methodology

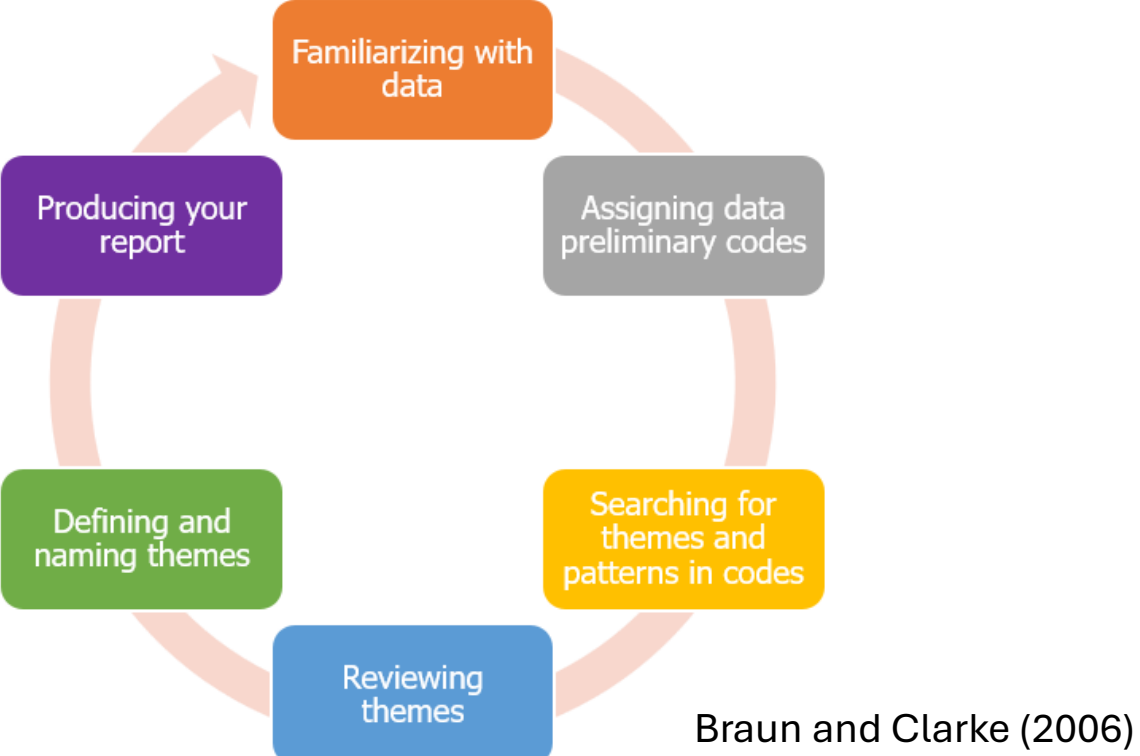
This study adopted a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore how remote work impacts social connection and belonging. Phenomenology is ideal for understanding lived experiences and individual meaning (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). It allows for deep exploration of participants' personal experiences within their work context (Tuffour, 2017; Noon, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used. This method supported the phenomenological approach by allowing open-ended responses while maintaining a focus through guiding/probing questions (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Bevan's (2024) structured phenomenological interview method guided the process.

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Phase Framework was used to analyse the data. This ensured a systematic and reflective approach to the data (Caulfield, 2019).



Recruitment Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants meeting the criteria of being young professionals working remotely in the finance sector. 6 participants were recruited. This is supported by Vasileiou et al. (2018) and Guest et al. (2006), who suggest that data saturation often occurs within this number.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
- Age 18-25 years – this age group is relevant due to their transition from remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic to remote working without in-office experience as defined by Smith et al (2021) - Employed in finance sector - Working remotely for major pat of role - Based in Jersey	- Outside age range - Remote workers in other industries/Not working in finance sector - Major part of working is in-office - Remote workers in other geographical areas/Not based in Jersey

Accessing Participants

Permission will be sought to access participants via a gatekeeper at a local finance company. Gatekeepers help maintain ethical standards and participant autonomy while facilitating trust and access (Dahike & Stahlke, 2020; Kay, 2019).

Findings

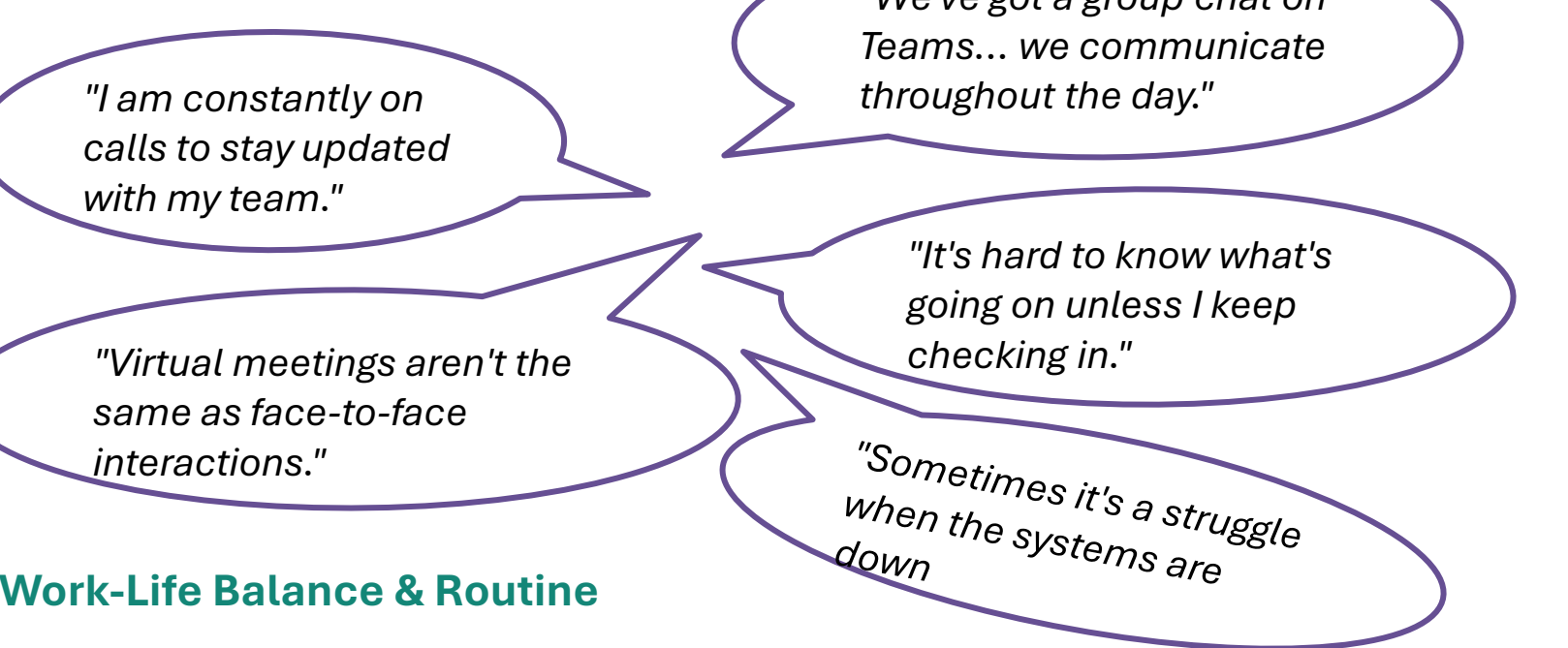
Summary of Findings

This research explored how remote work affects the social connectivity and sense of belonging of young professionals in Jersey's finance sector.

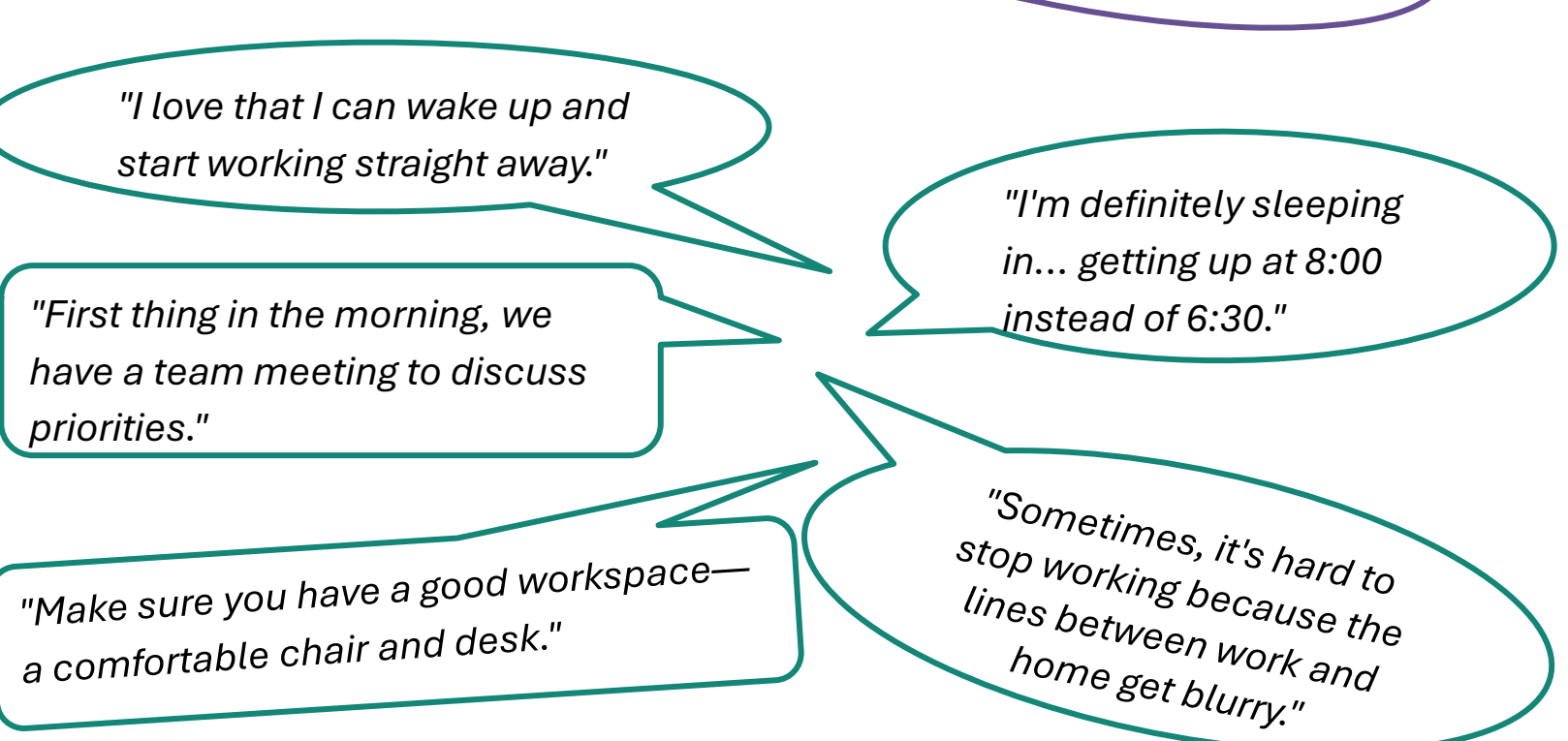
Interview data revealed key themes:

- Communication and connectivity
- Work-life balance and routine
- Social interaction and team dynamics
- Well-being and mental health
- Productivity and performance
- Challenges of remote working

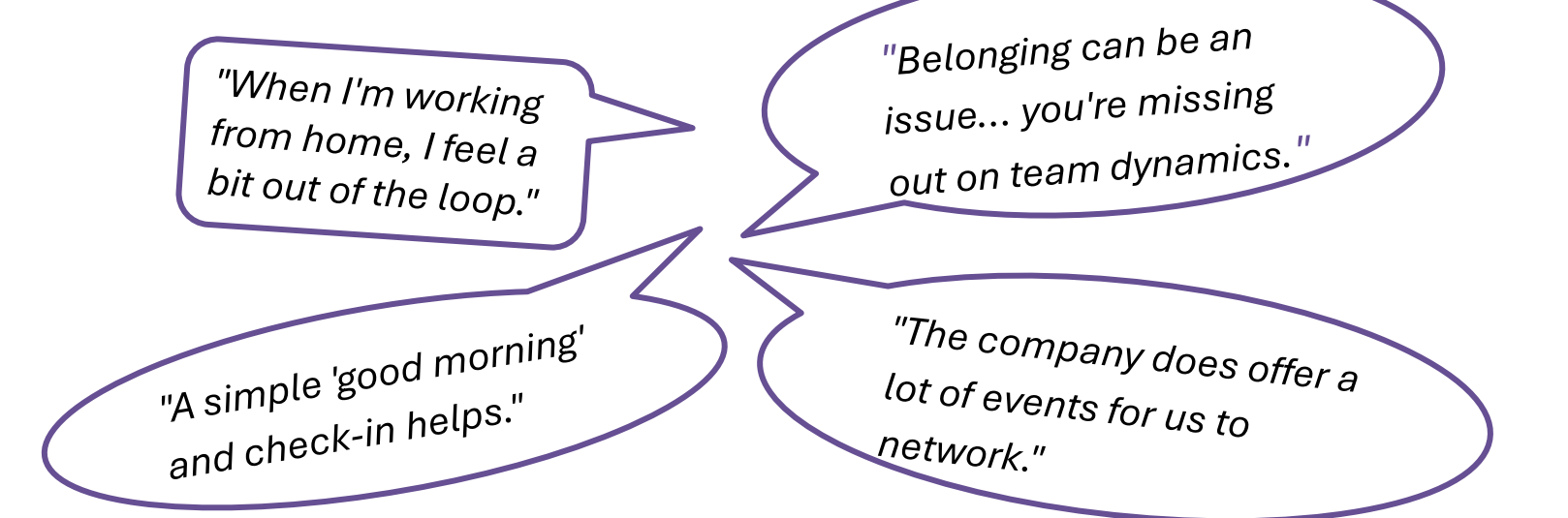
Communication and Connectivity



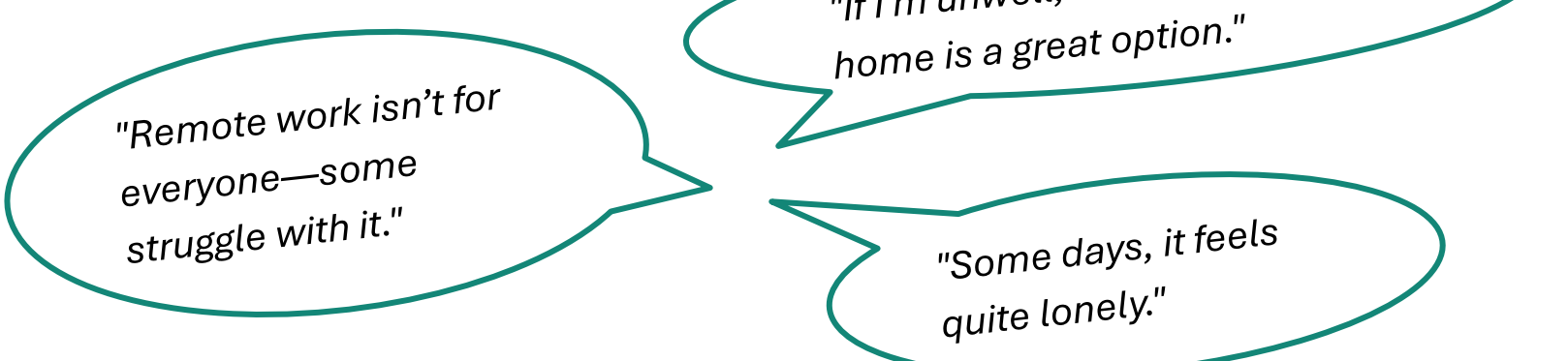
Work-Life Balance & Routine



Social Interaction and Team Dynamics

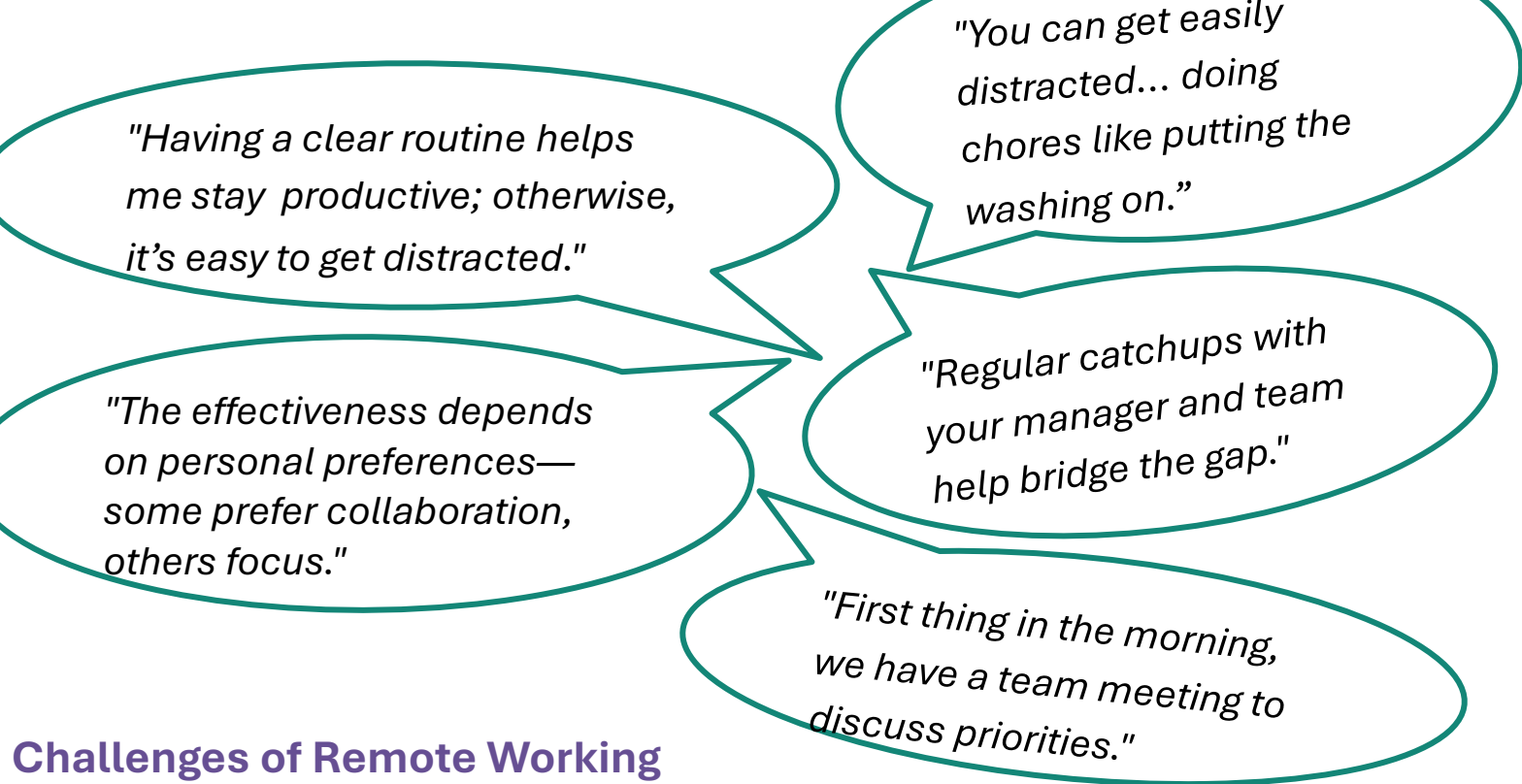


Wellbeing and Mental Health

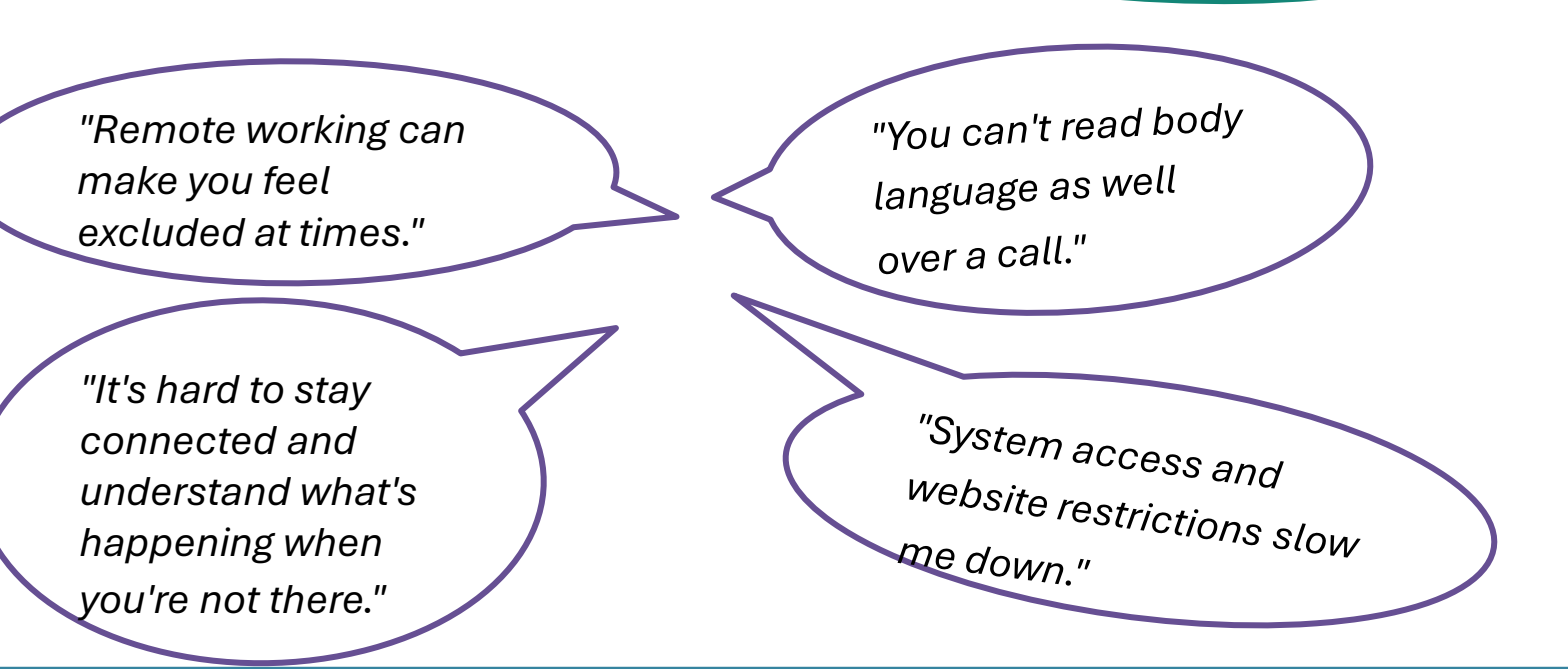


Findings

Productivity and Performance



Challenges of Remote Working



Conclusion and Recommendations

Was the Research Question Answered?

The study found that remote work impacts young professionals' social connections and sense of belonging and team relationship formation. Hybrid models were seen as a potential solution, offering both flexibility and opportunities for team bonding. Digital tools help with connection but can also lead to isolation. The findings demonstrated that these tools cannot fully replace informal, in-person interactions, which are vital for networking and mentorship. Hybrid models were seen as a potential solution, offering both flexibility and opportunities for team bonding.

These findings offer useful insights for Jersey's employers and policymakers.

Recommendations
Share findings with participants to increase the understanding of the experiences of young professionals who are working remotely.
Develop workplace strategies to improve social connectivity and belongingness in the remote worker workforce.
Education within organisations that use remote worker models to look at other mechanisms in addition to digital tools to help maintain social connectivity.
Further qualitative research exploring different age groups and industries.
Quantitative research comparing belongingness and connectivity in remote workers and in-office workers.

This research adds a local perspective and fills a gap by focusing on early-career professionals in Jersey's finance industry. It illustrates that remote work is not always beneficial, especially for younger workers who may struggle with isolation and this potentially limited career development opportunities.

References

