

Effectiveness of Remote Leadership before and after Covid-19 Pandemic in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of remote and hybrid work has raised important questions about how leadership functions when employees are physically dispersed. This systematic review examined quantitative studies that investigated remote leadership effectiveness within the United Kingdom, while considering developments before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Database searches were conducted across Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost, using predefined inclusion criteria and a PRISMA guided screening process. Studies were included if they focused on remote or hybrid work in the United Kingdom, reported quantitative data, and assessed outcomes related to leadership, performance, engagement, communication quality, trust, or wellbeing. A total of 38 UK-based quantitative studies (2010-2025) were synthesized, of which 4 directly measured remote leadership behaviours and effectiveness in remote contexts, while the remaining studies provided contextual evidence on remote work and employee outcomes. Findings indicate that effective remote leadership is characterised by empathetic communication, relational presence, adaptive behaviours, and active support for employee coping and wellbeing. Furthermore, the synthesis suggests that remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom depends on relational, communicative, and adaptive competencies, reinforced by organisational systems that foster trust, engagement, and consistent performance expectations in digitally mediated work environments. This review highlights important methodological gaps, including limited longitudinal evidence and inconsistent measurement of leadership constructs. Comprehensively, the findings suggest that leadership effectiveness in remote work settings depends on relational and communicative competence, supported by systems that promote trust, inclusion, and performance clarity.

Keywords

Remote Leadership Effectiveness, Remote Work, PRISMA, COVID-19 Pandemic, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a profound reconfiguration of organisational work practices across the world, and it simultaneously accelerated the widespread adoption of remote work as organisations sought to sustain operations under unprecedented constraints [1]. Remote work, often described as telework or working from home, can be understood as a flexible work arrangement that is not bound to a fixed physical location but relies extensively on digital communication and information technologies for coordination, interaction, and performance management [2].

Prior to the pandemic, remote work was primarily regarded as a supplementary and discretionary practice available to relatively few employees, since organisational cultures generally favoured conventional workplace presence in the United Kingdom. According to [3], before the pandemic, approximately 27% of individuals reported working from home occasionally and only 6% worked exclusively from home in the UK. Similarly, national statistics further indicated that in 2019 merely 12% of the workforce worked from home at least sometimes and about 5% worked mainly from home [2], which illustrates the limited institutionalisation of remote work arrangements.

However, with the onset of pandemic, these trends shifted dramatically, since public health directives designed to reduce viral transmission required organisations to restructure their operations around remote work in order to sustain business continuity while simultaneously safeguarding employee wellbeing [4]. Consequently, by April 2020 an estimated 46.6% of the UK population reported working from home compared with only 4.3% in 2015 [5]. Although the figure 1 and figure2 subsequently declined as restrictions were gradually lifted, they still remained considerably higher than pre-pandemic levels, which indicates that remote work evolved from a temporary emergency response into an enduring structural characteristic of the UK labour market [2].

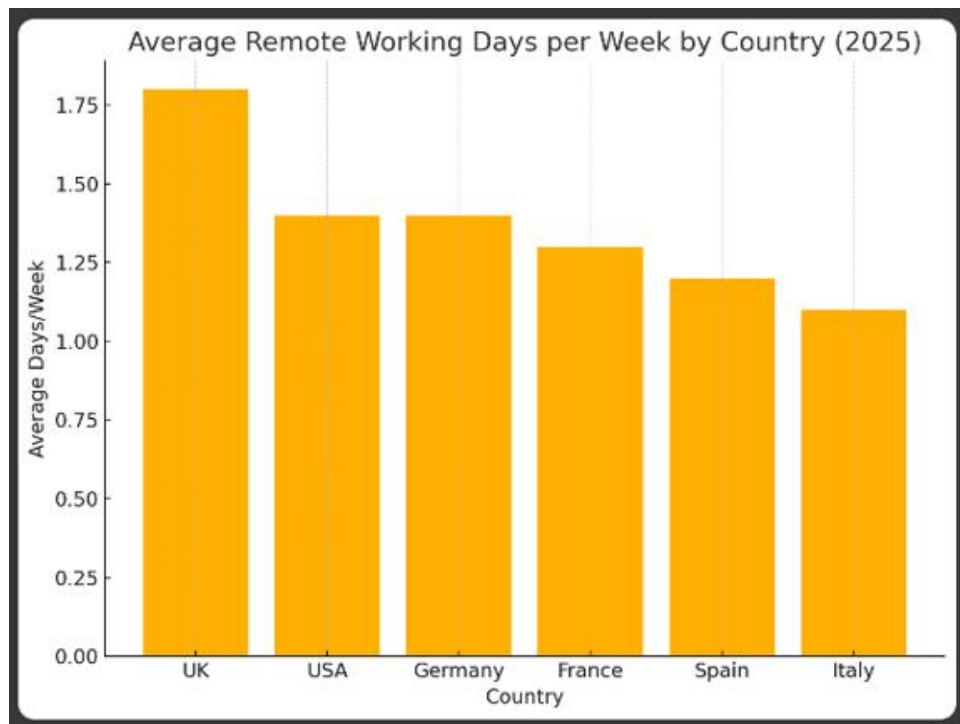


Figure 1. Average Remote days of working per week. Source: [6]

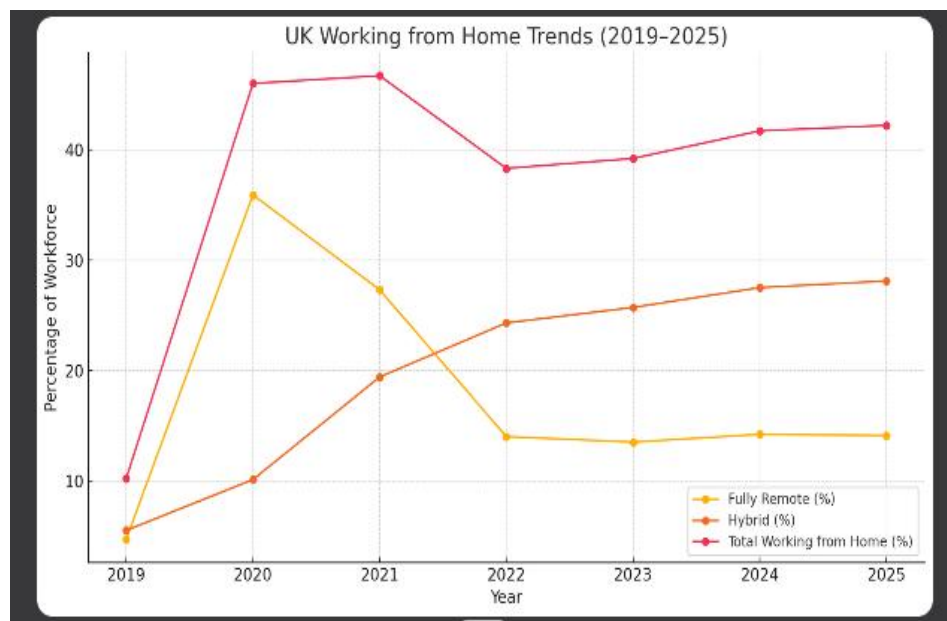


Figure 2. UK Working from Home Trends (2019-2025) line graph comparing Fully Remote, Hybrid, and Total WFH percentages. Source: [7,8].

These structural changes in turn raised important leadership challenges because conventional leadership approaches which was rooted in proximity and direct observation increasingly appeared insufficient, and leaders were required to depend more intensively on digital platforms in order to coordinate geographically dispersed teams, build and sustain trust at a distance, motivate employees, and monitor performance within virtual environments [9]. As such, the concept of e-leadership gained heightened relevance, since it encapsulates leadership enacted through information and communication technologies [10].

However, a significant gap emerged in leadership knowledge and practice due to this development because many leaders lacked prior experience in managing remote teams and previously effective leadership styles became increasingly inadequate in virtual contexts as leadership practice required adaptation to the realities of dispersed work environments [11,12]. Hence, understanding how leadership effectiveness evolved across the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic contexts becomes essential for sustaining organisational performance, promoting employee wellbeing, and supporting long-term resilience.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the evolution of remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom by comparing leadership practices before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, while also identifying the effectiveness of remote leadership. In order to achieve this, the study explores the characteristics of remote leadership prior to the pandemic, evaluates the changes that emerged in its aftermath, and analyses the factors shaping leadership outcomes within increasingly digital work environments. Furthermore, through the quantitative synthesis of empirical literature, the study integrates findings from both periods, thereby generating evidence-based insights into leadership adaptation and offering guidance for organisations seeking to enhance leadership capacity in remote and hybrid settings.

Building on these objectives, the review is guided by the following research question.

How has remote leadership effectiveness been operationalised and how have leadership outcomes changed in UK-based quantitative studies before and after COVID-19?

Additionally, to provide analytical clarity and to structure the review more systematically, the main research question is addressed through the following sub-questions:

1. What constructs and instruments are used to measure remote leadership effectiveness?
2. How do leadership outcomes differ between pre- and post-pandemic periods?
3. What leadership behaviours and organisational conditions predict effectiveness?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Overview of Remote Work and E-Leadership

Remote work refers to arrangements in which employees perform tasks partially or fully outside traditional offices, often from home, and has expanded significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, reshaping organisational norms and expectations [13,14]. This model relies heavily on digital platforms and information and communication technologies (ICT) to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and performance management [1]. Various terms describe similar practices, including telework, telecommuting, working from home (WFH), working from anywhere (WFA), distributed work, and virtual teams [1,15].

According to [16], leadership is commonly understood as a social and relational process through which leaders influence, motivate, and coordinate others to achieve collective objectives in a way that is central to organizational effectiveness. In Traditional leadership practices, leadership tends to rely on physical presence, face-to-face interaction, and informal interactions that help leaders monitor performance, build trust, and provide direct support to their teams [17]. However, the shift toward remote work necessitated adaptation to digital communication and virtual collaboration environments, prompting the development of e-leadership frameworks [16,18].

Remote leadership or e-leadership, involves guiding and managing teams that are geographically dispersed by relying on digital technologies to maintain communication, coordination, and engagement among the team members [16]. Research has operationalized functional e-leadership into six key competencies which collectively enable leaders to maintain cohesion, motivation, and performance in virtual teams. These competencies include, e-communication, e-social skills, e-team building skills, e-change management, e-technological skills, and e-trustworthiness [18,19].

2.2 Measurement of Remote Leadership Effectiveness Prior to COVID-19

Remote leadership effectiveness refers to the ability of leaders to achieve organisational objectives while sustaining team cohesion and employee wellbeing despite physical separation [17,20]. In the UK, pre-pandemic assessments focused on leader behaviours and outcomes linked to team performance, engagement, and communication quality [21]. Early frameworks drew on traditional theories, including transformational and transactional leadership, but adapted these for mediated communication and dispersed contexts [20]. However, these models often neglected contextual sensitivity, the role of digital communication, and the transformation of leader-follower relationships in virtual environments [9].

Measurement constructs commonly included communication quality, trust, team cohesion, job satisfaction, performance outcomes, clarity of objectives, and technological competence [22-24]. Communication quality was often measured using validated scales like the Team Communication Behaviour scale, along with qualitative methods such as interviews and self-reported surveys [25-27] while Trust was measured through affect-based and cognition-based scales focusing on leader behaviour, IT availability, and employee perceptions [28,29]. Additionally, Employee wellbeing assessments employed instruments like the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and job satisfaction surveys, often linked to retention and absenteeism data to evaluate long-term impacts [30,31].

2.3 Quantitative Evidence on Changes in Remote Leadership Effectiveness

Quantitative evidence indicates that the effectiveness of remote leadership in the United Kingdom has undergone measurable changes, particularly when comparing the pre-pandemic period with the post-pandemic context. Large scale surveys and longitudinal datasets suggest that, prior to COVID-19, remote leadership effectiveness was uneven and often constrained by limited managerial experience with virtual coordination. For instance, CIPD survey data showed

that less than half of UK managers felt confident leading dispersed teams effectively, with performance outcomes largely dependent on individual managerial capability rather than formal organisational systems [32].

Data from the UK Office for National Statistics demonstrated increase in self-reported productivity and engagement among remote workers, which were positively correlated with structured leadership practices such as regular virtual check ins and outcome-based performance monitoring [5]. Furthermore, regression-based studies have shown that leaders who adopted digital communication tools and participative leadership styles achieved higher team performance scores and lower turnover intentions compared to those relying on traditional supervisory approaches [9]. Despite these improvements, quantitative evidence also highlights persistent gaps, particularly in trust building and employee wellbeing, where survey scores plateaued rather than increased significantly. Overall, the empirical literature suggests that remote leadership effectiveness in the UK has improved in measurable terms since the pandemic, although these gains remain conditional on leadership capability, digital competence, and organisational support structures.

2.4 Comparison of Pre-and Post-Pandemic Periods Leadership Outcomes

Quantitative evidence highlights clear differences in leadership outcomes between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods, particularly in relation to employee engagement, trust, and productivity. Prior to the pandemic, leadership effectiveness was largely associated with physical oversight and informal communication, which often resulted in lower engagement levels and limited communication effectiveness in remote settings. In contrast, post pandemic organisational datasets indicate that leaders who developed well defined e-leadership competencies, including technological proficiency, virtual social skills, and adaptive communication strategies, achieved stronger leadership outcomes in distributed work environments [10,19]. These competencies enabled leaders to maintain coordination and performance despite reduced physical interaction, thereby marking a significant shift in leadership effectiveness.

Survey based and organisational data further demonstrate that post-pandemic leadership increasingly prioritised frequent and structured communication, clarity of expectations, and explicit attention to employee psychological wellbeing [33-36]. Organisations that implemented structured digital collaboration tools, outcome-oriented performance systems, and regular virtual check ins reported higher levels of employee trust, commitment, and sustained productivity [33]. Comparative evidence suggests that these practices were less prevalent before the pandemic, when engagement scores and communication quality were comparatively weaker, particularly within remote or flexible working arrangements [33,37].

In summary, comparative analysis indicates a clear evolution in leadership outcomes from the pre-pandemic to the post-pandemic period. Leadership effectiveness has shifted from reliance on physical supervision toward digitally mediated and evidence-based approaches that integrate performance management with employee wellbeing and engagement. The pandemic therefore acted as a catalyst for lasting adaptations in leadership practice, reinforcing the strategic value of digitally enabled leadership for sustaining organisational resilience and effectiveness in remote and hybrid work contexts [33,37,38].

2.5 Leadership Practices and Organisational Factors for Effective Remote Leadership

Effective remote leadership depends not only on individual leader competencies but also on organisational structures and practices that support performance, engagement, and wellbeing in distributed work environments. Post-pandemic quantitative evidence from the UK indicates that leaders who demonstrate strong digital communication, adaptive coordination strategies, and consistent attention to employee wellbeing achieve higher levels of trust, engagement, and productivity among remote and hybrid teams [33,35,37]. These competencies, often conceptualised under e-leadership, include technological literacy, virtual social skills, and the ability to provide timely, clear, and outcome-focused feedback [10,19].

Key leadership practices underpinning effective remote management include structured communication routines such as scheduled video briefings, digital check-ins, and asynchronous updates, which enhance clarity of expectations and reduce role ambiguity [33,36]. Outcome-oriented performance management, involving clear metrics and aligned goal-setting, enables leaders to monitor results without excessive micromanagement, maintaining productivity and morale [35]. Leaders who promote psychological safety, recognise achievements, and provide resources for wellbeing further strengthen engagement and retention, highlighting the continued importance of human-centred approaches in digital work settings [34,38]. Organisational factors also play a critical role in supporting remote leadership. Investment in digital collaboration tools, knowledge-sharing platforms, and e-leadership training enhances the environment for remote work, while a culture emphasizing trust, flexibility, and outcome-focused evaluation enables successful hybrid or fully remote models [33,36]. Conversely, rigid hierarchies or insufficient technology limit leadership effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

Overall, effective remote leadership emerges from the integration of adaptive leader behaviours and supportive organisational structures, illustrating that success in hybrid and distributed work models is shaped by both human and systemic factors [19,33,37].

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a systematic literature review which represents a rigorous form of secondary research that systematically collects, evaluates, and synthesizes findings from primary studies to derive conclusions grounded in empirical evidence [39]. It provides a structured and replicable approach to synthesizing existing research, offering insights that can inform both future studies and practical applications within the field of educational sciences [40,41]. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework, which provides clear guidance on the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of studies [42]. PRISMA is particularly suited for quantitative syntheses of primary studies through meta-analyses and may be less applicable for summarizing primary research using qualitative approaches [42,43].

3.2 Search Strategy

The search was conducted in four major databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost. The search covered publications from 2010 to 2025, capturing studies before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Keywords were derived from the core concepts of the research questions and included combinations such as: remote leadership, virtual leadership, e-leadership, remote work, telework, employee performance, engagement, communication, trust, wellbeing, and United Kingdom. Boolean operators (“AND,” “OR”) were used to refine and broaden the searches. Titles, abstracts, and keywords serve as the primary promotional elements of any scientific paper, making their careful construction essential [44]. Consequently, searches were conducted across these components to ensure comprehensive coverage and reference lists of included studies were examined to locate further relevant articles.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Defining inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants is a fundamental and essential step in developing rigorous research protocols. These criteria also delineate the scope and boundaries of a systematic review, ensuring clarity and consistency in the selection of relevant studies [45,46]. To ensure relevance and quality, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied as follows:

Studies were included if they:

1. Focused on remote or virtual leadership in organisational contexts.
2. Reported quantitative data or outcomes suitable for synthesis.
3. Included participants from, or were conducted within, the United Kingdom.
4. Measured outcomes such as employee performance, engagement, communication quality, trust, or wellbeing.
5. Were published in peer-reviewed journals and written in English.

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Focused exclusively on countries outside the United Kingdom.
2. Were purely qualitative, theoretical, or conceptual without extractable quantitative data.
3. Were opinion pieces, conference abstracts, book chapters, or dissertations.
4. Focused solely on technology or tools without leadership or employee outcome measures.

3.4 Screening Process and PRISMA Flow

Searches initially identified 1,240 records: 412 from Scopus, 285 from Web of Science, 318 from Google Scholar, and 225 from EBSCOhost. 302 duplicates were removed across databases, leaving 938 records for title and abstract screening. During screening, studies were excluded if the topic is irrelevant, solely qualitative, or did not focus on UK leading to 742 exclusions (Scopus 252, Web of Science 165, Google Scholar 195, EBSCOhost 130).

The remaining 196 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, studies were excluded at this stage if they lacked quantitative evidence, samples were conducted outside the UK, or failed to report relevant leadership or employee outcomes resulting in a final set of 38 studies (Scopus 14, Web of Science 10, Google Scholar 7, EBSCOhost 7) for synthesis. This stepwise screening process is illustrated using the PRISMA flow chart below (Figure 3), including database sources, numbers at each stage, and reasons for exclusion.

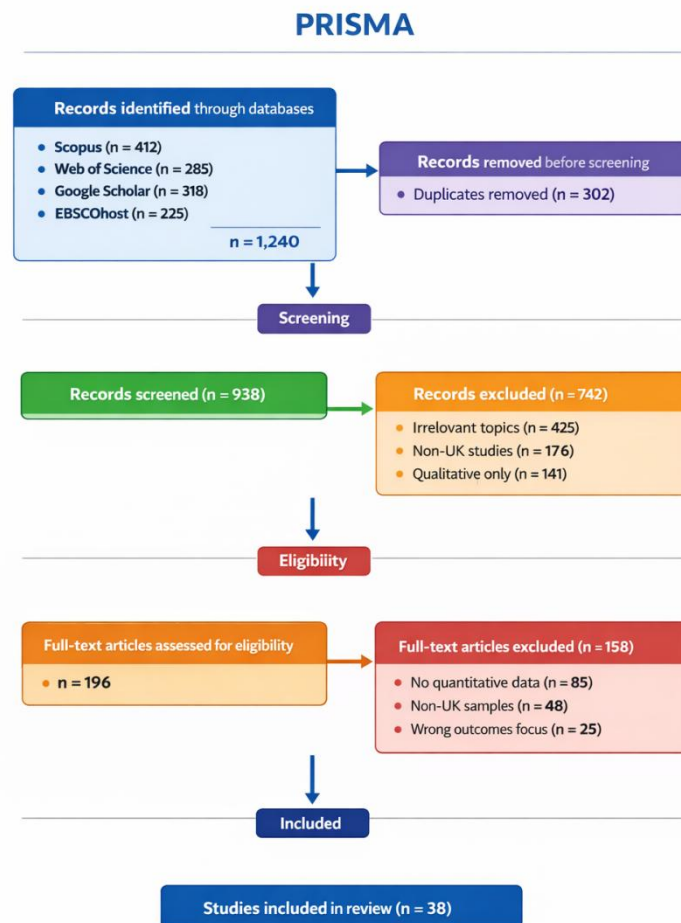


Figure 3. PRISMA flow diagram showing identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies.

3.5 Quality Appraisal

Appraising systematic reviews entails a critical assessment of the methods employed, the quality of the studies included, and the overall robustness of the evidence presented. This process involves multiple steps that examine both the methodological rigor of the review and the extent to which the authors adhered to established guidelines for conducting systematic reviews. Such appraisal is essential for identifying potential biases or limitations in the review process and can provide guidance for future research directions [42,47].

Hence, quality assessment was conducted to evaluate methodological rigour and inform interpretation of findings. Each study was appraised using a checklist adapted from established quantitative assessment tools, considering:

- Clarity of research objectives
- Appropriateness of study design
- Sample size and representativeness
- Validity and reliability of instruments
- Transparency of data analysis
- Reporting of limitations

While studies were not excluded based solely on quality, appraisal ratings guided the weighting of evidence in the synthesis.

3.6 Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis approach was adopted due to heterogeneity in study designs, instruments, and outcomes. This is a method of systematically reviewing and integrating findings from multiple studies, primarily using descriptive text to summarize and interpret the results [48]. Subsequently, findings were grouped around themes aligned with the research objectives: (1) measurement of remote leadership effectiveness, (2) changes in leadership outcomes pre- and post-pandemic, and (3) leadership practices and organisational factors associated with effectiveness. Patterns, divergences, and contextual insights specific to UK workplaces were highlighted, with attention to both pre-pandemic and post-pandemic trends.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Descriptive Characteristics of Included Studies

The systematic screening process resulted in a total of 38 studies that met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. However, only a subset (n=4) directly measured leadership behaviours and their impact on employee outcomes in remote or hybrid United Kingdom contexts [22,29,49,50] while the remaining studies provided supporting evidence on remote work, productivity, engagement and wellbeing, which contextualises leadership effectiveness and contributes to understanding the broader organisational environment within which remote leadership occurs.

The studies cover both pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods and include employees from public and private sector organisations across the United Kingdom. Quantitative designs predominated, comprising longitudinal surveys, repeated cross-sectional studies, and national workforce surveys [7,51]. Leadership effectiveness was assessed primarily through employee-reported perceptions of supervisory support, clarity of communication, empathy, trust, and performance outcomes. Table 1 below summarises the key characteristics, including settings, samples, and research designs.

Table 1. Characteristics of included studies.

Study	Year	Sample & Sector	Research Design	Leadership Construct Measured	Key Outcomes
Marstand, Epitropaki & Kapoutsis	2024	338 remote workers and 202 hybrid workers from mixed public and private sector organisations in the UK	Two four -wave time lagged survey studies	Supportive, communicative, and considerate leadership; psychological distance	Reduced psychological distance, improved employee coping, higher task performance and engagement
Durham University Business School	2025	over 300 remote workers and over 200 hybrid workers from mixed public and private sector organisations in the UK	Two four-wave online surveys	Empathy and supportive leadership, clear vision and structure, clarity of communication	Reduced perceived psychological distance, enhanced employee effectiveness and coping in remote work settings
Shi, Feenstra & Van Vugt	2024	Two studies consisting of 181 working adults and 202 working adults, working remotely across various sectors in the UK	Two cross-sectional online survey study	Identity-based leadership, team cohesion	Strengthened relational bonds, enhanced collaboration, reduced isolation
Oleksa-Marewska & Tokar	2022	N = 3050 remote workers from five European countries (France, Spain, Poland, Netherlands, United Kingdom) and two North American countries (United States and Canada); across diverse organisational contexts	Quantitative cross-sectional survey	E-leadership effectiveness	Lower turnover intentions, improved organisational commitment, trust development

4.2 Measurement Focus in UK Based Quantitative Studies

Recent quantitative research demonstrates a clear shift towards multi-dimensional frameworks for assessing remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom. Post pandemic studies increasingly employ validated psychometric instruments that integrate leadership behaviours, relational proximity, and employee level outcomes. Most notably, [22] measures leadership effectiveness through employee perceptions of empathy, communication clarity, trust, and psychological safety, thereby reflecting a relational and people centred approach. Similarly, [49] operationalise effectiveness using constructs such as psychological distance, leader support, and employee coping effectiveness, supported by advanced statistical modelling to examine relational pathways.

Earlier quantitative studies adopt comparatively narrower measurement approaches that reflect the emergent nature of remote work at the time. [29] focus on leadership inclusiveness, responsiveness, and communication frequency as predictors of virtual team effectiveness, while [50] rely more heavily on adapted e-leadership scales emphasising technological competence, task coordination, and perceived performance. Despite these differences, all studies rely on employee reported survey data, indicating a common perception that leadership effectiveness in remote contexts is best captured through employee experiences and relational quality rather than objective performance indicators. It could also be argued that existing studies are limited to the perception of employees with little to no perspectives of leaders on their effectiveness within the remote work context.

4.3 Change in Remote Leadership Effectiveness across Time

Quantitative evidence reveals substantive differences in reported remote leadership effectiveness across pre-and post-pandemic periods. Post pandemic studies consistently indicate enhanced leadership capability, particularly in relation to communication quality, emotional support, and behavioural adaptability. [49] demonstrated that leaders in post pandemic remote environments are more effective at reducing psychological distance, which in turn strengthens employee coping and perceived effectiveness. Similarly, [22] finds that empathetic leadership behaviours are strongly associated with higher employee engagement and discretionary effort.

In contrast, earlier studies suggest that leadership effectiveness during the initial expansion of remote work was uneven and strongly dependent on organisational readiness. [50] reports considerable variability in leadership outcomes, largely due to limited digital experience and the absence of formal remote leadership frameworks. Collectively, these findings suggest that the pandemic acted as a learning catalyst, accelerating leadership adaptation and contributing to more consistent leadership effectiveness. More so, there seems to be a transition in the perspective of employees on the relational and emotional support that could be achieved through remote leadership.

4.4 Leadership Outcomes across Pre-and Post-Pandemic Periods

Employee outcomes represent a central focus across the reviewed quantitative studies, with particular attention given to performance, engagement, communication quality, and trust. Post pandemic evidence demonstrates stronger and more stable positive relationships between remote leadership effectiveness and employee outcomes. [22] reports that employees led by empathetic and communicative remote leaders exhibit higher engagement, stronger organisational commitment, and more favourable performance perceptions. Complementing this, [49] show that reduced psychological distance mediates the relationship between leadership behaviours and employee effectiveness, thereby highlighting the importance of relational mechanisms.

Earlier studies present more mixed findings as [50] identified communication quality as a significant predictor of trust and engagement, although overall leadership effectiveness varies across organisations. These results indicate that leadership outcomes, although present before the pandemic, have become more pronounced and consistent as remote leadership practices have matured.

4.5 Determinants of Remote Leadership Effectiveness

Across the quantitative evidence, several leadership behaviours and organisational conditions emerge as key determinants of remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom. Recent studies emphasise empathetic communication, leader accessibility, and trust-based management as central behavioural predictors. [29] highlight inclusive communication and leader responsiveness as significant predictors of virtual team effectiveness, while [49] underscore the importance of managing psychological distance through regular interaction and emotional support.

Organisational conditions further shape leadership effectiveness as [22] identifies clear remote work policies, leadership development initiatives, and supportive digital infrastructure as enabling factors that strengthen leadership outcomes. Consequently, effective remote leadership emerges as the outcome of an interaction between individual leadership behaviours and organisational readiness.

4.6 Integrated Quantitative Synthesis

The integrated quantitative synthesis demonstrates a clear evolution in remote leadership effectiveness within the United Kingdom. Measurement approaches have become more comprehensive, leadership behaviours have adapted in response to sustained remote working, and employee outcomes have improved in the post pandemic period. The pandemic therefore represents a critical inflection point that reshaped leadership expectations and accelerated the development of relational, adaptive, and digitally competent leadership practices. Overall, the evidence indicates that remote leadership effectiveness is no longer defined primarily by task coordination or technological competence, but increasingly by leaders' ability to foster trust, engagement, and psychological closeness within digitally mediated work environments.

5. Discussion

The quantitative synthesis indicates that remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom has evolved considerably in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence demonstrates that post-pandemic leadership practices are more relational, adaptive, and digitally competent than those reported in pre-pandemic studies. Consistently, empathy, communication clarity, and trust emerge as central dimensions of effective remote leadership, reflecting a shift from the predominantly task oriented and technologically focused approaches observed in earlier studies. These findings suggest that the pandemic functioned as a catalyst for leadership development, compelling leaders to adapt rapidly to digitally mediated work environments and to prioritise employee well-being alongside performance outcomes.

The findings further indicate that measurement approaches in UK based quantitative research have matured over time. While pre pandemic studies relied on narrower e-leadership scales and basic behavioural indicators, post pandemic studies adopt multidimensional frameworks capturing both behavioural and relational elements, often using structural

modelling to examine the mediating effects of psychological distance and coping mechanisms. This evolution in measurement reflects a growing recognition that leadership effectiveness in remote contexts cannot be assessed solely through output or task completion, but must account for employee perceptions of relational support, communication quality, and engagement. Consequently, the evidence reinforces the notion that leadership assessment frameworks must integrate both behavioural and outcome-oriented indicators to provide an accurate representation of effectiveness in remote settings.

Analysis of leadership outcomes shows that post-pandemic remote leadership is associated with more consistent and positive employee responses. Engagement, trust, communication quality, and perceived performance are stronger and more stable after the pandemic, suggesting that leadership adaptation has tangible effects on employee experience. The mediating role of psychological distance, as highlighted by [49], underscores the importance of relational proximity in virtual environments, while organisational enablers such as clear remote work policies and digital infrastructure amplify leadership impact. Pre-pandemic variability in outcomes, by contrast, indicates that the absence of these conditions limited leadership effectiveness, particularly when leaders lacked formal remote work experience.

Collectively, these findings have several implications for theory and practice. Firstly, they highlight the dynamic and context dependent nature of remote leadership, reinforcing that effective leadership in digital environments requires ongoing behavioural and organisational adaptation. Secondly, the evidence emphasises that relational and communicative competencies are equally critical as technical or task-oriented skills, thereby expanding traditional leadership models to encompass virtual relational mechanisms. Finally, organisations seeking to enhance remote leadership effectiveness should prioritise leadership development initiatives, supportive digital infrastructure, and clear remote work policies, which together facilitate consistent employee outcomes and organisational performance. Conclusively, quantitative analysis clearly shows that the pandemic has expedited the evolution of remote leadership in the UK, producing leaders who are exceptionally attuned to the relational, communicative, and adaptive needs of digitally mediated work environments.

5.1 Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications for advancing the understanding and practice of remote leadership in the United Kingdom. The evidence demonstrates that remote leadership effectiveness extends beyond task coordination and technological competence, encompassing relational, communicative, and adaptive behaviours that influence employee engagement, trust, and performance. Theoretical frameworks therefore need to integrate these dimensions, recognising that leadership effectiveness in digital environments is context dependent and shaped by the interplay between individual behaviours and organisational systems.

Practically, the study highlights that organisations cannot rely solely on leader skill; enabling conditions are equally critical. Empathetic communication, accessibility, and trust building remain central leadership behaviours, yet their impact is contingent on supportive organisational structures, including clear remote work policies, leadership development programmes, and robust digital infrastructure. Post-pandemic evidence illustrates that when these conditions are aligned, leaders can foster stronger employee engagement, maintain psychological closeness, and enhance team effectiveness in remote and hybrid work contexts.

In light of these findings, the study proposes targeted recommendations for organisations seeking to strengthen remote leadership. First, leadership development initiatives should emphasise relational skills, emotional intelligence, adaptive decision making, and effective digital communication, equipping leaders to respond to the evolving needs of remote teams. Second, organisations should provide structural support through policies, digital tools, and communication protocols that facilitate consistency in leadership practice. Additionally, continuous assessment of leadership outcomes using multi-dimensional instruments can inform evidence-based improvements and ensure sustained effectiveness. Finally, organisations should cultivate a culture of learning and agility, recognising that remote leadership demands ongoing adaptation to technological advancements and changing work environments. By combining behavioural and structural interventions, organizations can strengthen leadership capacity, enhance employee experiences, and improve organizational performance in increasingly virtual work environments.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Despite providing comprehensive insights into remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom, this study has several limitations. First, the reliance on secondary quantitative studies means that contextual and qualitative nuances of leadership adaptation may be underrepresented. Also, the included studies predominantly use employee self-reported survey data, which may introduce perceptual bias and limit generalisability. Likewise, temporal comparisons are constrained by variations in organisational contexts and measurement instruments across studies.

Hence, future research should incorporate longitudinal and mixed methods designs to capture dynamic leadership processes over time. Additionally, examining sector specific differences, cross cultural comparisons, and the impact of emerging technologies on remote leadership could further advance understanding and inform more targeted interventions.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a synthesis of quantitative evidence on remote leadership effectiveness in the United Kingdom, focusing on changes before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It reveals that post-pandemic leadership has become more relational, communicative, and adaptive, with empathy, psychological proximity, and trust as key factors of effectiveness. Also, Measurement frameworks have shifted from narrow indicators to multidimensional tools that assess behavioural, relational, and outcome-based dimensions. Employee outcomes, including engagement, performance, communication quality, and trust, are stronger in post-pandemic contexts, reflecting effective leadership adaptation and the support of organizational systems. In conclusion, the study confirms that remote leadership effectiveness depends on context and is shaped by leader capabilities and organizational readiness. It offers actionable insights to help organizations enhance leadership capacity and improve employee outcomes in today's digital and hybrid environments.

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