Telework and Internal Corporate Social Responsibility: Insights from New Zealand Back-Office Personnel during COVID-19

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Abstract

The contemporary work landscape has experienced substantial transformations in recent years due to technological advancements, digital communication tools, and shifting employee expectations. Telework has become an essential element of the modern work environment and gained significant attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the widespread adoption of telework for business continuity and social distancing. This research investigates the demand and drivers of telework among New Zealand back-office personnel post-pandemic. Back-office personnel, in this study, refers to employees who perform functions related to administration, operations, and support, roles that do not involve direct interaction with clients or customers but are integral to an organisation's functioning. The focus on this group is crucial as they represent a significant portion of the workforce, and their adaptation to and perceptions of telework can significantly impact organisational effectiveness and employee satisfaction. This research examines the attitudes of its effects on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and potential as an internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) extension. Using a mixed-methods research design, 101 back-office personnel in New Zealand participated in a questionnaire and ten in semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were utilised to analyse quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. Results indicated a strong demand for telework due to improved work-life balance, enhanced flexibility, reduced commuting, and increased productivity. Most participants preferred a hybrid telework model, combining the benefits of remote work with in-person collaboration. Telework was generally seen as positively impacting work-life balance and job satisfaction, but challenges like work-personal life boundaries and social isolation must be addressed for sustained benefits. Moreover, findings suggest telework can serve as an internal CSR

extension. By incorporating telework into CSR strategies, organisations can tackle key internal CSR components, boosting their reputation and long-term success. This study offers insights and recommendations for organisations aiming to implement telework policies, emphasising the need to accommodate employee preferences while maximising benefits and tackling telework-associated challenges.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The landscape of work has experienced substantial transformations in recent years, driven by rapid technological advancements, digital communication tools, and evolving employee expectations (Beckel & Fisher, 2022). One significant development is the growing adoption of telework, also known as remote work or telecommuting (Mielck, 2021). Telework involves working from a location other than the traditional office setting, typically from home or a coworking space, utilising digital tools for communication and collaboration (Wibowo et al., 2022). Telework has become a popular choice for employees seeking a better work-life balance, as it enables them to work from any location with an internet connection, thus avoiding long commutes and providing greater flexibility in their schedules (Campo et al., 2021). Moreover, telework has been shown to improve employee productivity (Maghlaperidze et al., 2021) and job satisfaction (Foreman, 2021), reduce overhead costs for employers (Fujii, 2020), and decrease the carbon footprint associated with commuting to and from the office (Taborosi et al., 2021). As organisations increasingly seek flexible, efficient, and sustainable approaches to conducting business, telework has gained significant attention and has emerged as an essential element of the modern work environment (Davidescu et al., 2020).

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has served as a catalyst for the widespread implementation of telework on a global scale (Ning et al., 2021). To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, governments worldwide introduced lockdown measures and social distancing guidelines, which forced organisations across various industries to adopt remote working policies (Ning et al., 2021). New Zealand, like other countries, underwent multiple lockdowns and restrictions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (O'Kane et al., 2020). As a result, back-office personnel

across various sectors, such as finance, administration, human resources, and information technology (IT), were compelled to adapt to telework rapidly (Barański et al., 2021). Back-office personnel refers to employees responsible for the internal functions and support services within an organisation and represent a well-suited group for telework (Edelmann & Millard, 2021).

However, the rapid shift to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted several challenges for organisations and employees (Zappalà et al., 2021). One significant challenge is maintaining effective communication and collaboration among team members while working remotely (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). In a traditional office setting, employees can easily communicate and collaborate through face-to-face interactions, but telework requires the use of digital tools and platforms to facilitate communication and collaboration (Tokarchuk et al., 2021). Additionally, telework can lead to social isolation and feelings of disconnection among employees, which can negatively impact on their mental health and well-being (Adamovic et al., 2022). Another challenge associated with telework is maintaining a work-life balance (Schall, 2019). While telework provides greater flexibility in work schedules, it can also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to longer working hours and increased workloads (Uzun, 2021). This can have negative consequences to employee health and well-being and can lead to burnout (Beauregard et al., 2019). Moreover, telework can exacerbate inequalities, as employees who lack access to reliable ICT or a suitable work environment may be at a disadvantage (Beaunoyer et al., 2020). Acquiring knowledge about the benefits and challenges of telework can facilitate informed decisions by organisations and employees in adopting this mode of work, tackling its associated challenges, and optimising its benefits while diminishing the likelihood of potential adverse effects.

In parallel with the rise of telework, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved, bringing into focus the importance of internal CSR. In the context of this research, internal CSR practices fostering employee well-being, work-life balance, and job satisfaction are closely interlinked with telework. As telework emerges as an innovative work arrangement, it offers an opportunity for organisations to enact internal CSR initiatives, potentially leading to improved job satisfaction among back-office personnel (Beglari, 2022). Internal CSR initiatives focus on areas such as Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), work-life balance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction (Macassa et al., 2021). Telework can serve CSR objectives by promoting workplace flexibility, offering better working conditions for employees with disabilities, and supporting environmental goals through reduced commuting and lower office-related resource consumption (Mayo et al., 2016; Kacprzak et al., 2021). Furthermore, telework can enhance employees' work-life balance, empower them with more autonomy, and create more inclusive opportunities for those who might face challenges in traditional office settings (Mayo et al., 2016; Mielck, 2021).

On the other hand, internal CSR can contribute to telework by establishing a supportive organisational culture and promoting policies that address the challenges associated with remote work (Siltaloppi et al., 2021). For example, organisations can develop guidelines for effective communication, virtual team building, and mental health support for remote employees (Nayal et al., 2022). Additionally, internal CSR initiatives can help ensure that telework policies are equitable and inclusive, addressing potential disparities in access to resources, technology, and opportunities for career advancement (Parker, 2020).

Considering the growing prominence of telework, its relationship with job satisfaction, and its potential as a conduit for internal CSR, it is essential to investigate the perceptions and

experiences of the people most affected by this shift. As back-office personnel often perform their duties away from the public eye, their attitudes and experiences can provide unique insights into these interrelationships. Therefore, this research centres on the perspectives of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework, uncovering how telework impacts their job satisfaction, and how it could be harnessed as an internal CSR strategy. From an employee perspective, this research aimed to examine the drivers of telework demand and how telework impacts work-life balance and job satisfaction. By understanding their viewpoints, this research can provide insights into the factors that affect employees' well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction in the context of telework. From an organisational perspective, this research aims to explore how internal CSR initiatives can influence the implementation of telework in organisations. It will examine how organisations can incorporate telework into their CSR strategies and how this has impacted on their employees' well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. By understanding the organisational viewpoints, this research can offer valuable insights for managers and policymakers on incorporating telework effectively as part of their internal CSR initiatives while promoting a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive work environment for their back-office personnel.

1.2 The Rationale of this Research

The rationale for this research was driven by several factors that emphasise the importance of understanding the experiences and attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework.

Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes in how organisations function, with telework becoming necessary for many to maintain their operations (Mielck, 2021). This rapid shift to remote work has presented challenges and benefits for employees and organisations (Jones, 2022). As the world moves towards recovery from the

COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to examine the long-term implications of telework on employees' well-being, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and OHS, which are critical components of internal CSR.

Secondly, internal CSR has gained increasing attention in recent years as organisations recognise the importance of employee well-being in achieving sustainable business success (Beglari, 2022). The integration of telework into internal CSR practices can provide organisations with a competitive advantage by promoting employee satisfaction, reducing turnover, and enhancing overall performance (Mayo et al., 2016). Investigating the perspectives of New Zealand back-office personnel regarding telework can help organisations identify the factors that contribute to the success or failure of telework policies and guide them in making informed decisions.

Thirdly, while there is a growing body of literature on telework and its implications on employee well-being (Ashry, 2021; Dima et al., 2019; Ning et al., 2021), limited research focuses specifically on the experiences and attitudes of back-office personnel in New Zealand. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a nuanced understanding of how telework has impacted this particular group of employees. Filling this identified gap will contribute to the existing literature on telework and offer insights into how it can be applied to other contexts and countries.

The researcher believes that focusing on New Zealand back-office personnel as the target population will provide more detailed information to form a comprehensive overall picture of attitudes towards telework. To clarify more specifically, back-office personnel refer to employees who perform support tasks in an organisation but do not have direct interaction with clients or customers and include functions such as the organisation's finances, accounting, HRM, ICT, and other administrative tasks (Barone, 2022). Back-office personnel are essential to the smooth operation of an organisation because they perform behind-the-scenes tasks that support the front-

line employees who interact with customers or clients (Kearney et al., 2017). Back-office personnel may work in a variety of settings, including office environments, call centres, and other administrative settings such as telework. They may also be responsible for a wide range of duties, such as data entry, customer service, document processing, and record keeping. Back-office personnel are important for an organisation as they play a key role in supporting its operations, ensuring efficiency, improving decision-making, and maintaining customer satisfaction (Newenham-Kahindi, 2011). Although back-office personnel do not interact with customers face-to-face, they might communicate with customers via telephone, e-mail or social media (Kearney et al., 2017). Due to the nature of their work, back-office personnel are one of the groups that are less tied to traditional office environments. Therefore, they are easily adaptable to telework because they can perform their job functions remotely using computers and ICT tools from a location outside of the office. This group can offer more detailed information based on their personal experiences, providing a unique understanding of the benefits and challenges of telework. In contrast, surveying the general population, which may include individuals unable to telework due to their job requirements or other factors, may not provide a comprehensive picture of attitudes towards telework. By focusing on back-office personnel, the researcher believes they can obtain more relevant insights that can inform broader discussions about remote work in New Zealand.

Furthermore, this research will explore the potential benefits and challenges of telework for both employees and organisations. It will examine the factors that influence employees' attitudes towards telework, such as job flexibility, autonomy, social isolation, and work-life boundaries. These insights can be valuable for organisations looking to refine their telework policies and practices to better align with employees' needs and expectations.

Lastly, this research aimed to provide practical recommendations for managers and organisations on how to leverage telework as an internal CSR extension. By understanding the experiences and attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel, managers and organisations can develop strategies to enhance employee well-being, productivity, job satisfaction, promote work-life balance, and maintain OHS in a teleworking environment. This may not only contribute to the overall well-being of employees but also support the long-term success and sustainability of organisations.

In conclusion, the rationale for this research is grounded in the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the adoption of telework, the growing importance of internal CSR, and the need to understand the experiences and attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework. By exploring these aspects, this research aimed to provide valuable insights and practical recommendations for organisations and managers looking to incorporate telework as a part of their internal CSR strategy.

1.3 Research Interest

The motivation for this research stems from a combination of personal interest and experience. As an employee who has worked in a back-office setting for a significant period, I have developed a strong interest in understanding the various factors that affect the well-being of office-based personnel. Furthermore, my own experiences with remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic have provided me with first-hand insight into the potential impact of telework.

Additionally, while studying in New Zealand, I was intrigued by the concept of internal CSR. I find it fascinating as it represents a balanced approach for employees and organisations to collaborate. I believe that investing in a robust internal CSR programme could lead to substantial

mutual benefits for both employees and organisations in the long term. These circumstances have sparked curiosity to understand the perspectives and experiences of back-office personnel in New Zealand regarding teleworking, specifically in relation to internal CSR and its impact on their work and personal lives during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through personal experiences and discussions with colleagues, I have observed the challenges faced by New Zealand office-based personnel as they navigate the new realm of telework, which emerged as a critical aspect of work-life during the COVID-19 pandemic. While organisations have been implementing various strategies to support employees during this transition, there are still many challenges that managers and organisations face in designing and implementing effective telework policies that fulfil the unique needs of diverse employee groups.

Hence, this research is driven by the desire to identify the benefits and challenges that New Zealand back-office personnel encounter in the context of telework and to understand its impact on their work-life balance and job satisfaction. The aim was to recognise the key components of successful telework arrangements and offer insights into how these can be integrated into internal CSR practices. Ultimately, this research hoped to contribute to the development of tailored telework policies and practices that support the well-being of New Zealand office-based workers, enabling them to achieve a better quality of life while working remotely.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

This research aimed to understand the views and experiences of New Zealand back-office personnel regarding telework before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to gather insights into their perspectives on teleworking and how it has affected their work and personal lives. The research aims to understand the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework, particularly in the context of its integration as an aspect of internal CSR. This

research will not seek a direct response from New Zealand back-office personnel participants (participants) on the question of whether telework constitutes an internal CSR extension. Instead, this research will ask about the effect of telework on specific areas, such as OHS, work-life balance, and job satisfaction, which are key components of internal CSR. The aim was to gain an understanding of how telework has on impacted these aspects and to use that information to infer the participants' views on telework as an internal CSR extension. By doing so, this research will provide a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework in the context of internal CSR and its potential impact on the work environment and employees' overall well-being.

Based on the information discussed, the objectives of this research were:

1. To identify if New Zealand back-office personnel have a demand for telework after the COVID-19 pandemic and what are the drivers for it.

2. To determine the experiential effect of telework implementation on New Zealand back-office personnel's work-life balance and job satisfaction.

3. To explore the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel toward telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

4. Based on the existing literature and research findings, develop recommendations for managers and organisations on how telework could be used as an internal CSR extension.

To reach these objectives, it is crucial to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the drivers for this need?

2. What attitudes do New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction?

3. What were New Zealand back-office personnel's attitudes toward telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future?

1.5 Structure of the Research

This thesis is structured into five chapters, each addressing specific aspects of this research. The chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction - provides an overview of this research, discussing the background, rationale, research objectives, and questions. It sets the context for this research and outlines its purpose and significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - reviews relevant literature on telework, its evolution, benefits and challenges, and the concept of internal CSR. It explores the relationship between telework and internal CSR, highlighting research gaps that this research aims to address.

Chapter 3: Research Method - outlines the research design, paradigm, methodology, and data collection tools. It also discusses the selection of research participants, recruitment, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings - presents the results from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted. It explores the demand and drivers for telework, attitudes towards telework as an internal CSR extension, and the impact of telework on work-life balance and job satisfaction. It concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations - discusses the implications of the research findings, draws conclusions based on the results, and provides recommendations for managers and organisations on how telework could be used as an internal CSR extension. It also examines the strengths and limitations of this research, suggests future research opportunities, and concludes the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review undertakes an examination of a range of academic disciplines and their corresponding literature to thoroughly address the research objectives. This endeavour involves an in-depth analysis of the various fields of knowledge that may hold valuable insights and perspectives relevant to this research and provides a comprehensive overview of telework, including a definition, types, benefits, and challenges. It then examines the impact of telework on employees' OHS, work-life balance, and job satisfaction drawing on relevant literature to investigate the factors driving the demand for telework. Next, the literature review explores the concept of CSR in general, internal CSR and its aspects, how telework can serve as an internal CSR extension, and the potential role of CSR in managing telework. It then investigated how CSR can be utilised to promote employee well-being and OHS in a telework environment through various aspects such as policies and practices, training, and corporate culture.

2.2 The Concept of Telework

Telework is a term that originated in the 1970s, referring to the integration of telecommunication and computing technologies to shift the location of work (Wibowo et al., 2022). Despite the vast amount of literature on this topic, there is not a universally acknowledged and agreed definition for this concept. Instead, the definition of telework has expanded into a wide-ranging term that includes telecommuting, working from home, flexible working, smart work, e-work, and other comparable work arrangements such as remote working, distance working, satellite office working, virtual work, and offsite work (Shieh, 2019). The multitude of terminologies reflects the tendency of scholars to underline the variety of the concept's dimensions. However, the main idea is still that employees are available to perform their job in full or partially

somewhere other than the premises of the employer, and it profoundly relies on information communication technologies (ICT) (Beckel & Fisher, 2022). The International Labour Organisation defines telework as the utilisation of technologies such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, or desktop computers, for working outside the office of the employer (Bautista-Bernal et al., 2021). According to Hajal (2022), telework is a flexible work arrangement that involves mutually agreed adjustments to the location and schedule of work between employers and employees. These modifications are intended to not only improve the work-life balance and flexibility of employees but also meet the operational needs of the organisation (Beauregard et al., 2019).

According to Stoicov and Țîru (2021), telework is characterised by three fundamental components: the location of the employee, which can range from partially independent to completely independent; the utilisation of technology, specifically personal computers, e-mail, faxes, and telephones; and the configuration of communication with the organisation, which encompasses various modes, communication channels, and frameworks. The Statistical Indicators Benchmarking identified by the Information Society categorised four modes of telework, which include telework performed from home, mobile telework, freelance telework in a small office or home office, and telework conducted in shared facilities external to both the office and the home (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

Maghlaperidze et al. (2021) suggest that telework can be of two types: full-time and part-time. Under a full-time telework, the employee is required to perform all work duties away from the office, with minimal or even without face-to-face interaction with their managers and colleagues (Yang et al., 2022). Under a part-time telework, the employee carries out their duties for a limited number of days per week, with a portion of the work completed from the office of the

employer (Maghlaperidze et al., 2021). According to Smite et al. (2023), in contemporary times, a part-time remote work arrangement has come to be frequently called hybrid telework. According to Hopkins and Bardoel (2023), hybrid telework is a relatively novel concept that has gained prominence during the recent global COVID-19 pandemic and refers to an employment arrangement where the employees divide their working time between the traditional workplace and remote locations, such as home or a coworking space, cafe, or library. This arrangement combines the benefits of telework and office-based work and affords the employee a certain degree of autonomy and flexibility regarding the location in which they carry out their work tasks (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023; Kwok et al., 2022). Overall, considering that there are various interpretations and definitions of telework, scholars and practitioners must establish clear boundaries and dimensions to ensure consistency and comparability across different studies and contexts.

2.3 Evolution of Telework

The idea of teleworking is far from being a recent innovation and has been a subject of discourse among both academic experts and industry professionals since the mid-twentieth century. The origins of teleworking can be traced to the 1950s when technology allowed telecommuting by linking subsidiary locations with headquarters using so-called dumb terminals connected via telephone lines as a network channel (Mielck, 2021). However, the historical records suggest that the term "telecommuting" was coined by Jack Nilles, an engineer at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in 1972 (Shieh, 2019). In the 1970s, this phenomenon gained more attention from scholars who began to examine the potential of telework as a new mode of work and less commuting (Uzun, 2021). The rise of telework was largely driven by the oil crisis of the 1970s, which significantly increased fuel costs for daily commutes (Shieh,

2019). In the decades spanning the 1980s and 1990s, interest in telework gradually gained momentum along with the advancements in technology. At that time, telework was associated with using landline telephones, fax machines, and stationary computers (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). However, with the further rise in communication technologies and the growing availability of internet access, telework has become more affordable for the broader public (Mielck, 2021). In modern times, it can be described as a virtual or Cloud-based office accessible from anywhere with a gadget and internet connection (del Carmen Gutierrez-Diez et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, despite the growing potential for teleworking, many managers and organisations were modest to adopt these practices, which resulted in a limited number of employees engaging in telework (Uzun, 2021). Data from the 2000s and 2010s show that teleworking was still a niche practice, with only a small-scale group of the workforce participating in remote work arrangements. For example, in 2005, the United States of America (U.S.A) Census Bureau estimated that only 2.6% of employees in the country were teleworkers which grew slightly to 4.3% in 2010 (Mateyka et al., 2012). Similarly, the European Commission report suggests that the proportion of employees in the European Union (EU) working at least sometimes from their homes in 2009 was 5.2% and increased to 9% in 2019 (Milasi et al., 2021). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a vast impact on the landscape of work, catalysing the extensive adoption of teleworking (Nguyen, 2021). Governments worldwide introduced the omnipresent implementation of COVID-19 lockdowns and health mandates that limited in-person interaction and organisations were forced to take measures to ensure business continuity (Ning et al., 2021). Government requirements and health reasons induced the widespread shift to work from home in all industries where it was possible (Parker, 2020). For instance, in New Zealand, an estimated 40% of the total workforce shifted quickly from traditional office locations to telework (Green et al., 2020).

The sudden transition to telework has resulted in a novel work reality for many professionals, necessitating an adjustment to an unfamiliar operating environment (Tokarchuk et al., 2021; Zappalà et al., 2021). During the initial period of forced remote work implementation, studies showed that telework had a negative impact on health and well-being of employees, including increased rates of mental health issues, stress, burnout, and anxiety (Zalat & Bolbol, 2022; Oakman et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2021). Additionally, Adamovic et al. (2022) argued that telework may induce work-family conflict as well as impose additional financial burdens on employees in terms of modifying their homes to accommodate a suitable work environment.

Nevertheless, despite the initial identification of negative impacts research indicated a growing demand for telework among employees after the COVID-19 pandemic (Babapour Chafi et al., 2022; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Grzegorczyk et al., 2021). Moreover, a survey of over 2000 teleworking employees revealed contradicting findings to the studies during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Robinson, 2022). The data suggests that teleworking employees are more productive and working from home positively impacts their self-reported mental health (Robinson, 2022). Furthermore, employees of medium and big-size organisations (Bloom, 2021) and employees of giant corporations such as Apple (O'Brien, 2022) have expressed their desire to continue teleworking. Several studies suggest that at the current time, organisations have realised that telework could be a permanent or long-term alteration to the traditional working arrangements that will persist even after the resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cieniewicz, 2023; Pan & Shaheen, 2022). Donthu and Gustafsson (2020) claim that the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will impact CSR policies because policymakers are likely to consider taking steps to foster increased flexibility and reduce work-life conflict. However, studies conducted on telework during the COVID-19 pandemic have produced a wide range of results, including the opposed

ones. Given the contradictory nature of the available data, it becomes essential to thoroughly examine the phenomenon of telework and its associated outcomes for organisations and employees in a detailed manner.

2.4 Telework in New Zealand Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The data available on telework in New Zealand is relatively limited. There were only two surveys conducted by government agencies before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2012 and 2018 that are available in open sources (Statistics New Zealand, 2014; Statistics New Zealand, 2019). The 2012 Survey of Working Life indicated that approximately one-third of New Zealand employees had worked from home for at least a few hours each week (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). According to more recent data from 2018, only around 3% of New Zealand employees primarily worked from home, with one-third of employees reporting some form of telework with an even distribution between males and females (Statistics New Zealand, 2019). The capacity to work from home varies by industry, with the education sector reporting the highest percentage of employees teleworking to some extent (70%), while the retail, trade, accommodation and food services sectors reported the lowest rate (10%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2019). Comparing the 2012 and 2018 data shows that the proportion of the New Zealand workforce engaged in some form of telework had remained stable at around 30%.

However, following the the COVID-19 pandemic, New Zealand underwent a significant shift towards telework due to the implementation of lockdown measures (Mayer & Boston, 2022). The first national Alert Level 3 and 4 COVID-19 lockdowns occurred between the 25th of March and the 13th of May 2020, while other lockdowns took place periodically as new community cases of COVID-19 emerged, with varying restrictions imposed across different regions (Mayer & Boston, 2022). The lockdowns resulted in an estimated 40% of New Zealanders engaging in

telework, a substantial increase from the rate before the COVID-19 pandemic (Green et al., 2020). As reported by Auckland Council (2020), approximately 770,000 employees who typically worked in urban offices transitioned to full-time telework to help control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The recent data suggest that the aspiration for telework in New Zealand after the COVID-19 pandemic remains higher compared to the pre-COVID-19 time. According to O'Kane et al. (2020), a survey of 2,560 employees found that 22% of the participants prefer to telework full-time, and 67% desired a hybrid telework option. Another survey with over 1,000 New Zealanders participating revealed that 48% of participants would consider quitting their job if their employers forced them back into the office full-time (Hewett, 2022). While the studies do not directly provide information on the current telework in New Zealand, their findings suggest that the percentage of employee teleworking remains high following the COVID-19 pandemic. This research included related questions in the questionnaire to gain insight into employees telework demand and current telecommuting rates.

2.5 Benefits and Challenges of Telework

This section discusses the potential benefits and challenges associated with telework that can influence the decision-making of both employees and employers when it comes to choosing telework as a mode of working with a focus on work-life balance and job satisfaction.

2.5.1 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the level to which employees are satisfied with their work (Kunda et al., 2019). It is defined as a pleasant or positive emotional state that results from the general evaluation of the job or labour that employees are experiencing (Loor-Zambrano et al., 2020). Telework is often associated with job satisfaction, but the actual impact of telework on job satisfaction is inconclusive (Allen et al., 2015). This can be explained by the complex relationship

mediated by several factors (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). While job satisfaction can be considered the ultimate result, it is influenced by several variables such as work-life balance, job autonomy, work flexibility, social connection, and the potential for isolation and disconnection from colleagues and the workplace (Kaushal, 2021).

Furthermore, the degree to which teleworking affects job satisfaction may vary depending on individual employee differences, such as personality traits and the extent and nature of the telework (Tavares, 2017). For instance, introverted employees may find teleworking more satisfying due to reduced social interaction, whereas extroverted employees might perceive it as a disadvantage (Vega et al., 2015). Additionally, the quality of communication and managerial support can play a significant role in determining job satisfaction among teleworkers (Maruyama et al., 2009).Therefore, it is crucial to examine these mediated factors and consider individual employee differences to comprehend and forecast the impact of telework on job satisfaction.

2.5.2 Work-life Balance

According to Mazur-Wierzbicka (2015), employees have different social roles, such as parents, children, wives, husbands, friends, and members of the community. Thus, besides work time, employees need free time to foster personal relationships, self-development, and recovery (Mazur-Wierzbicka, 2015). However, the work-life balance concept does not imply the complete separation of personal life from the working one but rather merges both lives to embrace job, family, and leisure in one synergy with the easy shift between them (Gołaszewska-Kaczan, 2015).

One of the telework extensively researched outcomes is its ability to facilitate the management between professional and personal roles and decrease work-to-life conflict (Beauregard et al., 2019; Shieh, 2019; Uzun, 2021). For instance, a study conducted on employees who worked both in an office and at home found that the more they teleworked, the greater their

reduction in work-to-life conflict (Schall, 2019). Similarly, Beauregard et al. (2019) found that teleworking employees with flexible job scheduling reported better work-life balance, as they could organise their work tasks in a way that aligned with their personal and family responsibilities.

2.5.2.1 Telework and Commuting

Telework is often regarded as a means to improve work-life balance by reducing commuting, which is commonly associated with time and stress (Chatterjee et al., 2020). Numerous studies have demonstrated that telework can save employees significant time by reducing or eliminating commuting (Jones, 2022; Hook et al., 2020; Zürcher et al., 2021), particularly in densely populated urban areas with traffic congestion and limited public transportation options (Hook et al., 2020), and the rural regions where commuting to offices located in downtown districts can be time-consuming and expensive (Shieh, 2019). For example, Pabilonia and Vernon (2021) found that the average teleworker who works from home on a given day saves approximately one hour by eliminating their daily commute. In addition, Pabilonia and Vernon's (2021) research indicated that males save an average of 15 minutes on grooming activities during the work-from-home weekday, while females save 23 minutes on such activities.

Nevertheless, several studies have noted that employees who engage in occasional telework often have a longer one-way distance between their residence and place of work than those who work on-site (Hook et al., 2020; Wöhner, 2022). Hook et al. (2020) suggest that employees who engage in telework accept to endure longer commuting times in exchange for the ability to work from home. Nonetheless, there are findings that even partial telework reduces the average weekly travel distance and time (Wöhner, 2022) and decreases the stress associated with the commuting rush (Kazekami, 2020). Therefore, the ability of telework to reduce commuting

has an overall positive potential to improve work-life balance by saving employees time and decreasing stress.

2.5.2.2 Job Flexibility

Another frequently discussed aspect of telework that may promote better work-life balance is flexible job scheduling. Flexibility in the work schedule refers to the ability of an employee to adjust the timing and structure of their work activities to accommodate other demands and commitments in their personal life (Messenger, 2019). According to Caillier (2018), flexible work schedules are a modern employment practice that allows employees to have more control over the time, location, and regime of work. This assists in addressing the family demands faced by the modern workforce, particularly dual-earner couples and those with dependent care obligations (Caillier, 2018). For instance, Haddock et al. (2006, as cited in Beauregard et al., 2019) survey found that dual-earner couples could balance work and family time by utilising flexible work schedules to work during periods when their children were occupied or asleep. Beauregard et al. (2019) argued that teleworkers can accomplish more work by utilising flexible scheduling and simultaneously balancing work and family responsibilities. Telework also allows employees to take advantage of unscheduled time during the workday to attend to non-work tasks, such as medical appointments or running errands, without having to sacrifice work time (Sarbu, 2018; Thompson et al., 2022). Additionally, flexible work schedules can be advantageous for employers by helping them to reduce employee turnover rates and increase employees' commitment to the organisation (Caillier, 2016; Mutiganda et al., 2022). Studies have shown that teleworkers who experience reduced levels of work-to-life conflict also tended to have higher job performance, job satisfaction, and decreased levels of job-related stress that, in turn, provide lower intentions of leaving the organisation (Beauregard et al., 2019; Mutiganda et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2022).

Furthermore, telework enables employees to demonstrate greater adaptability in the meeting demands of employers because it allows them to plan online appointments with international colleagues and customers in different time zones by scheduling early morning or evening conference calls (Beauregard et al., 2019; Mayo et al., 2016). Overall, teleworks flexible job scheduling provides employees with greater control over their work and personal lives, allowing them to balance their responsibilities more effectively, resulting in increased job satisfaction, lower work-to-life conflict, and reduced job-related stress, ultimately benefiting both employees and employers.

2.5.2.3 Telework and Work-life Boundaries

Despite the widespread recognition of telework as a tool for improving work-life balance, its actual impact on this aspect remains inconclusive. For instance, Beauregard et al. (2019) claimed that when work is conducted in the same physical space that an employee uses for their personal life, it can pose challenges in creating and sustaining distinct boundaries between work and non-work domains. Jostell and Hemlin (2018) suggest that teleworkers may face problems in maintaining boundaries between work and their personal life, as the time and place separations that naturally exist for office-based employees are less evident. Likewise, the simultaneous presence of work-related and non-work-related signals within the same physical environment can hinder disengaging from work-related thoughts and behaviours during non-work hours (Widar et al., 2022).

Moreover, Abendroth and Reimann (2018) claim that teleworkers have a tendency to work longer hours and remain online for extended periods, which can escalate the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work domains. According to Beauregard et al. (2019), the increased availability of ICT has resulted in an "always-on" culture where employees are expected to be

contactable and responsive even outside of regular working hours. This pressure is even greater for teleworkers who must rely on ICT to demonstrate their virtual presence and show that they are working (Freeman, 2021). As a result, teleworkers encounter the dilemma of balancing ICT use to maintain relationships with colleagues with the need to disconnect from work during personal time (Beauregard et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a wealth of new research on telework, examining its impact on work-life balance. For instance, a scoping literature review of 131 publications revealed that while telework may facilitate participation in parenting, it can also lead to work-family conflicts (Elbaz et al., 2022). Furthermore, Fominykh (2020) suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic caused the sudden transition to telework which was accompanied by a host of challenges such as poor technical readiness, lack of dedicated workspaces, and the presence of other family members in the home. These challenges maybe the reason for a negative attitude to telework and reduced job satisfaction (Fominykh, 2020). On the other hand, Allen et al. (2021) claimed that teleworkers who were able to manage physical and social boundaries within the home environment reported greater job satisfaction. The employees who had separate and designated spaces for work activities appeared to find it easier to disconnect from their work (Beauregard et al., 2019). Conversely, a lack of a home office may intensify the unfulfilled requirements of employees to set apart their work and private life, thereby reducing their work-life balance (Allen et al., 2021). Similarly, teleworkers leveraged ICT to manage work-life boundaries by using separate electronic devices such as computers and telephones for work and shutting them down at the end of the workday (Beauregard et al., 2019; Elbaz et al., 2022).

Hence, the findings, specifically those obtained amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, propose that the employees' practices in managing boundaries can serve as a crucial measure to mitigate the unfavourable consequences of teleworking.

2.5.3 Productivity

Higher productivity is another benefit often associated with telework. Productivity is defined as the amount of output produced per unit of input, such as labour hours (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Increased productivity is beneficial for both employees and employers, as it can lead to enhanced job satisfaction, work-life balance, and organisational performance (Golden & Eddleston, 2020). Several studies have suggested that teleworking can positively impact employee productivity (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Golden and Eddleston (2020) reported that teleworking could lead to increased job performance and productivity due to reduced distractions, increased autonomy, and better work-life balance. However, it is essential to note that the impact of telework on productivity is not universal and may depend on various factors such as job type, task complexity, and telework arrangement (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). For example, teleworking may be more suitable for jobs that require a high degree of concentration and minimal interruptions, while it may be less effective for jobs that necessitate collaboration and constant communication with team members (Fujii, 2020).

Additionally, individual differences in employees' work habits, self-discipline, and home environment can also influence productivity levels while teleworking (Zürcher et al., 2021). Some employees may struggle with maintaining productivity in the absence of clear boundaries between work and personal life or face difficulties in managing distractions in their home environment Fujii, 2020). To maximise productivity benefits, organisations should consider implementing supportive measures, such as providing proper training to employees on time management, setting

clear expectations, and offering necessary resources and technologies for efficient remote work (Ma, 2021). Additionally, organisations should evaluate the suitability of telework based on job type, employee preferences, and the overall organisational culture to ensure an effective and productive teleworking arrangement (Stoian et al., 2022). Therefore, telework has the potential to enhance productivity, but its impact is contingent on various factors.

2.5.4 Employee Autonomy

One of the fundamental factors in the association between telework and job satisfaction is the extent to which employees have autonomy over their work arrangements, represented by discretion over the timing, location, and work mode (Even, 2020). Such autonomy can potentially contribute to a higher sense of job control, which is positively associated with job satisfaction (Beauregard et al., 2019; Tudu & Singh, 2022). The concept of job control, as a critical determinant of job satisfaction, is based on the theory of self-determination, which assumes that employees have an inherent drive for autonomy and a need to feel in control of their environment (Ngamkroeckjoti et al., 2022). The ability to control one's work arrangements is considered an essential aspect of fulfilling this need, and it can lead to greater job satisfaction as a result (Tudu & Singh, 2022). Therefore, the evidence suggests that autonomy over work arrangements is a crucial factor in the relationship between telework and job satisfaction. However, it is important to acknowledge that other factors, such as the nature of the work and employee preferences, may also influence the relationship between telework and job satisfaction.

2.5.5 Duration and Extent of Telework

According to Golden and Veiga (2005, as cited in Brunelle & Fortin, 2021), there is a positive association between telework and job satisfaction when the extent of telework is relatively low. Beauregard et al. (2019) indicate by working less than 12 hours per week, teleworkers are

less likely to experience adverse consequences of telework, such as isolation and frustration, and are more likely to benefit from the perceived increase in autonomy, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, according to Brunelle and Fortin (2021), the benefits of telework become less prominent and the negative consequences more prevalent as the extent of telework increases beyond 15.1 hours per week, indicating a threshold beyond which the positive association between telework and job satisfaction fades away.

Although previous studies initially questioned the benefits of telework, a meta-analysis by Gajendran and Harrison (2007, as cited in Foreman, 2021) confirmed a positive association between telework and job satisfaction for both low and high-intensity teleworkers. The mechanism for this association was mediated by reduced work-family and work-life conflicts, improved supervisor relationships, and increased job autonomy (Foreman, 2021). Likewise, a study by Fonner and Roloff (2010 as cited in Beauregard et al., 2019) found that employees who extensively used telework, working from home three days or more per week, remained more satisfied than their office-based colleagues. This job satisfaction can be linked to working in a less stressful setting, away from the distractions and policies of the traditional office environment (Beauregard et al., 2019). Therefore, as the findings are inconsistent, careful consideration and selection of the appropriate duration extent for telework may be critical to diminish the negative consequences.

2.5.6 Social Isolation

The most mentioned adverse outcomes of telework are social isolation and disconnection from the workplace community. According to Even (2020), the presence of social interaction and the perceived availability of support from relevant parties can significantly enhance an employee's level of job satisfaction. The sense of belongingness and inclusion that comes from positive social interactions can generate feelings of fulfilment, happiness, and well-being (Bentley et al., 2016).

On the other hand, the absence of in-person interaction with colleagues and the workplace community can lead to feelings of loneliness and detachment, which can affect emotional and psychological states (Even, 2020).

According to Schall (2019), extensive telework increases the reliance on ICT to communicate with colleagues and managers which can augment isolation and frustration. Similarly, Adamovic (2022) suggests that telework can be also destructive to an employee's well-being due to so-called Zoom fatigue. Collins et al. (2016) found that full-time teleworkers were more likely to experience social isolation and decreased social support from their office-based colleagues compared to part-time teleworkers. Bentley et al. (2016) examined the mediating role of social isolation in the relationship between organisational support and employee outcomes in 28 New Zealand organisations. Results showed that administrative support was positively related to job satisfaction and negatively associated with psychological strain (Bentley et al., 2016). The experience of isolation in the context of teleworking depends not only on the act of teleworking in substance but also on the extent to which the organisation provides support to facilitate effective teleworking and promote job satisfaction (Adamovic, 2022; Even, 2020; Williams, 2021). Therefore, organisational social support can be an essential tool in enhancing the telework environment and mediating the feeling of isolation for employees.

2.5.7 OHS and Well-being

The discussion about the connection between telework and OHS has been explored from various perspectives and aspects. It is generally acknowledged that telework can support both the continuation of business operations and the welfare of employees during times of disruption, such as natural disasters and outbreaks (Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; Green et al., 2017; Green et al., 2020; Ning et al., 2021). For example, several studies confirmed the ability of telework to

support business continuity during a series of earthquakes in Christchurch in 2010 and 2011 (Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; Green et al., 2017). Sarnosky et al. (2022) suggest telework provided the resiliency of employees to perform tasks from a safe place during a hurricane in the United States in 2017. Additionally, there are numerous studies on telework and its capacity to support business continuity and employee OHS during the COVID-19 pandemic (Athanasiadou & Theriou, 2021; Green et al., 2020; Houston & Foster, 2021; Ning et al., 2021). Therefore, telework can be a valuable tool to ensure operational resilience in challenging circumstances while safeguarding OHS and well-being of employees.

Furthermore, discussions about telework also cover its impact on both physical and mental health. According to World Health Organization and International Labour Organization (2021), employees who work from home reported that telework had a positive impact on their overall health. Moreover, telework has been shown to reduce blood pressure in two studies: one found that teleworkers had fewer complaints about high blood pressure, while another found that blood pressure was higher when working in an office (WHO, 2021). On the other hand, Beckel and Fisher, (2022) suggested potential adverse effects, including musculoskeletal damage, back pain, and eye strain, while Wöhrmann and Ebner (2021) suggested that extended working hours may lead to fatigue and anxiety. In addition, Buomprisco et al. (2021) found that inadequate air conditioning or poor circulation in the homework environment can create suboptimal local atmospheric conditions, posing additional health risks. Therefore, employees and organisations need to pay attention to and address issues such as ergonomics and poor environmental conditions to prevent adverse health effects associated with telework.

Moreover, several studies looked into how telework affects health behaviours such as physical activity and nutrition. According to Henke et al. (2016), employees who telework had a

lower risk of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and tobacco use compared to those who do not telework. The study also found that teleworkers who spent more than 50% of their time teleworking during weekdays had a lower risk of alcohol abuse, but those who teleworked on weekends had a higher risk (Henke et al., 2016). Chakrabarti (2018 as cited in WHO, 2021) claims that telework was associated with a 71% increase in the probability of achieving at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity. Similarly, Rodríguez-Nogueira et al. (2020) found an increase in physical activity frequency and a shift towards strength and stretching exercises among employees who had to telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Restrepo and Zeballos (2020) revealed that employees who telework from home have more time to prepare and consume food, which could lead to health benefits. This is because home-cooked meals are usually considered to be less calorie-dense and more nutritious than meals purchased from nearby cafes and restaurants (Restrepo & Zeballos, 2020; WHO, 2021). Additionally, Niu et al. (2021) observed an increase in total sleep time among employees in Japan during a mandatory COVID-19 lockdown. Overall, the available research suggests that telework can positively affect various health behaviours and outcomes, including physical activity, nutrition, and sleep, highlighting the potential benefits of telework arrangements for employee well-being.

Telework can positively and negatively impact employees' mental health and social well-being. Well-organised and executed telework can improve work-life and work-family balance and provide a sense of autonomy, leading to positive psychological outcomes (Adamovic, 2022; Beckel & Fisher, 2022). However, telework can also have adverse effects, including slower work pace, longer working hours, work-life balance issues, isolation, detachment, and even risks of violence and harassment such as cyberbullying (Beckel & Fisher, 2022; Elbaz et al., 2022; WHO, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of telework has been mandated,

potentially causing dissatisfaction among employees who prefer to work in a traditional office setting (Beckel & Fisher, 2022; Elbaz et al., 2022). Research suggests that employee preference may influence the mental health consequences of teleworking, highlighting the importance of considering individual employee needs and preferences when implementing telework policies (Adamovic, 2022; Athanasiadou & Theriou, 2021; Beckel & Fisher, 2022; Otsuka et al., 2021) Therefore, it is crucial to consider both the potential benefits and risks of telework as well as the personal preferences of employees. It is necessary to develop and implement appropriate strategies to mitigate any negative impact on employees' mental health and safety and well-being.

2.6 Telework and CSR

The widespread adoption and implementation of telework, which was greatly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led many organisations to recognise the importance of developing effective practices and policies tailored to the needs of employees and organisations (Metwally et al., 2022). From this perspective, it is essential to consider the potential role of CSR in managing telework arrangements (Parker, 2020). Especially internal CSR, which focuses on the well-being of employees as the primary internal stakeholders (Wampole, 2022). In the context of telework, internal CSR can be substantial for ensuring the maintenance of employees' health, safety, and well-being while supporting organisational objectives (Parker & Narayanan, 2022). This section will explore the concept of CSR in general and the specific aspects of internal CSR that are relevant to telework, including the potential role of training, corporate culture, and management practices in promoting employee OHS, well-being, and CSR goals. Ultimately, reviewing the literature on these topics can provide a better understanding of the potential for telework to serve as an effective internal CSR practice. This insight will be invaluable in addressing one of the key research questions, namely, the attitudes of New Zealand back-office

personnel towards telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

2.7 Concept of CSR

CSR is a complex and multidimensional concept that has been extensively discussed in both academic and practical settings. Carroll's Pyramid of CSR (1979, as cited in Cheng, 2021) provides a comprehensive framework that encapsulates the main dimensions of CSR. According to Carroll, CSR comprises economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (or philanthropic) responsibilities. Economic responsibilities refer to the expectation that businesses will be profitable; legal responsibilities require adherence to laws and regulations; ethical responsibilities encompass societal expectations that go beyond the law; and philanthropic responsibilities involve corporate actions that further societal welfare (Forney, 2018).

Although there is no consensus on its definition, many authors provided various interpretations. For instance, Carroll (2009) defines CSR as the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society imposes on organisations. According to Cheng (2021), CSR involves a management approach that considers both social and environmental factors in an organisation’s operations and engages with stakeholders to address related issues. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) characterises CSR as a permanent organisational commitment to demonstrate ethical behaviour that contributes to economic growth, improved living standards for employees and their families, and the community and society's development (Low, 2016). This interpretation also resonates with Carroll's framework, emphasising a balance between economic, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 26000 defines CSR as an organisation's obligation to be accountable for its decisions and actions' effects on society and the environment,

emphasising ethical and transparent conduct that supports sustainable development and stakeholder expectations (Moratis, 2016).

CSR was introduced into academic literature by Howard Bowen in 1953 (Mahyuni, 2016). Bowen defined CSR as the responsibility of organisations to pursue policies and make decisions that align with the values and goals of the community (Forney, 2018; Wampole, 2022). This perspective paved the way for a closer tie between organisations and communities, emphasising the ethical and philanthropic aspects of CSR as described in Carroll's Pyramid. In the 1960s, most scholars agreed that organisations and communities are closely tied, and for the development of a healthy organisation, the community where this organisation operates must also be healthy (Beglari, 2022). During the 1970s, the discussion about CSR gained more prominence from a financial standpoint, and CSR initiatives have been found to correlate positively with an organisation's financial performance (Cook, 2022; Lee, 2008). In the 1980s, organisations began to view CSR strategically as a tool to enhance their public image, boost employee morale, and develop stronger relationships with stakeholders to achieve a competitive edge (Mahyuni, 2016). During the 1990s, CSR evolved as a means for organisations to create long-term value by integrating the triple bottom line concept, increasing transparency and accountability through annual reports, and becoming an essential aspect of both organisations and the community (Kolk, 2016; Moravcikova et al., 2015). The development of CSR in the 21st century has been shaped by factors such as globalisation, ICT advancement, and public awareness of the impact of organisations on communities and the environment (Wampole, 2022). The importance of sustainability increased, leading to a trend of sustainability annual reporting and recognition of integrating social and environmental issues into core organisational strategies (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019; Sudirman & Upe, 2021). The evolution of CSR over the years, driven by factors such as

public awareness, financial performance, strategic advantages, and global challenges, has demonstrated that it has emerged as an essential aspect of modern organisational operations, and the rejection of CSR is no longer a viable option for organisations.

2.8 Internal CSR

CSR initiatives can be divided into external and internal. External CSR initiatives encompass relationships with stakeholders and the environment (Jia et al., 2019; Wampole, 2022). External CSR initiatives may include protecting customers' interests, supporting charity, managing natural resources, community development, and maintaining stakeholder transparency and trust (Cheng, 2021; Kacprzak et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). On the other hand, internal CSR initiatives refer to programmes directed towards the organisation's workforce and encompass a range of practices to enhance employees' working conditions, job satisfaction, and overall well-being (Beglari, 2022; Wampole, 2022). These practices can include policies and regulations that ensure employees are provided with healthy and safe working environments, equal opportunities, promoting work-life balance, and support for work-family relationships (Macassa et al., 2021).

Moreover, internal CSR programmes can also offer employees personal and professional development opportunities, such as training programmes, mentoring, coaching, and career planning (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2019). These initiatives are critical for enhancing employee skills, knowledge, and competencies, leading to higher job satisfaction, better employee engagement, and increased productivity (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021; Low, 2016). Research suggests that the success of organisations is significantly reliant on qualified, motivated, and satisfied employees who can meet clients' needs and give the organisation a competitive advantage (Low, 2016; Wampole, 2022). Providing appropriate internal CSR programmes can significantly influence employees' attitudes and behaviour towards organisational commitment, positively

impacting the organisation's sustainability (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). Thus, implementing internal CSR programmes along with positive effects on employees ultimately contributes to an organisation's sustainability and competitive advantage.

2.8.1 Relationship Between CSR and Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) refers to the strategic approach to the effective management of the workforce that helps the organisation obtain a competitive advantage (Santana et al., 2020). Considering the vast scope of internal CSR, there has been uncertainty about whether conventional HRM practices are part of internal CSR programmes (Essanoussi, 2022; Low, 2016). Scholars claimed that CSR extensions include but are not limited to traditional HRM practices (Low, 2016; Santana et al., 2020). For organisations to succeed in promoting sustainable practices and optimising their human resources, both internal CSR and HRM are crucial (Essanoussi, 2022; Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016). They are commonly considered as two inextricably linked components that complement each other, where CSR is a driver to go beyond conventional HRM (Siddiqi et al., 2021; Wampole, 2022).

On the one hand, HRM practices can contribute to the organisation's CSR goals. For instance, inclusive hiring practices, fair labour policies, fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment, and promoting employee development align with the principles of ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in Carroll's CSR Pyramid (Carroll, 1979). In this way, HRM practices can extend beyond traditional roles and incorporate elements of CSR, thus blurring the boundaries between the two (Essanoussi, 2022; Low, 2016).

On the other hand, a strong commitment to CSR can influence HRM policies, creating a work environment that motivates employees, fosters their satisfaction, and enhances organisational loyalty. CSR programmes, such as flexible work arrangements and efforts to maintain work-life

balance, can contribute to a positive workplace culture and a more satisfied workforce (Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016). Telework, an HRM strategy increasingly embraced by organisations, also embodies CSR principles by offering flexibility, promoting employee well-being, and contributing to reduced environmental impact (Mayo et al., 2016; Campo et al., 2021).

According to Siddiqi et al.(2021), CSR and HRM can work together to create a positive work environment for employees and promote sustainable practices. Organisations with a robust CSR programme can provide employees with better job satisfaction and motivation (Santana et al., 2020). From this context, the implementation of telework can align with the goals of both CSR and HRM by providing employees with greater flexibility and control over their work-life balance (Mayo et al., 2016). Moreover, telework can also be a strategic HRM tool for organisations looking to attract and retain top talent (Campo et al., 2021). In today's highly competitive job market, employees are increasingly seeking flexible work arrangements that allow them to balance their professional and personal lives (Johnson et al., 2020). By integrating CSR into HRM policies and practices, organisations can attract and retain talent and promote a positive organisational culture that values social responsibility and ethical behaviour (Mayo et al., 2016). Thus, internal CSR and HRM are two components that complement each other, and by integrating CSR into HRM policies and practices, organisations can create a positive work environment, promote sustainable practices, and attract and retain talent.

2.8.2 OHS

The interest in OHS from the context of CSR has grown significantly in recent years, with many organisations placing particular emphasis on including OHS assessments and measurements in their CSR reports (Parker & Narayanan, 2022; Kuhn et al., 2021). OHS promotion has become an essential part of an organisations CSR strategies that impact employees' well-being and the

organisation's sustainable development (Macassa et al., 2021). It is a multidimensional concept that focuses on the recognition, evaluation, prediction, and prevention of risks associated with the workplace that may harm employees' health and safety and well-being (Evangelinos et al., 2018). It includes the employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being and covers an essential issue of internal stakeholders' interests, positively impacting the organisation's goals achievement (Macassa et al., 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of telework, which can significantly contribute to OHS and CSR efforts (Metwally et al., 2022; Parker & Narayanan, 2022). Telework can reduce the risk of occupational accidents and injuries, reduce the risk of exposure to infectious diseases in the workplace (Parker, 2020), and contribute to lowering psychosocial risks associated with the workplace (Juchnowicz & Kinowska, 2021). It can also reduce commuting time, which can improve employees' work-life balance and reduce stress levels (Macassa et al., 2021; Górny, 2019). Overall, incorporating telework into an organisation's OHS and CSR strategies can significantly and positively impact employees' well-being, work-life balance, and environmental sustainability and should be considered as part of a comprehensive approach to OHS.

2.8.3 Job Satisfaction

Research suggests CSR initiatives have a significant impact on employee job satisfaction (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021; Obeidat et al., 2018). In turn, job satisfaction has been found to be a crucial factor in productivity, employee retention, engagement, and commitment to the organisation (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022; Esmaeelinezhad et al., 2015; Kautonen et al., 2012; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that internal CSR initiatives have a positive correlation with job satisfaction and can increase employee well-being and motivation (Adu-

Gyamfi et al., 2021; Chan & Hasan, 2019; Hossen et al., 2020; Kunda et al., 2019). Conversely, job dissatisfaction has negative consequences, such as increased turnover and absenteeism levels, degradation of organisational commitment, and adverse health outcomes, such as depression, melancholy, and sadness (Hossen et al., 2020; Macassa et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial for organisations to maintain the job satisfaction of their employees, and internal CSR initiatives can assist in achieving this.

Telework can be considered an extension of CSR initiatives for organisations that promote employee well-being (Mayo et al., 2016; Metwally et al., 2022). The provision of telework arrangements can enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction by allowing employees to work in a flexible and comfortable environment, reducing stress related to commuting and improving work-life balance (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2020; Schall, 2019). However, telework can also lead to feelings of isolation, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, and increased workload, which may negatively impact job satisfaction (Beauregard et al., 2019; Elbaz et al., 2022; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Still, internal CSR initiatives that focus on employee support can significantly mitigate the potential adverse effects of telework (Núñez-Sánchez et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2021). By providing social support, organisations can increase employees' sense of reciprocity and commitment to the organisation and its goals (Hossen et al., 2020).

The relationship between internal CSR initiatives and telework is a two-way dependency. From one side, telework can be considered an extension of internal CSR initiatives, as it supports employee well-being and work-life balance, which are essential components of a socially responsible organisation. On the other hand, internal CSR initiatives can play a critical role in mitigating the challenges and risks associated with telework. Therefore, internal CSR initiatives

and telework can complement each other and create a more supportive and sustainable work environment.

2.8.4 Work-life Balance

Another component of internal CSR is employees' work-life balance. CSR programmes related to work-life balance are described as organisational initiatives which focus on improving employee experience in work and non-work roles aimed to fit them together considering employees' personal values, goals, and system of life (Story et al., 2016). Brough et al. (2020) suggest that work-life balance is an issue which has a great capacity to affect organisational outcomes such as employee work engagement, turnover intentions, and job performance. Moreover, the balance between work and private life reduces employees' stress and sadness, which can cause psychological and physical health problems (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). Therefore, the implementation of initiatives regarding work-life balance is one of the crucial aspects of internal CSR policies and is essential for creating a healthy, sustainable, and supportive work environment for employees.

Telework has become a popular topic of discussion as a means to improve work-life balance (Beauregard et al., 2019; Shieh, 2019; Uzun, 2021). Therefore, it can be considered a tool for internal CSR programmes. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant shift in employees' attitudes towards telework, resulting in high demand for telework options (Vyas, 2022). The lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic have established a "new normal" where employees want the opportunity to telework, at least part-time (Karako et al., 2020). As employees are essential internal stakeholders (Wampole, 2022), organisations committed to CSR cannot ignore employees' growing demand for telework. To meet this demand, organisations must adopt flexible work arrangements that accommodate telework. Promoting a culture that values and

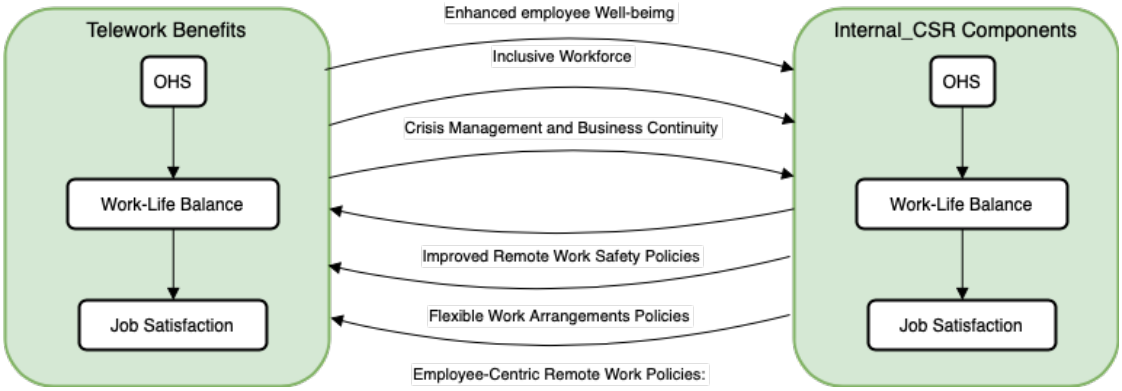
respects employees' personal time and well-being is also essential for demonstrating adherence to CSR (Brough et al., 2020). By implementing work-life balance initiatives, organisations provide benefits for employees and foster a more positive work environment, increasing productivity, employee engagement, and overall well-being for individuals, their families, and communities (Shieh, 2019). Therefore, the implementation of telework as a component of internal CSR policies can create a healthy, sustainable, and supportive work environment for employees and benefit both employees and organisations.

2.9 The Potential Role of Internal CSR for Successful Telework

Although telework has the potential to positively impact various aspects associated with the goals of CSR, such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, and OHS, it may also pose particular challenges. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic forced organisations to quickly shift to telework without sufficient time to plan and adjust critical structural elements such as procedures, policies, and frameworks (Zappalà et al., 2021). Bérastégui (2021) claims that an unprepared transition during such a turbulent time may result in employees holding negative attitudes towards telework and not realising its potential benefits. Conversely, if telework is considered an organisational and human resource innovation, and appropriate adjustments are made to governance structures, relationships, and mechanisms of coordination and control, its implementation can be effective (Green et al., 2020). According to Beauregard et al. (2019), a successful telework programme requires appropriate regulation, consistent monitoring to evaluate performance and progress, and organisational support. Therefore, by implementing appropriate management strategies and consistently maintaining them, organisations can effectively reduce the potential adverse effects of telework, thereby ensuring its success as a long-term practice.

Figure 2.1

The Interrelationship between Internal CSR Components and Telework Outcomes



Furthermore, internal CSR is often related to the policy-making guidance that enables decision-makers to design initiatives that contribute more constructively to an improved workplace environment (Jamali et al., 2015; Siltaloppi et al., 2021). From the context of telework management, CSR, in conjunction with HRM, can develop and promote programmes that include shaping corporate culture, providing employee training and support, and OHS policies.

Shaping corporate culture is essential for creating a positive work environment that supports telework. This can involve promoting a culture of trust, communication, and collaboration, which can help build a sense of community and connection among teleworking employees (Jämsen et al., 2022; Rogers, 2022). CSR policies related to corporate culture can include providing opportunities for team building and social interaction, promoting open communication channels, and recognising employee contributions (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020; Stoian et al., 2022). Appropriate communication, support, and a sense of community can help teleworking employees feel more connected and engaged and eventually mitigate the feeling of social isolation during telework (Graham et al., 2023; Rogers, 2022). Overall, shaping a positive

corporate culture through internal CSR policies and guidelines can be crucial for creating a supportive telework environment that fosters a sense of community and connection among employees, ultimately leading to improved well-being.

Employee training is also crucial for successful telework (Beauregard et al., 2019). Teleworking employees may require specific skills and training to perform their work effectively from remote telework locations (Ma, 2021). CSR policies related to employee training can include providing relevant tutoring programmes and resources, offering access to ICT support, and promoting ongoing professional development opportunities (Gould et al., 2020; Onkila & Sarna, 2022). Moreover, internal CSR policies and guidelines related to work-life boundaries can facilitate employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Golob & Podnar, 2021). These policies can include setting clear guidelines for work hours and availability, promoting regular breaks and rest periods, and providing resources and training for effective time management and prioritisation (Bartlett et al., 2021). Thus, incorporating employee training, ICT support, and work-life balance guidelines into internal CSR policies can enhance the effectiveness of teleworking and support employees' well-being, which in turn can lead to improved job satisfaction.

According to Schall and Chen (2022), OHS policies are essential to ensure that employees working remotely have access to the necessary equipment and ergonomically designed workspaces to perform their job without compromising their health and safety. It is crucial for organisations to understand the risks and challenges associated with telework and take appropriate measures to ensure the well-being of their employees. Implementing CSR policies related to OHS can include providing guidelines for teleworking employees to set up a safe workspace (Koo & Ki, 2020). For instance, guidelines can include suggestions for setting up a comfortable chair and desk, proper lighting, and a suitable computer monitor height (Sarsak, 2022). Furthermore, CSR policies can

ensure that the equipment and ICT used for teleworking are appropriate and well-maintained (Bolisetty et al., 2023). Overall, by implementing CSR policies related to OHS for teleworking employees, and organisations can create a healthy and safe work environment, which, in turn, can boost employee job satisfaction and well-being. Such policies demonstrate a commitment to employees' well-being and can help reduce the risk of work-related injuries and illnesses.

2.10 Research Gaps

The literature review explored various aspects of telework, including its evolution, benefits, challenges, OSH, HRM and its relationship with internal CSR. While telework has been found to have the potential to impact employee work-life balance and job satisfaction positively, it also presents challenges, such as social isolation and establishing clear boundaries between work and non-work domains. It was discovered the COVID-19 pandemic had induced the widespread adoption of telework, which led to an increased discussion in the academic literature on telework and its outcomes with a highlight on aspects such as health and safety, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. Furthermore, it was found that the employees' demand for telework has grown, and will persist in the long term. However, the data on the current demand for telework among specific groups in New Zealand, such as back-office personnel, are limited. Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by investigating the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework, with a specific focus on exploring the demand and drivers for telework, particularly in terms of work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the literature review highlighted that crucial internal CSR aspects such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, HRM and OHS significantly overlap with the benefits that telework can offer. However, the role of telework in supporting internal CSR and vice versa is not well covered in the existing literature. Therefore, this research aims to explore the attitudes of New

Zealand back-office personnel towards telework as an internal CSR extension in New Zealand. Through addressing the identified gaps in the literature, this research has the potential to offer valuable insights for policymakers and organisations on the implementation of telework and internal CSR policies to foster a more sustainable organisation and meet the expectations of internal stakeholders.

Chapter 3: Research Method

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a thorough examination of the research design, methodology, approaches, and instruments employed in this research. It presents a detailed account of the procedures undertaken to gather and analyse data, enabling the findings to be comprehended and assessed. It begins with an outline of the research design, encompassing the overarching strategy for the questionnaire. Furthermore, the chapter explores the methodology, the standards for selecting and recruiting participants, the methods used to gather data, and the strategies applied to analyse the collected data. It ultimately concludes with a discussion of the ethical principles and considerations addressed throughout this research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is a specific framework that outlines how research will be conducted to achieve its objectives and answer the research questions. It is a crucial element of research, establishing the groundwork for all subsequent stages (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). It encompasses elements such as data collection and analysis methods, sample size and sampling technique, data-gathering instruments, and the strategies employed for data analysis (Rahi, 2017).

Figure 3.2

This research design

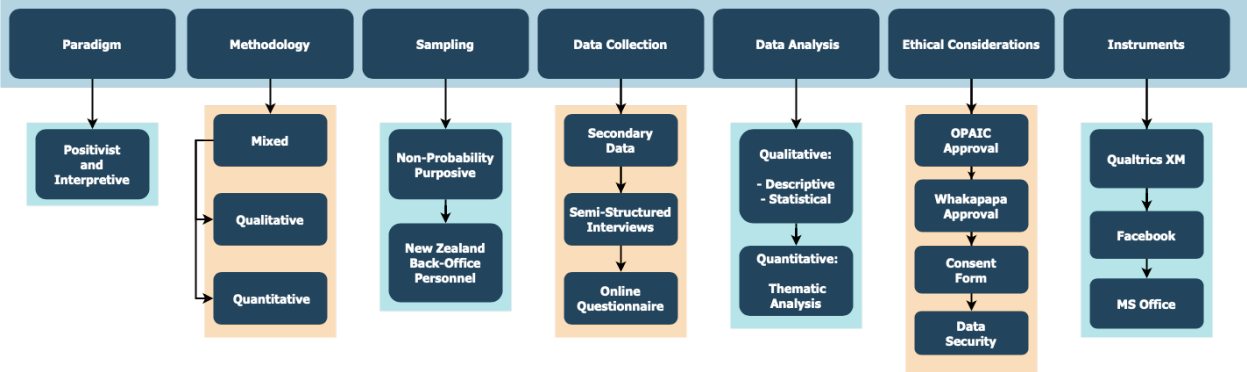


Figure 3.1 presents a detailed framework of the design of this research, which adopted both positivist and interpretive paradigms, integrating a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique, focusing on New Zealand back-office personnel as its target population. Primary qualitative and quantitative data was collected via an questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the participants. Data analysis tools included descriptive and statistical methods for quantitative data, alongside thematic analysis for qualitative data. Additionally, this research design encompassed an ethical considerations checklist and details instruments utilised.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms serve as philosophical frameworks that shape the understanding and interpretation of scientific research and knowledge (Samy & Robertson, 2017). They encompass specific assumptions and beliefs about reality and science's role in influencing research design, conduct, and interpretation (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Varied perspectives on objectivity, subjectivity, the researcher-subject relationship, and knowledge generation can result in different

outcomes (Rahi, 2017). Essentially, a research paradigm embodies a researcher's beliefs and methods that form their perception of reality.

In academic studies, considering diverse research philosophies is crucial, as they offer a framework for understanding research problems and guide the selection of research methods and data collection techniques (Rahi, 2017). It is vital to understand ontology (assumptions about reality) and epistemology (assumptions about knowledge) to ascertain one's philosophical stance and its impact on study design (Bonache & Festing, 2020).

Epistemological assumptions can be broadly categorised into positivist and interpretive, while positivist epistemology asserts that knowledge is objective, universal, and verifiable through empirical observation and experimentation (Rahi, 2017). Conversely, interpretive epistemology posits that knowledge is subjective and influenced by individual experiences and perspectives (Bonache & Festing, 2020).

The positivist paradigm involves a systematic and rigorous investigation, starting with a well-defined problem or research question, followed by data collection, analysis, and interpretation to generate knowledge about the phenomenon being researched (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Positivist researchers strive for objectivity and neutrality, believing it is possible to obtain an unbiased understanding of the world (Park et al., 2020). However, this paradigm may struggle to capture complex social phenomena and human behaviour, as it focuses on quantifiable data and overlooks individuals' subjective experiences (Bonache & Festing, 2020).

In contrast, the interpretive paradigm, often associated with qualitative research, adopts a subjective, empathetic, and reflexive approach (Park et al., 2020). Researchers engage closely with participants, listen to their narratives, and strive to understand their experiences from their perspectives. The goal is to comprehend individuals' personal experiences and the meanings they

ascribe to them (Bonache & Festing, 2020). Nevertheless, interpretive research focuses on meaning-making and individualised analysis rather than statistical methods, which may result in potential bias, limited generalisability, and challenges in verifying results (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating elements of both positivist and interpretive paradigms within a post-positivist lens, suggesting that while we can never attain absolute truth, we can get close to it through rigorous scientific inquiry (Samy & Robertson, 2017). The employment of the post-positivist paradigm allows for a more nuanced exploration of the research problem, offering a more holistic understanding by integrating the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Park et al., 2020).

3.4 Research Methodology

The research methodology determines the overall approach and strategies for collecting and analysing data, ultimately impacting the validity and reliability of the research findings (Rahman, 2016). Research approaches can be divided into three main types: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Mccrudden et al., 2019). Quantitative research focuses on measuring and collecting numerical data, using statistical analysis to make inferences about the population (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). In contrast, qualitative research aims to understand individual's experiences, attitudes, and perspectives through qualitative data, such as observations and interviews (Williams, 2007). The third approach, mixed methods, combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research question (Mccrudden et al., 2019).

In this research, the post-positivism paradigm has been embraced, wherein descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data and qualitative data were utilised to enhance

comprehension and refine the findings. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve the research its objectives and address the research questions. The mixed-method approach enhances confidence in the findings by counterbalancing the limitations of using either qualitative or quantitative methods exclusively and leveraging the complementary strengths of both approaches (Williams, 2007). Mixed-methods research offers several advantages, including data triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of findings, consideration of multiple perspectives to enhance understanding of complex phenomena and greater flexibility in data collection and analysis (Mccrudden et al., 2019).

The mixed-methods approach comprised of a combination of various research techniques and involved reviewing open information sources, including scientific articles on telework and CSR. The literature review informed the design of a set of questions for interviews and a questionnaire employed in this research. The questionnaire was administered to New Zealand back-office personnel who had teleworking experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the interviews were conducted with a subset of the respondents who completed the survey.

Data analysis for this research involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. For the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis methods were used to summarise the data and identify relationships between variables. For the qualitative data gathered from the interviews, a thematic analysis approach was employed. The quantitative data was analysed and then combined with the qualitative data for a thorough understanding of the data, enhancing the validity of the findings. This multi-facet approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject and provide insights that may have been missed using only one research method.

3.5 Data Collections Tools

After careful consideration of the subject matter, the most effective methods for collecting the necessary information were determined to be interviews and a questionnaire from the participants. These methods were specifically chosen for their efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as they required minimal investment of time and financial resources, while still allowing a substantial number of participants to be involved (Bryman, 2016). The researcher believed that the questions included in both the interviews and the questionnaire were unambiguous and free of bias. It was also important that the answer options provided were mutually exclusive and comprehensive. To guarantee the efficacy and accuracy of these research tools, both the interview and questionnaire underwent a thorough review process by the research supervisor, and co-supervisor, and received approval from the Ethical Committee of Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus (OPAIC). This process ensured that these research instruments adhered to ethical standards and guidelines, addressing any potential issues or gaps prior to their use with the participants.

The number of interviews conducted was ten, with each participant from the pool of survey respondents, offering a rich, in-depth perspective on the research questions. The Qualtrics eXperience Management (XM) platform was selected for gathering quantitative data due to its reputation as a highly professional and advanced tool for data collection. This platform features a user-friendly interface, making it easy to design and customise questionnaires, as well as advanced analytics and data visualisation tools that simplify the analysis and interpretation of collected data (Qualtrics, n.d.). In addition, Qualtrics XM takes the privacy and security of participant data very seriously and provides robust security measures, including secure data storage, backup and recovery options (Qualtrics, n.d.).

A questionnaire is a widely used research tool that allows the researcher to gather information from participants regarding their attitudes, experiences, or opinions (Taherdoost, 2019). Various types of questions can be included in a questionnaire, including closed-ended questions, such as multiple-choice or Likert scale questions, and open-ended questions that allow for elaboration and expression in the participants' own words (Jablokow et al., 2019). The questionnaire used in this research was designed with the guidance of existing literature, focusing on perceived benefits, challenges, and attitudes towards telework. The questionnaire used in this research consisted of a total of 33 questions. Of these 33 questions, 12 were multiple-choice, and 21 were on a five-point Likert scale. The five-point Likert scale provided a standardised and easy-to-use method for measuring participants' opinions, attitudes, or beliefs on various topics (Jablokow et al., 2019). At the same time, multiple-choice questions offer a more straightforward way of gathering data on specific topics. The combination of these two question types in the questionnaire allowed the researcher to gather a well-rounded understanding of the participants' perspectives and opinions (Taherdoost, 2019).

The interviews were accurately planned with the objective of obtaining insightful information about the research questions from the participants. The interviews consisted of nine open-ended questions, each question mapping to themes identified from the literature review. These interviews were designed in a semi-structured format, providing the researcher with a flexible approach to the questioning process. While a pre-determined set of questions was prepared, the researcher was also able to probe further based on the participants' responses. The semi-structured nature of the interviews facilitated the collection of rich qualitative data by exploring the participants' experiences, perspectives, and opinions regarding the research topic (Husband, 2020). The interview consisted of nine open-ended questions, which allowed the

participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences, thereby granting the researcher a deeper understanding of the research topic from the perspective of the participants. The questions explore the participant's timeline of teleworking and their attitudes towards telework before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions also research the perceived benefits and challenges of telework. Additionally, the questions probed the experiences and opinions of the participants regarding telework and its impact on various aspects of their work and personal lives, including job satisfaction, work-life balance, and their views on telework as a benefit offered by organisations.

By combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, addressing the research questions from multiple perspectives and offering a more nuanced analysis (Jablokow et al., 2019). The final versions of the questions for the interview and the questionnaire can be found in Appendices 1 and 2, respectively.

3.6 Research Participants

The target population for this research comprised of New Zealand back-office personnel who utilised telework to perform tasks and interact with colleagues and clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was designed to be inclusive and not biased towards any specific demographic characteristics such as age group, ethnicity, or gender. However, the inclusion criteria for participants included being at least 18 years old and having worked in their current position during periods of COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand. To specify, nationwide level four lockdowns were generally implemented in August and November 2020 in response to local outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cumming, 2022). However, some regions, such as Auckland, experienced additional lockdowns in other periods according to the history of the

COVID-19 alert system (Mayer & Boston, 2022). Another valuable but not mandatory criterion was that participants have continued to telework, either full-time or on a hybrid telework schedule combining remote and office-based work. This criterion reflects the trend towards increased flexibility and telework that has emerged in many industries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021).

This research applied a targeted sampling strategy, as the required data would be more accurate from participants who meet the specific criteria represented in a sample rather than selecting a sample randomly from a larger population (Thiblin et al., 2022). Stratton (2021) claims that using a targeted sampling strategy increases accuracy by selecting a sample that resents a subgroup of specific interest because the study findings are more likely to reflect the characteristics of that subgroup correctly. Also, targeted sampling implies a better generalisation by reducing bias and focusing on the particular subgroup's interest, which makes the research more meaningful and relevant to that group (Stratton, 2021).

Nevertheless, the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, which was promoted via social media, presented some challenges in thoroughly verifying the professional background of all participants. Utilising social media as a platform for conducting questionnaires has the advantage of reaching a wider audience and collecting a larger number of responses, but it may also lead to less control over the participants' characteristics (Ali et al., 2020). Anonymity in this research was essential, as it encourages participants to provide open and honest responses without fear of any repercussions or judgement (Roberts & Allen, 2015). The benefits of anonymity outweighed the potential limitations in verifying the professional background of participants. To mitigate these limitations, the researcher included screening questions at the beginning of the questionnaire. These screening questions required participants to confirm their job roles and teleworking

experience, ensuring that only participants who met the research criteria proceeded with the questionnaire. Therefore, this research's targeted sampling strategy, combined with anonymity and screening questions, aimed to accurately represent the attitudes towards telework among the participants while ensuring a secure and supportive environment for participants to share their experiences.

3.7 Recruitment and Data Collection

Following the identification of the criteria for the participants and the finalisation of the sets of questions for the questionnaire and interviews, the researcher composed the recruitment message text, which served as the foundation for the invitation to participate in this research. The recruitment message text included details regarding the research, such as its purpose, the eligibility criteria for potential participants, and the URL link to the questionnaire.

In order to recruit a sample that met the specified criteria for the research, the researcher employed a combination of personal networking strategies. The primary method employed was the distribution of an invitation post to various New Zealand community groups on Facebook, which was complemented by sending personalised messages to acquaintances via various distribution channels. These personalised messages offered the researcher the opportunity to engage with potential participants directly and to provide them with additional information regarding this research, including the steps involved in the participation process. This approach was advantageous as it allowed the researcher to reach potential participants who met the desired criteria and with whom the researcher already had established relationships, thereby increasing the likelihood of their participation (Thiblin et al., 2022). Additionally, the researcher utilised personal networks by seeking the assistance of people who were employed in New Zealand back-office positions. These individuals were asked to share the invitation with their colleagues within their

respective organisations. This approach allowed the researcher to engage with employees from several IT and accounting firms located in different cities in New Zealand.

If a potential participant consented to undertake the questionnaire, they clicked on the URL address in the recruitment message text and were redirected to the questionnaire. This was hosted on the Qualtrics XM platform and was structured in a series of blocks, each containing a set of questions that needed to be completed to proceed to the next section. Using a platform like Qualtrics XM ensured the secure collection and storage of data and provided the researcher with tools to manage and analyse the collected data (Qualtrics, n.d.). By dividing the questionnaire into blocks, the researcher aimed to reduce the potential for participant fatigue and enhance the overall questionnaire experience (Roberts & Allen, 2015). The initial page of the questionnaire consisted of a message for the participants that detailed the purpose of this research and the eligibility criteria for participation and provided links to both the consent form and the participant information sheet. This was crucial in ensuring that participants fully understood the nature of this research and the expectations of those who chose to participate. The inclusion of the consent form and participant information sheet also provided participants with additional information regarding their rights as research participants and the steps involved in the participation process. By presenting this information upfront, the researcher aimed to increase transparency, build trust with the participants, and comply with the research ethics regulations.

The final page of the questionnaire expressed gratitude to the participants their time and willingness to engage in this research. This also, included information advising that the researcher was looking for participants for the interview on the same topic, estimated to take between 15-25 minutes. If the participant agreed to take part in the interview, they were asked to email the researcher, with the heading "Interview participation". This approach was adopted due to the

anonymous nature of the questionnaire, which required that participants' personal information and contact details would not be collected. By asking participants to email the researcher directly, this enabled the collection of the necessary information for scheduling an interview and ensuring that the questionnaire responses remained anonymous. In addition, participants were informed that they could request a copy of the completed research through the same email address.

The data collection process lasted for approximately two months, January and February 2023. During this time, the researcher was able to gather a total of 125 responses to the questionnaire. Out of these responses, 101 were fully completed, while the participants left the rest with varying levels of completion. Also, the researcher received 10 emails from participants expressing their willingness to participate in interviews which were scheduled and conducted shortly after receiving their consent. The researcher believed that the sample size for the interviews was adequate for reaching saturation, as qualitative research often achieves saturation with a relatively small sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The interviews were conducted online via Microsoft (MS) Teams and Zoom platforms, selected for their ease of use and accessibility (Husband, 2020). These platforms facilitated the recording, saving, and transcription of the data, ensuring its accuracy and suitability for analysis (Husband, 2020). Moreover, the use of these online platforms enabled the researcher to conduct interviews with participants from different regions of New Zealand, including the South island, thereby increasing the geographical diversity of the sample.

3.8 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involved multiple stages, including gathering data, cleaning, transforming, creating models, and interpreting the results (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2021). A common method for approaching data analysis is using a linear, structured approach that helps to

ensure that each necessary step is completed systematically and efficiently (Raskind et al., 2019). However, data is often complex and disorganised, and a single method of analysis may not always be sufficient to understand the data fully. Thus, it is significant for researchers to be flexible and use a combination of different analysis methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data (Mccrudden et al., 2019).

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were employed. In the quantitative data analysis, descriptive methods were utilised. Descriptive analysis was used to summarise and describe the main features of the collected data, such as central tendency and dispersion, providing an overview of the general trends and patterns within the data (Black & Babin, 2019).

For the qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was applied to the data obtained from the interviews. This method involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis allowed a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, attitudes, and perspectives regarding telework (Williams, 2007). The researcher began by thoroughly reading all the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data. Initial codes were generated by assigning labels to segments of the text representing meaningful ideas or concepts relevant to the research question. The coded data were then grouped into potential themes by examining the relationships and patterns between the codes. Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture the essence of the data and effectively convey its meaning. Finally, the themes and their analysis were integrated into a coherent narrative, supported by quotations from the data to illustrate the themes and provide evidence for the findings.

To enhance the validity of the research findings, the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses were compared and triangulated. Specifically, patterns observed in the

quantitative data were explored in more depth through the qualitative data, allowing for a richer understanding of the experiences of back-office personnel in relation to telework. This integration of findings from different methods offered a means to cross-verify the data, thus enhancing the overall credibility and validity of the research conclusions (Black & Babin, 2019). The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods facilitated a more holistic understanding of the research questions and provided valuable insights into the attitudes and experiences of the participants towards telework (Mccrudden et al., 2019).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to OPAIC ethical principles and guidelines to ensure that it was carried out with the respect for the rights, dignity, and welfare of the participants and followed the guidelines of the Ethics Committee at the OPAIC, for which ethics approval was granted (AIC113, refer to Appendix A).

Participants were informed about the purpose of this research, the procedures involved, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time without explanation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were aware of the research objectives. For the interviews, participants were provided with a written consent form outlining the purpose of the research and the interview process. The researcher ensured that participants fully understood the information and were given the opportunity to ask questions before signing the consent form. This process aimed to ensure that the consent was informed and voluntary.

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout this research to safeguard the privacy and interests of the participants. Personal information for the questionnaire was not collected, ensuring the researcher could not identify any participants. For interview participants,

personal information was not disclosed, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identities and prevent any connection to the data. All collected data were securely stored, with access restricted to the researcher and authorised individuals only. All primary data collected by the researcher is maintained for seven years as per OPAIC policies.

The researcher ensured that the data collection process was conducted respectfully, avoiding any potential harm or discomfort to the participants. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings freely, with the researcher remaining sensitive to their emotions and well-being. Finally, in reporting the findings of the researcher ensured that the results were presented objectively and accurately without any bias or misrepresentation of the data.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology adopted, the objectives being to investigate the attitudes and experiences of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods through a questionnaire and interviews. The target population was defined as New Zealand back-office personnel who had experience with teleworking during periods of New Zealand COVID-19 lockdowns.

The participant recruitment process involved using personal networks and social media platforms to invite eligible participants to take part. Data collection occurred over two months during 2023, with 101 fully completed responses to the questionnaire, followed by 10 interviews being conducted.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive methods for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Ethical considerations were followed, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and welfare. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and data were securely stored.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

This chapter represents a crucial stage in this research, as it constitutes an in-depth examination of the empirical data gathered and it delves into a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, extracted, and processed through quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.

4.1 Dataset Pre-processing

This research utilised two datasets, namely questionnaire responses and interview responses, as primary sources of data for analysis. The questionnaire was started by 125 participants, with 24 failing to complete thethe questionnaire. These 24 responses were excluded from the analysis as theywere not completed. The remaining 101 questionnaire responses were completed and used in the analysis. The researcher utilised Qualtrics XM chart tools and Microsoft (MS) Excel pivot tables to organise the various variables and create visual aids. The raw data collected from the Qualtrics XM platform was exported to MS Excel, and unnecessary columns such as date, time, and duration were removed, leaving only the columns containing answers to the 32 questions. The dataset contained numerous non-numerical data that could not be subjected to quantitative analysis. Codes or numbers were then assigned to the non-numerical data. The data gathered through the Likert scale were coded numerically, with a value of 5 representing “strongly agree,” 4 for “somewhat agree,” 3 for “neither agree nor disagree,” 2 for “somewhat disagree,” and 1 for “strongly disagree.” To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, with a value of 0.793. This result indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency, supporting the reliability of the questionnaire items in measuring the attitudes towards telework (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Ten participants participated in the interviews. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed to create a text document. This document was then cleaned to remove irrelevant information and ensure participant anonymity. The researcher then reviewed the text document and identified key phrases and ideas that related to the research objectives. These phrases and ideas were assigned codes, which were then grouped into categories based on their relevance to the interview questions or themes that emerged from the data. The categories were refined and merged as necessary to represent the data accurately. A codebook was created that listed all the codes and categories used in the analysis, along with their definitions and examples. The coded data were analysed using thematic analysis.

4.2 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was designed to gather data relevant to three research questions:

1. Is there a demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the drivers for this need?

2. What attitudes do New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction?

3. What are the New Zealand back-office personnel's attitudes toward telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future?

The following section provides an analysis of the participants' responses. The findings from the analysis contributed to providing insights and answering these research questions.

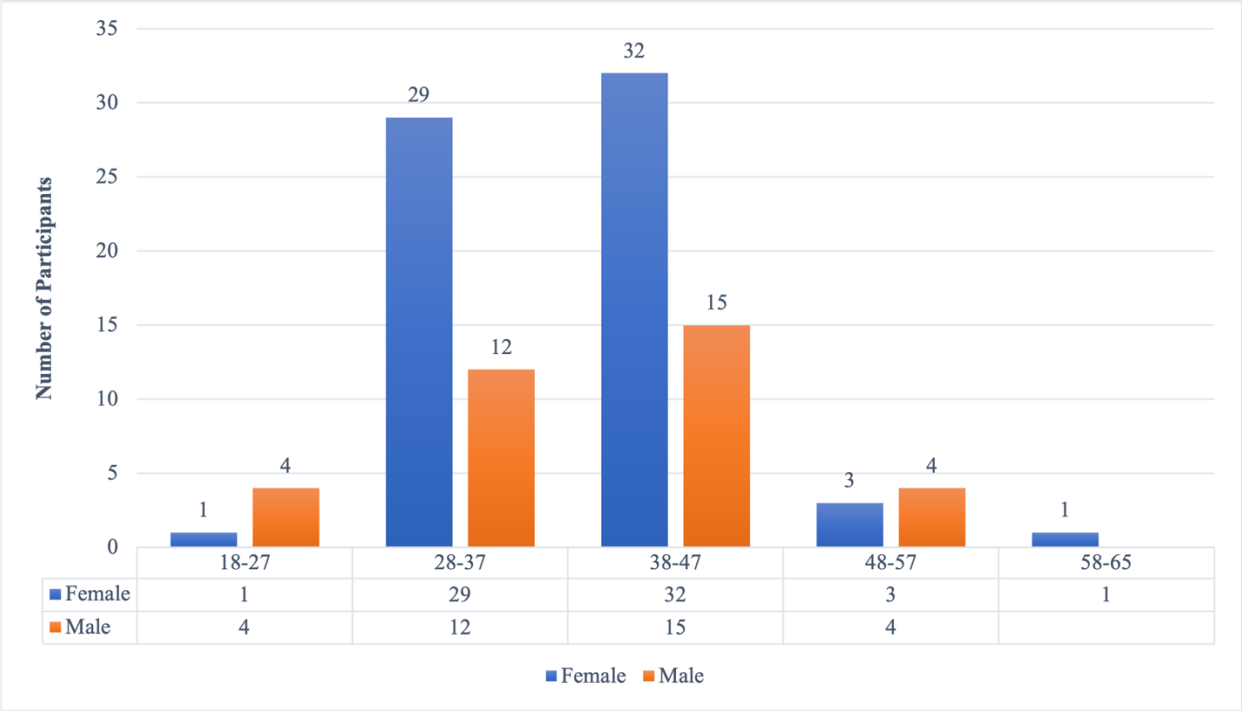
4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics

This section examines the demographics of the participants. Figure 4.1 displays the age distribution of the participants by gender, comprising two-thirds of females, accounting for 65.3% (n=66) of the sample, while males accounted for 34.7% (n=35). The questionnaire provided three

options for gender: male, female, or prefer not to answer. Despite the option in the questionnaire to not specify gender, all participants chose to identify as either male or female.

Figure 4.1

Participant's Age Demographics by Gender Subgroup

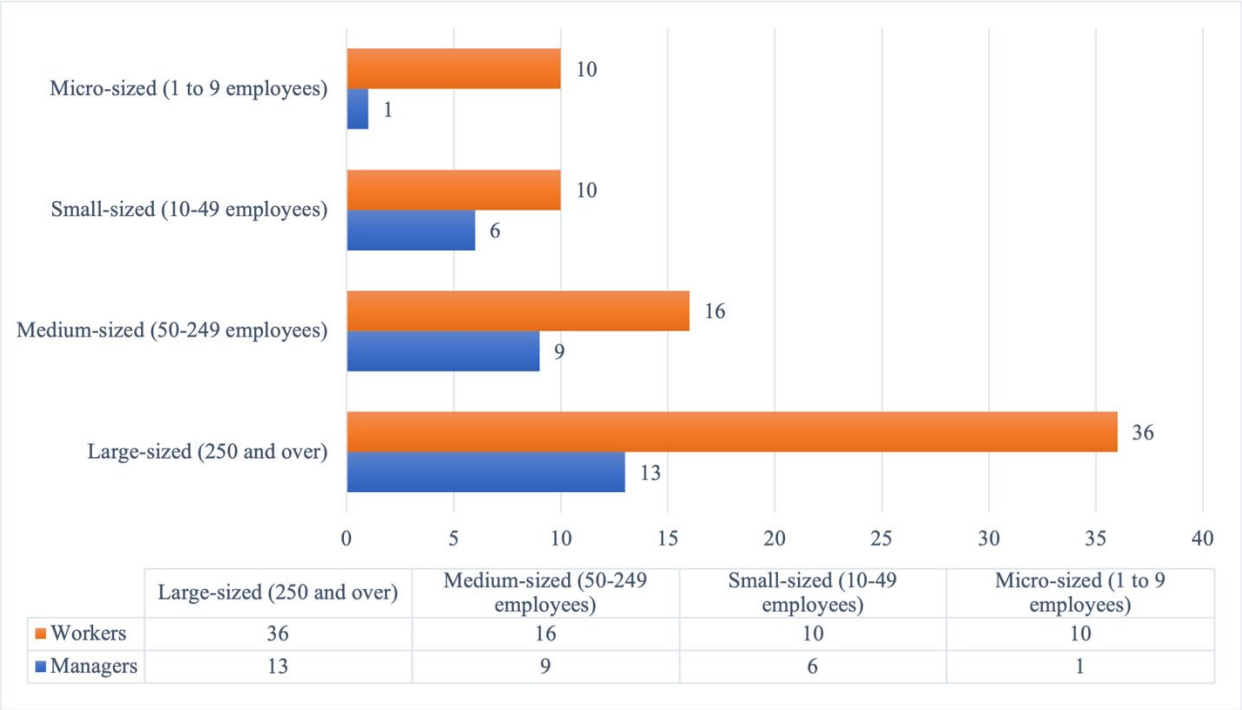


The most prevalent age group among the participants was 38-47 years, accounting for 46.5% (n=47) of the sample, followed by 28-37 years at 40.6% (n=41). The other age groups were less common, with 6.9% (n=7) belonging to the 48-57 years group, 5% (n=5) to the 18-27 years group, and only 1% (n=1) in the 58-65 years group, with no participants aged over 65 years. The data suggest that most participants were middle-aged, with those aged between 38-47 years representing the largest group. This may indicate that participants in this age range are more likely to participate in questionnaire related to telework, or that they are more likely to be employed in positions that offer telework options.

The participants were asked about their job positions, with a division between manager/supervisor and worker roles, and the size of the organisations they were employed by. The distribution of participants based on their job roles and the size of the organisations is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Participant Job Positions and Size of the Organisation They Are Employed By



	Large-sized (250 and over)	Medium-sized (50-249 employees)	Small-sized (10-49 employees)	Micro-sized (1 to 9 employees)
Workers	36	16	10	10
Managers	13	9	6	1

Among participants (n=72) belonged to the worker category, accounting for 71.3% of the sample, while the manager/supervisor category participants (n=29), represented 28.7% of the total sample. The breakdown based on the size of the organisations is as follows: 48.5% of participants (n=49) worked in large-sized organisations (250 and over), 24.8% of participants (n=25) worked in medium-sized organisations (50-249 employees), 15.8% of participants (n=16) worked in small-sized organisations (10-49 employees), and 10.9% of participants (n=11) worked in micro-sized

organisations (1 to 9 employees). The data suggest that most participants were categorised as workers with managers/supervisors comprising a smaller segment of the sample. This may indicate that those in worker positions were more likely to be impacted by or interested in the topic of this research or that such positions are more commonly associated with telework roles. While the sample of this study had more participants from larger organisations, patterns merely reflect the participant distribution in this study and may not represent the wider population.

4.2.2 Telework Availability and Intensity Rate Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The questionnaire inquired about various aspects of telework, including its availability both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of days per week spent telworking before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ideal number of telework days preferred by the participants.

Figure 4.3

Availability of Telework Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

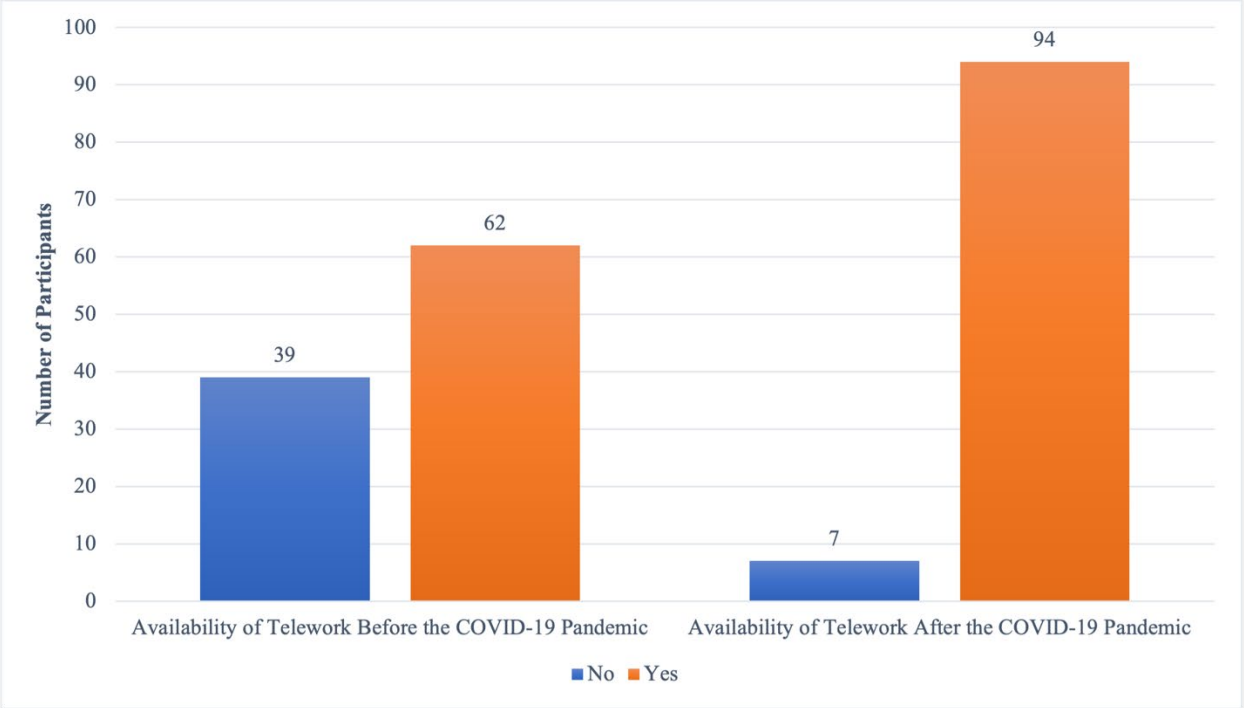


Figure 4.3 illustrates the availability of telework before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, telework was accessible to 61.4% of participants (n=62), while after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of participants with access to telework increased significantly to 93.1% (n=94). This represents a significant growth of 51.6% in the availability of telework after the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in access to telework can be attributed to the widespread adoption of telework as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for organisations to continue their operations while keeping their employees safe. It is likely that this trend towards teleworking will continue in the future, as many organisations and employees have found it to be a viable alternative to traditional office-based work.

Figure 4.4

Telework Rate Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

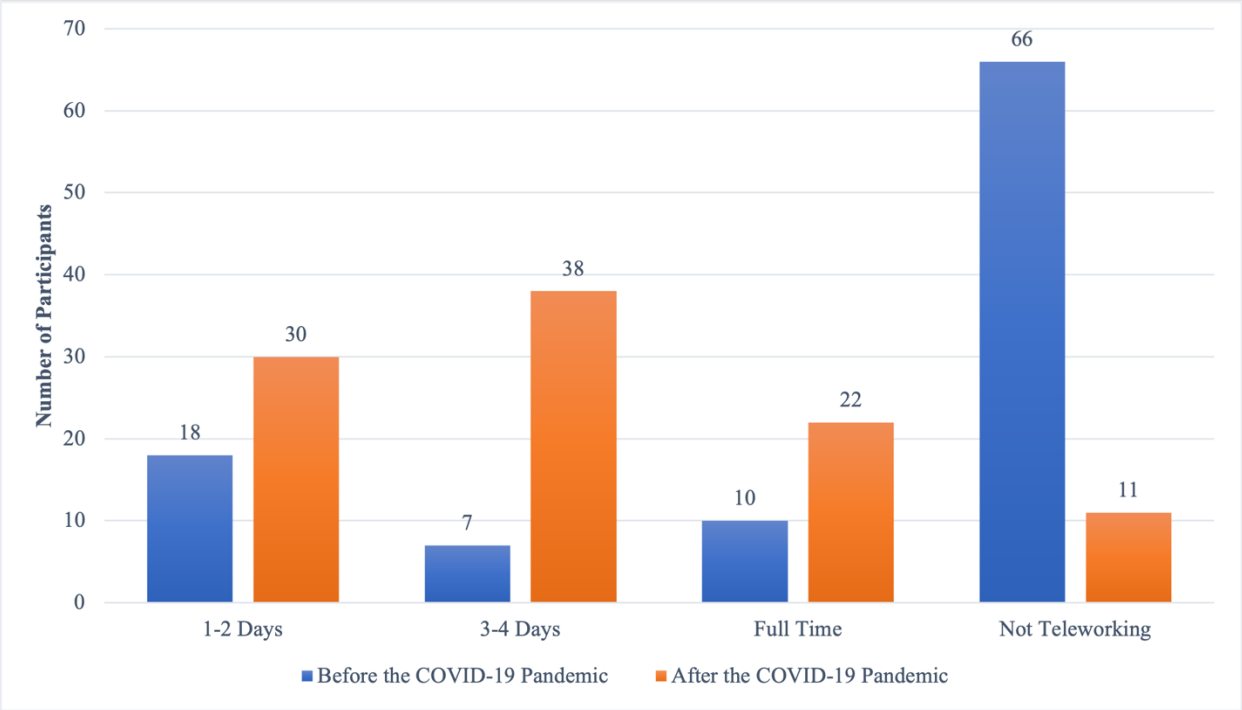


Figure 4.4 illustrates the telework rate before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, categorised into four groups: “1-2 days per week”, “3-4 days per week”, “Full-time”, and “Not teleworking”. Before the COVID_19 pandemic, 65.3% (n=66) of participants did not telework, while only 9.9% (n=10) of participants worked full-time, 6.9% (n=7) of participants worked 3-4 days per week, and 1-2 days per week worked 17.8% (n=18) of participants. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation changed significantly. At the time of the questionnaire, when the implementation of telework became voluntary compared to the compulsory application during the COVID-19 pandemic, only 10.9% (n=11) of participants did not telework, while 21.8% (n=22) participants worked full-time, 37.6% (n=38) participants worked 3-4 days per week, and 29.7% (n=30) participants worked 1-2 days per week. The initial shift towards telework during the

COVID-19 pandemic can be attributed to the social distancing measures and lockdowns that governments mandated to cope with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the rate of telework remains high even after the easing of these COVID-19 mandates, indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic has likely had a lasting impact on work arrangements and attitudes towards telework. This is likely since many organisations and their employees have found that telework can be effective. As employees and employers became more accustomed to telework, it became a viable option even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The growth in the percentage of teleworkers in each category is remarkable. The percentage of participants teleworking full-time increased more than twice, from 9.9% before the COVID-19 pandemic to 21.8% after the COVID-19 pandemic (a growth of 119%; n=10 to n=22). The rate of participants teleworking 3-4 days per week also increased significantly from 6.9% before to 37.6% after the COVID-19 pandemic (a growth of 442.9%; n=7 to n=38). Furthermore, the percentage of participants teleworking 1-2 days per week increased from 17.8% before the COVID-19 pandemic to 29.7% after the COVID-19 pandemic (a growth of 67.4%; n=18 to n=30). Finally, the percentage of non-teleworking participants reduced significantly from 17.8% before the COVID-19 pandemic to 29.7% after the COVID-19 pandemic (a decrease of 83.3%; n=66 to n=11). Overall, the data shows a significant shift towards telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with more participants choosing to telework even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

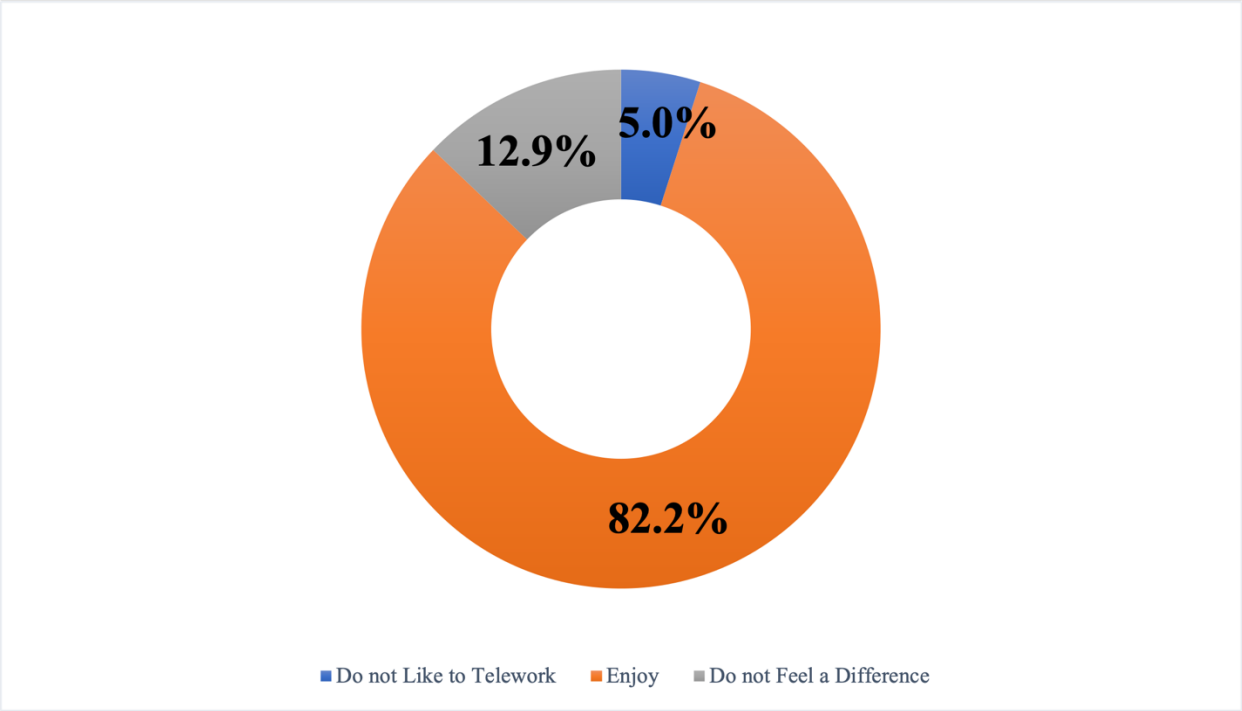
4.2.3 Attitudes and Desire to Telework

The questionnaire included two of the following questions to gain insights into participants' attitudes towards teleworking. The question, “Do you enjoy teleworking now?” aimed to measure participants' level of job satisfaction with teleworking and to identify whether participants who telework do not like it, do not feel the difference, or enjoy the experience. Figure 4.5 illustrates the

rate of job satisfaction with telework at the time when the COVID-19 pandemic measures were no longer mandatory.

Figure 4.5

The Rate of Participant Job Satisfaction with Telework After the COVID-19 Pandemic

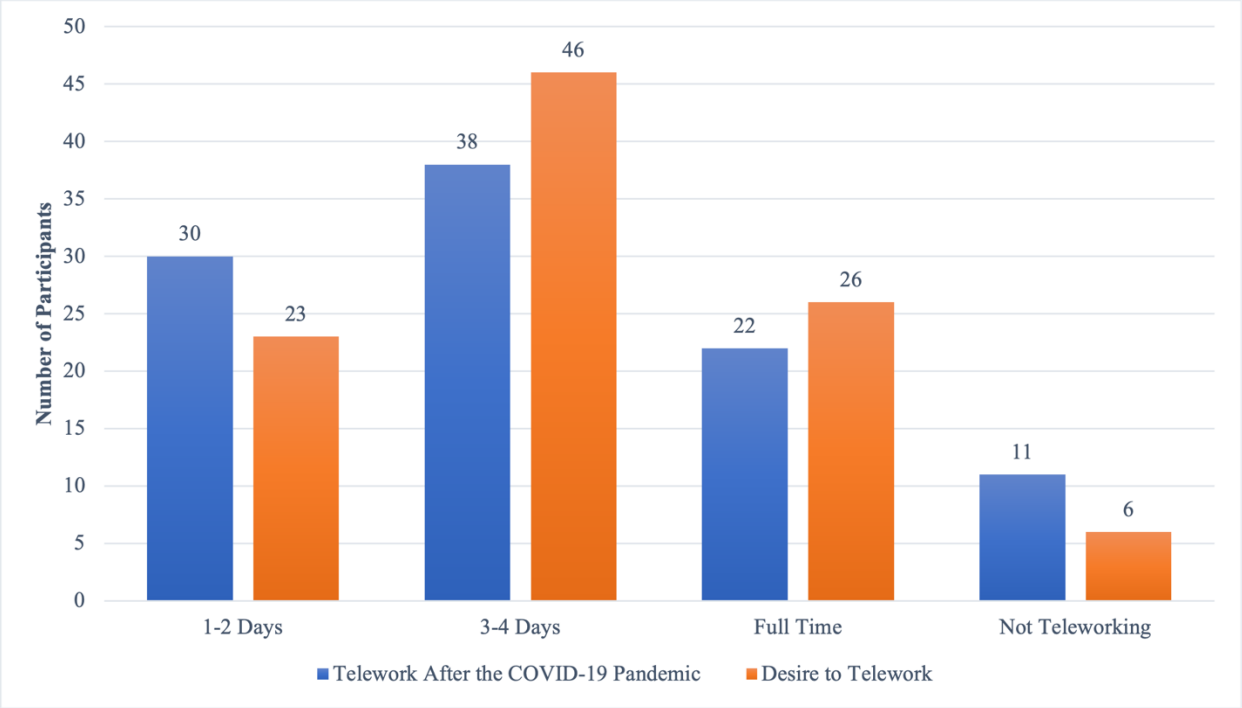


According to the results, 82.2% of the participants (n=83) reported that they enjoy teleworking. A smaller group of participants, 12.9% (n=13), indicated that they did not feel any difference between teleworking and working in a traditional office. Only 5 of participants (; n=5) reported that they do not like telework. The group who reported that they do not like teleworking indicates that telework may not be the best fit for everyone. The group of participants who do not feel a difference between teleworking and working in a traditional office may indicate that teleworking is becoming more normalised and that participants are adapting well to this new mode of work. Overall, this data suggests that telework is generally well-received by employees, which may have important implications for the future of work and workplace flexibility.

The next question, “How many days a week do you prefer to telework?” aimed to measure the extent to which participants prefer teleworking as an alternative to traditional office work arrangements. The responses may significantly contribute to answering the initial component of the first research question regarding the current demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel. Figure 4.6 illustrates the comparison between the participants' current rate of telework and their desired number of days per week to telework.

Figure 4.6

Comparison of the Participant’s Current and Desired Telework Rate



Despite the significant growth in telework following the COVID-19 pandemic, the data presented in Figure 4.6 suggest that participants had a higher preference for teleworking than the current rate available to them. According to the findings, the most preferred number of days per week for teleworking among participants was 3-4 days, with 45.5% (n=46) of participants

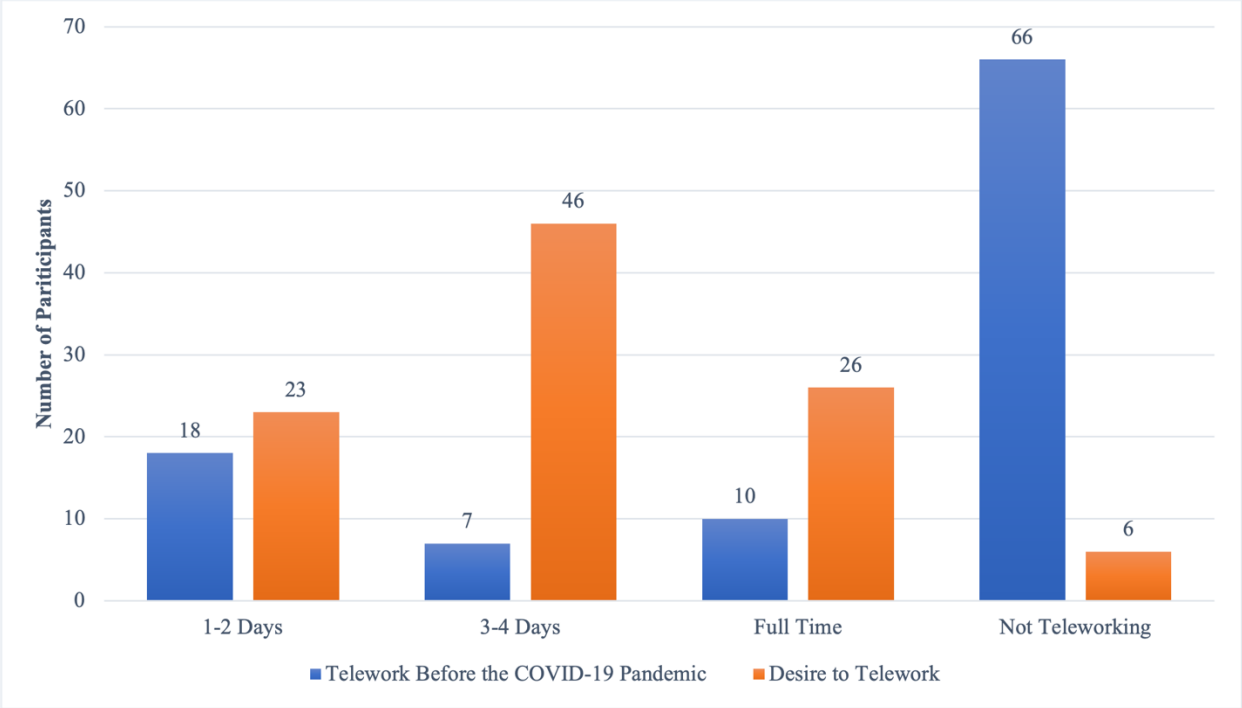
indicating this preference. The following preference was “Full-time”, 25.7% (n=26) of participants. Slightly fewer participants, 22.8% (n=23), preferred to telework “1-2 days per week”. The least preferred was “Not teleworking”, with only 5.9% (n=6) of participants.

The data reveals gaps in each telework category when comparing the current telework rate to participants' preferences. In the “3-4 days per week” category, the data indicates that 21.1% more participants would prefer to telework (n=38 current compared to n=46 desired). Similarly, in the “Full-time” category, the data show that 18.2% more participants would select this preference (n=22 current compared to n=26 desired). Additionally, the data reveals that 45.5% fewer participants want to work full time in a traditional office and want to have the telework option (n=11 current compared to n=6 desired). Moreover, the data suggest that 23.3% fewer participants want to telework “1-2 days per week” (n=30 current compared to n=23 desired). These gaps indicate that not only an additional number of participants want to have a telework option, but participants would prefer higher intensity in telework with a decrease in the “1-2 days per week” and “Not teleworking” categories and growth in the “3-4 days per week” and “Full-time” categories.

While the difference in desired and current telework preference rates may seem insignificant at around 20%, it is worth noting that such a figure can have important implications. However, the situation becomes more pronounced when the desired and pre-COVID-19 rates are compared, as illustrated in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7

Comparison of the Participant's Before the COVID-19 Pandemic and Desired Telework Rate



The findings illustrated in Figure 4.7 reveal a substantial difference in the three telework categories. Notably, there is a significant disparity between the number of participants who previously worked "3-4 days per week" and those who preferred to telework this number of days, with the desired rate exceeding the rate by approximately 6.6 times (n=7 previously compared to n=46 desired). Similarly, the "Full-time" category shows a significant difference, with the desired rate being 2.6 times higher than the previous rate (n=10 previously compared to n=26 desired). However, the most dramatic difference is observed in the "Not teleworking" category, where the desired rate is 11 times lower than the the pre-COVID-29 pandemic rate (n=66 previously compared to n=6 desired). These findings suggest that participants are showing a strong preference for telework, particularly for the "3-4 days per week" and "Full-time" categories, while the

traditional office-based work is becoming increasingly less desirable. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organisations and employees to adopt telework, significantly increasing telework rates. Given this development, it is difficult to picture a scenario where the telework rate reverts to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic level. Moreover, it seems that a considerable portion of the workforce has become accustomed to this way of working. Therefore, it is probable that the telework rate will remain higher than the pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

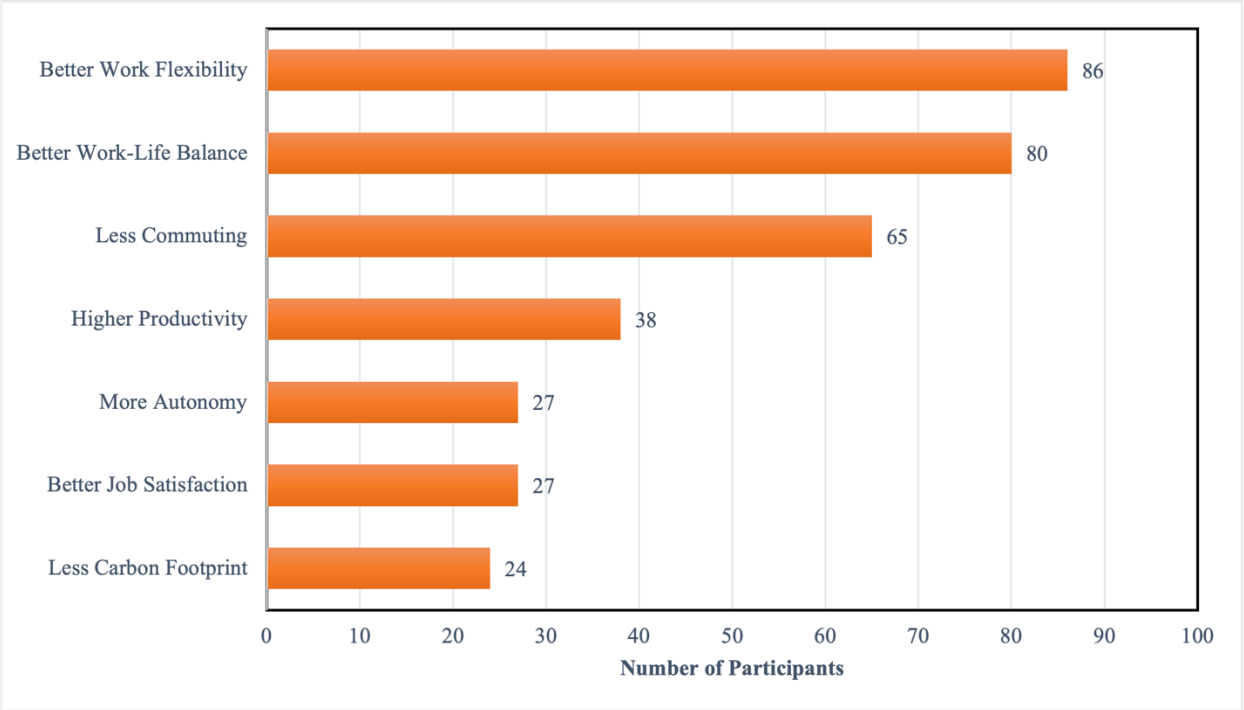
4.2.4 Benefits and Challenges of Telework

The questionnaire subsequently asked participants to identify the positive and negative aspects they encountered while teleworking. Two lists of features were prepared by the researcher, and participants also had the option to provide their own variants. Although a few participants submitted their variants, the researcher carefully reviewed and analysed them. It was found that these self-written variants were related to the existing categories. Consequently, the researcher reassigned the participants' self-written variants to the appropriate listed features.

The responses to the questions about the positive and negative aspects of telework can provide valuable insights into answering the second aspect of the first research question regarding the factors driving the demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel. A illustration of the positive features of telework and the frequency of their selection by participants is presented in Figure 4.8, while the negative feature distribution is illustrated in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.8

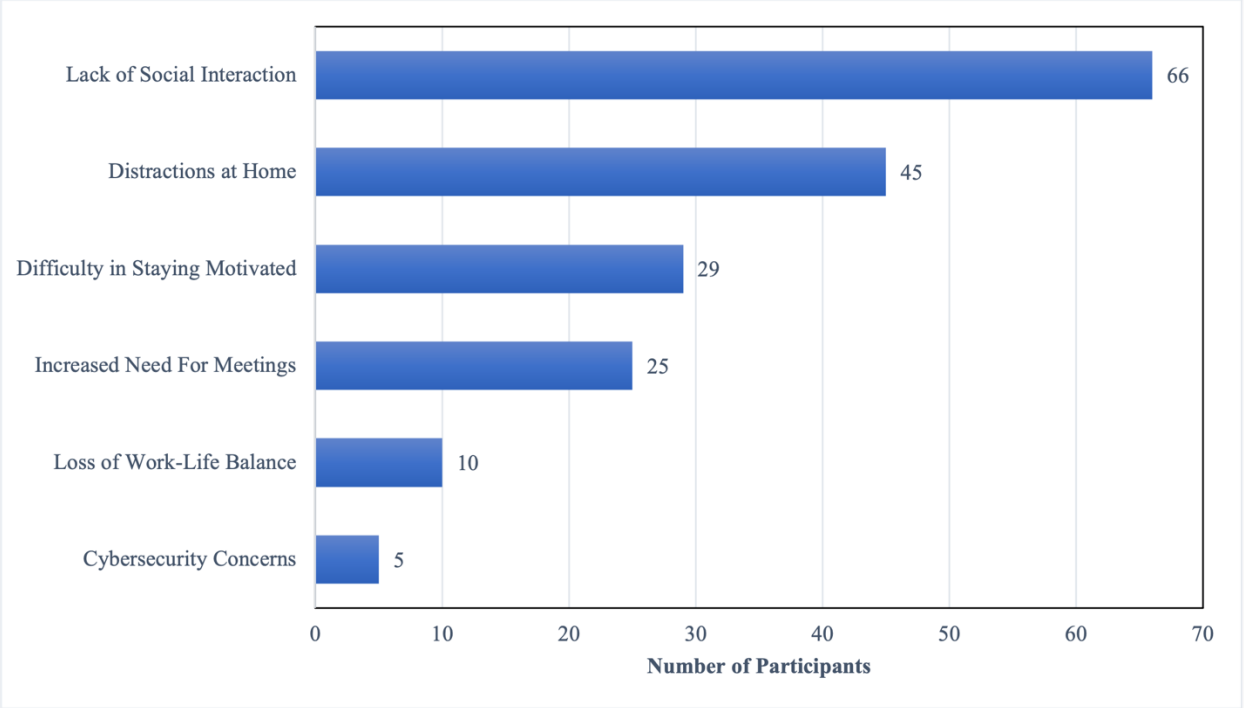
Benefits of Telework Selected by Participants



The data in Figure 4.8 reveals that the most frequently reported positive feature of teleworking is "Better work flexibility," selected by 85.1% of participants (n=86). This is followed by "Better work-life balance," which was selected by 79.2% of participants (n=80). "Less commuting" was the third most frequent positive feature, with 64.4% of participants (n=65) selecting this. Other positive features selected by participants included "Higher productivity" (37.6%; n=38), "More autonomy" (26.7%; n=27), "Better job satisfaction" (26.7%; n=27), and "Less carbon footprint" (23.8%; n=24). These findings suggest that the flexibility and improved work-life balance offered by teleworking are highly valued by New Zealand's back-office personnel. The reduced need to commute and associated time savings were also commonly selected as a positive aspect.

Figure 4.9

Challenges of Telework Selected by Participants



In addition to the positive features, respondents also reported challenges of telework, as illustrated in Figure 4.9. The most frequently selected negative aspect was the "Lack of social interaction", selected by 65.3% (n=66) of participants. "Distractions at home" were also a significant negative feature, with 44.6% (n=45) of participants selecting this feature. "Difficulty in staying motivated" was also selected by a notable percentage of participants, with 28.7% (n=29) selecting this as a negative feature. Other negative features included an "Increased need for meetings" (24.8%, n=25), "Loss of work-life balance" (9.9%, n=10), and "Cybersecurity concerns" (5.0%, n=5). The data show that while teleworking offers benefits, it also presents significant challenges, including a lack of social interaction, home distractions, and difficulty staying motivated.

Overall, the data indicated that telework offers several benefits for employees, such as better work flexibility, improved work-life balance, and increased productivity. These positive features can have significant implications for employees and organisations, including reduced commuting time, increased job satisfaction, and cost savings. However, the data also highlights several challenges associated with telework, including the lack of social interaction, distractions at home, and difficulty staying motivated. Organisations and policymakers should consider these aspects when implementing and managing telework.

4.2.5 Summary of Findings Regarding Telework Demand and Its Drivers

The findings obtained from the first set of questions revealed some understanding of the demand for telework among participants after the COVID-19 pandemic and the drivers for this need.

A significant increase in telework availability and intensity was observed after the COVID-19 pandemic. Telework was accessible to 61.4% of participants before the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased to 93.1% after the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate of telework remained high even after the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic mandates, indicating a lasting impact on work arrangements and attitudes towards telework.

Participants expressed a strong preference for telework, particularly for the “3-4 days per week” and “Full-time” categories, with the traditional office-based work becoming increasingly less desirable. 82.2% of participants enjoyed teleworking, and the 45.5% of participants preferred to telework “3-4 days per week,” followed by “Full-time” 25.7% of participants.

The benefits of telework as reported by participants, include better work flexibility, improved work-life balance, less commuting, higher productivity, more autonomy, better job

satisfaction, and a reduced carbon footprint. These benefits are highly valued by participants and can have significant implications for employees and organisations.

However, challenges associated with teleworking were also identified, such as lack of social interaction, distractions at home, difficulty staying motivated, increased need for meetings, loss of work-life balance, and cybersecurity concerns. These challenges should be considered by organisations and policymakers when implementing and managing telework.

In conclusion, there would appear to be an apparent demand for telework among the participants after the COVID-19 pandemic. The drivers for this need include the benefits of teleworking, such as better work flexibility, improved work-life balance, and increased productivity, among others. However, it is essential to address the challenges associated with telework to ensure its successful and sustainable implementation in the future.

4.2.6 Telework Impact on Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction

The research aimed to investigate the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction. To gather data, a series of Likert scale questions were utilised, and the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each question were subsequently calculated, as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Participant's Attitudes Towards Telework (Personal Perspective)

Question	M	SD
1. I feel more satisfied with my job when I am working from home	4.00	1.04
2. I feel that I have more time for my private life when working from home	4.31	1.03

3. I feel that my private life and work end up in conflict when working from home	2.50	1.33
4. I feel isolated when working from home	2.84	1.25
5. I feel that working from home allows me to create a more flexible working arrangement	4.53	0.69
6. I feel that working from home gives me an opportunity to spend less time every day getting ready for work	4.73	0.51
7. I feel that working from home gives me an opportunity to spend more time with family and/or pets	4.57	0.84
8. I feel less stressed when I'm working from home	3.86	1.09
9. The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to my view on working from home becoming more positive	4.10	1.06
10. Collaboration with my colleagues becomes increasingly difficult when working from home	2.82	1.24
11. The technical and digital tools that I have are enough to enable me to work from home without hindrance	4.20	0.97

The findings in Table 4.1 illustrates participants' attitudes to the various features of telework and indicates that participants generally have positive attitudes. For instance, participants reported feeling more satisfied with their job when teleworking (M = 4.00, SD = 1.04), highlighting the potential positive impact of telework on job satisfaction. Most participants agreed that telework could contribute to a better work-life balance, with (M = 4.31, SD = 1.03) reporting having more time for their private life when teleworking and disagreed that telework creates significant work-life balance conflicts (M = 2.50, SD = 1.33). The research findings suggest that the participants

generally had positive attitudes towards the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction, as reflected by high M and low SD.

Furthermore, teleworking was perceived to allow for a more flexible working arrangement, and participants strongly agreed with this statement (M = 4.53, SD = 0.69). Telework also provided opportunities for participants spending less time getting ready for work (M = 4.73, SD = 0.51) and more time with family and/or pets (M = 4.57, SD = 0.84), with a substantial majority of participants reporting these benefits. However, some participants may experience isolation due to telework as indicated by the variation in opinions (SD = 1.25) regarding the statement that participants did not feel isolated when teleworking (M = 2.84). Although participants generally felt less stressed when teleworking (M= 3.86, SD = 1.09), stress reduction may vary among participants. The research findings suggest that telework has several potential benefits for New Zealand back-office personnel, including increased flexibility, time-saving, and reduced stress, but some may experience isolation, and stress reduction may vary among employees.

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have positively influenced participants' perceptions of telework, with the mode of responses indicating a more positive view of telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 4.10, SD = 1.06). Moreover, the mode of responses for the teamwork question showed that participants disagreed that collaboration with colleagues became increasingly difficult when teleworking (M = 2.82, SD = 1.24). Finally, the mode of responses also suggested that participants felt their technical and digital tools were enough to enable them to telework without hindrance (M = 4.20, SD = 0.97), suggesting that ICT played a crucial role in facilitating telework. The findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive influence on the participants' perceptions of telework and did not hinder collaboration with colleagues, while ICT played a crucial role in enabling telework.

Overall, the findings suggest that teleworking can provide greater flexibility, reduce stress, and allow for more time for personal and family life. Additionally, the data indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had a positive influence on participants' perceptions of telework, perhaps due to the need to telework to reduce the risk of infection. However, the data also suggest that teleworking may have some challenges, such as the potential for isolation and varying experiences of stress reduction. Therefore, it may be necessary for organisations to consider implementing and managing telework arrangements effectively to maximise the potential benefits and address any challenges that may arise.

4.2.7 Attitude to Telework as Internal CSR Extension

This research sought to explore the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Although the questionnaire did not explicitly ask whether telework constitutes an extension of internal CSR, the participants' attitudes can provide valuable insights into the potential role of telework in addressing key aspects of internal CSR. A series of Likert scale questions were employed to collect data, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Employee Attitudes Towards Telework (Organisational Perspective)

Question	M	SD
1. My organisation was prepared for the shift from office-based work to telework at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic	3.66	1.31
2. Telework was effective in my organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic	4.28	0.98

3. I believe that providing telework during COVID-19 helped my organisation to maintain the health and safety security of employees	4.49	0.77
4. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation positively affects the work-family relationships of employees	4.26	0.87
5. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation positively affects the work-life balance of employees	4.43	0.84
6. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation increases the job satisfaction of employees	4.23	0.92
7. I believe that telework is important for health and safety security in normal times	3.87	1.11
8. I believe that providing telework may help my organisation to provide a more flexible working arrangement	4.71	0.55
9. I believe that providing telework helped my organisation to provide a more favourable working environment	4.43	0.89

The data in Table 4.2 it is possible to draw general conclusions about the participants' perspectives on the role of telework in assisting organisations in fulfilling their internal CSR objectives.

Participants generally felt that their organisation was moderately prepared for the transition from office-based work to telework at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 3.66), albeit with noticeable variation in opinions (SD = 1.31). This suggests that, although organisations may have managed the shift reasonably well, the level of preparedness varied significantly among organisations.

The participants predominantly agreed that telework was effective during the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 4.28), with a moderate variation in opinions (SD = 0.98). These findings suggest that telework was perceived as a successful measure of maintaining business continuity, highlighting its value as an internal CSR strategy that ensures smooth operations during crises.

Most participants (M = 4.49) believed that offering telework during the COVID-19 pandemic aided their organisation in upholding employee OHS, with a relatively low variation in opinions (SD = 0.77). This finding underscores the efficacy of telework as an internal CSR initiative focused on OHS and overall employee well-being.

The participants tended to concur that teleworking had a positive influence on work-family relationships (M = 4.26) and work-life balance (M = 4.43), with moderate variations in opinions (SD = 0.87 and SD = 0.84, respectively). These findings demonstrate the potential of telework as an internal CSR practice geared towards enhancing employees' quality of life and signify that telework can serve as a valuable tool for promoting a healthier work-life balance, which is a crucial element of internal CSR.

A significant number of participants believed that teleworking heightened job satisfaction (M = 4.23), with a moderate variation in opinions (SD = 0.92). This finding demonstrates that teleworking can contribute to an organisation's internal CSR by fostering employee job satisfaction.

The question “Telework Importance for Health and Safety Security in Normal Times” , indicated that participants perceived telework as moderately significant OHS even outside the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 3.87, SD = 1.11). This finding demonstrates that telework could be regarded as a continuous internal CSR practice to maintain employee well-being in normal times.

Participants strongly concurred that offering telework might assist their organisation in providing more flexible working arrangements (M = 4.71) and a more favourable working environment (M = 4.43), with relatively low variations in opinions (SD = 0.55 and SD = 0.89, respectively). This finding demonstrates that teleworking can be an essential internal CSR practice that supports adaptability and flexibility within an organisation.

In summary, although the questionnaire did not directly question whether telework constitutes an extension of internal CSR, the findings demonstrate that participants hold a positive perception of telework ability to address key aspects of internal CSR. They regarded telework as effective and beneficial regarding work-life balance, work-family relationships, job satisfaction, health and safety, and flexibility. These attitudes indicate that telework is likely to continue playing a vital role in organisational internal CSR strategies beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. By adopting telework, organisations can address various internal CSR objectives, ultimately contributing to their reputation and long-term success. As telework becomes more prevalent and widely accepted, it is crucial for organisations to effectively implement and manage telework arrangements to maximise potential benefits and address any challenges that may arise, thereby strengthening their commitment to internal CSR and fostering a more sustainable and employee-centric work culture.

4.2.8 Summary of the Questionnaire Findings

The analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire shed light on the three research questions that were posed:

1. Is there a demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the drivers for this need?

2. What attitudes do New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction?

3. What were New Zealand back-office personnel's attitudes toward telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future?

The data reveal that participants hold a positive perception of telework as an internal CSR practice, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. They view telework as effective and beneficial in addressing key aspects of internal CSR, such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, health and safety, and flexibility. These attitudes suggest that telework may play a vital role in organisational internal CSR strategies beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to their reputation and long-term success.

Overall, the findings indicate that participants generally have positive attitudes towards the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction. They perceive telework as providing flexibility, reducing stress, and allowing more time for personal and family life. However, the findings also highlight potential challenges, such as isolation and varying experiences of stress reduction.

4.3 Interviews Results

This section presents the findings obtained through conducting interviews. These were designed to provide a more in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants regarding telework in order to answer the first and second research questions. Precise questions related to the demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel following the COVID-19 pandemic and the factors driving this demand, as well as the attitudes towards telework impact on their work-life balance and job satisfaction.

The sample size of ten participants was deemed appropriate for the present research, as the focus of the qualitative method was on obtaining rich and detailed data through semi-structured interviews rather than on generalisability to a larger population. Furthermore, data saturation was

reached after interview ten, indicating that no new ideas or coding were generated after interview eight, suggesting that the sample size was sufficient for the research. The interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes, with a range of 21 to 42 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a structured manner, using open-ended questions to allow for flexibility and depth in responses while ensuring that the research questions were addressed.

Table 4.3 illustrates the themes and categories that emerged from the thematic analysis of the findings obtained from the interviews. Th ethematic analysis identifed nine themes, each with several categories that represent a detailed overview of the various attitudes and experiences shared by the participants.

Table 4.3

Thematic Analysis: Themes and Subthemes from Interviews

Themes	Categories
Telework experience	a. Limited or no experience before the COVID-19 pandemic b. Full-time remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic c. Hybrid telework model or continued remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic
Attitudes towards telework	a. Mixed or positive initial attitudes b. The COVID-19 pandemic influence on attitudes (adaptation, increased positivity)
Benefits of telework	a. Flexibility (scheduling, work-life balance) b. Time and cost savings (elimination of daily commute) c. Increased productivity d. Global collaboration opportunities

Challenges of telework (Individual)	a. Lack of face-to-face communication (inefficient problem-solving) b. Sense of isolation and reduced social interaction c. Difficulty maintaining clear and effective communication d. Establishing and maintaining work-life boundaries
Challenges of telework (Team)	a. Loss of informal communication and team cohesion b. Coordinating schedules and deadlines across different environments c. Onboarding and integrating new team members
Effect of telework on work-life balance	a. Increased flexibility and autonomy (positive) b. Flexibility for parental responsibilities c. Difficulty establishing and maintaining boundaries between work and personal life (negative)
Effect of telework on job satisfaction	a. Increased job satisfaction (flexibility, autonomy, trust) b. Decreased job satisfaction (reduced face-to-face interactions and social isolation)
Organisational attractiveness	a. Telework options make organisations more attractive to potential employees b. Organisations commitment to employees c. Improved workforce diversity (colleagues from around the world)
Preference for traditional office or telework	a. Preference for a hybrid telework model b. Never return to full-time office mode

4.3.1 Telework Experience

The participants' telework experiences varied across different stages, including pre, during, and post- the COVID-19 pandemic. While participants (n=5) had limited or no experience with teleworking prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, others had occasional telework experience (n=3). Remote work arrangements were uncommon and often revolved around personal appointments or commitments.

"Before COVID-19, I had limited experience with telecommuting, primarily working remotely when I had personal appointments or commitments..." (M2)

However, for two participants (n=2), the COVID-19 pandemic was their first experience with remote work, and they had to adopt a new working approach.

"I had never worked remotely before the pandemic. It was a big change to have to set up a workspace at home and learn how to use new tools..." (F6)

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a widespread shift towards remote worktelework, with organisations implementing telework to comply with public health mandates and guidelines. This transition required particapants (n=10) to adapt quickly to new tools and processes, transforming their homes into primary workspaces.

"When the pandemic started, our company had to switch to full-time remote work. It was definitely a big adjustment for me. I had to learn how to collaborate with my team virtually. It was quite different from being in the office every day." (F2)

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations of every participant (n=10) adopted telework policies, with the prevalence of a hybrid telework model, allowing employees to choose how often they wanted to telework based on their preferences and job responsibilities. Participants

telework experiences during this period varied, with participants (n=8) teleworking for a few days per week, while others (n=2) maintained a fully telework schedule.

> "*After the pandemic, my company started a new way of working where we could choose how often we wanted to work remotely or in the office depending on our job. For me, I work from home about three days a week now, which helps me balance working with my team in person and from home." (M2)*

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the acceptance of telework, with a widespread shift towards telework across participants' organisations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, telework arrangements were mainly limited and often revolved around personal appointments or commitments. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations had to adopt telework policies to comply with public health mandates and guidelines, resulting in employees adapting quickly to telework. As a result, most of the participants organisations adopted a hybrid telework model after the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the acceptance and normalisation of telework, highlighting the employees' existing demand to have an option for telework in the working environment.

4.3.2 Attitudes Towards Telework

Examination of participants' attitudes towards telework revealed diverse perspectives. While most of the participants expressed positivity towards telework, there were still some variations in opinion. The common view shared by all (n=10) participants was that telework offered a considerable degree of flexibility and convenience to traditional office-based work. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, participants (n=5) were open to the idea of teleworking, while participants (n=3) had no strong feelings about it.

"I always dreamed about it, to be able to work from home, and not all employees are happy with it. So, my initial attitude is very positive." (F3)

However, participants (n=2) had concerns that telework may affect productivity and lead to social isolation.

"... I would probably say about my first feeling that I really didn't want to work from home. I didn't even imagine how we can stay alone at home and do that, and I was thinking that it will drop down my efficiency." (M1)

The COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in influencing participants' attitudes towards telework. For participants (n=5), the COVID-19 pandemic formulated a positive outlook, as they witnessed the potential for telework to be effective for various job roles.

"COVID-19 has made remote work more normal for me... now, because of COVID-19, more people are working from home, and it's not seen as strange or unusual anymore. In fact, it has become a more normal part of work for many people." (F4)

"... then I started liking it very quickly probably because the company was quite ready for remote working, and gave us all the tools necessary, so we can set up the working place at home… I really started liking it. And I'm still enjoying working from home." (M1)

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, participants' attitudes towards telework have changed. The hybrid telework model became more prevalent, and participants appreciated the balance between in-person and telework collaborations.

"I like to work from home sometimes, but I also like to work with my colleagues in person. So, I think it's best to have a mix of both. That way, I can enjoy the advantages of both ways of working." (F4)

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant change in participants' attitudes towards telework, with many acknowledging its potential effectiveness and appreciating the benefits of flexibility and convenience. The hybrid telework model that emerged after the COVID-19 pandemic has been positively received by participants as it allowed for a balance between in-person and telework collaborations.

4.3.3 Benefits of Telework

Participants identified several main benefits of telework that contributed to their overall job satisfaction and work-life balance. These benefits included increased flexibility and control over their schedule, reduced commute time and cost, and improved productivity.

Flexibility and control over their schedule were identified as the most significant benefits reported by all participants (n=10). Having more control over one's schedule was cited as a key factor in managing personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. This control allowed participants to plan their work and personal commitments, enabling them to prioritise tasks and make time for their own needs and interests.

> *"I feel that the main advantage is flexibility related to my family and my personal life. I can go, for example, to a gym whatever time I want, if I don't have some meetings at work." (F5)*
>
> *"Working from home has given me the opportunity to spend more time with my daughter. I can now take her to school in the mornings and make her lunch box at home. It's great because I get to be more involved in her routine and have more time together." (M3)*

Moreover, participants (n=3) highlighted that flexible schedules could help them be more productive and efficient, as they could choose the time of day when they were most alert and productive to complete certain tasks. Moreover, participants (n=3) noted that working from home allowed them to focus on their tasks without distractions, ultimately leading to higher productivity.

"*When I work from home, I can choose when to work. I'm most productive in the early morning... So, I can plan my workday around my best hours to get the job done." (M4)*

"I find that working from home helps me focus better on my work since there are fewer distractions around, which helps me be more productive." (F6)

Participants (n=7) also appreciated the reduced commute time and cost associated with telework arrangements. By avoiding rush hour traffic and the need to commute to a traditional office, participants were able to save significant amounts of time and money on transportation.

"The commute takes around an hour, including waiting for and walking to the bus. It's not too bad, but it's not great because I have to take two buses or walk to the bus station. Driving is also not a good option. I spend this hour commuting, but if I didn't have to commute, I would get that time back for other things." (F1)

Furthermore, participants (n=5) emphasised the financial benefits of flexible work arrangements. By teleworking, participants were able to save money on petrol, and public transport fares. Additionally, those who typically drove to work were able to save on parking fees, which can be a significant expense in some urban areas.

"In my case, the company I work for doesn't offer any parking spaces, I have to find my own parking spot if I choose to drive. And the cost of parking in the downtown area, where my office is located, is really expensive..." (F3)

Overall, the findings suggest that teleworking can offer benefits to employees and organisations, including increased flexibility and control over their schedule, reduced commute time and cost, and improved productivity. The ability to manage personal and professional responsibilities more effectively, save time and money on transport, and work during peak productivity hours were identified by participants as the primary drivers for preferring to telework.

4.3.4 Challenges of Telework

Participants reported various challenges associated with telework, both at the personal and team persceptive. Individual challenges included the lack of face-to-face communication, feelings of isolation, reduced social interaction, and maintaining boundaries between work and personal life. Team-level challenges comprised of effective communication and collaboration, coordinating schedules and deadlines, on-boarding and integrating new team members.

One of the challenges reported by participants was the lack of face-to-face communication. Participants (n=4) noted that the lack of in-person interaction with colleagues and managers/supervisors could lead to miscommunication, which could affect their work outcomes.

> *"Sometimes you want to talk to your colleagues, but it's not always easy because they may be busy for call at a time that's convenient for you. So, you may have to use messages to communicate with them, but messages can be less clear than a conversation." (M3)*

> *"... it's easier in most cases, to show something or to train someone when you are just sitting beside the person." (F2)*

Isolation and reduced social interaction were identified as common challenges associated with telework. Participants (n=6) reported that the absence of daily interactions with colleagues and the lack of social support could lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection. The challenge of isolation was particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic when participants were required to telework due to the lockdowns and social distancing mandates.

> *"... challenge of teleworking is feeling lonely sometimes, especially when you're always working from home. You may miss the social interactions that you would normally have in the office..." (M2)*

"This is the challenge of like just being blocked, let's say, in the house when you cannot even go to the nearest beach or something like that. This was very challenging during the COVID-19 lockdown." (F1)

Another challenge for participants (n=4) was maintaining boundaries between work and personal life. Telework sometimes blurred the lines between the two, making it difficult to switch off from work and engage in personal activities that could promote well-being and work-life balance. This pressure could lead to overworking and burnout, ultimately decreasing job satisfaction and productivity.

"... I find myself working more than when I used to go to the office. Before, I would work for the normal hours and then commute, but now that I work from home, and I work more than eight hours a day... and I know other people who are also working more than they used to." (M1)

On the other hand, participants (n=4) reported no challenge in maintaining boundaries between work and personal life while teleworking. They found it easy to separate their work and personal life by turning off their work devices or setting clear work hours. By creating a clear distinction between work and personal time, these participants were able to maintain their work-life balance.

"It is easy for me to maintain boundaries between work and life when teleworking. I simply turn off my work devices after I finish my workday, and I don't check them until the next day." (M3)

"I've been teleworking for a while now, and I haven't had much trouble switching between my job and my personal life... I also set clear work hours for myself, so I know when I'm supposed to be working and when I'm not." (F4)

Effective communication and collaboration emerged as a significant challenge for teams teleworking (n=7). Participants noted that maintaining clear and effective communication with team members often required more proactive and deliberate efforts.

"So, you need to, you know, schedule meetings, send a message to people. Hey? Do you have time to talk a little bit? People are sometimes very busy... I think that is a little bit frustrating." (M2)

"It's important for the team to be on the same page, and sometimes it's easier to do this when everyone is in the same office. You can get things done quickly by talking to your team in person instead of trying to communicate through messages or emails." (F3)

Onboarding and integrating new team members into the existing team dynamic was more difficult in a telework setting (n=2), as the lack of face-to-face interaction made it harder to build rapport and establish a sense of belonging.

"... for newcomers, especially younger ones who have just joined our company. When you're new to a job, you need guidance and support to learn how things work. This can be really tough for them without seeing people face-to-face." (F6)

Participants (n=3) noted that establishing a network of contacts can be challenging when teleworking. The lack of social interaction can make establishing relationships with colleagues more difficult, ultimately impacting the ability for effective networking.

"The other challenge, I think, for mode work is the establishing the networking. I think lack of this social interaction at some point affects your ability to establish those relationships." (F2)

Overall, participants identified several telework challenges, such as maintaining boundaries between their work and personal life, effective communication and collaboration,

onboarding and integrating new team members, and establishing relationships. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the challenges associated with telework, particularly regarding isolation and reduced social interaction. Addressing these challenges could be essential for organisations to ensure successful telework experience.

4.3.5 Effect of Telework on Work-Life Balance

The effect of telework on work-life balance was a prominent theme among participants, with most of them reporting positive attititudes to aspects such as improved work-life balance due to increased flexibility, additional time for personal activities, and flexibility for parental responsibilities. However, some participants also highlighted the difficulty of establishing boundaries between work and personal life.

Improved work-life balance due to flexibility was a benefit mentioned by participants (n=10). All ten participants noted that telework provided them with more control over their work schedules and allowed them to attend to personal matters more easily. This contributed to a better work-life balance, which can ultimately lead to higher overall well-being.

> *"While working from home, I can do more than just work. I can multi-task and do some household chores like washing clothes or other things at the same time." (F1)*
>
> *"We allow our employees to have a more flexible schedule on Fridays since we started teleworking. They can finish work early without using up any leave or take a trip while still being able to use their phone to finish up any work." (M2)*

This flexibility also resulted in additional time for personal activities (n=7). The absence of a daily commute provided participants with more time for hobbies, exercise, and spending time with family.

"... now I can spend more time on my hobby and do what I actually want to do without spending this wasting time for commuting." (F4)

Telework also provided flexibility for participants (n=4) with parental responsibilities, enabling them to better balance their work and family commitments.

"When you work from home, you can help your kids with their homework while you work on your own tasks. You can sit together and do both things at the same time. You can spend more time with your kids." (F3)

"It's helpful for doing things like going to appointments, running errands, and taking your kids to their activities." (F2)

However, participants (n=4) experienced difficulty establishing boundaries between work and personal life. The blurred lines between work and home environments sometimes led to overworking and difficulties in "switching off" from work.

"Some people don't work the traditional 9 to 5 schedule anymore. They split their workday into different time periods, and some even work in the evening. This can be distracting because they might message me or ask questions when I'm not working. I can answer them on my phone, but it interrupted my family time." (M1)

In summary, teleworking had both positive and negative effects on work-life balance. While telework offers the benefits of flexibility, additional time for personal activities, and support for parental responsibilities, it can also present challenges in establishing boundaries between work and personal life. It is essential to acknowledge these challenges and provide support and guidance to employees to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

4.3.6 Effect of Telework on Job Satisfaction

The effect of telework on job satisfaction was another theme that emerged from the interviews. Participants reported both increased and decreased job satisfaction due to telework, depending on various factors.

Increased job satisfaction was mainly attributed to the flexibility (n=8), autonomy (n=6), and trust (n=3) provided by telework arrangements. Participants appreciated the freedom to manage their work schedules and the ability to work independently without constant supervision.

"Yeah, I think it increases job satisfaction because it's more flexible now, and I can plan my day, I'm in charge, and I'm in control." (F2)

"The most important thing for me is that I can plan my work schedule the way I want. This is a very important criterion for me." (M3)

"My manager doesn't need to check on me constantly. They trust me to decide when to work as long as the job is done... It feels good to have that independence." (F4)

On the other hand, two participants (n=2) experienced decreased job satisfaction due to reduced face-to-face interactions and social isolation. The importance of social interaction and in-person communication was highlighted by participants (n=8). Participants reported feeling isolated and disconnected from colleagues, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown when they could not leave their homes.

"Working remotely can sometimes be a lonely experience. When I'm not in the office, I miss the opportunity to have face-to-face conversations and catch up with colleagues during coffee breaks. I can feel isolating to work alone for extended periods of time..." (F6)

However, participants reported that hybrid telework arrangements provided a solution to this challenge by offering a balance between telework and in-person work. Participants (n=7) noted

that hybrid telework arrangements allowed them to maintain social connections with colleagues while also enjoying the benefits of telework. They appreciated the flexibility of being able to choose when to telework and when to come into the office.

> *"I go to the office twice a week to see people. During lockdown when we can't go anywhere, it was hard because there was no personal communication. It made me feel like just sitting in front of the screen all the time, and I didn't enjoy it. But now, if I plan it carefully and go when all the people are there, going to the office is enjoyable." (F1)*

Overall, the effect of telework on job satisfaction depends on various factors, with flexibility, autonomy, and trust increasing job satisfaction. At the same time, reduced face-to-face interactions and social isolation may have negative impacts. Hybrid telework arrangements, which combine the benefits of telework and in-person collaboration, can provide a balanced solution to address these challenges and optimised job satisfaction.

4.3.7 Organisational Attractiveness

The participants also discussed how telework options affected an organisation's attractiveness to potential employees. Most of the participants (n=9) indicated that organisations offering telework options were more appealing to them. They attributed this increased attractiveness to an organisation's commitment to employees.

> *"I think when a company offers remote work, it shows they care about their employees and understand that people have different needs and preferences when it comes to their work." (M2)*

> *"Companies that offer remote work options seem to be more focused on employees. Providing telework, they offer flexibility, which is important to me. It also shows that they trust their employees to work independently..." (F5)*

The participants (n=3) also highlighted the value of working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations, which were made possible by telework arrangements. They noted that collaborating with team members from different cultures and experiences enriched their professional growth and contributed to a more dynamic work environment.

"*It's great to work with colleagues from around the world and learn from their experiences and perspectives." (F2)*

This statement was supported by several participants (n=3) who appreciated the insights and ideas brought by a diverse workforce. They acknowledged that tele work allowed organisations to access a wider pool of talent.

"*Remote work has given me a chance to work with people from various countries and backgrounds... I believe it benefits the entire team and increase innovation and creativity." (M3)*

Overall, the participants' responses indicate that telework options contribute significantly to an organisation's attractiveness by demonstrating a commitment to employees, fostering flexibility and trust, and facilitating a diverse work environment. This highlights the importance of considering telework arrangements as part of an organisation's strategy to attract and retain talent.

4.3.8 Preference for Traditional Office or Telework

Participants were asked about their preferences regarding working in a tradiational office or teleworking. Most participants (n=9) preferred a hybrid telework model that combines telework and in-person collaboration in the office. Participants also highlighted the benefits of choosing when and where to work based on their personal preferences and job responsibilities.

"I prefer a hybrid work model because it allows me to enjoy the best of both worlds. I can work from home when I need to focus on individual tasks, and I can go to the office when I need to collaborate with my team or participate in meetings." (F4)

"The hybrid model works best for me. I can work remotely when I need quiet time to concentrate on my tasks, and I can go to the office to have face-to-face interactions." (M2)

Moreover, participants (n=4) indicated that they would never want to return to full-time office work, citing the flexibility and autonomy of telework as the main reasons for their preference.

"*I can't imagine going back to the office full-time after experiencing remote work... the flexibility it provides over my work schedule is too valuable." (F3)*

In summary, participants predominantly favoured a hybrid telework model that combines the benefits of both teleworking and in-person collaboration in the office. This preference not only underscores the significance of organisations adopting flexible telework arrangements but also reflects the evident demand for telework among participants. By acknowledging and addressing these preferences, organisations can create a more accommodating work environment that fosters employee job satisfaction and retention.

4.4 Summary

The research objectives were to investigate the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework in three main areas:

1. Is there a demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the drivers for this need?

2. What attitudes do New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction?

3. What are the New Zealand back-office personnel's attitudes toward telework as an internal CSR practice during COVID-19 and in the future?

The quantitative data were obtained through a series of questions that were designed to contribute to answering all three research questions. The analysis of the questionnaire results revealed that telework is highly desired by participants after the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of participants with access to telework increased significantly from 61.4% before the COVID-19 pandemic to 93.1% after the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating a growth of 51.6%. Moreover, 82.2% of participants reported that they enjoy teleworking, while only 5% of participants reported that they do not like it. Participants expressed a strong preference for telework, particularly for the "3-4 days per week" (45.5%) and "Full-time" (25.7%) categories, with the traditional office-based work model becoming less desirable.

The findings identified several benefits of telework, including "Better work flexibility" (85.1%), "Improved work-life balance" (79.2%), "Less commuting" (64.4% o), and “Higher productivity” (37.6%). However, the findings also identified several challenges associated with telework, such as a "Lack of social interaction" (65.3%), "Distractions at home" (44.6% o), "Difficulty staying motivated" (28.7%), "Increased need for meetings" (24.8%), "Loss of work-life balance" (9.9%), and "Cybersecurity concerns" (5.0%).

Concerning question 2, which examines the impact of telework on work-life balance and job satisfaction, the data indicated that participants generally reported feeling more satisfied with their job when teleworking (M= 4.00), and they had more time for their private life (M = 4.31). Participants also strongly agreed that telework allowed them to create a more flexible teleworking arrangement (M = 4.53) and provided an opportunity to spend less time getting ready for work (M = 4.73) and more time with family and/or pets (M = 4.57). However, the data also showed that

participants might experience isolation due to telework (M = 2.84), and stress reduction due to telework may vary among participants (M = 3.86).

Regarding research question 3, which focused on attitudes towards telework as an internal CSR practice, participants believed that telework was effective during the COVID-19 pandemic in maintaining business continuity (M = 4.28), aided in upholding employee health and safety (M = 4.49), and had a positive influence on work-family relationships (M = 4.26), work-life balance (M = 4.43), and job satisfaction (M = 4.23). Participants also perceived telework as moderately significant for health and safety in normal times (M = 3.87). They strongly agreed that offering telework might assist their organisation in providing more flexible teleworking arrangements (M = 4.71) and a more favourable working environment (M = 4.43).

The interviews were aimed to answer two research questions: the demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19 pandemic and the attitudes towards the impact of telework on work-life balance and job satisfaction.

The findings revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants (n=5) had limited or no experience with teleworking, while (n=3) had occasional telework experience. However, telework policies were adopted by 100% of participant organisations after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a prevalence of hybrid telework models (n=8). Moreover, most participants (n=9) expressed a preference for a hybrid telework model that combines telework and in-person collaboration, which highlights the demand for telework among participants and the importance of flexible telework arrangements.

Regarding attitudes towards telework, most of the participants (n=8) expressed positivity towards telework, appreciating the benefits of flexibility and convenience. Additionally, participants identified several benefits of teleworking that contributed to their overall job

satisfaction and work-life balance, including increased flexibility and control over schedule (n=10), reduced commute time and cost (n=7), and improved productivity (n=3).

However, participants also reported several challenges associated with telework, including the lack of face-to-face communication (n=4), feelings of isolation (n=6), and maintaining boundaries between work and personal life (n=4). Telework had both positive and negative effects on work-life balance, with participants reporting improved work-life balance due to increased flexibility (n=10), additional time for personal activities (n=7), and support for parental responsibilities(n=4). On the other hand, some participants (n=4) experienced difficulty establishing boundaries between work and personal life.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from this research conducted to explore telework among New Zealand back-office personnel. This research objectives were to:

1. To identify if New Zealand back-office personnel have a demand for telework after the COVID-19 pandemic and what are the drivers for it.

2. To determine the experiential effect of telework implementation on New Zealand back-office personnel's work-life balance and job satisfaction.

3. To explore the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel toward telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future.

4. Based on the existing literature and research findings, develop recommendations for managers and organisations on how telework could be used as an internal CSR extension.

This research was conducted against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to a significant increase in the availability and adoption of telework arrangements. The research focused on understanding the attitudes and preferences of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework. This discussion is structured around these key objectives, providing insights into the demand and drivers for telework, the impact of telework on New Zealand back-office personnel work-life balance and job satisfaction, and the potential for telework to be considered an internal CSR practice.

5.2 Demand and Drivers for Telework among New Zealand Back-office Personnel

The demand for telework among New Zealand back-office personnel has been evident through the findings of this research. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered through questionnaires and interviews have revealed a significant preference for telework, specifically the

hybrid telework model, which combines telework and in-person collaboration. The quantitative findings of this research indicated that 82.2% of the respondents enjoyed teleworking, with a significant shift in telework availability and intensity rates after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that telework availability significantly increased, indicating a growth of more than 50%. Moreover, although the availability of telework has grown significantly, the desire to telework, reported by participants, is even higher. When participants were surveyed about their telework preferences, a considerable proportion of them favoured a hybrid telework model, with almost 70% indicating a preference for teleworking for 1-2 days or 3-4 days per week. Similarly, the qualitative findings also support this, with nine of ten of the interview's participants expressing a preference for a hybrid telework model. These findings are consistent with the research of Smite et al. (2023), which underscores that hybrid telework models have become a prevalent trend across industries and countries as employers strive to cater to the flexibility needs of their workforce. Similarly, the studies by Babapour Chafi et al. (2022) and Kwok et al. (2022) identified a significant growth in telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the prevalence of the hybrid telework model. In addition, four interview participants expressed that they would never return to the traditional office for a full-time schedule. This is similar to previous studies that found that many employees exhibit a preference for the flexibility and independence offered by telework and expressed reluctance to reject such benefits by reverting to the traditional office (Hewett, 2022; Mayer & Boston, 2022; Pan & Shaheen, 2022).

Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a significant demand for telework, particularly the hybrid telework model, among New Zealand back-office personnel. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a substantial increase in the availability of telework, but the desire to telework is even higher among participants. Most participants preferred a hybrid telework model, indicating a preference

for the flexibility offered by telework while also valuing in-person collaboration. The preference for telework is consistent with previous studies that found a growing trend towards telework due to its benefits (Kwok et al., 2022; Mayer & Boston, 2022; Smite et al., 2023). Moreover, participants also expressed a reluctance to return to the traditional office for a full-time schedule, indicating a potential shift from the traditional office towards more flexible telework arrangements.

Several drivers contributed to the demand for telework among New Zealand back-office personnel, as identified by both quantitative and qualitative findings. These drivers include improved work-life balance, better work flexibility, reduced commuting time and costs, and higher productivity.

Firstly, the desire for better work flexibility emerged as one of the most significant drivers for telework demand among New Zealand's back-office personnel. The quantitative findings revealed that more then 85% of respondents identified flexibility as a significant benefit of telework. Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that increased flexibility and control over their schedules were advantages benefits for all interview participants. These findings align with previous research by Thompson et al. (2022) and Caillier (2018), which underscored the importance of flexible telework schedules in employment practices, allowing employees to have more control over their time, location, and regime of work. Moreover, the findings are in line with the research of Sarbu (2018) and Thompson et al. (2022), which found that telework allows employees to take advantage of unscheduled time during the workday to attend to non-work tasks without having to sacrifice work time. In addition, the the research findings also corroborate the notion that telework enables employees to demonstrate greater adaptability in meeting the demands of employers (Beauregard et al., 2019). This adaptability allows employees to plan online appointments with international colleagues and customers in different time zones, further

emphasising the importance of telework flexibility. Thus, the findings of this research among New Zealand's back-office personnel highlight the significant role of work flexibility in driving telework demand, aligning with prior research that emphasises the benefits of flexible work schedules for both employees and employers.

The potential for improved work-life balance emerged as another significant driver for telework demand, with almost 80% of respondents stating that telework positively impacted work-life balance. The findings align with previous research that highlights the positive impact of telework on work-life balance (Beauregard et al., 2019; Schall, 2019; Shieh, 2019; Uzun, 2021). As Mazur-Wierzbicka (2015) and Gołaszewska-Kaczan (2015) emphasised, employees have multiple social roles and need time to navigate between personal and professional responsibilities, the ability to merge both aspects of life and easily shift between them is crucial for achieving work-life balance. Similarly, Beauregard et al. (2019) found that employees with flexible telework arrangements reported better work-life balance, as they could align their work tasks with personal and family responsibilities. The qualitative findings further supported these findings, with participants expressing that telework allowed them to spend more time with their family, attend to personal responsibilities, and enjoy increased flexibility in managing their personal lives. These results emphasise the significant role that telework plays in facilitating work-life balance for New Zealand back-office personnel, further driving the demand for telework.

Thirdly, the reduction in commute time and costs also emerged as a key driver for telework demand. The quantitative revealed that almost 65% of participants identified less commuting as a benefit. The qualitative findings duplicated this sentiment, as participants highlighted the time and cost savings resulting by minimising the need for commuting. This is consistent with research by Chatterjee et al. (2020), Jones (2022), and Hook et al. (2020), which demonstrated that telework

could save employees significant time by reducing or eliminating commuting. Furthermore, the study by Pabilonia and Vernon (2021) found that the average teleworker saves approximately one hour per day by eliminating their daily commute. Similarly, Kazekami (2020) showed that telework could reduce work-related stress by removing the need for commuting every day. Thus, the research findings support the existing literature, further emphasising the importance of reduced commuting time and costs as critical drivers for the increasing demand for telework among New Zealand back-office personnel.

Finally, higher productivity was another driver for telework demand among New Zealand back-office personnel. The quantitative findings revealed that almost 40% of particpants identified higher productivity as a benefit of telework. Similarly, in the qualitative findings, three participants reported improved productivity as a significant benefit of teleworking. This is in line with studies conducted by Bailey and Kurland (2002), Gajendran and Harrison (2007), and Golden and Eddleston (2020), which linked telework to higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness in employees teleworking. Factors contributing to this enhanced productivity, as identified in the literature, include reduced distractions, increased autonomy, and a better ability to focus on tasks (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden & Eddleston, 2020). Furthermore, the flexibility offered by telework, allowing employees to work during their most productive hours, has been found to contribute to increased productivity (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Golden & Eddleston, 2020). Thus, this research findings corroborate with the existing literature, emphasising the role of higher productivity as a driver for the growing demand for telework among New Zealand back-office personnel.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates a significant demand for telework, particularly the hybrid telework model, among New Zealand back-office personnel. The findings reveal that

factors such as improved work-life balance, better work flexibility, reduced commuting time and costs, and higher productivity drive the demand for telework. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a substantial increase in the availability of telework, with a strong preference for the hybrid telework model. The preference for teleworking is consistent with previous studies that found a growing trend towards telework due to its benefits. As telework continues to be a popular work arrangement, it is crucial for organisations to consider these drivers when implementing telework policies and to ensure that they align with employees' needs and preferences.

5.3 Impact of Telework on Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction

The research in question 2 sought to examine what attitudes New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction. This section discusses the findings of the research by triangulating quantitative and qualitative data and existing literature on the subject.

5.3.1 Impact on Work-Life Balance

The findings of this research reinforce the notion that teleworking has the potential to impact work-life balance positively. As evidenced by the quantitative findings, almost 80% of participants reported an improvement in work-life balance. Furthermore, participants indicated that telework allows spend less time getting ready for work and dedicate more time to their private life when working from home. Participants reported that telework does not create significant work-life balance conflicts. The qualitative findings affirmed quantitative findings, with ten participants emphasised the positive contribution of telework to work-life balance influenced by factors such as increased flexibility, additional time for personal activities, and support for parental responsibilities. These results are consistent with previous studies that suggest that telework has

the potential to improve work-life balance through increased flexibility and control over work schedules (Allen et al., 2015; Beauregard et al., 2019; Shieh, 2019; Uzun, 2021).

Flexible job scheduling was found to be a key aspect of telework that enabled employees to balance work and family responsibilities more effectively. According to quantitative findings, telework allowed employees to create more flexible working arrangements. These findings are in line with the literature, which suggests that teleworkers with flexible scheduling can more effectively balance work and family responsibilities (Messenger, 2019; Beauregard et al., 2019). Flexibility in telework arrangements allows employees to better adapt to personal commitments, including childcare or other personal appointments, without negatively affecting their work performance (Sarbu, 2018; Thompson et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the quantitative findings revealed that almost 65% of participants indicated the decreased need for commuting as a significant contributor to better work-life balance. Similarly, in qualitative findings, seven participants confirmed that telework saves considerable time by reducing or eliminating commuting. These findings are consistent with previous research (Jones, 2022; Hook et al., 2020; Zürcher et al., 2021), which also suggests that saving time on commuting allows employees to spend more time on personal activities and with their families, ultimately leading to a more balanced lifestyle.

Although the findings predominantly illustrate the positive impact of telework on work-life balance, it is important to acknowledge the challenges experienced in establishing boundaries between work and personal life. While the quantitative findings indicated that only 10% of the participants had problems with setting boundaries between work and personal life, the qualitative findings showed that 40% of participants reported experiencing such difficulties. These align with existing research indicating that telework may lead to the blurring of boundaries between work

and home environments, causing employees to struggle with disengaging from work and potentially leading to overworking (Allen et al., 2021; Beauregard et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Widar et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important for employers and employees to take steps to address the challenge of establishing boundaries between work and personal life in a telework environment. One effective strategy is to establish clear guidelines on work expectations and boundaries, such as specific working hours and communication protocols (Allen et al., 2021; Sarbu, 2018). Employers should encourage employees to disconnect from work during non-working hours, such as by disabling notifications or encouraging them to take breaks and engage in personal activities (Beauregard et al., 2019; Elbaz et al., 2022). Additionally, employees can create a designated workspace and establish rules that help them separate work and personal life (Allen et al., 2021). These steps can help to ensure that telework remains a positive experience that promotes work-life balance and enhances employee well-being.

5.3.2 Impact on Job Satisfaction

The research findings revealed a generally positive attitude toward telework's impact on job satisfaction, as more than 80% of participants reported feeling more satisfied with their job when teleworking. This finding aligns with previous studies that have reported positive correlations between telework and job satisfaction (Beauregard et al., 2019; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Schall, 2019). However, when discussing job satisfaction, it is vital to understand that it can be considered as the ultimate outcome influenced by other variables that represent value for participants (Kaushal, 2021). From this context, the benefits of telework, such as better work-life balance, greater work flexibility, and reduced commuting, which were previously discussed, can be considered contributing factors to the observed increase in job satisfaction (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019). This notion was further supported by qualitative findings, where eight of ten

participants specifically mentioned the benefits of flexibility when asked about their job satisfaction.

In addition, autonomy and trust were also identified as significant factors influencing their job satisfaction. Participants cited autonomy as the state of having the freedom to manage their work schedules and the capability to work independently. Trust was highlighted as participant's perception that their organisation had confidence in their competence to complete tasks without the need for continuous supervision. These qualitative findings support the quantitative results by providing a more in-depth understanding of the specific factors contributing to job satisfaction in the context of telework. The importance of autonomy and trust as key determinants of job satisfaction in telework arrangements has been previously documented in the literature (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Tudu & Singh, 2022). Autonomy and trust can enhance employee motivation and commitment, which in turn, can positively impact job satisfaction (Even, 2020; Ngamkroeckjoti et al., 2022).

However, despite the generally positive impact of telework on job satisfaction, it is crucial to consider that teleworking can also have some challenges, such as social isolation and reduced face-to-face interactions. The quantitative findings indicated that the participant's responses to the Likert scale questio regarding social isolation had an average score of 2.84, with a standard deviation of 1.25. These findings suggest that feelings of isolation can potentially have a negative impact on job satisfaction among telecommuters. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that social isolation can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction among teleworkers (Bentley et al., 2016; Even, 2020; Mayer & Boston, 2022). The qualitative findings supported this, with eight of tenparticipants emphasising the importance of social interaction and in-person communication for job satisfaction. This is consistent with existing research, which has

reported that face-to-face communication is crucial for building and maintaining in-team relationships, which are predictors of job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2015; Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Kazekami, 2020). Employees who highly value social connections and in-person collaboration may experience decreased job satisfaction in telework settings due to reduced opportunities for face-to-face interactions (Adamovic, 2022). This highlights the importance of organisational support in mitigating feelings of isolation and maintaining a sense of community among teleworkers (Adamovic, 2022; Even, 2020; Williams, 2021). Therefore, it is essential for organisations to develop strategies that foster social connections and facilitate face-to-face interactions among teleworkers to promote job satisfaction and prevent negative consequences such as isolation (Beauregard et al., 2019). Moreover, hybrid telework arrangements emerged as a potential solution to addressing social isolation, as they offered a balance between telework and in-person collaboration (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023; Williams, 2021). The findings also confirm this notion, with significant responses and highlyg significant responses from the questionnaire and interviews, respectively, quantitative data and 90% of interview participants expressing a preference for a hybrid telework model.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that telework has a predominantly beneficial impact on work-life balance and job satisfaction for New Zealand back-office personnel. Factors such as increased flexibility, autonomy, trust, and reduced commuting time contribute to these beneficial outcomes. However, challenges such as establishing boundaries between work and personal life and potential social isolation must be addressed by organisations to ensure the sustained benefits of telework. Hybrid telework arrangements offer a balanced solution that combines the benefits of telework with the benefits of in-person collaboration, effectively addressing the potential challenges and optimising work-life balance and job satisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial for

organisations and managers to carefully consider the implementation of telework policies and practices to balance the benefits and challenges, ensuring that employees can reap the benefits of telework while minimising its potential challenges.

5.4 Telework as an Internal CSR Extension

This research sought to explore the attitudes of New Zealand back-office personnel towards telework as an internal CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future. The findings, along with existing literature, suggest that telework can play a significant role in addressing key aspects of internal CSR. The quantitative findings revealed that participants perceived telework as effective during the COVID-19 pandemic and contributed positively to OHS, work-life balance, work-family relationships, and job satisfaction, with mean Likert scale scores exceeding 4 for each benefit. These aspects align with the key components of internal CSR, as identified by Beglari (2022), Wampole (2022), and Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2021). The qualitative findings further emphasised the importance of teleworking in promoting a healthy work-life balance, and job satisfaction.

The qualitative findings demonstrated that telework was perceived as effective in maintaining business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic and upholding employee health and safety. The existing literature also supports these findings, as research has shown that telework can contribute to OHS (Metwally et al., 2022; Parker & Narayanan, 2022) and provide business continuity in times of crisis (Donnelly & Proctor-Thomson, 2015; Green et al., 2017; Sarnosky et al., 2022). Furthermore, the findings showed that by implementing telework organisations can contribute to more flexible teleworking arrangements and provide better work-life balance and work-family relationships, which aligns with the goals of internal CSR (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021; Macassa et al., 2021; Mayo et al., 2016). The concept of internal CSR encompasses initiatives

aimed at enhancing employees' working conditions, job satisfaction, and well-being (Beglari, 2022; Wampole, 2022). The findings suggest it was assumed that the provision of telework could facilitate organisations to enhance employees' job satisfaction and supply a more favourable working environment.

Moreover, the qualitative findings revealed that organisations offering telework options were perceived as more attractive to potential employees, as they demonstrated commitment to employee well-being and flexibility. These findings support the idea that telework can contribute to an organisation's reputation and long-term success by addressing internal CSR objectives (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020; Stoian et al., 2022). Additionally, organisations offering telework options can attract a wider pool of talent and foster diversity, an important aspect of internal CSR (Mayo et al., 2016). The qualitative finding also revealed that participants emphasised the value of working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations.

In conclusion, the findings provided evidence that telework can be considered an extension of internal CSR. By integrating telework into their internal CSR strategies, organisations can address the key components of internal CSR, ultimately contributing to their reputation and long-term success (Stoian et al., 2022). As telework becomes more prevalent and widely accepted (Cieniewicz, 2023), it is crucial for organisations to effectively implement and manage telework arrangements to maximise potential benefits and address any challenges that may arise, thereby strengthening their commitment to internal CSR and fostering a more sustainable and employee-centric work culture.

5.5 Recommendations for Managers

The fourth and final objective of the research was to use the findings to build recommendations for managers on the implementation and management of telework to ensure the

best experience for New Zealand back-office personnel. First and foremost, it is essential for managers to consider implementing telework due to detected demand and the potential to enhance employees' well-being. Telework has been shown to improve work-life balance, job satisfaction, and OHS, which can ultimately contribute to higher employee engagement, better performance, and increased retention rates (Sarbu, 2018; Thompson et al., 2022). By offering flexible telework arrangements, employees can better manage their personal and professional commitments, leading to reduced stress and improved well-being (Beauregard et al., 2019; Mutiganda et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2022). However, teleworking can also have challenges if not managed carefully. For instance, some employees may experience feelings of isolation, disconnection from their colleagues, and difficulty in maintaining boundaries between work and personal life (Even, 2020; Williams, 2021). Additionally, the rapid shift to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for adequate preparation and support, as many organisations struggled to adjust to the new working conditions (Zappalà et al., 2021). In light of these potential challenges, a hybrid telework arrangement may be the best option, as it combines the benefits of telework with the benefits of traditional office and in-person collaboration (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). A hybrid telework model allows employees to work remotely for part of the week while maintaining regular face-to-face interactions with their colleagues in the traditional office (Williams, 2021). This approach can help mitigate feelings of isolation, enhance team cohesion, and provide opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing that may be challenging to achieve in a fully teleworking setting (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023).

Furthermore, internal CSR is often related to the policy-making guidance that enables decision-makers to design initiatives that contribute more constructively to an improved workplace environment (Jamali et al., 2015; Siltaloppi et al., 2021). From the context of telework

management, internal CSR, in conjunction with HRM, can develop and promote programmes that include shaping corporate culture and providing employee policies, guidelines, training and support.

Shaping corporate culture is essential for creating a positive work environment that supports telework. This can involve promoting a culture of trust, communication, and collaboration, which can help build a sense of community and connection among teleworking employees (Jämsen et al., 2022; Rogers, 2022). CSR policies related to corporate culture can include providing opportunities for team building and social interaction, promoting open communication channels, and recognising employee contributions (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020; Stoian et al., 2022). Appropriate communication, support, and a sense of community can help teleworking employees feel more connected and engaged and eventually mitigate the feeling of social isolation during telework (Graham et al., 2023; Rogers, 2022). Overall, shaping a positive corporate culture through internal CSR policies and guidelines can be crucial for creating a supportive telework environment that fosters a sense of community and connection among employees, ultimately leading to improved well-being.

Employee training is also crucial for successful telework (Beauregard et al., 2019). Teleworking employees may require specific skills and training to perform their work effectively when tele working (Ma, 2021). CSR policies related to employee training can include providing relevant tutoring programmes and resources, offering access to IT support, and promoting ongoing professional development opportunities (Gould et al., 2020; Onkila & Sarna, 2022). Moreover, internal CSR policies and guidelines related to work-life boundaries can facilitate employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Golob & Podnar, 2021). These policies can include setting clear guidelines for work hours and availability, promoting regular breaks and rest periods, and

providing resources and training for effective time management and prioritisation (Bartlett et al., 2021). Thus, incorporating employee training, IT support, and work-life balance guidelines into internal CSR policies can enhance the effectiveness of teleworking and support employees' well-being, which in turn can lead to improved job satisfaction.

By adopting these recommendations, managers can ensure that their telework initiatives are more successful and contribute positively to employees' well-being and job satisfaction, ultimately aligning with the goals of internal CSR.

5.6 Contribution

The current research contributes to the literature on work-life balance, job satisfaction, telework, and internal CSR in several ways, expanding on both the academic and practical understanding of these topics. Firstly, this research adds to the growing body of literature examining the impact of telework on work-life balance and job satisfaction, thereby reducing the gap in the literature. By focusing on telework and its relationship with internal CSR, the research sheds light on how organisations can leverage telework policies to enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction while also improving their internal CSR performance. This interdisciplinary approach, combining concepts from HRM, CSR, and organisational behaviour, offers a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the topic, benefiting both academics and practitioners.

Secondly, this research delved deeper into the potential benefits and challenges of telework for New Zealand back-offic epersonnel, including its impact on work-life balance and job satisfaction. This focus enabled a more thorough understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful telework environment and the possible role of internal CSR in mitigating potential challenges. By addressing both the benefits and challenges of telework arrangements, this research

contributes to a more holistic understanding of the implications of telework for back-office personnels and organisations in New Zealand.

Thirdly, this research offers practical recommendations for managers/supervisors and organisations aiming to implement telework policies effectively, considering the potential impact on employee well-being and the role of CSR in shaping and monitoring such policies. By offering actionable guidance, this research helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, enabling organisations to navigate better the challenges and benefits associated with telework.

5.7 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This research has some limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation is the relatively small sample size. A larger sample size could have potentially provided a more diverse range of experiences and perspectives, thus enhancing the generalisability of the findings (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Another limitation was the potential for self-selection bias among the participants (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). As the recruitment process relied on social media and personal networking, those who had strong opinions or experiences with teleworking may have been more likely to participate. This may have led to an overrepresentation of certain viewpoints within the sample, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to a broader population of New Zealand back-office personnel. Furthermore, this research scope is limited to New Zealand back-office personnel, and the findings may not be generalisable to other professional groups or countries. Future research could explore the demand and drivers for telework across different industries and countries to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the global telework landscape. Also, cross-cultural studies could provide insights into how cultural factors influence telework preferences and experiences.

Additionally, the cross-sectional design of this research, which collected data at a single point in time, may not have captured the dynamic nature of telework experiences and attitudes (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Moreover, this research focused on the COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst for the increase in telework opportunities in New Zealand. Future longitudinal research would be valuable in understanding how telework attitudes evolve over time in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such research could help to identify trends and shifts in preferences for telework, as well as uncover any potential long-term consequences of telework on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and internal CSR.

Lastly, the notion of telework as an internal CSR extension is still an emerging concept. More research is needed to understand how telework can be effectively integrated into organisations' internal CSR strategies. Future research could explore specific organisational practices that enable successful telework implementation, as well as the mechanisms through which telework contributes to improved employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall corporate sustainability. Furthermore, comparative research could be conducted to explore potential differences in telework experiences and preferences between various industries, job roles, and demographic groups.These may reveal unique challenges and benefits related to telework in specific contexts, thereby enabling organisations to tailor their telework policies and practices to the unique needs of their employees. By addressing these limitations and exploring future research opportunities, scholars can continue to build a comprehensive understanding of telework and its implications for individuals, organisations, and society as a whole.

5.8 Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the prevalence, demand, and impact of telework among New Zealand back-office personnel, with a specific focus on work-life balance, job satisfaction,

and the potential of telework as an extension of internal CSR. This research sought to understand employees' preferences, the drivers for telework adoption, and the potential challenges benefits and associated with telework arrangements. The findings of provide important insights for organisations and managers/supervisors, offering valuable recommendations for the effective implementation and management of telework policies, with the goal of creating a more sustainable, employee-centric, and successful work environment.

This research has provided valuable insights into the attitudes of New Zealalnd back-office personnel towards telework. The findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the availability of telework, reflecting global trends (Kwok et al., 2022; Mayer & Boston, 2022; Smite et al., 2023). However, the desire for telework among participants in this research is even higher than current availability, with most participants preferring a hybrid telework model, highlighting the importance of flexibility and in-person collaboration. This preference is consistent with previous studies that have noted the benefits of telework, including improved work-life balance, better work flexibility, reduced commuting time and costs, and increased productivity (Cieniewicz, 2023; Stoian et al., 2022).

This research has shown that telework can have a predominantly beneficial impact on work-life balance and job satisfaction for New Zealand back-office personnel. Factors such as increased flexibility, autonomy, trust, and reduced commuting time contribute to these positive outcomes (Mayer & Boston, 2022). However, potential challenges, such as establishing boundaries between work and personal life and addressing social isolation, must be considered to ensure the sustained benefits of telework (Cieniewicz, 2023). The hybrid telework arrangements offer a balanced solution by combining the benefits of telework with the benefits of the traditional office

and in-person collaboration, effectively addressing potential challenges and optimising work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Moreover, this research supports the notion that telework can be considered an extension of internal CSR (Mayo et al., 2016; Stoian et al., 2022). By integrating telework into their CSR strategies, organisations can address the key components of internal CSR, ultimately contributing to their reputation and long-term success. As telework becomes more prevalent and widely accepted, organisations must effectively implement and manage telework arrangements to maximise potential benefits and address any challenges that may arise, thereby strengthening their commitment to internal CSR and fostering a more sustainable and employee-centric work culture.

In conclusion, the findings of this research have significant implications for organisations and managers/supervisors in New Zealand and beyond. As telework continues to gain popularity, it is crucial for organisations to understand the factors driving its demand, the impact on employees' work-life balance and job satisfaction, and its potential role as an internal CSR extension. By carefully considering these aspects and implementing telework policies and practices that balance the benefits and challenges, organisations can ensure that employees reap the benefits of telework while minimising its potential adverse effects, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable, employee-centric, and successful work environment.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

OTAGO POLYTECHNIC
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3rd November 2022

Name: Alexander Churilov

Dear Alexander,

Re: Application for Ethics Consent

Reference Number: AIC113

Title of Application: Telework as an internal CSR extension and the effect of COVID-19 on employees' attitudes toward it.

Thank you for your application for ethics approval for this project.

The review panel has considered your revised application including responses to questions and issues raised. We are pleased to inform you that we are satisfied with the revisions made and confirm ethical approval for the project.

Many thanks for your considered responses to our recommendations.

We wish you well with your work and remind you that at the conclusion of your research you should send a brief report with findings and /or conclusions to the Research Ethics Committee.

All correspondence regarding this application should include the reference number assigned.

Project approval is valid for three (3) years from date of letter.

With best regards,

Indrapriya Kularatne

Ethics Coordinator, Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus

Appendix B: Questionnaire and Interview Questions

Demographic questions

1) What is your position role?
   a) Worker/Subordinary
   b) Manager/Supervisor
2) What is your organisation's size?
   a) Micro-sized (1 to 9 employees)
   b) Small-sized (10-49 employees)
   c) Medium-sized (50-249 employees)
   d) Large-sized (250 and over)
3) Your age group
   a) 18-27
   b) 28-37
   c) 38-47
   d) 48-57
   e) 58-65
   f)65+ years of age
4) Your gender
   a) Male
   b) Female
   c) Prefer not to answer.

I. **Is there a demand for telework among New Zealand's back-office personnel after the COVID-19** pandemic**, and what are the drivers for this need?** (Multiple-choice)

1. Was telework available in your organisation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?
   a) Yes
   b) No
2. Is telework available in your organisation now?
   a) Yes
   b) No
3. On average, how many days a week are you teleworking prior to COVID-19?

a) Not teleworking

b) 1-2

c) 3-4

d) Full time

4. How many days a week do you prefer to telework?

a) Don't want

b) 1-2 days

c) 3-4 days

d) Full time

5. On average, how many days a week are you teleworking now?

a) Not teleworking

b) 1-2 days

c) 3-4 days

d) Full time

6. Do you enjoy teleworking now?

a) Do not like to telework

b) Do not feel difference

c) Enjoy

7. What positive telework features match your attitudes?

a) Better work-life balance
b) Better job satisfaction
c) Better work flexibility
d) Less commuting
e) Higher productivity
f) Less carbon footprint

g) More autonomy
h) Your own feature/s (split by a comma if several) _____

8. What negative telework features match your attitudes?

a) Lack of social interaction
b) Distractions at home
c) Loss of work-life balance
d) Increased need for meetings
e) Cybersecurity concerns
f) Difficulty in staying motivated
g) Your own feature/s (split by a comma if several) _____

II. **What are the New Zealand back-office personnel attitudes toward telework as an internal CSR practice during COVID-19 and in the future?** (Likert Scale)

1. My organisation was prepared for the shift from office-based work to telework at COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. Telework was effective in my organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. I believe that providing telework during the COVID-19 pandemic helped my organisation to maintain health and safety security of employees.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation positively affects the work-family relationships of employees.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

5. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation positively affects the work-life balance of employees.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

6. I believe that by providing telework, my organisation increases the job satisfaction of employees.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

7. I believe that telework is important for health and safety in normal times.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

8. I believe that providing telework help my organisation to provide a more flexible teleworking arrangement.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

9. I believe that providing telework help my organisation to provide a more favourable working environment.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

III. **What attitudes do New Zealand back-office personnel possess due to the impact of telework on their work-life balance and job satisfaction?** (Likert Scale)

1. I feel more satisfied with my job when I'm working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. I feel that I have more time for my private life when working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. I feel that my private life and work end up in the conflict when working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. I feel isolated when working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

5. I feel that working from home allows me to create a more flexible working arrangement.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

6. I feel that working from home gives me an opportunity to spend less time every day getting ready for work.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

7. I feel that working from home gives me an opportunity to spend more time with family and/or pets.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

8. I feel less stressed when I am working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to my view on working from home becoming more positive.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

10. Collaboration with my colleagues becomes increasingly difficult when working from home.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

11. The technical and digital tools that I have are enough to enable me to work from home without hindrance.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Interview questions

1. Describe your timeline of telecommuting. Have you used it before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic ?
2. What was your initial attitude toward telework, and how did the COVID-19 pandemic influence it?
3. What are the main benefits in your experience with telework?
4. Describe any challenges you have experienced with telework.
5. Describe what challenges your team experienced with telework.
6. Can you discuss or elaborate on the effect of telework on work-life balance?
7. Can you discuss or elaborate on the effect of telework on job satisfaction?
8. Do you think that organisation that provide telework may be more attractive for employees and why?
9. If you had the option to choose to work from the traditional office or telework, what would you select? Please explain the reason for your answer.