

Article

Exploring Career Orientations and Career Self-Management in the Context of Working From Home—A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

As part of individuals' growing responsibility for managing their careers, they increasingly engage in career self-management to guide their careers according to their career orientations. At the same time, many individuals work from home to varying degrees. Until now, little has been known about how career orientations and career self-management are shaped by working from home. Against this background, this study aims to explore career orientations and career self-management in the context of working from home. We conducted 26 interviews with individuals who worked from home at least part of the time. Our findings demonstrate that individuals' perceptions of working from home depend on their career orientations. Additionally, working from home comprises contextual factors that serve as either resources or demands for different career self-management behaviors. While behaviors that depend on social contextual factors, such as networking, are hindered when working from home, those related to work (e.g., productivity) and person (e.g., career planning) are facilitated. Our findings contribute conceptually to understanding the role of contextual factors in the model of career self-regulation and extend the literature on working from home by highlighting the relevance of career-related constructs.

Keywords: career orientations; career self-management; working from home; qualitative study**JEL:** J24, J28, J81, O15

1. Introduction

In recent decades, individualization has led to an increase in autonomy, self-determination and responsibility of individuals in their working lives (Ryan and Deci, 2017). This mirrors in the responsibility for individuals' careers which partially shifts from organizations to individuals. Therefore, individuals have greater autonomy in planning and shaping their careers (Bal and Hornung, 2019; Ryan and Deci, 2017). They are increasingly responsible for setting their future career goals and planning their career steps to achieve their personal career aspirations.

The process by which individuals proactively plan and manage career behaviors is referred to as career self-management (King, 2004; Lent and Brown, 2013; Zacher and Frese, 2018). Research has shown that career self-management is influenced by individuals' preferences for different career paths, e.g., the desire to have a long-term versus short-term career in one organization. These preferences are called career orientations (e.g., Gubler et al., 2014; Wiernik and Kostal, 2019). Along with individualization, individuals increasingly prefer careers that are in line with their interests and values (Cortellazzo et al., 2020).

However, career orientations and career self-management vary depending on the organizational context in which careers are embedded (e.g., Hirschi and Dauwalder, 2015). In this regard, the work environment plays a crucial role (e.g., Seibert et al., 2024; Soens et al.,

2006). This is highlighted by the fact that organizational support (e.g., mentors or career programs) serves as a central career resource that promotes career advancement (Hirschi, 2012). Likewise, organization-related career shocks (e.g., downsizing or ethical scandals) can adversely impact careers and reduce career optimism (Hofer et al., 2021).

The work environment is undergoing dynamic changes. An important facet of these changes is the transformation of the work conditions, driven by the increasing flexibilization of work (Kattenbach et al., 2021). As such, individuals have greater flexibility, particularly in terms of where they work (Allen et al., 2013; Leslie et al., 2012). For this reason, many individuals work from home using information and communication technologies (ICT) to varying degrees (Beck, 2019; Bloom et al., 2015).

First studies have shown that working from home alters communication, social exchange and the work environment which impacts individuals' perceptions of their careers (e.g., Kramer and Kramer, 2020; Spurk and Straub, 2020). So far, research has demonstrated that the isolation when working from home fosters concerns about negative career consequences and increases individuals' sense of responsibility for their careers (Bachrach et al., 2023). Thus, research indicates that social career resources are less accessible to individuals when working from home (Bjursell et al., 2021; Suess et al., 2022).



Still, these studies take a rather one-sided perspective on the impact of working from home on careers as they neglect the impact of other contextual factors of working from home and solely focus on social isolation despite many other possibly relevant contextual factors of working from home, such as autonomy and privacy (e.g., Gajendran et al., 2024). Hence, studies on the impact of working from home on individuals' career interests, motives and behaviors beyond these socially related factors are missing (e.g., Gajendran et al., 2024; Marsh et al., 2022; Reimann and Abendroth, 2023). Additionally, recent studies did not consider qualitative changes to career orientations and career self-management behaviors in the specific context of working from home (e.g., Sotto-Mayor et al., 2023). Consequently, research is lacking on how working from home is perceived to impact the quality of individuals' career orientations and the nature of their career self-management behaviors.

Against this background, the purpose of our study is to explore individuals' career orientations and career self-management behaviors in the context of working from home. In particular, we address the following research questions:

RQ1: How are individual career orientations shaped through working from home?

RQ2: How is individual career self-management shaped through working from home?

In order to achieve our study's aim, we chose an exploratory qualitative methodology in the form of semi-structured interviews. This approach serves best to study individuals' subjective career-related interests, motives and behaviors when working from home.

Addressing the research gap on individuals' career orientations and career self-management behaviors in the context of working from home, we expect the following contributions to the literature as well as practical implications. First, we explore the subjective importance of working from home as a flexible work arrangement and contextual factor for individuals' career orientations and career self-management. In doing so, we respond to calls for research on the role of contextual factors in shaping career orientations and career self-management (Wilhelm et al., 2024). In addition, our findings add to the predominantly quantitative state of research on the career implications of working from home by providing insights into subjective experiences and perceptions.

Second, we expect to extend the model of career self-regulation by exploring how working from home, as a flexible work arrangement, may function as a contextual factor (resource or demand) within the self-regulatory process. With this, we follow the call of Hirschi and Koen (2021) for empirical studies applying the career self-regulation model in a qualitative approach and thereby advance theoretical understanding of how career orientations and career self-management behaviors unfold in specific work contexts.

Third, addressing this research gap is of practical relevance. As organizations increasingly adopt flexible work arrangements, with working from home becoming a central part (Wigert and Agrawal, 2022), it is important to understand its impact on employees' careers. Because individual career preferences and behaviors influence work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Li et al., 2021), insights into how working from home shapes career orientations and career self-management can help organizations design more effective support for employees' career development in hybrid work environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Career Orientations and Career Self-Management

Career orientations and career self-management have gained momentum in studies of contemporary careers, as they underscore the proactive role of individuals in shaping their careers (Hirschi, 2018; Hirschi and Koen, 2021). *Career orientations* represent individuals' preferences for their careers (Gubler et al., 2014). They are fundamental to individuals' career decisions (e.g., Chui et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019). However, career orientations are manifold. Literature distinguishes between (1) traditional and (2) self-centered career orientations (Gerber et al., 2009). Individuals with (1) traditional career orientations have organization-centered preferences as they are seeking long-term career paths in a specific organization (e.g., Brousseau et al., 1996; Gerber et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2025). Research has demonstrated that traditional career orientations provide security and predictability for employees (Gerber et al., 2009). In contrast, individuals with (2) self-centered career orientations prefer careers in line with their personal norms and values, regardless of the organization they work for. Studies show that self-centered career orientations have increased in the course of individualization within the last two decades (Gerber et al., 2009; Grote and Hall, 2013). One reason for this is that these enhance the adaptability to dynamic labor market conditions (e.g., Sullivan and Arthur, 2006) and lead to higher levels of subjective career success and satisfaction (De Vos and Soens, 2008; Hall, 2004).

Contextual factors – such as labor market trends, organizational culture and critical career events – impact individuals' career orientations (e.g., Gmür, 2006; Schrujjer, 2006). For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic provoked many individuals to re-evaluate their career orientations and goals with regard to more positive and secure career decisions (e.g., Akkermans et al., 2020).

Career self-management is the active process by which individuals plan, monitor and adjust their career goals and their goal-directed behaviors, such as building social contacts (King, 2004; Lent and Brown, 2013; Wilhelm et al., 2024). Research has demonstrated that individuals with strong skills in career self-management tend to adjust more effectively to changes and opportunities in the labor

market (Sturges, 2008) which strengthens their career satisfaction and advancement (De Vos and Soens, 2008; King, 2004).

Hirschi and Koen (2021) developed an integrative model of career self-regulation. This model views career orientations and career self-management as dynamically interacting constructs (De Vos and Soens, 2008; Hirschi and Koen, 2021). Self-centered career orientations, for instance, provoke career self-management behaviors such as networking and career exploration (De Vos and Soens, 2008; Herrmann et al., 2015). Furthermore, the model comprises a self-regulatory perspective. Thus, career outcomes are the starting point of a feedback loop that regulates career orientations and career self-management behaviors. Career self-regulation is embedded in a complex environment that includes various contextual factors that in turn shape career decisions, behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Gunz et al., 2020; Hirschi and Dauwalder, 2015; Hirschi and Koen, 2021). Therefore, there has been a considerable increase in research interest on contextual factors from career orientations and career self-management (e.g., Hirschi and Koen, 2021; Seibert et al., 2024; Wilhelm et al., 2024), especially due to rigid changes in the work conditions.

2.2 Working From Home as a Context for Career Orientations and Career Self-Management

Due to the ongoing flexibilization along with the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home has established itself as a common work arrangement (Gajendran et al., 2024; Hauff and Rastetter, 2021; Poethke et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). It is defined as a flexible work arrangement in which individuals work from private premises for some of their regular working hours by using ICT (Aksoy et al., 2023; Allen et al., 2015; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). The amount of working from home varies between working exclusively from home and hybrid arrangements in which work is performed from home to some proportion of the regular working hours (Behrens et al., 2024).

Further, working from home with its work conditions can also be seen as a context surrounding individuals. According to Johns (2006), the context can be divided into an omnibus context (e.g., occupation, location, time or relations) and its discrete contextual factors (e.g., salient features of tasks or workplace characteristics) which include both opportunities and constraints. Thus, working from home forms a unique omnibus context that confronts individuals with different discrete contextual factors (e.g., autonomy or isolation from colleagues) that can be both opportune or constraining (e.g., Gajendran et al., 2024; Johns, 2006). Research has shown that working from home impacts individuals' overall perceptions and behaviors. Hence, it is conceivable that working from home also is perceived as an impact factor of career orientations and career self-management behaviors.

Working from home is associated with isolation as it reduces face-to-face interactions and the visibility towards stakeholders. Recent studies have demonstrated that the isolation as a contextual factor of working from home actually hinders career self-management behaviors related to networking (e.g., Allen et al., 2021; Fortagne et al., 2024) and increases individuals' concerns about negative career consequences, due to less expected organizational support when working from home (Gazit et al., 2021).

Still, our knowledge about the subjective relevance of this and other contextual factors of working from home on individuals' career orientations and career self-management behaviors is limited. However, there are certain indications that working from home is crucial for individuals' career orientations and career self-management. As working from home regularly is characterized by fewer workplace distractions, such as noise, interruptions from colleagues or spontaneous meetings (e.g., Nwoko and Yazdani, 2024), it is imaginable that working from home might lead individuals to enhance certain behaviors of career self-management that require a calm and uninterrupted environment, such as human capital development and career goal setting (Wilhelm et al., 2024). Some initial studies provide evidence for this assumption as they show that individuals feel empowered when working from home and start to teach themselves (e.g., Yarberry and Sims, 2021). In addition, working from home offers possibilities for work-life-integration (e.g., Brega et al., 2023). The experienced advantages of increased work-life-integration might provoke individuals to prefer career paths that allow for a better integration of work and private life and might therefore change their career orientations (Kossek et al., 2006). Furthermore, working from home offers increased autonomy and self-determination over schedules and task prioritization but also spatial flexibility (e.g., Gajendran et al., 2024). This might be valued by individuals and therefore might lead to awareness and adaptation of related value-oriented career orientations (Bravo et al., 2017). These assumptions highlight the need to explore individuals' perceptions of how working from home impacts individuals' interests, motives and behaviors regarding career orientations and career self-management.

3. Method

3.1 Procedure and Sample

To shed light on how individuals experience and respond to working from home in relation to their interests, motives and behaviors regarding career orientations and career self-management, a qualitative analysis was chosen that used semi-structured interviews. As career orientations and career self-management form constructs which are highly dependent on individual perceptions, experiences, emotions and cognitions, interviews allow to look closer at exactly these aspects as well as the individuals' motives behind certain career-related preferences and be-

haviors (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). Additionally, a qualitative analysis enables to explore the specific career self-management behaviors that are performed in the context of working from home. Furthermore, the qualitative approach can capture the complexity, versatility and uniqueness of the working from home context (Johns, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). Research also suggests that trust is built up between the interviewees over the course of an interview (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, honestly discussing sensitive career issues may be more likely in a confidential interview setting.

We chose semi-structured interviews in order to ensure comparability between interviews, while still retaining the flexibility to explore certain topics in more depth. The interviews were conducted by telephone in German.

We conducted the interviews between June and July 2024 with employees who worked at least 20% of their regular working hours from home. The first two interviews functioned as pre-tests to adapt the interview guide for logic and comprehensibility. As the pre-tests led to changes in the structure of the interview guide only, we still included these in the data analysis.

To ensure a heterogeneous sample, employees of different ages, gender, education and industries were selected. They were recruited via the professional social network LinkedIn together with snowballing and recommendations. Prior to the interviews, we informed the participating individuals about the anonymized handling of their data. To minimize priming effects and ensure unbiased, authentic responses, we revealed the topic of the interviews only as “work-related experiences”. Socio-demographic data (age, gender, industry, occupation, etc.) was collected in advance in a questionnaire.

The interviews began with a brief introduction by the interviewer, confirming confidentiality and outlining the purpose of the interview to discuss about work-related experiences. Subsequently, the interviewed individuals introduced themselves and described a typical work week, highlighting the frequency and conditions of working from home. We then asked them to describe their career background and orientations, including key career moments, achievements, career preferences, goals, values and future aspirations. These descriptions served as the basis for identifying individual characteristics and patterns of personal career orientations. Rather than assigning participants to “fixed” career orientation types, we inductively categorized key elements mentioned in their descriptions – such as career goals, values and priorities. This was based on how they described their desired career paths, what they considered important in a career and the motives guiding their decisions. These categories reflect distinct features of career orientations (e.g., focus on autonomy, balance) and were derived to capture the nuanced and subjective ways individuals framed their career thinking in relation to working from home.

To illustrate our approach to identifying career orientations, we refer to participant I21, who described a preference to be flexible in her future career by stating “*I have a lot of freedom in terms of deciding whether I go to the office, whether I work in the morning, at lunchtime or in the evening. [...] I would like that to be possible for my professional career*”. We understand this as indicative of an autonomy- and flexibility-oriented career orientation.

Next, we encouraged the interviewed individuals to describe their career self-management, particularly the actions they take towards achieving specific career goals, both in general and when working from home. Our questions focused on differences in career self-management behaviors between the home and office environment as well as challenges and perceived ease of career goal pursuit in each context. Additionally, we provided examples if interviewees had difficulty in describing their actions. Finally, we asked the interviewed individuals to elaborate on how working from home influenced their career orientations, including whether it has led to new career goals and preferences or changed existing ones. Further, they were asked to describe situations in which working from home had either facilitated or hindered their career advancement. Returning to the earlier example of participant I21, her reflections illustrate how such responses were closely linked to her previously expressed orientation toward autonomy and flexibility. She emphasized how working from home allowed her to maintain control over when she works by reducing time-related constraints: “*Working from home has made it possible for me to take on this role at all. [...] you have two hours more time each day.*” This demonstrates how participants perceived the implications of working from home in light of their career orientations.

We interviewed a sample of 26 employees who were 38.72 years old on average ($n = 25$ due to one missing age value). 57.69% of the interviewed individuals were female and 42.31% were married. Only 19.23% of the interviewees had children requiring care. Most of the interviewed individuals (84.62%) held a university degree and 23.08% had management responsibility for between 2 and 90 employees. The interviewees’ average regular working hours per week were 44.04 hours (including overtime). They worked between 16 and 65 hours per week from home, with an average of 24.4 hours (including overtime) and an average of 4.21 years of experience with working from home. Three of the interviewed individuals could not flexibly choose the days for working from home. On average, the interviewees worked together with their colleagues in the office on 1.75 days a week. In Table 1, we provide an overview of interviewee characteristics.

3.2 Data Analysis

The interviews took 39.77 minutes on average. We transcribed and anonymized the interviews using the software MAXQDA 2022 (version 22.8.0, VERBI GmbH,

Table 1. Interviewee characteristics.

	Job Description	Industry	Age	Gender	Education
I1	In-house Counsel	Metal & Electronics	62	male	Doctorate/PhD
I2	Research Associate	Education	33	male	Doctorate/PhD
I3	Judge	Judiciary	33	female	Doctorate/PhD
I4	Legal Affairs Specialist	Public Sector	58	female	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I5	Consultant	Consulting	29	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I6	Management Consultant	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	30	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I7	University Professor	Education	47	female	Postdoctoral Qualification
I8	Supply Chain Specialist	Chemical & Raw Materials Industry	59	female	High School Diploma/University Entrance Qualification
I9	Commercial Employee	Telecommunications & IT	59	female	Secondary School Certificate/Intermediate School Qualification
I10	Sales Consultant	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	31	female	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I11	Department Head for Leadership Recruiting and Development	Services & Trades	51	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I12	Assistant	Public Sector	58	female	Vocational School Training
I13	Associate	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	27	male	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I14	Accounting	Telecommunications & IT	44	female	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I15	Associate Consultant	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	31	female	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I16	Marketing Manager	Advertising & Marketing	33	female	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I17	Associate Consultant	Economy & Politics	25	male	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I18	Working Student	Economy & Politics	29	female	Bachelor's Degree/Pre-Diploma
I19	Senior Auditor	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	29	female	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I20	Government Employee	Public Sector	37	female	Vocational Training
I21	Head of Talent Acquisition	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	-	female	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I22	Police Officer	Public Sector	32	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I23	Operations Manager for Train Stations	Transportation & Logistics	38	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I24	Legal Counsel	Transportation & Logistics	30	female	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I25	Project Lead	Energy & Environment	29	male	Master's Degree/Diploma/State Examination
I26	Lawyer	Legal Consulting	34	male	Doctorate/PhD

Berlin, Germany). The data analysis was processed using the artificial intelligence (AI)-based tool OpenAI Whisper (version 20231117, OpenAI, San Francisco, CA, USA, Radford et al., 2023). In light of the exploratory nature of our research questions, which necessitated an approach that transcended a purely deductive framework, we opted for Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle coding strategy. This method provides a systematic yet flexible structure for qualitative data analysis, making it particularly well-suited for capturing participants' experiences and perspectives while relat-

ing them to existing theoretical constructs. It enabled us to explore the data in depth while at the same time connecting participants' experiences and perspectives with the established model of career self-regulation (Hirschi and Koen, 2021), without pursuing entirely new theory development.

The first cycle of coding combined in vivo, descriptive and initial coding techniques to build categories of career preferences, career behavior and career-related characteristics of working from home. In the second cycle, we applied elaborative and theoretical coding techniques to link

these categories to each other and to refine them in relation to existing theoretical constructs on career orientations and career self-management. Theoretical coding allowed us to synthesize the categories derived from the first coding cycle in order to create theoretical assumptions (Saldaña, 2016). Elaborative coding enabled us to integrate previous research and theoretical assumptions into our analysis, such as from the model of career self-regulation (Hirschi and Koen, 2021). A visualization of the two-cycle coding process, including the techniques applied and the analytical focus of each cycle, is provided in **Supplementary Fig. 1**.

To ensure intercoder reliability, the authors conducted the first and second cycle in parallel (e.g., MacPhail et al., 2016). Subsequently, all authors together discussed and reconciled the results. Finally, we compared the responses across interviewee groups, differentiated by demographic characteristics, industry and occupation, to identify unique patterns, trends and group-specific particularities.

4. Results

In this chapter, we present our study's results, which we organized according to our research questions. Below, the statements made by the interviewed individuals are indented and reported in quotation marks. The corresponding interviewee is indicated in parentheses. The quotations have been translated from German into English by the authors. Each quotation is directly linked to the respective construct and category, ensuring transparency and traceability of the results.

4.1 How Are Individual Career Orientations Shaped Through Working From Home? (RQ1)

Our initial assumption was that working from home might influence or even reshape individuals' perceived career orientations. However, our analysis revealed that most interviewees did not describe such an effect or change process. Instead, they primarily reflected on how the career-related preferences and values, mirrored in their career orientations, guided their perceptions and experiences of working from home. Thus, career orientations served as a lens through which individuals interpreted the opportunities and challenges of this work arrangement. Our finding – that career orientations predominantly frame perceptions of working from home rather than being directly shaped by it – already represents a key insight from our study, which we will further elaborate in the discussion.

Further, we derived individuals' career orientations from their reflections on what kind of career paths they aim to pursue and which values and goals guide them in doing so. Based on these narratives and the question how working from home impacts these values and goals, we identified patterns of meaning that structured how participants made sense of working from home in light of their broader career aspirations. Therefore, in the following section, we focus on reporting the results concerning these perceptions and

interpretations – always in relation to the career orientations expressed by participants.

In Fig. 1, we provide an overview of the identified main and sub-categories of career orientations that were associated with different perceptions of working from home.

Some interviewed individuals described that their career orientations have an impact on their perceptions of working from home. Others described to not sense any interrelation of working from home with their career orientations at all. Additionally, some interviewees described working from home as an own aspired criterion for their future careers. Therefore, we identified three main categories: (1) *career orientations associated with different perceptions of working from home*, (2) *working from home as career criterion* or (3) *no relevance*.

In the first main category, we identified four career orientations that were associated with different perceptions of working from home: *flexibility*, *work-life-integration*, *social interactions* and *personal growth*. Some interviewed individuals reported a desire for *flexibility* in their careers as career orientation, which they said is facilitated by working from home either through its *task-related* or *time-related* flexibility. One interviewee valued the task-related flexibility of working from home which allows her to autonomously structure her tasks according to her personal needs and capabilities (I18). Time-related flexibility when working from home was also appreciated by interviewees who emphasized the autonomy to control and adjust their working hours according to personal needs (I7, I16, I18, I21). This enables them to create space for non-work activities such as exercising in the morning:

“Because I enjoy it, when I do my sports in the morning. That's important to my definition of a successful career, this work-life balance; having the flexibility to decide whether I can work from home or not.” (I16)

The second identified career orientation is *work-life-integration* which is divided into two sub-categories: *work-family-integration* and *reintegration*. Individuals with caregiving responsibilities expressed that working from home facilitates the *integration of work and family life* by reducing commute times (I9, I11, I19, I20, I21, I26). Unlike time-related flexibility, which emphasizes autonomy over scheduling and daily work hours, *work-life-integration* focuses on the broader blending and balancing of work and family roles. One caregiving mother even stated that working from home enables her to actually pursue a career after parental leave (I21):

“Due to the fact that there is so much emergency care at the daycare center, childrens' illnesses and pick-ups from the daycare center, I wouldn't have been able to take this job if I hadn't been able to work from home.” (I21)

One individual mentioned the preference for a proper *reintegration* into her career after suffering a severe stroke

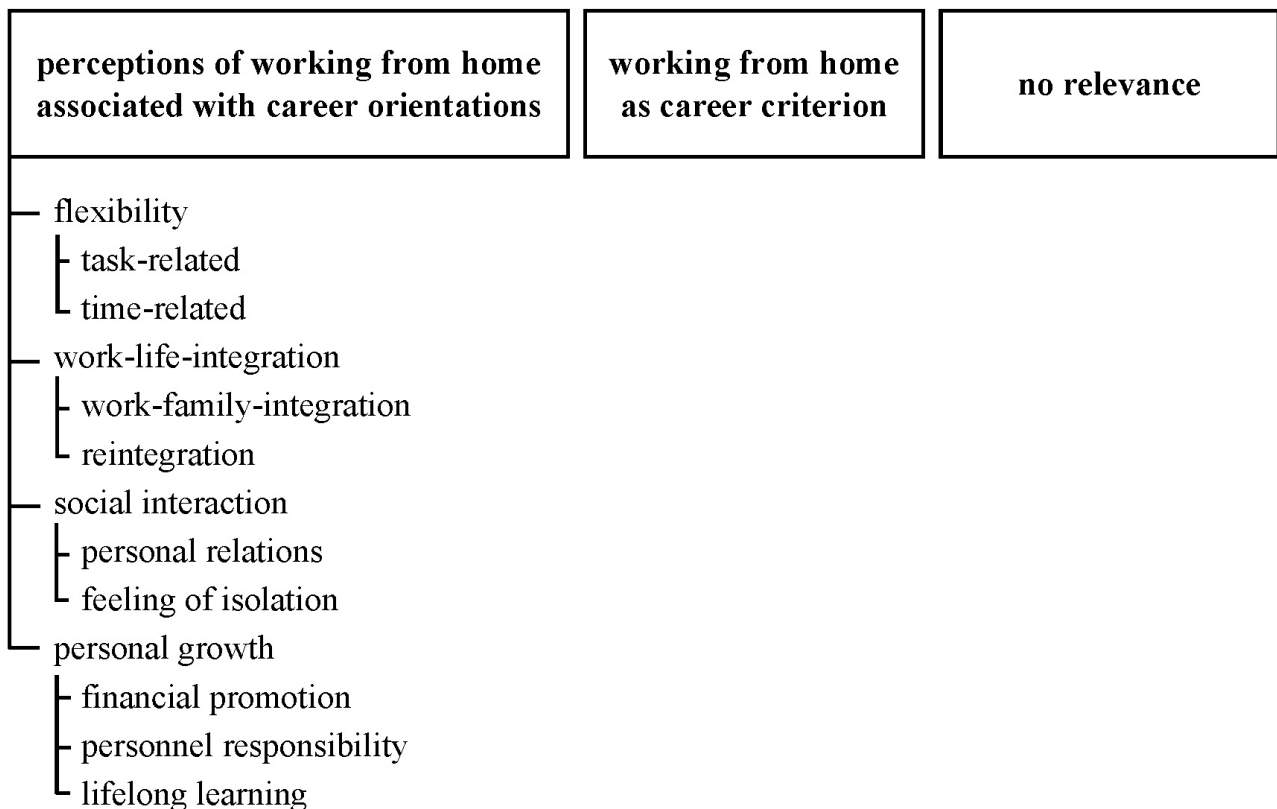


Fig. 1. Career-related perceptions of working from home.

which prevented her from progressing in her career (I9). Working from home enabled her to make a smooth transition back into her career after her health-related absence (I9):

“[Working from home] was good for me on the days when I wasn’t feeling so well that I could say ‘I’m working at home now’. Then, I can always go and lie down in a corner somewhere if things get worse.” (I9)

The third category of relevant career orientations for working from home is *social interaction*. Within this category, we identified two sub-categories: *personal relations* and the *feeling of isolation*. As such, several interviewed individuals that desire social interactions in the course of their careers, noted that working from home comes along with limitations to have such *personal relations* in their careers, e.g., with colleagues (I2, I15, I20, I24, I25). Further, one interviewee reported that the *felt isolation* when working from home actually fosters concerns about exclusion from the team and even turnover intentions, making the absence of isolation a relevant orientation within her career (I15):

“When working from home, you feel more isolated. Every now and then you [...] think, information is somehow being hidden from me and you don’t know who’s been talking with whom, what’s been agreed on [...].” (I15)

Additionally, some of the interviewed individuals described diverse needs for *personal growth* within their careers to be impacted by working from home. The results suggested that these needs could best be divided into the three categories of *financial promotion*, *personnel responsibility* and *lifelong learning*. Some interviewees saw fewer opportunities for financial promotion or stronger personnel responsibility when working from home as their performance is less visible towards relevant stakeholders (I3, I10, I13):

“For me, it’s simply about advancing financially [...]. It’s harder to [achieve this] when working from home [...] because you don’t have that visibility. That’s why colleagues who are based in [the headquarters] are more likely to advance in their careers, because that’s where most of the managers and the managing director are.” (I10)

With regards to the preference for *lifelong learning*, interviewees highlighted the opportunity of working from home to engage in professional development trainings or to work strongly content-focused which facilitated their learning journey (I2, I3).

Many interviewed individuals emphasized that being able to work from home some days a week forms a *criterion for their future careers* beyond the above listed orientations as it comes with diverse individual benefits (I6, I8, I11, I12,

I13, I15, I17, I20, I22, I24), such as time savings. As such, it was described to influence their future career decisions:

“I need to work from home in the future, it doesn’t have to be four days, but two or three. After [this criterion], I would also select my next job.” (I20)

Finally, some individuals stated that working from home had *no relevance* for their career orientations. They mentioned that their professional development and career ambitions were not impacted by their work environment (I1, I5, I14, I24, I26):

“The work environment is of secondary importance to me [...]. I have my sphere everywhere where I can look at things in peace. In this respect, I see no connection with my career planning.” (I1)

These individuals further argued that the emotional and strategic relations within their organization are stronger than the environmental, remote or on-site, circumstances (I5).

4.2 How Is Individual Career Self-Management Shaped Through Working From Home? (RQ2)

With regards to the second research question, we identified three contextual factors of working from home that were perceived as relevant for career self-management. We grouped these into (1) *social factors*, (2) *work-related factors* and (3) *person-related factors*. We illustrated the main and sub-categories of these contextual factors in Fig. 2.

Within the main category of (1) *social factors*, the interviewed individuals mentioned *visibility*, *human relations* and *stereotypes* as contextual factors of working from home that impeded certain career self-management behaviors. Several individuals reported experiencing challenges with reduced visibility, which they described as both *person-related* and *performance-related* (I10, I16, I18, I22, I25). The reduced physical presence while working from home often resulted in fewer opportunities to showcase achievements or engage in (in)formal conversations that could enhance the personal standing in the organization:

“[...] and I notice that with colleagues who aren’t in the office that often, they just aren’t on people’s radar that much because you don’t see them [...]. And that’s why I believe that visibility is an enormously important factor.” (I25)

In addition, the interviewees discussed the contextual factors related to *human relations* of working from home, highlighting *targeted communication*, loss of *interpersonal exchange*, impeded *networking* and less *social support* as relevant for career self-management when working from home. Some interviewees reported to communicate more focused and objective via ICT when working from home which results in faster and more efficient meetings (I7, I25). In parallel, many interviewed individuals emphasized a decline in the informal interpersonal exchange when working

from home (I6, I9, I17, I19, I23) which they feel impedes nurturing social contacts through spontaneous small-talks:

“Of course, what’s missing when working from home [...] is this whole issue between two appointments; you’re standing in the coffee kitchen and are meeting someone or [...] my office door is open and someone sticks their head in and says, I’ve got this and that [...] or it’s just nice that you’re here, how was the weekend [...].” (I23)

Interviewees also identified challenges in maintaining professional strategic networks through *networking* while working from home (I10, I23, I25, I26). According to them, working from home hinders their ability to build or maintain relations critical for career advancement:

“We are a relatively large law firm, which means that we also benefit greatly from cross-selling in corporate law [...]. If I always just work from home and don’t get to know my colleagues in my age structure, then they won’t contact me in case of doubt because I’m not in their network.” (I26)

The interviews further revealed that some individuals feel reluctant to seek *social support* from colleagues when working from home (I12, I17, I20), resulting in slower and less efficient work performance which can hinder career advancement:

“You don’t dare to call your colleagues so quickly [when working from home]. That is different in the office. So, it’s actually the case that you go to your colleagues in the office faster than you pick up the phone.” (I12)

Some interviewees referred to *stereotypes* associated with working from home, such as assumptions about reduced commitment or productivity which, they think, impacts their reputation in the company and their career advancement negatively (I14, I22):

“I think, it’s important to show that you work [...] because many people think that you don’t do anything when you’re working from home.” (I22)

The second main category we identified relates to (2) *work-related factors*. Several interviewed individuals highlighted the advantage of less *distractions* and increased *concentration* while working from home, allowing them to focus more effectively on tasks (I2, I15, I16, I18, I21):

“[...] sometimes, I can simply concentrate better at home and can then complete tasks more quickly, more effectively and with a bit more substance.” (I18)

This increased concentration often translates into *time efficiency and speed* (I3, I11, I12, I17, I24) as well as increased *productivity* (I3, I11, I14, I18, I21). Many individuals argued that their productivity increases as they can work undisturbed on tasks that require substantive reflection and focused thinking:

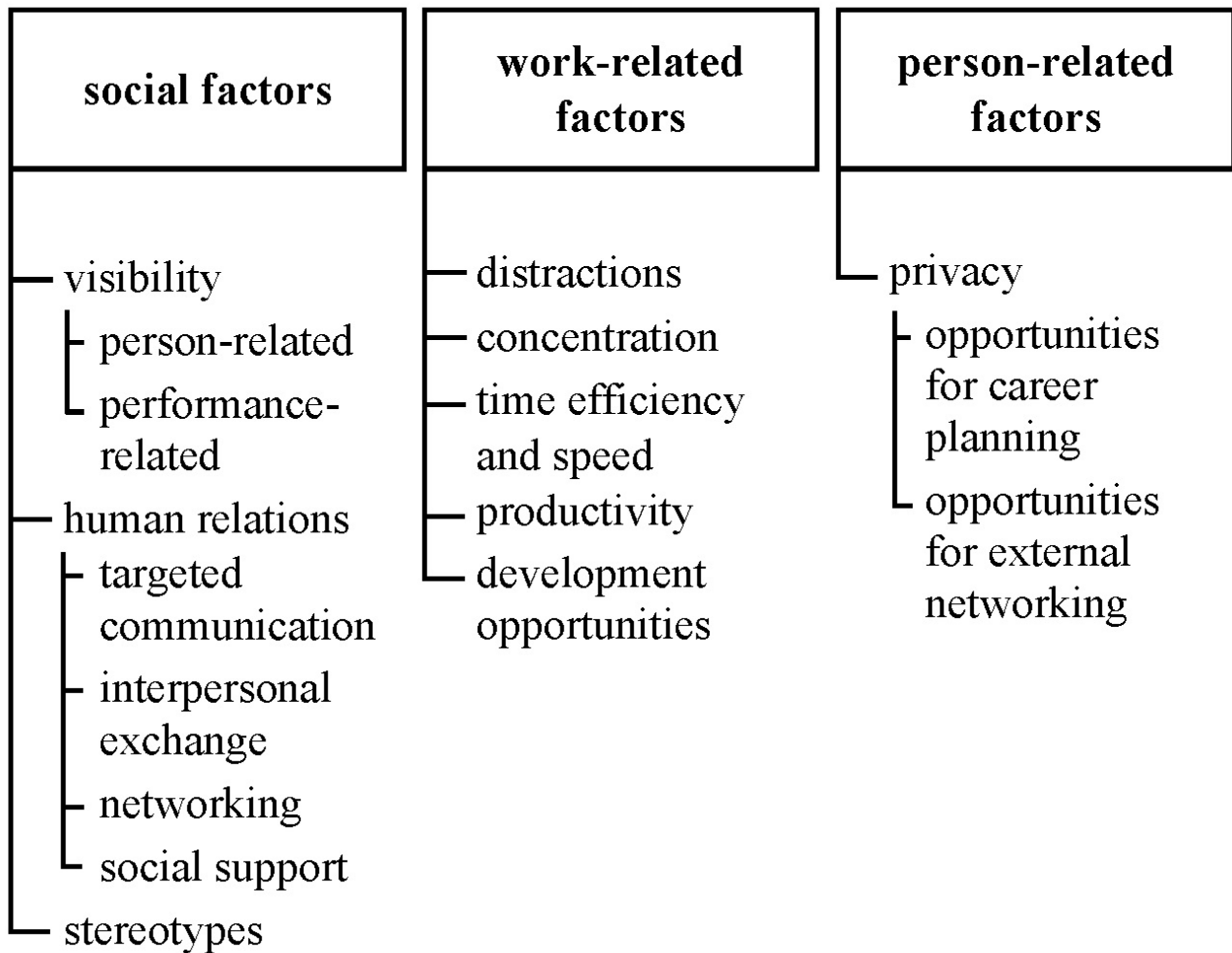


Fig. 2. Contextual factors of working from home are perceived as relevant for career self-management.

“[...] these are actually the days when I just sit at my desk in quiet and work on things, [...] but where I really work on the content [...]. And that doesn’t stress me out as much.” (I7)

Some interviewees also identified *development opportunities* as an unexpected benefit of working from home, as they have more flexibility to pursue additional training or to engage in personnel development programs provided by the organization, therefore facilitating the participation on organizationally embedded opportunities for development (I2, I13, I21):

“If I want to look at things on our information portals or learning programs or do some studying, I prefer to do it at home because I can’t be distracted.” (I13)

We therefore categorized these descriptions as work-related factors, as they refer to resources and programs within the organizational setting that were easier to access or benefit from while working from home.

In contrast, the third main category refers to (3) *person-related factors* shaping individuals’ career self-

management while working from home. Many of them value the *privacy* of the home environment as it provides room for personal career activities. This includes *opportunities for career planning*. For instance, interviewees reported to explore vacancies in the labor market when working from home as no colleagues or stakeholders are around (I1, I6, I11). Another interviewee mentioned to be able to easier reflect on himself and his future career goals when working from home as distractions are absent:

“I can take my time to think about [my future career], which is made a little easier by working from home because you’re sitting there alone.” (I17)

Further, one individual mentioned that working from home offered *opportunities for external networking* which he considered important for advancing his career (I2):

“[...] with certain people with whom I don’t actually have any business, for the sake of the network idea [...], I meet regularly when working from home using video conferencing tools.” (I2)

Since these actions relate to individual cognitive, such as reflective and motivational processes rather than to organizationally provided development structures, we categorized them as person-related.

5. Discussion

Our study aimed to explore how working from home shapes individuals' career related interests, motives and behaviors. In detail, we analyzed the perceived relevance of working from home for individuals' career orientations (see Fig. 1) and career self-management behaviors (see Fig. 2). We identified four different career orientations that were associated with varying perceptions of working from home. Further, the contextual factors of working from home were of relevance for career self-management, with both positive and negative implications for different behaviors of career self-management.

5.1 Relevance of Working From Home for Career Orientations

In our study, against our initial assumptions which were the basis for framing RQ1, working from home did not directly shape individuals' career orientations. On the contrary, we identified that career orientations were associated with different perceptions of working from home. This finding suggests that career orientations function more as "filters" through which individuals make sense of their work environment, rather than being readily altered by contextual changes such as working from home. These unexpected findings align with prior assumptions that career orientations possess trait-like characteristics through which they influence future behavior (e.g., [Wiernik and Kostal, 2019](#)). By demonstrating that career orientations are associated with different perceptions of individuals' work environment, their importance in organizational research is highlighted.

We found that working from home is particularly relevant for individuals with career orientations emphasizing *flexibility*, *work-life-integration*, *social interaction* and *personal growth*. These career orientations include both self-centered (flexibility, work-life-integration, lifelong learning) and organization-centered aspects (financial promotion, personnel responsibility).

First, our findings show that individuals with career orientations towards *flexibility* as well as *work-life-integration* value working from home. These individuals exhibit a desire to align their careers with personal needs (e.g., hobbies or family) as well as private responsibilities (e.g., childcare). For them, working from home serves as a tool to enhance flexibility and/or work-life-integration in their careers. This highlights the importance of spatially flexible work arrangements for work-life-integration ([Kumar et al., 2023](#)).

Further, these findings underscore that the sustainable integration of work, private life and personal needs is in-

creasingly seen as a key element of a successful career (e.g., [Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014](#); [Hirschi and Koen, 2021](#)). Emerging career models, such as the model of whole-life career self-management, reflect this trend by incorporating the private domain into career conceptualizations (e.g., [De Vos et al., 2020](#); [Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014](#); [Hirschi et al., 2020](#); [Hirschi and Koen, 2021](#)).

Additionally, career orientations emphasizing flexibility and work-life integration overlap with the concept of the *protean career orientation* which describes individuals who prefer careers aligned with their personal values and needs ([Briscoe and Hall, 2006](#); [Hall, 2002](#)), such as personal growth, autonomy (e.g., [Hall et al., 2018](#)) and work-life balance (e.g., [Direnzo et al., 2015](#)).

In the literature, the protean career orientation is frequently associated with the needs of younger individuals (e.g., [Birdie and Madhavkumar, 2017](#); [Cortellazzo et al., 2020](#); [Holtschlag et al., 2020](#); [Kostal and Wiernik, 2017](#)). However, in our study, preferences for flexibility and work-life integration were also reported by individuals who are in the final stage of their careers (e.g., I1, I4, I11). Thus, our findings underscore the significance of flexible work arrangements even for older employees, for instance, as a strategy of organizations to reduce retirement tendencies (e.g., [Hudomiet et al., 2021](#)).

Further, our results reveal that individuals with career orientations focused on *personal growth* or *social interactions* tend to devalue working from home due to its perceived negative career impact. Interviewed individuals with career orientations towards personal growth want to gain personnel responsibility or secure financial promotions within their organization. These orientations align with the so-called *traditional career orientation*. This career orientation reflects a preference for long-term development within a single organization ([Brousseau et al., 1996](#); [Gerber et al., 2009](#); [Kim et al., 2025](#)). Consequently, traditionally-oriented individuals rely on social relations to key stakeholders and they prioritize visibility to secure promotions and additional responsibilities (e.g., [Forret and Dougherty, 2004](#)). The importance of strategic networking and visibility was also emphasized by the interviewees, as they fear losing their visibility when working from home. The critical role of visibility for upward movements has already been highlighted in prior studies on remote workers ([Richardson and Kelliher, 2015](#)).

Individuals with orientations towards *interpersonal relations* reported to feel isolated from colleagues while working from home. This finding underpins the relevance of isolation as a negative contextual factor of working from home ([Clair et al., 2021](#); [Klinenberg and Leigh, 2023](#); [van Tilburg et al., 2021](#)). Isolation when working from home has been shown to reduce productivity and engagement (e.g., [Galanti et al., 2021](#)). However, our findings suggest that isolation affects not only job-related outcomes but also career orientations. Thus, for individuals who prioritize so-

cial connections in their careers, working from home may fail to satisfy their need for social belonging (Ellis et al., 2020) and could lead to turnover intentions (e.g., Yarberry and Sims, 2021).

Some interviewed individuals, however, did not perceive working from home as relevant to their career orientations. Our results on their reasons are scarce, but for them, working from home does not seem to differ substantially from working on-site. One reason might be that the on-site work conditions of these individuals might already provide comparable levels of flexibility. Further, ICT tools used while working from home might enable them to sustain social connections with colleagues (e.g., Cho et al., 2024).

However, many interviewed individuals reported that they do not want to forego working from home in their careers. This highlights the value of working from home not only as a flexible work arrangement but also as a future career criterion (e.g., Cook, 2020). In some cases, it even serves as a career enabler, for instance, for individuals experiencing long-term illness aftereffects.

5.2 Contextual Factors of Working From Home Relevant for Career Self-Management Behaviors

Our study identified *social*, *work-related* and *person-related contextual factors* of working from home that either have been described to facilitate or hinder specific career self-management behaviors. The interviews revealed that *social contextual factors* hinder career self-management behaviors involving social exchange, such as networking and managing visibility. In contrast, *work-related contextual factors*, like a quiet, uninterrupted work environment, enabled the interviewed individuals to concentrate, be productive and perform better. Last, the privacy when working from home as a *person-related contextual factor* facilitated behaviors related to career planning and mobility-oriented actions.

Looking at the findings in more detail, we see interconnections between the identified career self-management behaviors and the seven key behaviors of career self-management by Wilhelm et al. (2024), derived through factor analysis. We matched these seven behaviors with the findings on contextual factors of our analysis, as illustrated in Fig. 3. The following section details the perceived relevance of the three identified contextual factors on the key behaviors illustrated.

Regarding social contextual factors, the interviewed individuals commonly reported challenges in managing their *visibility* while working from home. Specifically, two distinct forms of visibility were described to be relevant: performance-related visibility and person-related visibility. These forms are closely linked to *impression management* as one of the key behaviors identified by Wilhelm et al. (2024), described as “behaviors that people use to influence the image others have of them” (p. 349). Impression management includes self-promotion of capabilities, aspirations

and ingratiation. These subcategories align closely with the facets of visibility identified in our study.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of managing visibility for career success (McDonald and Harvey Wingfield, 2008; Retkowsky et al., 2023; Richardson and Kelliher, 2015) and the adverse effects of invisibility (e.g., Bachrach et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2019). Our findings indicate that managing visibility in the socially isolating context of working from home poses significant challenges for individuals’ career self-management (Gajendran et al., 2024). Given the persistence of digital work, it warrants further research that explores strategies to manage visibility in these circumstances (e.g., Yoon et al., 2021).

Interestingly, our study reveals that visibility is managed not only to advance careers but also to mitigate negative career effects caused by *stereotypes*. To date, career-related stereotypes have primarily been studied in the context of gender and ethnicity (e.g., Bachrach et al., 2023; Heilman and Parks-Stamm, 2007). Still, the interviews uncovered stereotypes suggesting low work engagement and commitment among those working from home, prompting some individuals to engage in impression management to counteract these perceptions. These findings align with what is described in the literature as flexibility stigma – the perception that employees who use flexible work arrangements such as working from home are less dedicated, ambitious or committed (Williams et al., 2013). Our data suggest that such stigma is also prevalent in assumptions about career consequences of working from home, shaping individuals’ career self-management behaviors, such as their visibility strategies. This is in line with previous studies’ findings on negative career consequences of academic scientists and engineers (Cech and Blair-Loy, 2014).

In addition to visibility, *human relations* played a crucial role for career self-management in our study. Our findings suggest that working from home reduces opportunities for interpersonal interactions which are crucial for *networking* (see Fig. 3) as well as career development (e.g., Seibert et al., 2001; Spurk et al., 2015). This is consistent with prior studies indicating that working from home often leads to fewer spontaneous interpersonal exchanges and informal networking opportunities (Allen et al., 2015; Tavares, 2017). The interviewed individuals in our study reported that communication tends to be more task-oriented and less personal when working from home, as mimicry and gestures are less visible. This supports findings by Brandt and Suess (2024) on the risks associated with reduced non-verbal communication in remote work environments.

Further, individuals reported feeling more distant from colleagues and, in some cases, more hesitant to seek help or guidance. These behaviors are related to career self-management activities such as *building social contacts* and *using social contacts* (see Fig. 3).

Considering the findings on social contextual factors, our results indicate that working from home primarily

<u>contextual factors of working from home</u>	<u>behaviors of career self-management by Wilhelm et al. (2024)</u>
social factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impression management • building social contacts • using social contacts
work-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human capital development
person-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-exploration • career goal setting and planning • mobility-oriented behavior

Fig. 3. Links between the identified contextual factors of working from home and the seven key career self-management behaviors by Wilhelm et al. (2024).

hinders socially-related career self-management behaviors, such as networking, impression management and building as well as using social contacts. This may be especially relevant for individuals who rely on social relationships and visibility for career development, such as those in entrepreneurial or leadership roles (e.g., [Hidalgo et al., 2021](#)).

In contrast, our findings indicate that working from home facilitates *performance* and *efficiency* due to its work-related contextual factors. Individuals reported feeling less disrupted by colleagues when working from home, allowing them to concentrate more easily. This is consistent with prior studies highlighting the potential of working from home to improve *concentration* and *productivity* by minimizing workplace distractions ([Bloom et al., 2015](#); [Felstead and Henseke, 2017](#)). While productivity itself is not a career self-management behavior, we interpret the reported performance increases as an outcome of proactive self-management behaviors that aim at maintaining or improving performance and productivity (e.g., impression management). Increased productivity may, in turn, support career progress in merit-based systems where output and efficiency are recognized (e.g., [Debus et al., 2024](#)). These advantages not only account for performance increase, but also for *lifelong learning* from the interviewees' perspective. Thus, working from home offers opportunities for *human capital development* as key career self-management behavior (see Fig. 3), which is particularly relevant during early career stages ([Bagdadli et al., 2021](#); [Harris et al., 2015](#)).

Further, we identified *privacy* as a person-related contextual factor of working from home that enhances career planning behaviors, such as *self-exploration* and *career goal setting and planning*, as well as *external networking* (see Fig. 3). Interviewees who intended to reorient and leave their current organization mentioned dedicating part of their working hours for *mobility-oriented behavior* (see Fig. 3), such as searching for job vacancies. One interviewed individual even described that he is establishing his own business while working from home, alongside his responsibilities for his current employer (I6). Therefore, privacy may alleviate feelings of shame or fear of punishment if colleagues or decision-makers discover that one is seeking to reorient away from their current organization. This provides new perspectives on working from home, as it may facilitate career transitions. However, studies on the effects of privacy when working from home are still limited, particularly regarding its impact on career self-management (e.g., [Nurse et al., 2021](#)).

6. Contributions

6.1 Contributions to Research on Contemporary Careers

Our study makes two key contributions to the research on contemporary careers. First, by examining working from home, which has increased in prevalence and relevance over the last decades, we responded to calls for further research on evolving contextual factors in careers (e.g., [Hirschi and Koen, 2021](#); [Seibert et al., 2024](#)). Our findings demonstrate that working from home is not equally relevant to all individuals regardless of their career orientations.

While individuals with career orientations towards flexibility, social interaction and work-life integration benefit from it, others reported no perceived interconnection of working from home with their career orientations. In contrast, working from home has been shown to matter for all key behaviors of career self-management identified by Wilhelm et al. (2024), further supporting their factor-analytically identified seven key behaviors of career self-management.

Second, we reveal that working from home is not uniform in its perceived impact; both positive and negative implications for career self-management have been described, aligning with career resources and demands in the career-resources-and-demands approach. According to Hirschi (2012), career resources are key to facilitating career advancement. These resources are managed by the process of career self-management (Strauss et al., 2012). Conversely, career orientations serve as motivational factors that influence how individuals engage with career resources or respond to career demands (Hirschi and Koen, 2021). Further, career resources form career capital (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Inkson and Arthur, 2001) which can be divided into human capital (e.g., skills, knowledge), social capital (e.g., organizational support, network) and psychological capital (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy).

Based on our study, different forms of career capital can be attributed to working from home. First, *human capital* is developed through working from home, as its undisrupted and quiet environment supports learning and productivity. Second, the privacy provided by working from home encourages self-reflection on career motives and goals, thereby enhancing self-efficacy as a *psychological capital* resource, as suggested by previous studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2023). Third, working from home is associated with reduced *social capital*, as social isolation hinders the development and utilization of social contacts as career resources.

6.2 Conceptual Contributions to the Model of Career Self-Regulation

We identified four career orientations as crucial for shaping perceptions of working from home. Therefore, we propose extending the model of career self-regulation by Hirschi and Koen (2021) to include an evaluation process in which contextual factors are evaluated through individuals' career orientations. We suggest that, in the evaluation process, contextual factors are categorized as either career resources or career demands based on their alignment with individuals' career orientations. We illustrated this conceptual extension of the career self-regulation model in Fig. 4. Our extension is represented by the dotted arrow pointing from career orientations to the process of evaluating contextual factors as resources or demands.

Furthermore, based on our findings, the handling of working from home – along with its resources and demands – is enhanced through effective career self-management be-

haviors. Thus, we suggest adding a feedback mechanism to the model, whereby career resources and demands are modified through career self-management behaviors so that they better align with individuals' career orientations. We illustrated the feedback process by the dotted arrow from career self-management to career resources and demands in Fig. 4. By integrating the feedback mechanism, we further expand the self-regulatory perspective of the model by Hirschi and Koen (2021).

Our study did not aim to analyze causal relationships between career orientations and applied career self-management behaviors, as proposed by the model of career self-regulation. Still, it is reasonable to assume that individuals' career orientations and their associated perceptions of working from home may influence the prioritization of specific career self-management behaviors. The dynamic warrants further investigation to better understand how career orientations guide the balance between leveraging resources and mitigating demands in evolving work environments.

6.3 Contributions to Research on Working From Home

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the widespread adoption of working from home across various industries. Since then, working from home has become an integral part of the “new normal” for many employees (Wigert and Agrawal, 2022). Consequently, scholarly interest in understanding the implications of working from home for industries, organizations and employees has surged. However, existing research has produced mixed findings regarding the effects of working from home on outcomes such as productivity, motivation and engagement (e.g., Boell et al., 2016).

Although our study primarily focused on career research, it also contributes to the literature on working from home. Specifically, our results lay part of a groundwork for further research on the interplay between working from home and career constructs, particularly as working from home continues to solidify its place in work. Our study contributes to this growing body of literature by examining the previously underexplored role of individual career constructs – including interests, motives and behaviors beyond job-specific factors – in shaping experiences of working from home (Baruch and Sullivan, 2022). Moreover, our findings align with Gajendran et al.'s (2024) meta-analysis which highlights autonomy and social isolation as key aspects of overall remote work for future research. We demonstrate that perceptions of and attitudes towards working from home are shaped by individuals' career orientations. Additionally, our findings suggest that individuals working from home are often aware of being perceived through the lens of flexibility stigma. This prompts them to actively manage their visibility and career-related behaviors in response to anticipated stereotypes about reduced commitment. These insights highlight the importance of incor-

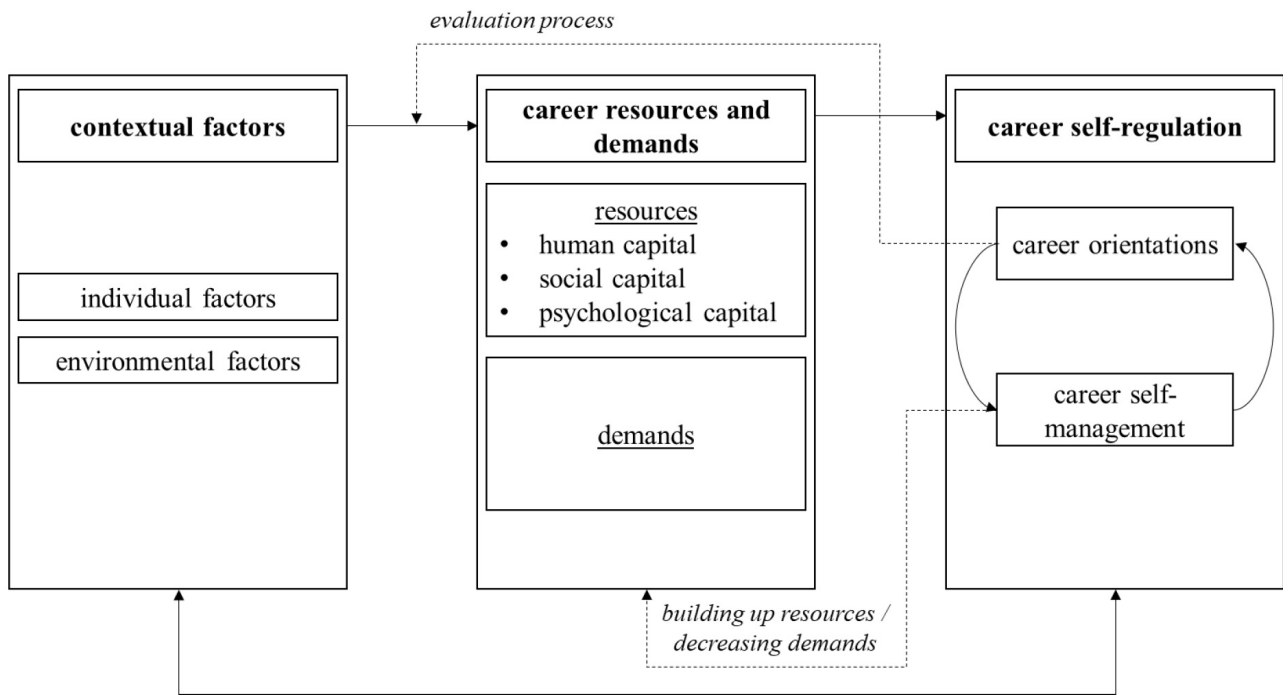


Fig. 4. Extension of the model of career self-regulation by Hirschi and Koen (2021) on the basis of the study's results.

porating career-related identity work and stigma management into future research on the dynamics and long-term implications of working from home.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Our study also has some limitations. First, the sample predominantly consisted of interviewees holding a university degree. This may have influenced the findings, as higher-educated individuals tend to exhibit greater adaptability to transformation processes within their career self-management and are often better equipped to advance in their industrial careers (e.g., Hitka et al., 2021; Shmatko et al., 2020). Consequently, this characteristic may have limited the perspectives on working from home in our study.

Another limitation refers to the fact that our sample exclusively included employees, thereby excluding individuals with other forms of employment, such as self-employed individuals and platform workers. These may have different career orientations and apply distinct career self-management behaviors. Additionally, by focusing on German-employed individuals, we potentially overlooked cultural differences. Previous research has highlighted cultural variations in career self-efficacy which acts as an antecedent to career orientations and career self-management (Mau, 2000; O'Keefe et al., 2022). Thus, we recommend to study heterogeneous samples, encompassing individuals with different educational levels, employment forms and cultural backgrounds.

Further, previous research has demonstrated that the extent of working from home – whether fully or hybrid –

has distinct implications for individuals' health and work-related outcomes (Gajendran et al., 2024; Höcker et al., 2024) and careers (Andrade and Andrade, 2023). Since we sought to capture a range of experiences and subjective perceptions related to working from home, we did not systematically differentiate the degree to which individuals had been working from home. However, we encourage future studies to investigate how fully remote versus hybrid work arrangements impact career-related perceptions and behaviors.

Additionally, despite assurances of anonymity, socially desirable responses cannot be ruled out. Career-related topics, especially those concerning turnover intentions, are highly sensitive (Arnold et al., 1985). As a result, interviewees may have provided socially desirable answers or refrained from disclosing their career goals.

Given that we aimed to explore the relevance of working from home on career orientations and career self-management, we adopted a qualitative approach. While this method allowed for rich insights, it does not enable causal inferences. Thus, we recommend quantitatively testing the identified negative impact of social contextual factors and the positive impact of work-related contextual factors and privacy on specific career self-management behaviors. Further, interviewees with certain career orientations appeared to value or devalue working from home. However, whether these relationships are stable and whether working from home can fundamentally alter career orientations requires longitudinal investigation.

Finally, our results suggest that the contextual factors of working from home can function as both career resources

and demands. Building on this, we encourage future research to test the career demands-and-resources perspective, examining gain and loss cycles of career resources in the context of working from home longitudinally (Hirschi and Koen, 2021).

8. Conclusion

This qualitative study contributes to the literature on contextual factors for careers by demonstrating that working from home forms an omnibus context which entails contextual factors that are evaluated based on individuals' career orientations. Further, these factors can serve as either resources or demands for career self-management behaviors. Our findings show that work-related and person-related contextual factors serve as resources for human and psychological capital, facilitating personnel development and career planning in career self-management. In contrast, social contextual factors of working from home, such as isolation, create demands and hinder networking and impression management as key behaviors of career self-management. Taken together, our study's findings deepen our understanding of how individuals perceive and navigate working from home to manage their careers in times of ongoing individualization and flexibilization of work. This provides valuable insights not only for contemporary career research but also for understanding the antecedents and consequences of working from home.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets underlying the findings of this study are not publicly available, as they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants. Since participants did not consent to the full sharing of their data, the interview transcripts cannot be provided.

Author Contributions

LLG, BS and SS designed the research study. LLG conducted data collection through interviews. LLG and BS analyzed the data. LLG, BS and SS contributed to writing and editing the manuscript. All authors contributed to editorial changes in the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. All authors have participated sufficiently in the work and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. Stefan Süß and Bianca Straßhöfer are serving as Guest Editors of this journal. We declare that they had no involvement in the peer review of this article and had no access to information regarding its peer review. Full responsibility for the editorial process for this article was delegated to Simon Jebsen.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <https://doi.org/10.31083/MRev55443>.

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