

How Government Organizations Can Sustain Remote Work Post COVID-19

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Government organizations are unprepared to sustain remote work post-COVID-19. Even though COVID-19 seems to be under control, organizations are still struggling with the aftermath of the pandemic and the need to sustain remote work. Challenges include lack of necessary information technology tools, software, technological skills, strategies for remote work, leadership skills, real-time communication, activity planning and program implementation, scheduling meetings, organizing childcare, managing caseloads, fostering team work, and effective supervision. A conceptual framework based on organizational adaptation theory guided this qualitative case study. Since the study was to ascertain how government organizations can sustain remote work post-COVID-19, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 12 government employees in Dallas Texas who worked remotely during COVID-19. Thematic analysis was conducted and nine themes morphed from the study. The results highlighted the need for employee training and continuous organizational adaptation to the changing business environment.

Keywords: COVID-19, remote work, employee training, adaptation, strategies for managing change

INTRODUCTION

Businesses rely on employee productivity to succeed, whether those people work collaboratively in a centralized location or independently from numerous remote locations. Remote work has become an important work strategy (Wang et al., 2021). According to Haber (2020), employees can use information technology (IT) to execute their duties from the comfort of their own homes or other locations, removing the need for employees to commute to an office. Several factors, including the globalization of technology, the need for improvement in the balance between work and personal life, a rise in younger generations entering the workforce, and, most recently, social distancing measures necessitated by the novel coronavirus pandemic, have contributed to the rise in remote work in the (IT) industry (Haber, 2020). Remote work

allows employees to perform their duties from approved locations that are not the typical business locations (Donati et al., 2021). During COVID-19, from February 2020 to September 2022, many organizational questions were related to ensuring organizations had the tools needed for employees to succeed in remote or in-person environments. In September of 2022, President Biden announced that the pandemic was over. However, a few critical questions included: What are the future workplace trends after Covid-19, and how do employees and employers manage in the new workplace? Today, the questions employers are pondering are becoming much more complex.

- How do we help associates and leaders adapt to a hybrid model? How can we create flexibility?
- How do you ensure that leaders are focused on the right activities when they have associates in the office?
- How do you maintain the right level of engagement while associates are at home?
- How can leaders best support their associates when they cannot always physically see them? (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2022).

Successful companies understand that their employees are its substantial element. It is important to recruit and hire well, keep employees satisfied, streamline resources, and adapt to potential changes. COVID-19 upended many outdated assumptions about digital transformation. Now companies need to focus on different initiatives. There needs to be a balance between technology and people in the new workplace of the future. According to CNBC's Q3 Global CFO Survey, 33% of companies allow workers to choose between an in-office or remote schedule; 24 percent said they require employees to be in the office for specific days, but it is less than five per week; 29% say employees must come in to the office less than five days per week, and they get to choose which days; and 5 percent require workers in the office five days per week (SHRM, 2022). The typical employee works from home 1.5 days per week and employers plan to offer an average of 0.7 work-from-homes days per week after the pandemic. Still, workers want 1.7 days, according to a working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research, based in Cambridge, Mass., which surveyed people from 27 countries (SHRM, 2022).

BACKGROUND

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people had limited experience working remotely and organizations were unprepared to support remote work, which has recently become the standard in many industries (Wang et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused several organizations and governments at different levels to enact policies to limit the spread of the virus, and take preventive measures that led to social separation and remote work (Ingram et al., 2021). According to Truelove et al. (2017), social separation is a scenario in which people are isolated from social groups, causing social interactions to be disrupted. Following the pandemic, many businesses could no longer interact face-to-face with their customers, and many businesses were required to alter their operational strategies or shut down their physical locations. Studies have been conducted on the challenges of remote work. For government organizations that could not afford to shut down because of the pandemic, it became necessary for them to look for alternative ways of conducting business; hence, (IT) became a viable option. Mbunge et al. (2020) argued that the prolonged lockdowns, travel bans, and increasing numbers of COVID-19 instances were all good reasons for businesses to embrace technology to work remotely.

The introduction of IT as a means of conducting business in organizations during the pandemic presented numerous challenges to employees and employers. The technological innovation brought about complexities and difficulties in applying the different technological tools and software (Singh et al., 2022). Also, the feelings of isolation due to the inability to interact with the organization's stakeholders have been linked to increased job discontentment and poor productivity (Aczel et al., 2021). Furthermore, Coffey and Wolf (2018) pointed out that the inability of organizational leadership to understand how remote work aligns with the organization's vision can bring about lack of opportunities for the organization. The lack of the necessary IT tools, software, technological skills, and strategies for remote work, leadership skills, and real-time communication can be depressing. It may negatively affect the organization's ability to sustain

remote work post-COVID-19. Even though COVID-19 seems to be controlled, many organizations are still dealing with the aftermath of the pandemic because of the inability of organizational management and employees to sustain remote work. Scheduling meetings, organizing childcare, managing caseloads, fostering team work, and effective supervision are some challenges affecting the quality of work done by remote workers post-COVID-19.

This qualitative study was carried out by interviewing employees of government organizations who worked remotely during COVID-19. We collected and analyzed non-numerical data to have a better idea of how government organizations can sustain remote work post-COVID-19. The study's findings may add to the existing literature on procedures and strategies that government organizations can use to sustain remote work post-COVID-19 pandemic. Jacks (2021) argued for broadening the scope and depth of research on remote IT employees. With the aid of a mixed-methods study design, Wang et al. (2020) looked at the difficulties that remote workers encountered during COVID-19 as well as the aspects of remote work and personal traits that affect these difficulties. Ingram et al. (2021) explored COVID-19 prevention and control approaches in industrial settings.

There are multiple studies on remote work during COVID-19; however, there is a dearth of information on how government organizations can sustain remote work post-COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the everyday life of people, and the perceptions towards technology use, benefits, developments, and use of technology (Mondal & Mitra, 2022). Following the increased use of technology, humans have to train the AI to perform specific functions (Talwar & Koury, 2017). Many of the challenges faced by organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic are still present, and organizations are struggling with the aftermath of the COVID-19. The current study may contribute to positive social change by showing how government organizations could strategize work for employees to effectively manage organizational change. The potential for positive social change may also include improved technological skills, better job engagement, and an increase in employee productivity.

The future of HR expects a flexible workforce, which will change the employee experience. Companies will have to determine if their strategies require a continued evolution to return to the workplace for all employees who are working remotely, if they might offer more flexibility for certain jobs, a hybrid workplace. An important question is to define a comprehensive strategy that works for the organization and that aligns employees to its vision and mission statements. It is not surprising that not all organizations will find hybrid work to be compatible to all employees. HR's role may expand to conduct a climate survey to determine the feasibility of such measure and plan the new workplace to meet the needs of everyone involved (SHRM, 2022).

PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant life and professional adjustments for many people (Sigahi et al., 2021). Following the onset of the pandemic, many businesses could no longer interact face-to-face with their business customers, and a lot of businesses were required to alter their operational strategies or shut down their physical locations. Government organizations that could not afford to shut down because of the pandemic, sought alternative ways of conducting business, and remote work method became a viable option. While working remotely, feelings of isolation due to the inability to have face-to-face interactions with organization's stakeholders increased job discontentment and poor productivity (Aczel et al., 2021). Furthermore, as Coffey and Wolf (2018) pointed out, the inability of organizational leadership to understand how remote work aligns with the organization's vision led to lack of opportunities for the organization.

Consequently, the study aimed to explore how government organizations can sustain remote work post-COVID-19. To address the problem, one research question was used to guide the study:

RQ: *How can government organizations sustain remote work post-COVID-19?*

Research Methodology and Design

The study was a qualitative single case study that applied OAT propounded by Hrebiniak and Joyce (1985), as the conceptual framework that guided and supported the research. According to Sarta et al. (2020), organizational adaptation is a thoughtful choice made by organizational stakeholders in line with business reality, leading to visible activities that aim to close the gap between an organization and its administrative and economic environments. The population of the study comprised of employees of government organizations and purposeful sampling was used to select 12 participants for the study. Purposeful sampling allows the researchers to select participants who can advance the course of their research, strengthening the research's validity and the trustworthiness of the findings (Campbell et al., 2020). The data for this study were derived from 9 semi structured interviews, observations, organizational policy documents, and the researcher's reflective field notes. The 9 semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were field-tested and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before interviewing participants. Following IRB approval, each participant signed an informed consent form for the interview session. We recruited research participants through social media by posting flyers on my Facebook and LinkedIn pages, and the settings being made public so anyone on any of these social media platforms could see the posting. The flyers gave a brief insight into the study and contained a phone number and email address for volunteers to contact us.

The interviews were guided by an interview guide using open ended questions which allowed for follow-up questions. One-on-one interviews were conducted with participants via Zoom web conferencing tool. The responses from the participants were recorded using Zoom's application recorder. The Zoom transcription service transcribes the recorded data from speech to text. Each interview session was audio-recorded and verbatim transcriptions were sent to participants for credibility and accuracy of responses. Transcription reviews allowed the participants to review the researcher's interpretations of the responses and modify responses if necessary. After the reviews, transcripts were uploaded into NVivo™12 software for coding, categorization, and content analysis. Credibility was established through triangulation, transcription reviews, proper handling of researcher bias, and scrutinizing discrepancies in the data (Cypress, 2017). The interviews were conducted in the order in which participants returned their consent forms; each participant was assigned a pseudonym from P01 to P12. The pseudonyms were provided to conceal participants' identities and to maintain their confidentiality.

RESULTS

The section on study results was organized using the themes that emerged during data analysis. The themes were created by analyzing the participants' responses to the primary research question. No significant data inconsistencies would have affected the study's findings. The information was gathered using thirteen semi-structured interview procedure questions. The participants' responses to the questions had an impact on the development of themes and the comprehension of their meanings. We paid close attention to the participant's thoughts, feelings, and expressions, and the data analysis produced nine themes about how government organizations might continue remote work post COVID-19.

The table below summarizes the themes developed from the data to answer the research question. The findings of the study show significant impact regarding participants' views and experiences of COVID-19 in their organization, how their organization has adapted to remote work, the role of their organizational leadership during the pandemic, the challenges they encountered while working remotely, strategies they believe will help their organization improve, assessment of their technological skills, organizational support systems available to employees, perceptions of training as a strategy for improvement, and how they have contributed to positive social change. COVID-19 brought about a lot of adjustments in organizations, necessitating organizations to devise means for employees performing duties from remote locations (Cho et al., 2021). Factors, such as training of employees, understanding change models, and ascertaining how the technological skills of employees contribute to job engagement helped to provide a better strategy on how to operate remotely. Nine themes emerged from analysis of the participants' responses. Below is the interpretation of the findings based on the identified nine themes.

TABLE 1
NINE THEMES FROM THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Theme 1	Participants' views on the impact of COVID-19 on their organization
Theme 2	How organization has adapted to remote work since COVID-19 started
Theme 3	Participants' views of their organizational leadership
Theme 4	Challenges of remote work
Theme 5	Strategies for managing change and improving remote work experience
Theme 6	How participants' technological skill is comparable to their work productivity
Theme 7	Strategies for supporting remote workers with less proficient abilities
Theme 8	Employees' training needs
Theme 9	Strategies for achieving positive social change

Finding 1: Participants' Views on the Impact of COVID-19 on Their Organization

We began by asking participants how COVID-19 impacted their organization. All the participants indicated that COVID-19 had negatively and positively impacted their organization. The selected participants were employees of government organizations who worked remotely during COVID-19 and were able to express their opinions on the impact of COVID-19 on their organization. In attempt to stem the pandemic's spread, P01, P02, P03, P04, P05, P06, P07, P08, P09, P10, P11, and P12 revealed that their organizations adopted synchronous and asynchronous methods of performing their jobs. They attributed the low productivity in their firms to the lack of cooperation and poor communication brought on by the necessity of working remotely. P03 stated that several employees were sick and their inability to work resulted in low productivity and job losses.

All the participants admitted that COVID-19 brought about a shortage of staff because, before working remotely, many employees had to quit their jobs to spend time with their children and family members who could not go to school or work and needed to be supervised. P03, P04, P07, P09, P10, P11, and P12 explained that the low productivity in their organization was mainly caused by a lack of requisite technological application skills among employees. P01, P02, and P05 stated that low productivity and job losses resulted from many employees being sick or distracted while working remotely and unable to perform their duties. P06, P08, P12, and P11 added that poor communication and lack of team collaboration were among the major challenges faced in their respective organizations. P01 used herself as an example, saying that her kids were home for most of the pandemic period because schools were closed, and she had to assume multiple roles being an employee and struggling with the technology that had just been introduced, being a mother, and being her kid's teacher. The conclusions drawn from the participants' responses was that COVID-19 changed the way organizations operated originally. However, participants expressed happiness that COVID-19 made their organizations reevaluate their organizational practices regarding efficiency. Some of the organizations had adopted both synchronous and asynchronous methods of service delivery to sustain business activities.

Finding 2: How Organizations Have Adapted to Remote Work Since COVID-19 Started

We asked the participants to discuss how their organizations have adapted to remote work since COVID-19 started. From the participants' perspectives, while some organizations have easily adapted to the remote work experience, many others have not fully adapted. Adaptation is essential for organizational sustainability and competitive advantage (Ali Hameed et al., 2019). P01, P04, P11, and P12 indicated that their organization had adapted well because employees were trained to work remotely. P01 stated that her

organization encouraged teamwork to carry everyone along. P02 said their organization adapted by engaging employees, increasing wages, and promoting employee healthcare programs.

Working remotely during COVID-19, according to P03, P07, P09, and P12, helped their organization lower the rate of illness transmission because employees were not forced to carry out their job in a crowded workspace. P03, P07, P09, and P12 also received instruction that assisted them in carrying out their tasks remotely. P06 said that his company gave employees training on how to use the different technology tools they needed to do their jobs, even though employee supervision has remained difficult in his company. P05, P10, P08, and 12 said their companies adapted because they created an environment where people could thrive. P11 stated that his organization saved money on infrastructure and office space because they had to shut down some physical office spaces and provide employees with the tools needed to work remotely. Working remotely helped their organization save money. All the Participants said that organizations provided training on how to use the various technological tools needed to perform their job and supervised their progress and adaptation to their new work environment. These participants agreed that understanding the applicability of the various software and resources provided to them by their organization entails a tedious learning process. The conclusions drawn from the responses of the participants is that organizational adaptation could be achieved differently, but in line with Xiao et al. (2021), which include knowledge learning, teamwork, and the capacity for independent creativity. These crucial skills allow an environment or system to survive and flourish. All the participants indicated that constant training and retraining will make their adaptation process easier. Participants stated that government organizations should allocate more resources to technological intervention and encourage employees to become more technologically savvy.

Finding 3: Participant's View of Their Organizational Leadership

The success of leadership depends on inclusiveness, social accountability, rules of conduct, and management, which can inspire eager teamwork and a desire to fully become involved (Bhatti et al., 2023). Effective organizational leadership, therefore, entails having the ability to influence and guide others' actions to achieve organizational goals (Dabke, 2016). In this light, an effective leader inspires others to carry out their professional responsibilities in a way that advances the company's objectives and fulfills both individual and group expectations (Bican & Bren, 2020). The participants, while projecting their views of their organizational leadership, presented a variety of views. Participants generally agreed that their organization's leadership makes efforts to be engaging, even though leadership could do better. Participants stated that their organization is sensitive to the plight of the employees and keep up with employees and make efforts to be involved in their activities. Participants also admitted that their organization is understanding and empathetic to employee challenges. P01, P02, P04, and P06 said that even though their organization is engaging, their leadership pattern is somewhat autocratic, leaving little room for mistakes or for employees to apply their own discretion when making certain decisions. P01, P02, P04, and P06 argued that it is worrisome to work under leadership that believes in full compliance and even tries to micromanage employees to ensure they comply with the organization's policies and rules.

Nonetheless, P03 said that his organization is understanding and empathetic to employee challenges. P04 added that their organization cares about staff welfare, which is evident in the organization's welfare activities. P04 said they have good healthcare benefits, sporting events, and periodic wellness education. P07, P08, and P10 said they see their company as a learning organization where employees can learn on the job through peer mentoring and team building. Additionally, P07, P08, and P10 said that their company promotes the welfare of its workers. According to P09, his company is proactive and successfully handles employee issues. P07, P11, and P12 stated that their organizations promote collaboration, teamwork, and an open-door policy. P07 stated that his organization is disruptive and adaptive to change and was able to adapt easily during the pandemic. P07 said that employees are encouraged to express their thoughts and build connections inside the company that will aid them in carrying out their jobs. Participants' responses support the arguments advanced by Yukl et al. (2002), which grouped a range of leadership traits into three main categories: (a) task-driven leadership (that discusses tasks and obligations, plans, and prioritizes activities); (b) relationship-driven leadership (to manage individual support and recognition of achievements); and (c) change-driven leadership (to expand the goal of what is achievable and to

demonstrate why changes are required). This sort of categorization provides a framework for envisioning leadership structures.

Finding 4: Challenges of Remote Work

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased the demand for internet remote working from home in 2020–2021. This unanticipated event has necessitated people and businesses to swiftly train workers so that they can adjust to the use of online working methods in a bid to sustain the comparable level of productivity as working in a traditional workplace. However, organizations were faced with multi-level challenges. The participants expressed their opinions on the challenges of remote work in their various organizations. P01, P02, P05, P06, P07, and P11 thought that the biggest problems their respective organizations were facing were a lack of communication, a poor rate of information processing, and a lack of teamwork. P03 and P04 said that once their organizations adopted the remote work pattern, the team collaboration that had existed before to COVID-19 was lost. According to P03, his firm faced a number of difficulties, including the incapacity of the personnel to grasp the use of the technological resources at their disposal, the unavailability of the equipment required to operate remotely, and the delays in service delivery. P04 claimed that his firm encountered additional difficulties as a result of its inadequate internet access. P08 made the observation that when his company initially started working remotely, the staff lacked the necessary IT abilities to carry out their duties remotely. Employees, for instance, had to learn how to use Zoom and Teams in order to do their duties. The majority of employee reports were written in hard copies before COVID-19. Employees had to learn how to utilize specific computer software in order to produce and submit soft copies of their reports, though, because they had to work remotely.

The consequences of bureaucratic bottlenecks were cited by P09 as the major cause of the problems his organization was experiencing. Employees, according to P09, were resistant to change and many preferred to carry on with the status quo. Many employees were reluctant to utilize their laptop, scanner, printer, and other work equipment designed to support remote work, and some refused to receive training on how to use the necessary IT tools. P10 and P12 claimed that their organization's difficulties were caused by a combination of large resignations brought on by employee burnout and a general lack of discipline among many employees. Generally, all the participants mentioned how the lack of mentorship and poor organizational communication affected their various organizations. The participants also pointed out that even when their organization provided the necessary tools to get the job done remotely, the employees still lacked the skills to use the technological tools provided by their organization. For instance, employees had to learn how to use Teams and Zoom to perform their jobs. Prior to COVID-19, most reports written by employees were in hard copies. However, since employees had to work remotely, it became necessary for them to learn how to use some computer applications that would enable them to write and submit soft copies of their reports.

Finding 5: Strategies for Managing Change and Improving Remote Work Experience

The research participants showed that numerous strategies could be used to manage change and improve the remote work experience of employees. The participants mentioned that employee training and having access to the right tools needed to execute their job can help improve employee experiences. Demerouti (2023) opined that understanding and enhancing the effects of remote work requires assisting people in their efforts to balance their professional, family, and personal needs, demands, and resources. According to Nyberg et al. (2021), organizational communication practices should be genuine, ongoing, and two-way to achieve a successful remote work strategy. Communication is an important and fundamental factor in every company; it is needed for fostering collaboration within the workplace and impacts organizational performance and decision-making (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). It has been demonstrated that social cohesiveness and trust have a significant impact on team productivity (De Jong et al., 2016). P01 mentioned that maintaining a good work-life balance and good mental health will improve the remote work experience of employees. The participant also advocated for the involvement of employees in matters that concern their wellbeing in the organization. Similarly, the P02 believed that building a communal orientation, defining measurable goals, offering clear procedures for employees to follow, and cultivating

effective communication and conscientiousness within an organization can improve employees' remote work experiences.

According to P02, the community experience would increase communication among employees as well as between employees and their organizational leadership. P03, P04, P05, and P06 stated that providing employees with the necessary working equipment and encouraging teamwork could improve their remote work experiences. P03 noted that being truthful when dealing with employees and maintaining a positive attitude toward work is critical. P05 added that training and mentoring on effective time management should be made available to employees. P07 and P08 agreed that offering a pleasant work atmosphere and the ability to work on a flexible schedule would improve employees' remote work experiences. This is because employees would be allowed to work at their pace. P09 emphasized the necessity of training and providing the essential tools for remote work. Employees are better positioned to accomplish their responsibilities when they are effectively prepared to use the technical tools. P10 believed that using a calendar to schedule work tasks and improve communication in a business would improve employees' remote experience. P11 and P12 indicated that constant training, team collaboration, and empathy can improve the remote work experience. All the participants mentioned that employees should be provided with mentors to guide less tenured workers, training on efficient time management, a suitable work environment, and the opportunity to operate a flexible schedule. The importance of training, in addition to providing the necessary tools for remote work, cannot be overemphasized because the participants argued that employees' remote work experiences could be improved if they are provided with the right working tools and trained to use them. Salas et al. (2012) stated that for organizations to remain competitive, they must continually train their employees to learn and grow.

Finding 6: How Participants' Technological Skill Is Comparable to Their Productivity

COVID-19 brought about a lot of changes in the work environment, such that technology has become a part of our daily lives (Rasool et al., 2022). More than ever, more people are beginning to work remotely following the aftermath of the pandemic. To work remotely, employees must have the skill set needed to utilize the technological tools. Ra et al. (2019) opined that there is a need to prepare the workforce for learnability so that they can assume new roles, unlearn, and relearn in order to bolster their skill set. The research participants were asked to talk about how their technological skills compare to their productivity. All the participants claimed to have good technological skills. The majority of the participants stated that they have enough technological skills to perform their job. They argued that they are able to use search engines, work in real time using Zoom and Teams, which allows them to hold meetings regularly with their team members, and do every other thing that they would have done if they were in the traditional office. P01 stated that she was able to provide training to less technologically knowledgeable staff because of her technology expertise. P02 indicated that he possesses the technological skills required for his profession. P02, for example, indicated that he can use search engines and work in real time with Zoom and Teams.

The video conferencing features of this program enable staff to conduct presentations in real time. P02 mentioned that he attends regular meetings with his team members and does everything else that he would do in a traditional office. P03 remarked that his technological application skills allow him to do a good job. Before COVID-19, P04 thought his technological skills were mediocre; nevertheless, he has grown significantly since starting to work remotely because he had to learn and adapt quickly to execute his job. P04 went on to claim that he has learned how to use programs like Excel and Zoom to carry out his responsibilities. Before working remotely, he had limited expertise on using Excel sheets to turn in his reports, as most were submitted in hard copies to the organization's secretary, who re-produced the soft copies. P05, P06, P07, and P08 all claimed to have exceptional technological abilities. P07 indicated that he has good hands-on talents and that he can readily use his technical application skills to complete his job as required by his firm. P08 remarked that, while having outstanding technological abilities, he believes there is still much space for improvement. P09, P10, and P11 all stated in separate interviews that their technology application skills were excellent. P09 remarked that he possesses outstanding technological skills and the ability to adapt to changes. P10 stated that she is quite knowledgeable about most information technology products and even assists other employees at her firm. P11 claimed that her technological skills

enable her to configure complex software at her job. Similarly, P12 stated that COVID-19 gave her the opportunity to develop her technological abilities, at least to the point where she could do her needed obligations. She went on to claim that working remotely allows her to make more progress than working in-person in a regular office setting.

Finding 7: Strategies for Supporting Workers With Less Proficient Abilities

In an organization, all employees do not have the same capabilities or skill set needed to carry out their job. While some may be tenured, others may just be struggling to get their job done. The participants were asked to explain how government organizations can support remote workers with less proficient abilities. The majority of the participants argued that organizational leaders should make efforts to identify employee weaknesses in order to understand their training needs. Once the training needs of employees are identified, organizations must provide training and constantly retrain employees until they become tenured. According to Armstrong (2020), an organization's fundamental responsibility is to provide employees with the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs effectively. One of the best methods for improving employee performance and efficiently achieving business goals and objectives is training (Afroz, 2018). Training will help organizations improve both quantity and quality of production, leading to the overall wellbeing of the organization (Garavan et al., 2020). P01 agreed that organizational leaders should make attempts to uncover employee deficiencies in order to understand their training requirements. Once employees' training needs are discovered, firms must give training and regularly retrain personnel until they are tenured. P01 went on to say that organizational training should be comprehensive, including all areas of work duties. Team building, adequate intra- and inter-organizational communication, and mentorship programs were highlighted as significant support aspects for remote workers with less proficient abilities by P02 and P03. P04, P05, and P06 believed that training should be adaptable and tailored to the needs of the employees.

Apart from training, staff should be given the necessary equipment to operate remotely. They said that firms should invest in information technology resources including virtual conferencing tools, laptops, and internet equipment. Employee motivation, the availability of incentives, and proper distribution of work, according to P07, P08, and P12, could be used to promote employee engagement and productivity. P12 noted that organizations should hold workshops and seminars regularly. According to P09, employee training is a positive start toward aiding employees with less proficient talents, but it is also necessary to increase employee morale and optimize employee potential. According to P09, employee morale is linked to employee engagement and retention, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. P10 believes that learning firms are better positioned to accommodate remote workers with less skilled talents because employees can learn from their tenured colleagues. According to the participant, organizational leadership should ensure that employees have access to the appropriate tools and more experienced personnel, whose depth of experience is usually useful to the firm. Organizations, according to P11, should not be inflexible. She went on to suggest that innovation should be fostered and that the workplace should be a no-judgment zone where individuals can use their discretion as needed. All the participants agreed that providing training for employees is a good step towards supporting employees with less proficient abilities, but it is also important to boost employee morale and maximize the potential of the employees. They also believed that organizational leadership should ensure that employees have access to the right tools and more experienced workers, whose wealth of experience is usually invaluable to the organization. According to Kumari and Yelkar (2022), the elements that could improve employee engagement are transparency in approach, ongoing feedback, developing engaging activities, recognizing employee successes, employee connect, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, focusing on the everyday employee experience, and lastly, strengthening the trusting environment.

Finding 8: Employees' Training Needs

The participants were asked to talk about the training needs of employees of government organizations that hope to sustain remote work post-COVID-19. According to P01, the staff should receive sufficient training on time management, organizational abilities, and strong customer relations. She went on to explain that many government personnel lack good customer service skills and do not show as much dedication to

their jobs as they would in the private sector. She believes she does not demonstrate enough devotion as a government remote job because she is paid at the end of the month regardless of her input. P02, P05, P06, P07, P08, P09, P11, and P12 all advocated for technical tool training. P02 contended that firms can train people on how to use advanced computer equipment with high speeds and software that will allow them to do their tasks more efficiently. P05 also stated that it would be beneficial for government companies to train employees on using the various video conferencing tools available so that employees can communicate with their colleagues in real time while simultaneously completing their weekly PowerPoint presentations and meetings. According to P06, adequate training on various information technological tools, such as programming software, virtual presentation tools, and data analysis software, will transform remote employees into valuable organizational assets whose contributions will significantly increase organizational productivity.

Respondent P07 indicated that appropriate knowledge of the basic technology tools utilized in an organization will reduce work turnaround time and boost task accuracy. This is possible provided personnel obtain the appropriate training. P03 thought that distant government personnel should be taught excellent communication skills and team collaboration. He went on to remark that when a business has efficient communication, employees gain a greater knowledge of the task at hand. Because team members can learn from one another, team cooperation helps employees develop more efficient ways to carry out their jobs. P10 felt that personnel should be given greater training in interviewing tactics so that they may probe their clients and find better ways to assist them. All the participants believed that training remote workers was instrumental to the general productivity of the organization. Several studies and research findings demonstrate that training improves business outcomes through higher productivity, better leadership abilities, cheaper production expenses, simpler ways to earn profits, and a bigger market (Kessy & Temu, 2010). To ensure that employees actually benefit from training provided by their organization, Mathis and Jackson (2016) opined that organizations should identify the training needs of employees, design training, deliver training in an effective style, and evaluate training. Team collaboration helps the employees learn more efficient ways of carrying out their duties because team members can learn from one another. Communication and team collaboration are necessary components of success in all organizations (Pouragha et al., 2020).

Finding 9: Strategies for Achieving Positive Social Change

Positive social change is necessary for organizational development. This is because positive social change entails a cause of action that improves the status quo. Employees could contribute to positive social change in their organization in several ways. Stephan et al. (2016) viewed positive social change as a unique blend of change processes facilitated and promoted by procedures within organizations. A change agent must propose strategies to lessen barriers and increase benefits to influence social change. As change agents in their organizations, participants were asked about how they contributed to positive social change. All the participants believed that they contributed to positive social change in their organization in one way or another. When asked how they contributed to constructive social change in the same manner, P01 answered that she contributed in various ways. She added that she makes herself available to her coworkers who are less skilled in using her company's technology equipment. She also works as a mentor to new staff. P01 sees herself as the go-to person for other employees who are having problems at work. Participant P02 considered that he had made a significant contribution to positive social change in his organization, particularly in advocacy. P02 claimed that he is an outspoken supporter for workplace equality, gender equality in leadership roles, a staff healthcare program, and a weekly staff support group.

The weekly staff support group is formed on a weekly basis from diverse teams around the firm to provide ongoing assistance to employees with less skilled abilities. P03 also admitted to being a positive social change agent in his firm by always assisting in the facilitation of trainings, offering comments on the quality of work done by remote workers, and serving as a mentor to new hires. Respondent P04 indicated that he contributed to positive social change by exchanging ideas with other employees and mentoring new employees. Mentoring is a crucial aspect of bringing about positive social change because it is a teaching and learning process in which the mentor teaches the mentee and the mentee learns and implements what

the mentor has taught them in their professional and personal lives (Hill et al., 2022). Similarly, P05 claimed that he fostered organizational learning and supported the drive to fulfill his organization's vision and purpose through increased communication and team building. P06 and P07 stated that they helped create positive social change by teaching employees ICT. Furthermore, P07 stated that he created positive societal change by encouraging team development. P08, P09, and P10 noted that in addition to providing training, he assists staff in gaining access to user-friendly tools. P11 and P12 admitted to assisting during trainings and coaching other employees so that everyone worked together to achieve a shared goal. One interesting thing about the responses of the participants is that they all understand the concept of social change and have all been involved in positive social change activities in their organization. The following paragraph addresses the study's limitations.

Limitations

Three limitations were observed in the study. First, the study was biased because the emphasis was on government organizations. There was no consideration of non-government organizations while studying how organizations can sustain remote work post-COVID-19. By studying only government organizations, the scope was minimized. However, it did not affect the outcome of the study because the researchers could collect plenty of data that could also be applied to non-government organizations.

Environmental factors contributed to the second limitation. The study was conducted virtually using Zoom. The participants had to log into Zoom using the meeting link sent to them, and the interview was conducted at a convenient time for both parties. The majority of the participants preferred their interview at night, after they had returned home from work. Sometimes, the researchers experienced noise from kids playing in the home. This was a situational factor that the researchers could not control. The researchers had to suspend the interview for a while and proceed when the noise decreased. However, this condition did not influence participants' responses.

Challenges with technology constituted the third limitation. There were times during the interview with the participants that their computer froze for a couple of seconds. The participants attributed it to their poor internet connection and slow laptop speeds in some cases. We had to wait for a couple of seconds for their internet to pick up. This was a situational factor that we had no control over.

Gladly, the technological challenges were manageable and did not affect the responses of the research participants. The study adds to the body of research by offering suggestions that organizations can use as a manual for continuing remote work after COVID-19. The findings also left potential for future research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations put forward by the researchers includes recommendation for further research, recommendation for strategies for sustaining remote work, and recommendation for social change.

Recommendations for Further Research

The first recommendation is for scholars to extend the exploration to include a larger population size of 30 to 50 remote workers of religious organizations so as to create more insights on how religious organizations can sustain remote work post COVID-19.

Recommendations for Strategies for Sustaining Remote Work

The study offers a number of suggestions for sustaining remote work. One recommendation is to ensure that any government organization with remote workers develop mentorship programs to enable new workers to learn from more experienced workers. Mentoring is a crucial strategy for improving employee performance and organizational development (Xu et al., 2021). According to Higgins and Kram (2001), mentorship argues that the mentoring connection, which kicks off the social exchange process, might offer protégés two basic types of advantages. The main benefit for a protégé is career-related support, which aids in professional advancement through the unique mentor support techniques such as funding, guidance, safety, publicity, and visibility. Psychosocial support is another benefit of mentorship. It offers protégés a

sense of social support and typically aids in making them feel more capable and efficient. In other words, mentors are more seasoned workers within an organization who use their wealth of experience to coach and develop less seasoned workers.

Training is also important to this study. Training significantly impacts employee performance and organizational objectives because it fosters learning (Sung & Choi, 2014). In order to produce results that have an influence on the business and motivate employers to up their game, employees need to be trained to become more knowledgeable, more skilled, and more critical thinkers. According to Abdulla et al. (2017), employees can boost their productivity if they are provided with the right social, intellectual, and mental training. If workers are properly trained, they acquire the necessary abilities to carry out job duties that they would not have done so effectively otherwise. It is impossible to overstate the value of training because it will assist staff in comprehending the function and use of the technical instruments necessary for work performance. For instance, staff members will be taught how to give reports and engage in other team activities using Teams or other video conferencing software. Shkoler and Kimura (2020), citing the significance of training, claimed that because modern businesses are characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, only continuous training can give them a competitive advantage.

Employee motivation is another guideline for this study. Employee motivation aims to create a supportive workplace where workers are encouraged to work with enthusiasm, responsibility, and dedication. Zoellner and Sulikova (2022) opined that individuals feel motivated when they believe that particular activities will achieve a particular objective. Similarly, Baumeister (2016) believes that the primary objective of motivation is to facilitate behavioral change by energizing and leading processes that influence the choice and efficacy of implementing tasks. Employees who are properly motivated will be eager to go above and beyond to complete their tasks. Numerous things can motivate workers. For instance, while some workers might find motivation in higher pay, others might find inspiration in a flexible schedule. The leadership of an organization has a responsibility to comprehend the ideal methods for inspiring employees in order to get the most out of them.

Setting attainable goals for staff is also key for businesses. Employees who work remotely benefit from flexible work schedules. Certain workers are able to take care of certain personal concerns between shifts before returning to finish their work. They are continuously under pressure to defend their input, which may not have been the case if they were working from their regular office locations, but this is because they operate remotely. Employees may have to put in many hours over their regular work hours to justify their contribution to the company. Many remote workers have admitted to working longer hours to prove their dedication to their employer (Song & Gao, 2020; Dockery & Bawa, 2020). This is due to the corporate leadership's constant focus on exceeding goals to maintain employee engagement (Rau & Hyland, 2002). Although some employees may struggle with technological equipment or have trouble accessing the internet, organizational leadership occasionally fails to set realistic expectations for the staff. The workers wind up putting in more time than they are compensated for to defend their accomplishments.

Team collaboration is important in this study. Teamwork and collaboration are terms that are frequently used interchangeably. In a business setting, collaborative effort comprises interaction between employees intending to advance organizational objectives. According to Sanyal (2018), a team is a group of individuals working together to achieve shared goals while offering excellent services. Team collaboration empowers employees to maximize their potential and explore effective means to accomplish tasks on time. When a task requires a greater diversity of expertise, discernment, and opinion, teamwork produces superior results compared to individual effort. Teams significantly affect employee performance, which helps foster employee growth and enhance organizational productivity (Oseiboakye, 2015). Businesses must foster good team collaboration in order to sustain remote work post-COVID-19. This will enable workers to reach their full potential and teach them better ways to carry out their responsibilities. The lack of team collaboration has an impact on organizational performance and productivity (Sanyal, 2018).

Recommendation for Social Change

Government organizations looking to sustain remote work should also take mentoring into account. Many participants confirmed the value of having mentors guide the less experienced staff, as highlighted

during the data collection. By observing their more experienced coworkers, less experienced and less tenured employees can advance through mentoring. In the case of new employees, it is frequently challenging for them to comprehend organizational expectations or to know what to do in specific situations; however, with the assistance of the mentors, work processes are more streamlined and expectations are more easily understood.

In the researchers' opinion, successful change management practices could help organizations grow more broadly, productively, efficiently, and with better teamwork. A safer workplace, lower employee turnover, and higher performance and sustainability may be experienced by organizations that are able to adopt the change initiatives described. When change is implemented, the organization understands and accepts the reasons behind it, which leads to increased productivity, improved teamwork, and lower staff turnover. Registries that always met the quality standards spent more on data edits and case consolidation as well as data validation and QA. In a previous study with cancer registries examining facilitators and barriers to electronic reporting, registries noted the need for more QA staff because the number of records received increased substantially with electronic reporting. Registry staff also mentioned that several manual tasks were needed to process the electronic data, particularly regarding case consolidation (Tangka et al., 2021). These additional manual reviews could be reduced through further automation to optimize the benefits from electronic reporting.

Registries that always met the quality standards also spent the most on training registry staff. Registries identified staff training as a facilitator of electronic reporting (Tangka et al., 2021). Furthermore, registries that always met the quality standards on average spent the most on all data reporting categories and on average devoted the largest percentage of funds to data reporting. Future studies might explore the correlation between registries that always met the quality standards and resources devoted to data reporting.

The analysis presented here, based on a small subset of CCRs that were selected to reflect a variety of registry characteristics, does not consider potential interactions among characteristics. The small sample size is more sensitive to outliers, which can shift calculated averages. Furthermore, we attempted to collect detailed, activity-based cost and provided definitions for all the categories included. We also offered technical assistance throughout the data collection process, and despite our efforts, there could be differences in interpretation or reporting of activities across the registries. For example, in some instances, IT staff activities could be embedded within ongoing registry activities, and these may not have been reported as standalone IT support. Furthermore, we were not able to collect details about all activities specifically related to electronic reporting and automation. Retrospective costing data were reported for a prior annual period and can be subject to recall bias, but our team's comparative analysis, using prospectively collected activity-based labor hours, indicated that our retrospective data was quite accurate (Beebe et al., 2023). We designed and planned this study before the COVID-19 public health emergency, which was in effect during the data collection period. Five of the participating registries had to shift staffing resources, amounting to no more than 5% of the total cost, to support the COVID-19 response. This could have potentially disrupted normal registry operations; therefore the study results may not be illustrative of general operations.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to explore how government organizations can sustain remote work post COVID-19. The research designed was a qualitative approach based on a case study approach to answer the research question. The study was guided by semi structured interview protocol questions attached in appendix A. The study's findings align with previous studies conducted on the importance of remote work. However, the previous studies failed to focus on the experiences and thought of government remote workers. The conclusions drawn from the research showed that COVID-19 affected organizations positively and negatively. Despite the fact that workers appreciated the freedom of working from home, COVID-19 resulted in job losses, low productivity, poor employee-organization communication, and a lack of adequate monitoring. Many workers were forced to leave their employment to spend time with their children and other family members who could not attend school and required adult supervision. We also understood that

workers may adjust to unique work situations with the support of ongoing training and retraining. We discovered that organizational training must be comprehensive, focused, adaptable to employee demands, and cover every work assignment facet.

Our message to employers and employees is that COVID-19 can happen again, and they should make sure that the advancements made by working remotely during COVID-19 are improved. Employees should receive updated training on using the fundamental technology resources required for remote work. The current study has shown that the importance of remote work cannot be overemphasized. Collaboration, realistic goal-setting, equipping employees with the proper tools, establishing mentorship programs, and employee motivation are very instrumental to the success of remote work in government organizations. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation and assumptions of Chandler's OAT were examined to comprehend the controversy over whether adaptation is managerially or environmentally determined, and whether adaptation is a process that involves choice and selection versus one in which it is an essential response to environmental pressures.

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