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Transformational Leadership for a Remote Work Environment – Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Transformational Leadership for a Remote Work Environment – Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era

A Dissertation Project

Presented to the Faculty of the

Department of Business and Public Management

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By

Liza A Craig

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Abstract

COVID-19 is caused by the novel SARS-COV-2 virus in 2020, took many lives, impacted, effected, and changed life for everyone around the world in one way or another. The rapid spread of this virus forced organizations around the world to make rather spontaneous decisions to abruptly pivot to an alternative way of working, to minimize exposure risk which transformed the traditional professional work environment to a remote option for many after the pandemic.

This qualitative research study used surveys and semi-structured follow-up interviews to explore benefits and challenges associated with post-pandemic remote work, leadership skills and behavior necessary to support remote employees who transitioned from a traditional onsite office work environment to an offsite virtual work environment, and how all these factors impact employees' well-being and organizational success. This review also highlights leadership skills and behaviors identified to support employees in the transition and transformation from working in a traditional office space to a remote work environment to maintain balance between organizational productivity and success, and employee well-being. The findings conclude that while there are benefits and challenges to remote work, the benefits of working remotely outweigh the challenges, and that transformational leadership skills and support are vital for an easy and effective transition and experience to remote work post-pandemic. This study will add to the body of knowledge by providing benefits and challenges of remote work in the post-pandemic era, specifically for the period between 2021 and 2023, and the importance of support from transformational leaders.

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Finally, I am eternally grateful, and give all the glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the source of my strength. For His love, grace, and faithfulness, for being with me throughout this journey, and enabling me to complete this project and publish this dissertation.

Dedication

To my husband John, my biggest cheerleader, champion, my inspiration. For your unwavering love, encouragement, motivation, and continued support. I love and appreciate you for always highlighting my potential, having faith, and always believing in me.

To my son John Jr., and my daughter Breanna, my two precious gifts from God. For your steadfast love, patience, and understanding, especially during this journey. I love you!

To my spiritual nephew, Minister Marcus White for your prompting that started me on this journey. As we pass the torch, we look forward to encouraging you as you embark on your doctoral journey! Love, peace and blessings!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Like many other aspects of life, the professional work environment was changed drastically at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March of 2020. While some organizations are now reverting to onsite work in a physical office space as it was pre-pandemic, some are instituting a hybrid model, that is, a combination of central organization workspace and home office space, while other organizations are maintaining the remote model approach, that they urgently pivoted to at the beginning of the pandemic.

As the concept of post-pandemic remote work continues to evolve, it requires a shift in mindset and for organizational leaders to embrace this new work model for successful outcomes, for both the employees and the organization. Many employees who were forced to work remotely at the beginning of the pandemic have come to appreciate the flexibility post-pandemic remote work provides, making it difficult to return to an office, if their organization is requiring that shift back to the office, or even a hybrid model.

This research study focuses on the initial few years of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the period from 2021 to 2023. This research aims to identify and examine some of the advantages and challenges associated with remote work post-pandemic. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore some of the leadership skills and behavior necessary to support employees in the transition from a traditional to virtual work environment, for employees' well-being and organizational success.

This opening chapter will introduce the benefits and challenges of remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic by discussing the background and context, followed by the research problem, research aims and objectives, questions, significance, and limitations.

Background of Research Study

Remote work is not a new concept as many professionals have participated in this alternative way of working for many years. Remote work was established in the 1970s, with a dynamic increase of employees working remotely in the United States in the 1990s (Kacprowska, 2021). However, this model has taken on new meaning since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. COVID-19 as defined in Appendix A, is caused by the novel SARS-COV-2 virus, that has taken many lives, impacted, effected, and changed life for everyone around the world in one way or another. The rapid spread of this virus forced organizations around the world to make rather spontaneous decisions to quickly pivot to an alternative way of working, to minimize exposure risk and transform the traditional professional work environment to a remote option where possible. The typical "nine to five" job as it has been known, has changed for many professionals almost instantaneously, altering the future of many jobs for future generations. Virtual companies referred to remote work as work done by employees within an organization who could be anywhere except in an office—in locations that are both off-site and off-shore. In other words, headquarter-less, office-less companies with employees spread around the globe (Stillman, 2016, as cited by Turnea, 2022).

This unprecedented experience emphasized that change can be unpredictable, spontaneous and affects sudden organizational shifts such as pivoting to a remote or hybrid work environment, without prior strategic planning. This required leaders to exercise their skills in being impulsive, flexible, innovative, and adaptable, all at the same time. A shift or transformation of this magnitude requires change in many facets of the organization, including culture and leadership.

The drastic switch from working in a physical office space to a remote model due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has created a fundamental operational change for many organizations. The transition to what is now considered a new normal for many organizations today, required employers to quickly respond to ensure that employees had the necessary equipment and infrastructure to effectively perform their job duties remotely. The transition for some employees who are already working from laptop computers was easier than the transition for those who did not have laptop computers, and who may have been challenged even more by the supply chain issues experienced across the world during that time. The demand for all goods and services was exacerbated by an upheaval of the global supply chain system due to the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis.

There are both benefits and challenges to working remotely, requiring leaders to transform the way in which they lead their teams, to maintain a balance between work and family life, productivity and success, innovation, growth, and development, for both the institution and the workforce. Several factors impacted the radical shift from traditional work as we knew it pre-pandemic to remote work post-pandemic for many workers around the world. Employers needed to define and implement new ways to engage and support employees by setting specific expectations for working in a remote environment. This remote workplace typology is one where employees are in several geographical locations performing tasks offsite but within the same organization.

Given the nature of this rather unprecedented pandemic and unexpected shift to remote work, it also influenced how leaders supported their staff around the world. A research study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), provided insights for leaders into how remote work could be effectively implemented to enhance organizational productivity and employee well-

being. Additionally, considering psychological contract theory, the study highlighted the theoretical and practical implications regarding how exchanges and expectations between employers and employees influence positive remote working outcomes (Adekoya et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

Remote work has become a new work model for many non-profit organizations since the COVID-19 pandemic. Skepticism about employee's ability to work and produce at the same level in a remote setting was quickly debunked during the pandemic where organizational leaders quickly realized that non-essential, non-location critical employees in specific business sectors were not only producing work at the same level, but some areas saw an increase in productivity. Street (2020) noted not having to commute as one of the benefits of remote work, which can result in employees working additional hours, equating to a higher level of productivity.

A transformational leader is referred to a leader who is followed by their subordinates to achieve the organization objectives, usually indicative of the subordinates trust and respect for the leader (Bass, 1985 as cited by Aboramadan & Dahleez,2020). There is agreement that transformational leadership comprises of several elements, like charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and personal recognition that suggest transformational leadership skills and behavior are therefore critical for employees' well-being and organizational success in a remote work environment. Several studies have identified some of the benefits and challenges with remote work, which can now be considered the new normal for many organizations and employees alike (Aboramadan & Dahleez,2020).

Organizations, societies, and economies are the core aspects of sustainability in every community. According to Ebri and Bassey (2021), some restrictions imposed by COVID-19

negatively affected the world's economies resulting in collapse of businesses, bankruptcy and shut down of some industries and organizations, while introducing the concept of remote work. During this time, remote work was considered as an alternative while certain jobs became obsolete. In addition, losing income from sectors associated with tourism such as airlines, hotels, local transport, and entertainment were major challenges for the economies (Yushan et al., 2020 as cited by Bassey et al., 2023). The concept of remote work may be inadequate to convince some organizations that reverted to the traditional office work environment or hybrid work environment model after the COVID-19 pandemic. This remote work theory may also present a problem for these and other organizations that are challenged with changing fiscal landscapes and uncertainties associated with the full impact of the constant, rapid advancement, and innovation of technology, such as artificial intelligence that has not yet been identified for business sectors that have not embraced remote work (Bassey et al., 2023).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact on employees and leaders who continue to work remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic for employees' well-being, work-life-balance, and organizational success. To provide guidance and help to current and future leaders of remote workers, identify areas for improvement, and create ways to keep employees engaged and motivated in a virtual environment while accomplishing the organization's goals.

Research Aims and Objectives

Given the growing transition to remote work, this study will aim to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. The main objective of this study is to:

1. Identify and explore some of the benefits and challenges of employees who continue to work remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Investigate ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success.

Research Questions

1. What are the benefits and challenges of working remotely for staff workers?

2. What are the benefits and challenges of working remotely for leaders?

3. What leadership skills and behaviors are necessary to support remote workers' well-being and organizational success?

Significance of the Study

With many non-profit organizations offering a remote work option post-pandemic, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on remote work. It is intended to add value and contribute to further research on the required leadership skills and changes needed to make this new paradigm shift productive, and successful for both the employees and the organization. The results of this study will provide real-life value to organizations operating in such a dynamic environment, give insights into how the reality of remote work continues to impact its work force in the post pandemic era as the concept evolves, and in the long term, provide viable transformational options for employees, leaders, and organizations.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research study. Firstly, the research study presents a limited scope and does not consider how certain variables would interact with each other in a different environment. For example, conducting this research with other non-profit organizations, or with private organizations. Secondly, given that this is a qualitative study with

an interpretivist approach, it may be criticized for being overly subjective, requiring further investigation on the effectiveness of remote work. However, this provides the opportunity for future research, applying other methodological approaches to this study. Thirdly, inadequate resources, time, and the researcher's restricted research experience all presents limitations to this study. Lastly, using surveys as the instrument in this qualitative study enabled the researcher to have follow-up conversations that provided additional data, enriching the study outcome. Twenty-six percent of participants who completed the survey volunteered to be interviewed in a follow-up conversation after completing the survey, to share more about their remote work experience.

Delimitations

There are many organizations that have adapted to a remote work environment after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this study is delimited to administrators who worked in a traditional office space pre-pandemic but continue to work remotely post-pandemic, in one department within a non-profit organization in one city in the United States.

The study only focuses on identifying the benefits and challenges of working remotely after the pandemic, exploring leadership skills and behavior needed to support employees' well-being, and organization success in the transition from traditional to remote work environments.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that participants will be honest, truthful, and objective when responding to the survey questions. To address this, participants were assured in writing of the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey and that their decision to participate will not be share with their supervisor and will not have any effect on their performance evaluation or employment in any way.

A second assumption is that the sample size would provide a level of saturation that would identify themes that would emerge from the survey responses.

Summary

While the concept of remote work may not have been a thought or option for some leaders prior to 2020, it has become one of the models in the forefront of the minds of many leaders as a new concept for leading a team from a far. Many leaders who are now leading teams who work remotely that are either 100% remote or hybrid are now thinking about new ways to help develop the skills required to do the job well in this new work environment.

The purpose of this study is to identify benefits and challenges with working remotely and understand how leaders adapted to the drastic change to this new working environment after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study is designed around a qualitative phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of employees and leaders who continue to work remotely after the pandemic.

Organization of Chapters

Remote work has been characterized by physical distance that limits face-to-face interactions, especially for those who are separated by thousands of miles in a different town or state. (Zimmermann et al., 2008 as cited by Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

In Chapter One, the context of the study has been introduced. The aim of the research, objectives, and questions have been identified and stated. The limitations have also been discussed.

Existing literature is reviewed in Chapter Two to identify benefits and challenges of staff and leaders who continue to work remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlights leadership skills and behaviors identified to support employees in the transition and

transformation from working in a traditional office space, where there were physical face-to-face interactions, to a remote work environment with virtual interactions, to maintain balance in organizational productivity, success, and employee well-being.

Chapter Three presents the qualitative, theoretical framework used in this study and the limitations. Chapter Four presents the findings from the study and Chapter Five, a discussion of the findings and conclusion.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

It is important to keep in mind that remote work was instituted by several organizations prior to the pandemic. Sutherland, Janene-Nelson, and Appelo, highlighted in their handbook that for centuries employers have held an ideology that connected an office space in a particular geographical location as the constant, and have hired the most qualified employees who were able to gather in that central office location as the variable (2020). This allowed employers to hire candidates who were able to either relocate or easily convene at that office location. This ideological concept excluded the option of being able to seek out and hire the most qualified candidates, the best and the brightest who may not be geographically situated or allowing them to gather in a physical office building. This also placed limits on employees in selecting jobs that were available only within their geographical reach. Employees were selecting jobs based on availability and perhaps not necessarily what may have motivated them, limiting opportunities that could be available to them if location is irrelevant and was made a variable. Considering how technology has removed some of the limitations and enhanced other aspects of the hiring process, employees can now be recruited from a physical distance based on their qualification, experience, and enthusiasm, making these characteristics the constant (Sutherland et al., 2020).

The advancement in information and communication technology has indeed pivoted the remote work option to another dimension, giving the current work force the opportunity to explore job opportunities that excite them and allow them to pursue things that they like to do, and that brings them fulfillment and success, from a distance and outside the walls of a physical office space. Digital technology continues to evolve in the global market and remote work has

also allowed employees to utilize and optimize the use of technology, in ways they have never used technology before.

As with any major change in life, systems, or processes, there are always pros and cons, those who agree and those who disagree, and this is no different to that of remote work. While remote work is not appropriate for all employees based on the industry they are associated with, it has been proven to be beneficial for some organizations and employees alike. Normal operations in almost all industries have been affected by COVID-19. For example, the transportation industry that relies on commuters who are their customers, to be productive and successful, may not agree with the benefits of remote work. The effects on public transit with social distancing measures and precautions associated with the virus has drastically altered travelers' behavior in urban areas. Transit agencies must determine how to continue providing adequate service while navigating a changing environment with reduced revenues caused by the fundamental changes in ridership behavior and public transit usage. One of the major reasons there has been a significant decline in public transit ridership is the fear of contracting COVID-19. Recent work on the impact of COVID-19 on urban transportation shows a decrease in public transport ridership ranging from 40% to 80% for bus systems throughout Europe and the United States (Wilbur et al., 2023).

COVID-19 also caused social and economic uncertainty around the world including the workforce that experienced a mass exodus in the first several months of the pandemic. As a result, some employers lost their business or were forced to close their business due to the pandemic (Batiste, 2024). It is also important to note that some employees quit their jobs while others were terminated due to challenges encountered as an individual or as an organization during the pandemic, decisions that made sense for them as individuals, for their families, and

for the organization. For example, some nurses resigned from their jobs because of the health risks posed from COVID-19 for themselves, their families and increase in workload. Other employees were dismissed from their jobs due to the negative economic impact some organizations experienced during the pandemic. (Jarden, et al., 2023).

In exploring some of the benefits of working remotely, Alexandra Street mentioned that remote teams save time by not having to commute, which continues to be one of the key benefits for remote employees even today. For the organization, there are fiscal savings, for instance the reduction in travel, given that conferences can now be held and facilitated virtually, which also provides an opportunity to bring the best and the brightest people together for successful and effective collaboration at a reduced cost (Street, 2020). In these examples, both the employee and the organization share some of the benefits as it pertains to remote work.

Employees can experience a higher level of satisfaction integrating work, family, and social life, improving physical and mental health, reducing stress, and increased concentration and creativity. These can all aid in maintaining or increasing the level of job satisfaction, their commitment to work and loyalty to their employer and referring others to the organization. For the employer, a reduction in organizational costs, adapting to the work environment of the future, economic development, global trends, and the advancement of technology (Kacprowska, 2021).

Among the many benefits noted by employees who worked remotely during the pandemic and continue to do so, autonomy and flexibility was highlighted as one of the major benefits that allows them to design and adjust individual work schedules to meet their needs, which in some ways provides empowerment and work satisfaction. Remote work also helped increase individual productivity for many with fewer distractions, being able to focus on goals and tasks in online collaboration and meetings. Employees appreciate the time saved by not

having to commute. The reduction in the amount of time spent commuting is most attractive to employees who live miles away from the office location who are often challenged with urban congestion, parking, and time-consuming travel to work, that often translate to problems with creating balance between work and family. It has also allowed employees more quality time with family, making the daily routine easier. (Babapour et al., 2022; Kacprowska, 2021).

While there are several other factors that influence remote work, making it appealing to employees, there were obviously known challenges with working remotely, that impacted both employees and leaders. For the employee, the lack of social interaction from the absence of interacting with colleagues, and the inability to limit the number of working hours were noted as the top two negative aspects of remote work (Tremblay, 2001a, 2001b; CEFRIO, 2001 as cited by Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012; Kacprowska, 2021). A sense of overwhelmingness was built up over the workload, stress, and exhaustion from back-to-back online meetings, constant notifications, responding to emails, and finding balance and the ability to switch off in a culture that felt that you needed to always be available for fear of missing out. Although flexibility could be considered a positive characteristic of remote work, extended working hours could impact family life in a negative way (Teo et al., 1998; Chapman et al., 1995 as cited by Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). Remote work may have also increased conflict in balancing work and other aspects of life. For instance, longer working hours could impede on personal obligations that in turn impact family life when boundaries are not defined between working and non-working hours (Taskin & Vendramin, 2004; Felstead & Jewson, 2000, as cited by Tremblay, & Thomsin, 2012).

The proportion of employees in the United States who primarily work from home has more than tripled over the past 30 years, from 0.75% in 1980 to 2.4% in 2010 (Mateyka et al.,

2012 as cited by Bloom et al., 2014). Bloom et al., questioned whether management practices are useful for raising productivity and profitability with remote workers that lacks systematic evidence or consensus, and raise concerns over deteriorating work-life balance and the potential that remote work would be the solution. In this study, it was thought that implementing remote work might reduce the high attrition rates the organization was experiencing by saving the employees from long commutes. Managers worry that allowing remote work would lead to increase neglect of responsibilities as employees would be away from the direct oversight of their supervisors, especially junior employees who may struggle to remain focused when working remotely without direct supervision. The results of this study reveal that the performance of remote workers increased by 13% over a period of nine months. Study participants attributed the increase in time worked to the greater convenience of being at home and having easy access to food, bio breaks, and relative quietness at home. The organization realized a 20% - 30% increase in productivity with savings of approximately $2,000 a year per remote employee with about two thirds of this improvement coming from the reduction in office space, and a third from improved employee performance and reduced turnover (Bloom et al., 2014).

Organizational Leadership and Culture

Leadership is a critical element to the success of any organization, having a significant increase in importance in organizations over the years. Leaders organize and align followers toward a common goal by giving direction, defining and modeling the appropriate behaviors and attitudes needed for change (Geller, 2003; Northouse, 2007 as cited by Yasir et al., 2016).

Bass (1985) classified leaders into three categories: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, in a continuum with transformational leaders being the most active and

effective form of leadership, laissez-faire being the least active and effective leadership style, and transactional in the middle. Transformational leaders tend to inspire followers by sharing the organization's vision and where it is headed. Transformational leaders are concerned about the transformation of both the organization and the employees, and influence their followers to surpass their own self-interests for the good of the group by aligning their commitment with that of the organization's vision. Transformational leaders act as change agents who are actively involved in creating an environment and culture that fosters change and growth (Bass, 1985; Oke et al. 2009, as cited by Lutz Allen et al., 2013).

Transactional leaders try to satisfy the needs of their followers by offering rewards when expectations are met. They call attention to the exchange that takes place between leader and follower, by providing clear expectations and the corresponding reward when the expectations are met. Laissez-faire leaders, however, avoid leadership responsibilities, and do not provide clear expectations between themselves and their followers (Avolio & Bass 2002 as cited by Lutz Allen et al., 2013).

Leadership is considered a vital indicator of individual and team outcomes with the assumption that individuals interact with their leaders and team members on a face-to-face basis. However, as organizations become more dependent on electronic communication, to which this model adequately explains, the behavior of leaders and their outcomes is questionable and as a result, leaders need to find a different way of leading in a virtual environment (Barling et al., 1996; Dvir et al., 2004; Hambley et al., 2007a; Zaccaro et al., 2004 as cited by Kelly & Kelloway, 2012).

The work carried out by employees in public and nonprofit organizations has a significant impact, and it is sometimes difficult for employees to observe a direct link between

their contributions and the success of their organization, due to a variety of factors such are regulations or bureaucracy and the size of the organization (Perry & Porter, 1982 as cited by Peng et al., 2020).

Organizational culture encompasses various aspects of the workplace that help employees to do their best work. Culture not only increases employee engagement, but it also produces stronger business results with a correlation between positive workplace culture and that of a positive business impact. Culture speaks to an interconnected system of behaviors, emotions, and mindsets that works together, and seen in a way in which employees do things with their organization, and when designed properly, creates a healthy workplace culture that fosters employee engagement and overall positive business end results (Razzetti, 2022).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a dominant leadership theory that impacts employees' psychological attachment to their organizations. Literature in public administration has noted and acknowledged the positive impact of transformational leadership on employee's motivation, attitude, and behavior that influence followers' attitudes and their commitment to a leader and an organization. Additionally, a relationship between transformational leadership and an indirect effect on the affective commitment transmitted through perceived work impact has been identified (Bass & Riggio, 2006 as cited by Peng et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2020).

The core of any organization is the employees, who are the significant contributors, the team players, and innovators who often go beyond their assigned roles and responsibilities. These are key characteristics of transformational leadership. Transformational remote leaders should influence their followers to utilize their best effort to help achieve goals and challenge the status quo to be innovative by seeking ways for improvement. These followers are also more

likely to endorse and embrace the organizational mission (Caillier, 2014a, 2014b; Colbert et al., 2008, as cited in Ng, 2017).

Transformational leadership encourages team members to collaborate and assist each other with brainstorming ideas and identifying how they can be implemented and executed. It displays supportive behavior among team members by creating a shared commitment to innovation, triggering their followers to explore and enhance their critical thinking skills. This also helps establish a working environment where alternative and risk-taking approaches are strongly valued and where creativity is given high priority to solve problems. Transformational leadership also emphasizes team spirit that helps team members to go beyond their own self-interest for the benefit of the team. This approach builds allegiance where team members feel a deeper commitment to the team and therefore, they are more willing to engage in efforts for the team's sake (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass et al., 2003, Jung et al., 2003 as cited by Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). However, despite a plethora of research on transformational leadership, the question still needs to be explored to respond to how organizational context influences the emergence and effectiveness of transformational leadership in the remote environment (Purvanova & Bono, 2009, as cited by Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

Transformational Remote Leadership

As we think about this drastic shift in the work environment, transformational leaders find new, different, and creative ways to lead, emerge, and promote employee engagement that has become a major work-related approach for remote workers, that empowers, and foster involvement, satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Christian et al., 2011 as cited in Rainey et al., 2021).

Organizations will have to consider sustainability implications when developing guidelines for remote work by providing opportunities to expand the talent pool and recruit employees from geographical areas outside of their sphere. Sustainability issues related to the consumption of energy and resources will be central in the remote work model. This is where organizations rely on their transformational remote leaders to develop new skills and competencies for its workforce, and create sustainability for the work environment, organizational innovation, and the well-being and performance of remote workers to ensure employee engagement and retention. Continued remote work is likely to contribute to carbon emission reductions because of the reduction of commuting and increased consumption of office furniture and equipment for both company offices and home offices. It is however important to identify potential conflicts, collaborations, and trade-offs in implementing sustainability goals (Babapour et al., 2022).

Additionally, transformational remote leaders need to ensure that remote workers are equipped with the right technical support, infrastructure, and tools for this new way of working. This required more planned or scheduled meetings instead of the face-to-face check-ins that spontaneously took place in the office hallways. The convenience of working from home led to back-to-back meetings without the natural breaks that were integrated into a physical office space that required moving between meeting rooms. Transformational remote leaders also need to find new ways to train and help their teams adopt to a new culture and learn etiquette like the proper way to navigate online meetings, learning to virtually raise their hands, turning on cameras, choosing appropriate backgrounds, turning microphones on and off, and so on (Babapour et al., 2022).

A research study was conducted by Meiryani et al., (2022), to provide empirical evidence of the effect of transformational leadership and remote work on employees' performance. The study suggests that consideration should be made for leaders to change their leadership style to a more appropriate, supportive leadership model, which directs employees to achieve organizational goals. The results of the study indicate that remote work has a significant effect on employee performance, which could be referenced for leaders and organizations who are still undecided in implementing the remote work option for their employees (Meiryani et al., 2022).

The transformational leadership style has begun to be considered useful when it comes to organizational changes, with empirical evidence that shows transformational leadership effects on organizational effectiveness and employee performance. Research also shows that the employees of organizations that provide a remote work option are more motivated, and experience better work life balance that paves the way for increase productivity (Keller,1992; Stevens, 2019 as cited by Meiryani et al., 2022).

Figure 1 on page 20, is a visual representation of a preliminary model of remote leadership that Kelly and Kelloway developed. By using antecedents such as perceived control, unplanned communication, regularly scheduled communication, and prior knowledge of leaders that were gathered during their mixed method study of remotely led workers. These antecedents were tested to determine whether the data fit the model and whether that fit varied significantly between those who worked remotely and those who did not (Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

Figure 1

Preliminary Model of Remote Leadership
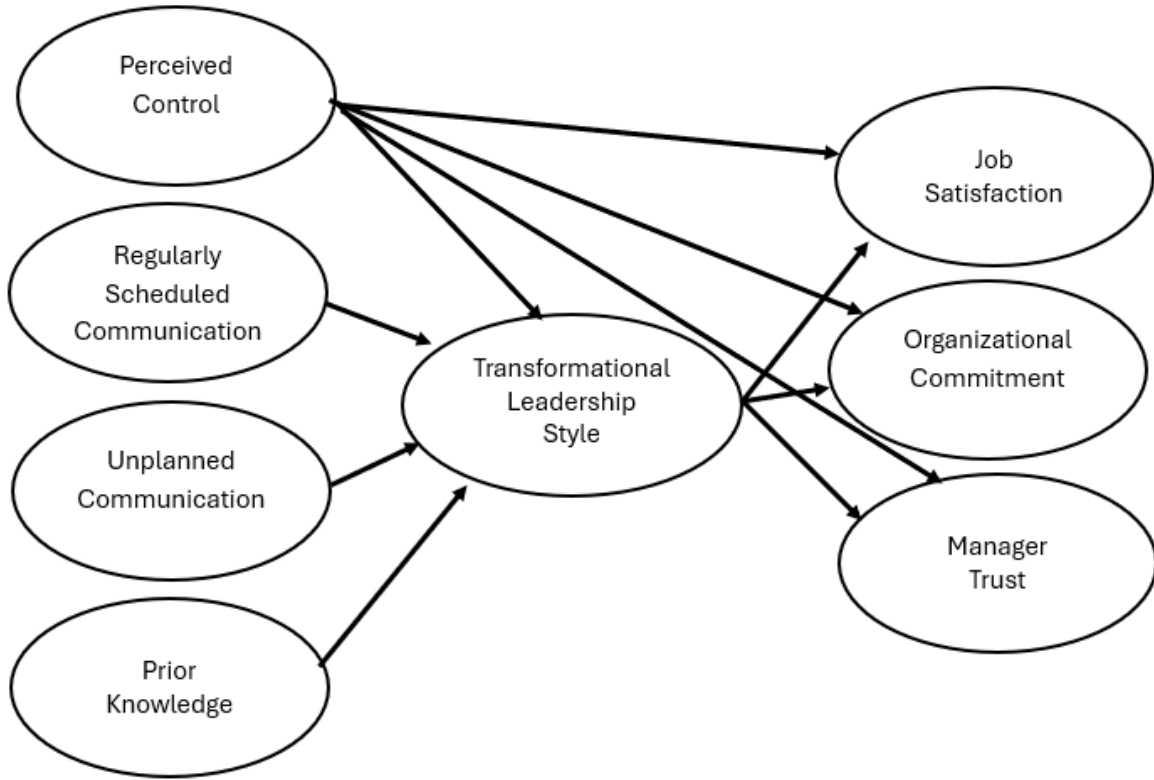
Research has shown that a new model of leadership is needed in the remote environment, one that is different from the traditional model where face-to-face communication and interaction was prevalent. Transformational leadership is a common process in which both leader and follower are changed by one another, where the characteristics of the followers have the potential to predict leadership. This type of leadership allows followers to go beyond their own self-interests for a higher collective vision that exceeds performance expectations, exhibiting behaviors that influence, inspire, motivate, demonstrates intelligence, and individualized thought (Bass, 1985; Dvir et al., 2002; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999 as cited by Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

It is important for leaders to guide the navigation of what has truly been transformational for many employees in this new remote work environment in a post pandemic age, where research has already shown positive effects on employees' job performance. It is also important for leaders and followers alike to understand that this type of change takes work, time, and effort to develop an organizational culture that transformational remote leaders can develop with authenticity. In addition, effective communication systems lead to better employee engagement, well-being, overall benefits of job satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

Upon further review, there appears to be a connection between a leader's behavior, the perceptions of the leader, and the relationship of the individual's outcome, in an environment where there is physical distance and face-to-face interaction between employees and their remote leaders. It has also been identified that there is a correlation between a leader's behavior and how it relates to individual outcome in a relationship mediated by perceptions of transformational leadership in contrast with, and in the context in which they occur—that is, physically near or remote.

Hajal indicated that empirical evidence promotes a favorable correlation between working remotely and the benefits of productivity for employers' and employees' health and well-being, although some employees have experienced a negative impact on their health due to ergonomics, higher stress levels, anxiety, and loneliness. However, the overall conclusion of the research found that with proper job design, leadership and organizational support, and ample information and communication technology, remote work will be pivotal to the future of jobs (Hajal, 2022).

Researchers suggest that electronic communication, where nonverbal cues tend to limit the message that is being conveyed, is inferior to face-to-face communication, often resulting in misunderstanding, increased role ambiguity, decreased trust, inaccurate perceptions of self and

others, lowered leader influence, and reduces group cohesiveness. This might explain why virtual teams take longer to make decisions or why email communication is sometimes perceived as less kind than face-to-face communication, limiting the development of interpersonal relationships. These nuances contribute to the perceptions of leader legitimacy, expertise, and status (Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

Frequent communication among remote teams helps to improve working relationships among team members, increase job satisfaction, and increase perceptions of trust in leaders. More frequent and higher quality communication has been found to strengthen relationships for transformational leadership. Virtual communication may further force social interaction by the physical effort involved in typing longer messages with what may be seen as unnecessary words. Simulating the frequent regular interactions that comprise the proximal environment can be challenging for remote leaders (Hart & McLeod, 2002; Staples, 2001; Straus, 1996, 1997 as cited by Kelley & Kelloway, 2012).

Social isolation has been identified as one of the key negative impact factors on mental health that negatively relates to job satisfaction. Social isolation can be defined by "the absence of support from coworkers and supervisors and the lack of opportunities for social and emotional interactions with the team" with evidence linked to geographically dispersed collaboration (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 198 as cited by Efimov et al., 2022). Remote work creates limited opportunities for social interaction and may also lead to professional isolation, which in turn could lower the possibility of being promoted and or rewarded (De Vries et al., 2019, Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017, Wang et al., 2017, Marshall et al., 2007, Wilson Felix Bassey et al.,2008, Giorgi et al., 2020, Lengen et al., 2020, Loades et al., 2020, Toscano & Zappal, 2020, as cited by Efimov et al., 2022).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher explains the various methods and approaches used to collect and analyze data to help answer the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of working remotely for staff workers?

2. What are the benefits and challenges of working remotely for leaders?

3. What leadership skills and behaviors are necessary to support remote workers' well-being and organizational success?

The Remote Staff Survey (Appendix I) was administered to 117 employee participants and the Leader Survey (Appendix J) was administered to 44 leaders who also work remotely and have 1 or more remote employees reporting directly to them. As time went on, the survey was shared with a few other leaders along with the employee survey so they could disseminate to their teams, however the total number of surveys distributed is not confirmed. The goal of the surveys is to understand and gain insights from both leaders and subordinates who currently work remotely to get their perception based on their lived experiences.

Research Design

It is important that the design of any research study is aligned with the appropriate methodology to get the best study results to address the empirical questions and problem. The argument between qualitative and quantitative methodologists continues but has softened in recent years, with an evolving compromise suggesting that methods should be matched appropriately with experiential questions and issues, and not to unanimously advocate any single methods approach for all problems (Patton, 1999).

A qualitative method is used for this research study to capture the participants' expressions of the beliefs and feelings that influence their remote work experience, which may be difficult when using quantitative methods (Bryman, 2016 as cited by Adekoya et al., 2022).

This qualitative research study uses a theoretical framework, design, and methodological approach to explore and identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with working remotely, specifically for employees who have been working remotely 100% since March 2020, and how leaders transform their leadership style in the remote work environment in a post pandemic era. This study also helps identify variables that are not so easily measurable and to give an ear to the silenced voices of participants that would not otherwise be heard and would only be achieved by communicating directly with participants who are living witnesses to this reality. It will also attempt to analyze and provide ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior, to align with employees' well-being and organizational success. In addition, the data derived from this research would be used to answer the research questions, to identify the benefits and challenges of working remotely for staff and leaders and explore leadership skills and behaviors that are necessary to support remote workers' well-being, and organizational success in an ethical manner (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Qualitative research usually begins with a theory that uses an interpretive or theoretical framework to inform the study or research problems, to address the individuals identified with a social or human problem. It helps to focus on the experiences and ideas of the participants. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to examine and interpret collected data in a natural setting, that is sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive to establish patterns and/or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Among other characteristics, qualitative studies can be characterized as trustworthy, transferable, and confirmable but often raise criticism about credibility. Despite the issues and concerns about the validity of qualitative research, Cho & Trent (2006), examine transactional validity as alternative framework to qualitative research, and defines transactional validity in qualitative research as "An interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 321). The concept of transactional validity in qualitative research was used during the conduct of the study. The research seeks trustworthiness through exploring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Seale, 1999 as cited by Cho & Trent, 2006; Cho & Trent, 2006).

Credibility in a research study refers to the legitimacy of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012 as cited by Cope, 2014). Credibility in a qualitative study includes descriptions of the participants' experiences that are recognized by individuals who share the same experience (Sandelowski, 1986 as cited by Cope, 2014). In addition, the researcher should demonstrate engagement, methods of observation, and audit trails when reporting on a qualitative study (Cope, 2014).

Transferability refers to the ability for study findings to be applied to other settings or groups (Houghton et al., 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012 as cited by Cope, 2014). Sufficient information about the participants and the research context should be provided to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are capable of being transferable.

Confirmability is the ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints. Confirmability is demonstrated by

describing how conclusions and interpretations were established and characterizing the findings that were derived directly from the data. Qualitative research findings can also be displayed by providing rich quotes from the participants that represent the emerging themes (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004 as cited by Cope, 2014; Cope, 2014)

Dependability describes the consistency of the data over similar conditions that is usually achieved when another researcher agrees with the decision trails at each stage of the research process. The researcher's process and descriptions of a study would be considered dependable if the study findings were replicated with similar participants in similar conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004; Koch, 2006 as cited by Cope, 2014).

A qualitative study is considered to have met the condition of credibility if the results are transparent and hold meaning to individuals who were not involved in the study and readers can associate the results with their own experiences (Cope, 2014).

Positivism is a research theory or paradigm where positive knowledge or discovery by facts or truth is based on a natural experience, its properties and relations verified by science (Savin & Howell, 2013). The researcher holds personal assumptions of the social reality of remote work and strive to remain objective in the process to avoid their own values, beliefs, mindset, and/or opinion to influence or taint the research study to enhance the quality and validity of the qualitative data. The goal is to create a clear delineation between the researcher and the research participants in every aspect of the research study, and not blur the researcher's perception with those of the research participants. Although some colleagues participated in the study as remote workers, protocol was observed in that the survey was not directly distributed to the staff who are direct reports. This information is being disclosed if the researcher's

professional affiliation with the participants may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation either negatively or positively in the minds of users of the findings (Patton, 1999).

Grounded theoretical framework was also used to evaluate how leaders transform their leadership style in the remote work environment and how staff adjusted to a new norm of working remotely in the post pandemic era. Grounded theory generates concepts involving social phenomena, to develop higher level understanding derived from, a systematic or methodical analysis of data, and aims to explain the study of social interactions or experiences. The key characteristics of a grounded study, which is iterative study design, theoretical or purposive sampling, and systematical sampling, are all closely related to the emergence of a new conceptual model. An iterative study design of grounded theory constructs a concept from data that has been collected, analyzed, and requires theoretical sampling for iterations or repetitions to be meaningful. The constant comparative analysis also allows the integration of new and existing data in the iterative cycle. The iterative design of this grounded theory is used in this study to help explain the meaning of participants social interaction and experiences. It allows us to identify and analyze emergent themes from the data collected for answering the research question (Lingard et al., 2008).

The approach to this qualitative research was one from an interpretivist theoretical framework or perspective, to gain insights from the participants on their experience working remotely. Interpretivists seek to understand and interpret the interaction, actions, and objects of social reality from the perspective of those who are entangled within the social truth (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Interpretive research generates its own criteria for judging the equality of truth and cannot be precise, nor objective based on the researcher's method of understanding the social reality from the participant's perspective (Yanow Shea, 2006).

Sampling Method

Three methods of sampling were used in this qualitative research study, purposive or purposeful sampling, theoretical sampling, and convenience sampling. Purposive or purposeful sampling involves an intentional, purposeful selection or sampling of a group of people who could best provide information to the researcher about the research problem being addressed. This concept focuses on seeking significant contributions to learn and understand the central issues of the research project and requires participants with firsthand experience who could provide information about the research problem. Purposeful sampling investigates information-rich cases in depth and detail, focusing on understanding and illustrating important cases rather than generalizing from a sample to a population (Patton, 1990).

Theoretical sampling is the second sampling method used in this qualitative research study. An essential feature of sampling in qualitative research, that enables researchers to capture similarity, differences, and/or anomalies for detecting new and meaningful data. Theoretical sampling is a core principle of grounded theory, used for construction and development of a conceptual framework, by gathering additional information to expand the theory of already developed concepts. Prior studies on remote work have called for additional qualitative studies to enhance the richness of data (Grantet al., 2013 as cited by Adekoya et al., 2022). This type of sampling is not bounded by limits based on a particular theory and involves identifying emergent concepts in the data to conclude what additional data should be collected. Theoretical sampling operates as a secondary analysis to derive assumptions that go beyond the original purpose of data collection. (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 1992, as cited by Conlon et al., 2020). Theoretical sampling focuses on data from a homogenous sample of participants who are identified and selected for having similar characteristics, which helps to achieve a cumulative

and progressively deeper understanding and saturation, making the sample theoretically sound

and meaningful (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Morse 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2014).

Thirdly, convenience sampling, a non-random sampling method was used to individual

who fit the criteria were identified given that not all remote workers had the chance of being

selected to participate in the study (Johnson, 2015).The participants all easily accessible as they

all belonged to the same organization so this convenience sample was also purposive as well as

being straightforward to generate within a limited timeframe (Brewis, 2014).

The intentionality of generating data in qualitative research seeks participants whose

views and experiences add meaning, illustration, and even help explain the phenomenon of the

study. (Cleary et al., 2014 as cited by Conlon et al., 2020).

Study participants were recruited from a pool of administrators at a non-profit

organization who continue to work remotely 100% since the COVID-19 pandemic. This

population includes employees who worked in a physical office space prior to the pandemic and

continue to work remotely. In addition, this research population includes employees who were

recruited and onboarded as remote workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of whom

currently live in several different states across the country. Remote employees, staff and leaders

were identified from a list generated from the organization's human resources system where the

employees' office location was noted as home/remote. The remote workers were purposefully

and intentionally selected from a specific organization within the enterprise to participate in this

study.

Sample Size

One of the aims of qualitative research is to examine the meanings individuals attribute to

their social situation. Qualitative research is concerned with an in-depth understanding, usually

with a small sample size, and as such, a target of 100 employee participants, and 25 leader participants was set for this research study. The participants in this study represent an available purposeful sample of remote workers in the same organization who continue to work remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Data Collection

It is not unusual to encounter ethical problems in the data collection process, including gaining permission, sampling, collecting, developing protocol for recording the information, and data security. Ethical procedures were used as we sought prior approval to survey employees who work remotely at the non-profit organization, and said approval was granted. The request was made and vetted by the institution's own research compliance department, Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol regarding the involvement of human subjects, study procedures, and risks was submitted, reviewed, and approved to ensure compliance within the institution's ethical boundaries (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The approved consent form was presented to participants to ensure they understood what their participation would involve, requiring their willingness to consent prior to accessing the study survey. Consent information was reiterated in the solicitation email and in the introductory section of the survey, outlining that participation is voluntary, confidential, anonymous, that the responses would not be shared with their supervisor, and that the decision to participate or not participate would not affect their job performance or employment status.

Approximately 161 participants were identified to participate in the surveys, about 117 remote staff employees, and about 44 leaders. Below in Tables 1 and 2 respectively are the demographics with 67 staff and 26 leaders consenting to participate in the study:

Table 1

Demographics of Staff Participants

Female	Male	Remote Worker Pre-Pandemic - Yes	Remote Worker Pre-Pandemic - No	No. of States Represented
48	19	48	17	15

Table 2

Demographics of Leader Participants

Female	Male	Prefer Not to Say	Remote Leader Pre-Pandemic-Yes	Remote Leader Pre-Pandemic-No	No. of States Represented
15	9	2	10	15	7

Surveys

Qualitative surveys were used as the main instrument for collecting data in this study. Surveys were distributed and open to study participants on February 19, 2024, and were closed on March 2, 2024. The researcher created two different versions of surveys for remote workers, one specifically for leaders and one specifically for staff employees or subordinates, the surveys were administered, responses were collected and analyzed.

The 11-question survey presented in Appendix I, was created for staff employees, and includes demographic information and some open-ended questions to gather information about perceived benefits and challenges of working remotely.

Similarly, appendix J, is the survey created for the leaders, with 12 questions including specific questions about the leaders' individual teams and the benefits and challenges they experience in managing and leading a remote team. The questions in both surveys were created by the researcher with the goal of deriving the appropriate responses that would respond to, address, and answer the research questions posed in this study. Closed-ended questions were

used to provide the participants a fast and easy way to respond by just checking a box, and a few open-ended questions were asked so that participants could share their experiences with insightful, quotable information for reporting. Only a few open-ended questions were listed on each survey, being mindful of the participants time and to reduce the burden of completing the survey (Johnson, 2015). The surveys were compiled and administered via Qualtrics, an electronic survey software to ensure validity of the research.

Interviews

Question #12 on the Employee Survey and question #13 on the Leader Survey were end of survey questions that asked participants if they would like to be contacted to provide additional information about their experience working remotely. If participants responded yes to questions #12 or #13 respectively, they were then asked to provide their email address to be contacted for a follow-up conversation. This phenomenological approach provided an opportunity to interview participants who share similar experiences or interests, allowing the researcher to glean more information about their experiences working remotely (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

A total of 25 participants, (7 leaders and 18 employees) responded yes to question 12 on the Employee Survey, and question 13 on the Leader Survey, indicating an interest of being contacted to provide additional information about their experience working remotely, and provided their email addresses. Individual Zoom meetings were scheduled for the conversations, and additional information was gathered. The process of engaging, describing, interpreting, and analyzing experiences, thoughts, and actions of others, brought to life the social reality of a new way in which people work (Bazeley, 2013).

Semi-structured 30-minute one-on-one Zoom conversations were conducted with these employees and leaders allowing them to elaborate on their experience working remotely. Questions in appendix K and appendix L were prepared and used to help guide the conversations for the employees and leaders respectively. Not every question was asked of every participant but was rather used to steer the conversation depending on their individual experience and perspective, to ensure that their remote work experience aligned with the research questions and objectives of the study. Interviews were conducted between February 26, 2024, and March 22, 2024. The conversations were transcribed using the transcription feature in Zoom, in addition to some notetaking. This combination of transcription and notetaking is intended to add validity by capturing the details of each interview. The data was then coded using descriptive coding that allowed for categorization of key concepts and themes for analyzing and evaluating the information and data collected (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Data Analysis

The surveys were administered, and data collected via Qualtrics, a web-based online software. The data was exported from Qualtrics to Excel and further analyzed. An inductive analysis was used to identify emerging patterns, themes, and concepts from the data to describe and interpret the information based on the participants' voices.

Shafritz & Hyde framed ethics as the branch of philosophy that focuses on a systematic thought about character, morals, and doing the right thing (2012). With that premise, there are several interconnected steps in the process of analyzing and representing the research data including the organization of the data, preliminary read through, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation. In the process, care

was taken to address ethical issues, to protect participants from harm and to be able to disclose comprehensive findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Open, axial, and selective coding are the three steps used in grounded theory and were used in this study to analyze qualitative data to identify themes, patterns and relationships derived from research data, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the data and create an explanatory theory. Open coding is the first step where data is broken down to identify concepts and generate codes. Vivo coding is sometimes used with open coding and was used to capture participants' exact words and expressions to preserve authenticity. The second step is axial coding that focuses on finding relationships between categories and subcategories. The third and final step is selective coding, that aims to develop a ideas or theories that explain the research study by refining and organizing data into a core category or theme (Siegle, 2023).

Conclusion

Among other characteristics, qualitative studies are considered to be trustworthy, transferable, and confirmable but often raise criticism about credibility. The credibility of a qualitative study depends on the rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that are analyzed, with consideration to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation. In addition, credibility of the researcher depends on their training, experience, track record, status, presentation of self, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative analysis or a fundamental appreciation of true-to-life investigation. The argument between qualitative and quantitative methodologists continues, softening in recent years evolving with a compromise to match methods appropriately to experiential questions and issues, and not to unanimously advocate any single methods approach for all problems (Patton, 1999).

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This research aims to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, and to explore some of the leadership skills and behaviors necessary to support employees in the transition from a traditional to virtual work environment for employees' well-being and organizational success.

A total of about 161 surveys were distributed to participants in this study, approximately 117 to remote staff employees, and about 44 to leaders who work remotely and manage or lead a team of one or more remote employees were administered.

Employee Survey Results

A total of 67 remote staff employees invited to participate in the study completed the survey (representing a 57% response rate). Of this 48 identified as females and 19 males representing residents from 15 different states across the United States of America. Of this population 25% or 17 employees confirmed having worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, 58 of the employee participants (representing 87%) indicated that their leaders were very supportive in their transition to remote work, and the same percentage of participants expressed having an extremely positive experience working remotely. 12% or 8 employees responded to having somewhat of a positive experience with support from leaders in the transition to remote work and their overall experience working remotely after the pandemic. Of the 67 employees who completed the survey, 97% or 65 participants somewhat agree or strongly

agree that they can effectively stay engaged in a remote environment while 3%, or 4 participants

disagree or somewhat disagree.

Figure 2

Benefits of Working Remotely
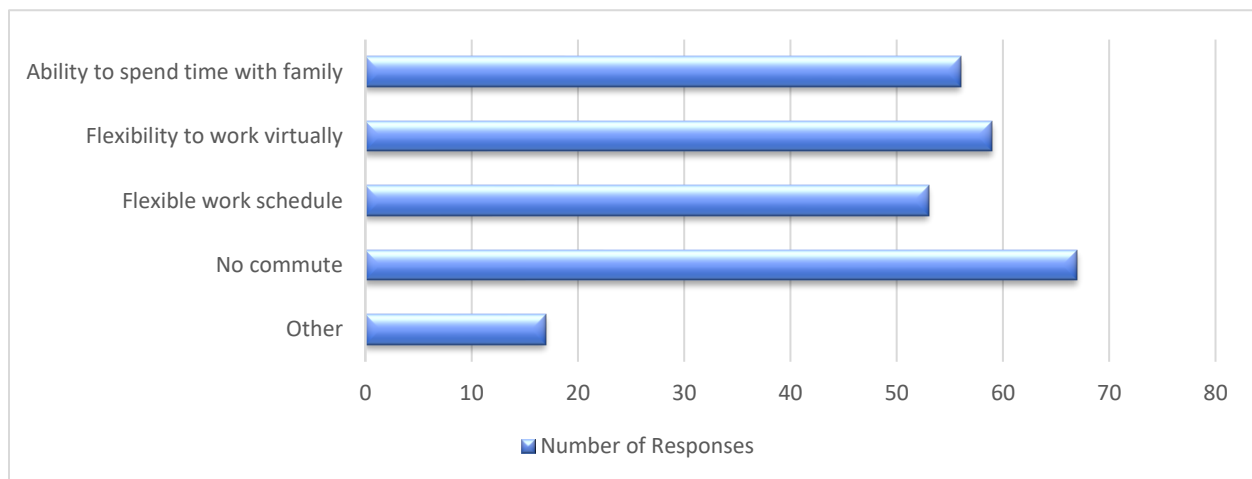
In addition to the benefits of working remotely outlined in Figure 2 above, staff

participants noted additional benefits represented in the "other" category shown in Figure 2

which includes:

- "Make private medical and personal calls at the comfort of my home"

- "More time in my community"

- "Helps maintain a proper work/life balance"

- "Significantly improved work-life balance"

- "More physically active."

- "Increased productivity"

- "Well-being: easy access to water and healthy snacks/meals, 5-minute

  breaks for strength exercises, ability to sit with my son for a 20-minute

  lunch break or stop to get a quick hug and so many other things."

- "Ability to focus on a proposal/project without outside distractions."

- "Ability to be able to concentrate more!"

- "Savings on gas, tolls and upkeep of car, parking fees"

- "Cost savings, ability to balance work-chores-free time."

- "Reduced childcare costs"

- "Save money"

- "Block off time for in-depth projects. No one can pop in my door without notice"

- "Allow the distraction free environment I need to focus on my work which is hard to achieve in an office."

- "Being willing to work longer hours due to the above benefits"

- "Getting work done without being interrupted"

Most participants identified challenges they face working remotely, the lack of socialization with co-workers was identified as a challenge by 70% of 47 employees.

Figure 3

Challenges Faced Working Remotely
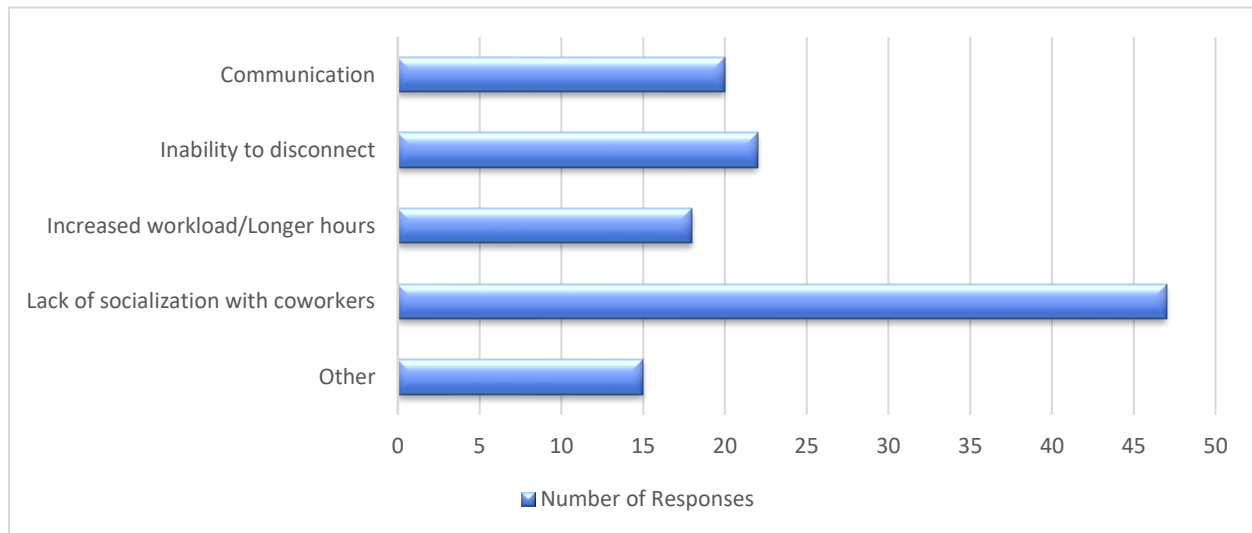
There were about 6% or 4 employees indicating no challenges working remotely, and following is what these participants had to say:

- "I didn't experience situations that I would categorize as "challenging" while working remotely."

- "No challenges."

- "None."

- "I don't see any challenges with working remotely."

In addition to the top four challenges shown in Figure 3 above, that is, lack of socialization, inability to disconnect, communication, and increased hours and workload, following are the other challenges represented in the "other" category in Figure 3, notably:

- "The only time I feel uncomfortable is during large group meetings where most of the people are in-person. It is difficult to connect with the speaker when they are a tiny speck sitting at a table of 20 people."

- "The inability to participate in sponsored company events or "

- "Group events (holiday lunch etc.)"

- "Becoming comfortable with online meeting software and options. It would be nice if leadership provided education and guidance on best practices."

- "Lack of understanding coworkers work styles or preferences."

- "Sometimes there is not enough communication as to what is happening with coworkers when you work remotely. When in person, you always hear of circumstances that you don't hear when not on-site."

- "Training challenges"

- "Furnishing a room for an office"

- "Feel I am not able to express/show my full abilities."

- "Personally, I'm more sedentary. When working on-site I was more active/mobile."

The time saving that results from the absence of commuting has afforded remote employees the flexibility to reallocate their time for their personal time and to spend more time with their families as shown in Figure 4 below. About 36 responses, representing 54% of employees, indicated that not having to commute is one of the greatest rewards and benefits of working remotely. Not having to contend with the stress induced from commuting whether dealing with urban traffic or travelling by train, or bus, provides flexibility and work life balance and well-being (22 responses each), time savings (29 responses), financial savings from gas, or other costs associated with other modes of transportation (9 responses), being more efficient

without interruptions that easily occurs in the office (16 responses), and communication (2 responses).

Figure 4

Rewards, Benefits & Values of Working Remotely
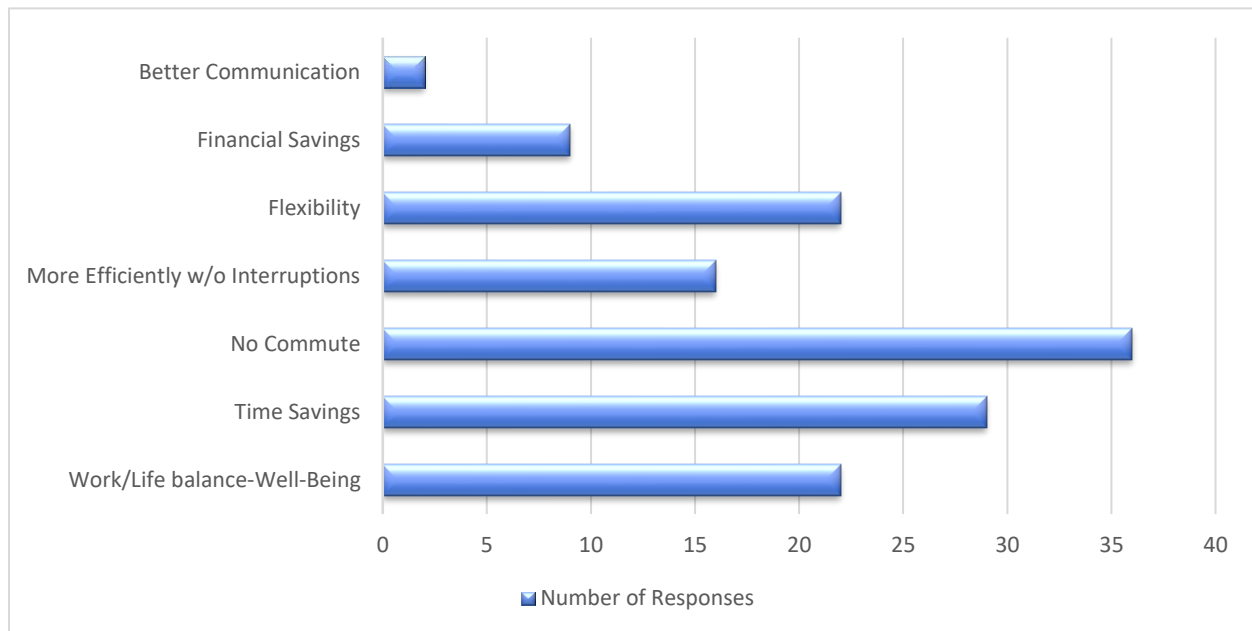
As for suggestions that would make for a more effectively engaged remote environment, 40% or 27 employee participants proposed, no change is needed to the current state of their remote environment. Figure 5 below highlights the other 60% or 40 participants who indicated several things that would allow them to effectively stay more engaged in a remote environment. Among the suggestions made, 10% to 19%, that is 7 to 13 participants stated that having a dedicated, ergonomically furnished home office, and the opportunity to have occasional in person gatherings on campus would allow them to effectively stay engaged in the remote environment.

Figure 5

Suggestions for a More Effective Remote Work Environment
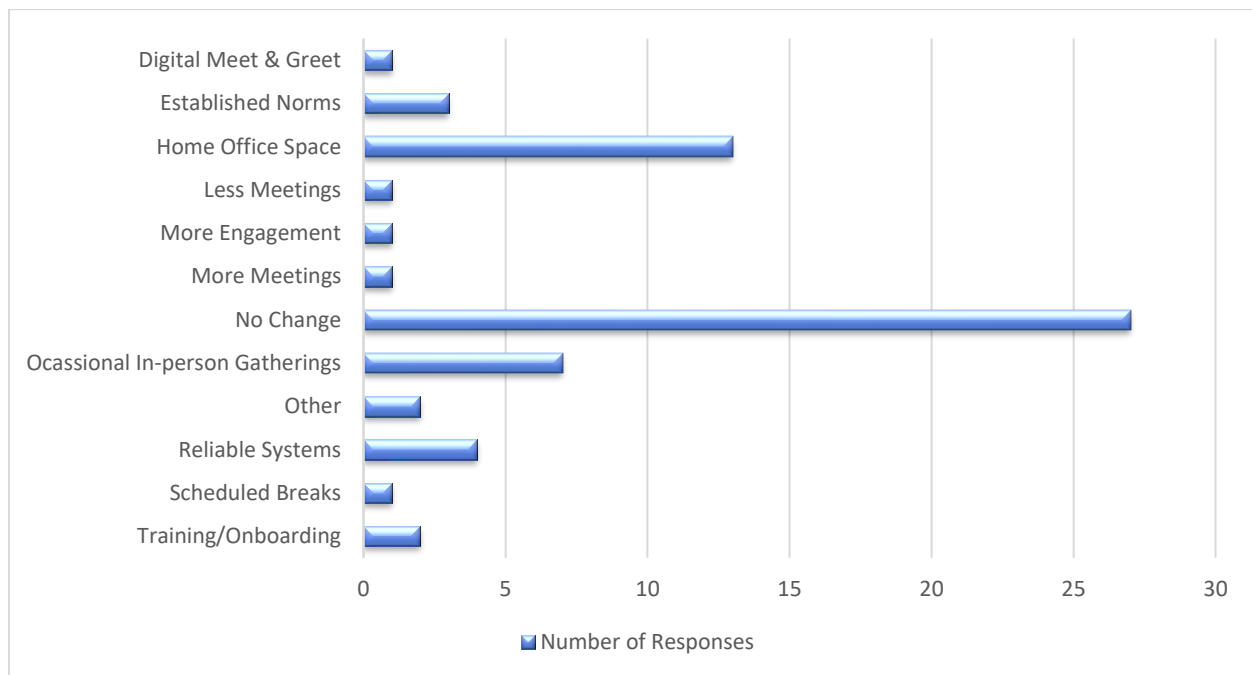
As it pertains to accomplishing professional goals with the integration of personal needs and expectations, being organized by utilizing calendars, checklists, note taking techniques, and other organizational tools available, managing priorities and effective time management were cited as the top three strategies for accomplishing and meeting professional and personal demands as illustrated on Figure 6 below. Some participants mentioned that they continue to manage achieving their professional goals the same way they did prior to the pandemic. Other participants underscored the importance of maintaining relationships with colleagues and those within their network, in addition to support they receive from their leaders, helps them to achieve their professional goals while integrating their personal needs and expectations.

Figure 6

Integrating Professional Goals with Personal Needs
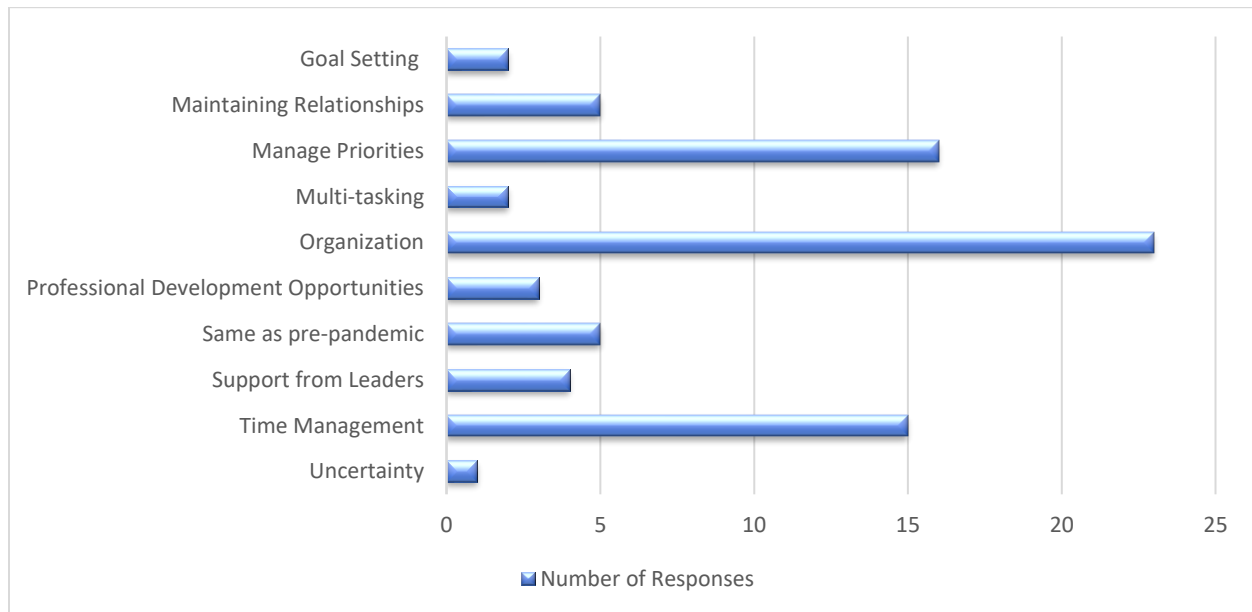
Leader Survey Results

Of the approximately 44 leaders who were invited to complete the survey, a total of 26 or

59% responded and completed the survey, comprising of 15 females, 9 males and 2 who

unidentified leaders, residing in 7 different states across the United States of America. Of this

population, 25 participants responded to survey question #3 on the leader survey, with 10 leaders

confirming that they have managed a remote team prior to the pandemic with about 58%, that is,

15 leaders managing a team of 1-5 staff members.

Seven respondents representing 27% of leaders somewhat or strongly disagree that their

leadership or managerial style has changed leading a remote team, and 100% of leaders indicated

having a somewhat or an extremely positive experience working remotely and leading a remote

team.

All 26 leaders participating in this study indicated that their ability to recruit remote

talent, the flexibility to work remotely, and an increase in productivity are all benefits of leading

a remote team as shown in Figure 7 below. Twenty-six leaders, representing 96% of responses, also indicated that having flexible schedules was another benefit of leading a remote team.

Figure 7

Benefits of Leading a Remote Team
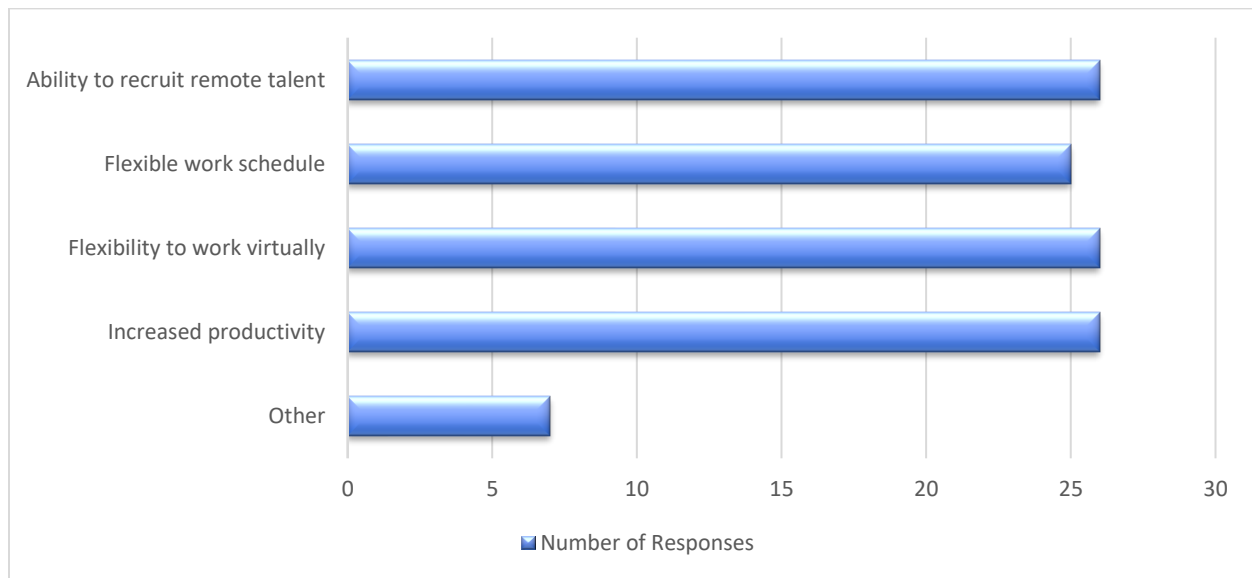
Leaders also quoted below other benefits they experience leading a remote team as denoted in the "other" category above:

- "Able to support and promote employee well-being."

- "Ability to recruit nationally."

- "Overall better attitude of employees; less stress, more willing to work longer hours if needed because of flexibility."

- "Work life balance"

- "Ability to attend school functions for my kids while maintaining full work schedule."

- "No commute"

Likewise, some of the challenges leaders face leading a remote team are indicated in

Figure 8 below, like difficulty in disconnecting from work, the lack of socialization, increased

workload resulting in additional work hours and communication. Other challenges were noted by

leaders represented in the "other" category in Figure 8 including:

- "Occasionally, if there are technical issues that cannot be resolved from home, we are asked to make a trip on-site to get it resolved. If someone is not within driving distance to (the office), there could be lost time in productivity as the equipment has to be shipped and make take time to get it fixed."

- "Computer fatigue - On computers all the time"

- "Extra effort required to maintain employee engagement"

- "Lack of face-to-face training of new hires who learn better in person"

- "No visibility into whether someone is truly working."

As it pertains to a change in expectations of staff working remotely, 27% of leaders

somewhat agree or strongly agree that there is a change in their expectation of their staff who are

working remotely, while 38% somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

Figure 8

Challenges Leading a Remote Team
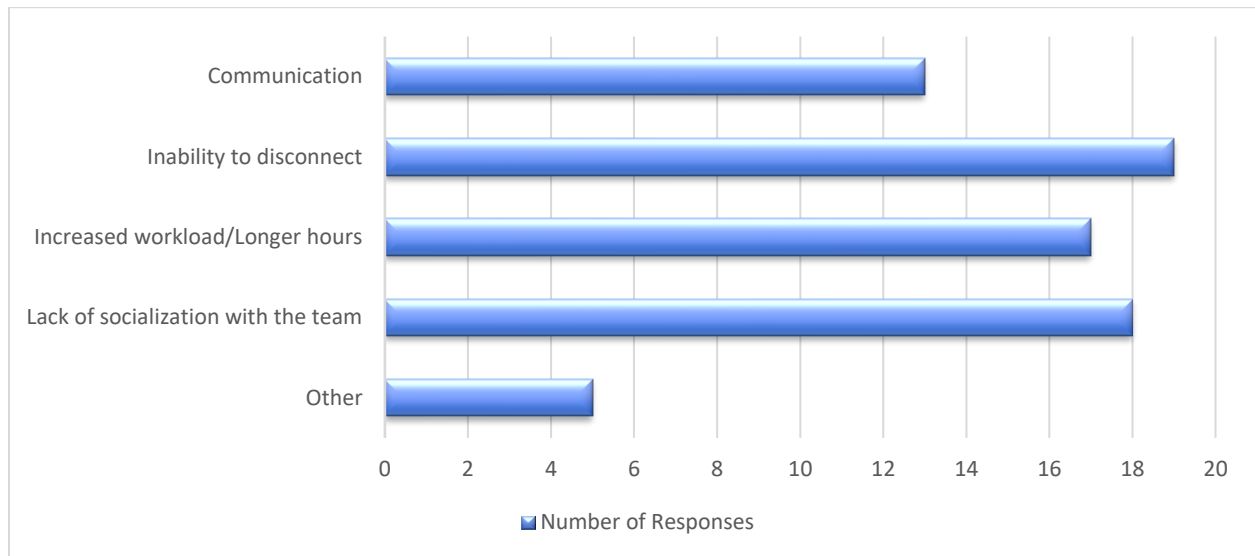
Remote leaders cited several rewards, benefits and the value that comes with working remotely and leading a remote team as presented in Figure 9 below. Flexibility, not having to commute, work life balance and one's well-being are the most common benefits being called out by 8 or more leaders representing at least 31% of leaders who responded.

Figure 9

Rewards, Benefits & Values as a Remote Leader
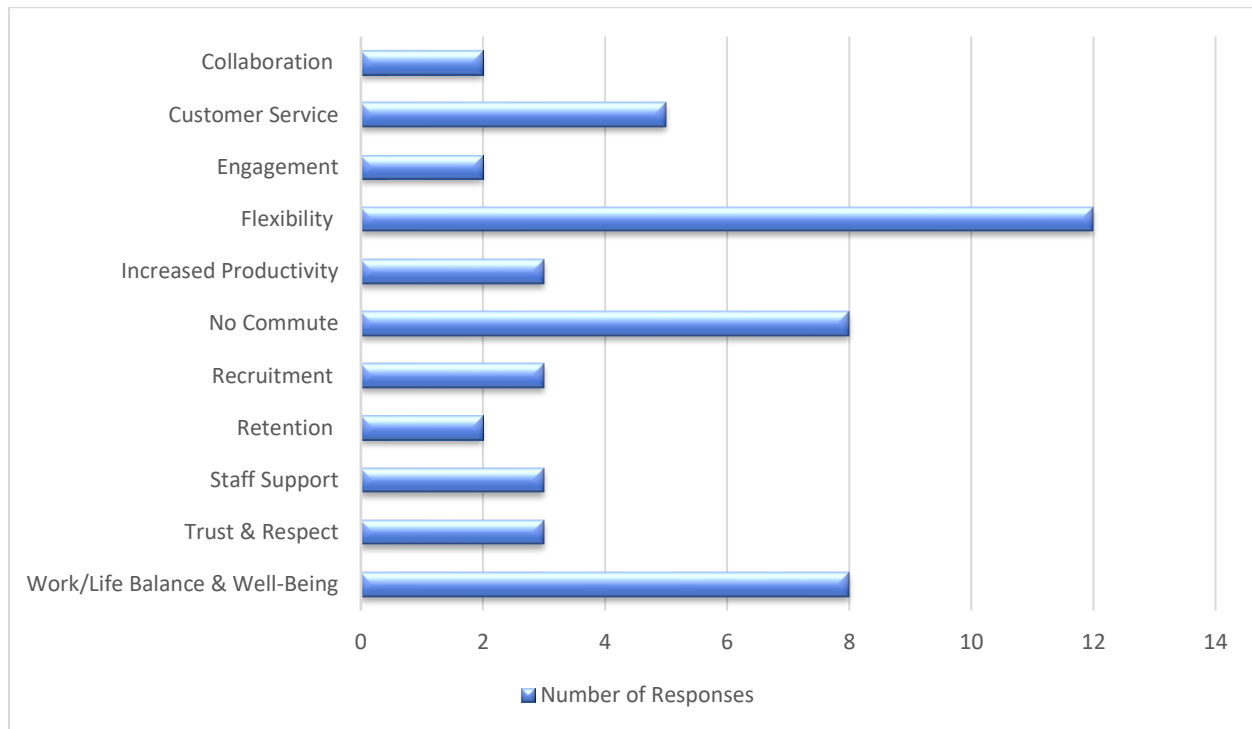
Of the 26 responses to question #11 in the leader survey, 31% of the leaders indicated

that they would not change anything to make the remote environment more effective for them or

their teams. However, the other 69% of participants from the leader population identified other

things they thought would help enhance the remote work environment for themselves and their

teams alike, highlighted in Figure 10 below. Occasional in-person gatherings as noted by 6

leaders, additional resources to align workload and an opportunity to level set expectations and

create clearer boundaries.

Figure 10

Recommended Changes for a More Effective Remote Work Environment
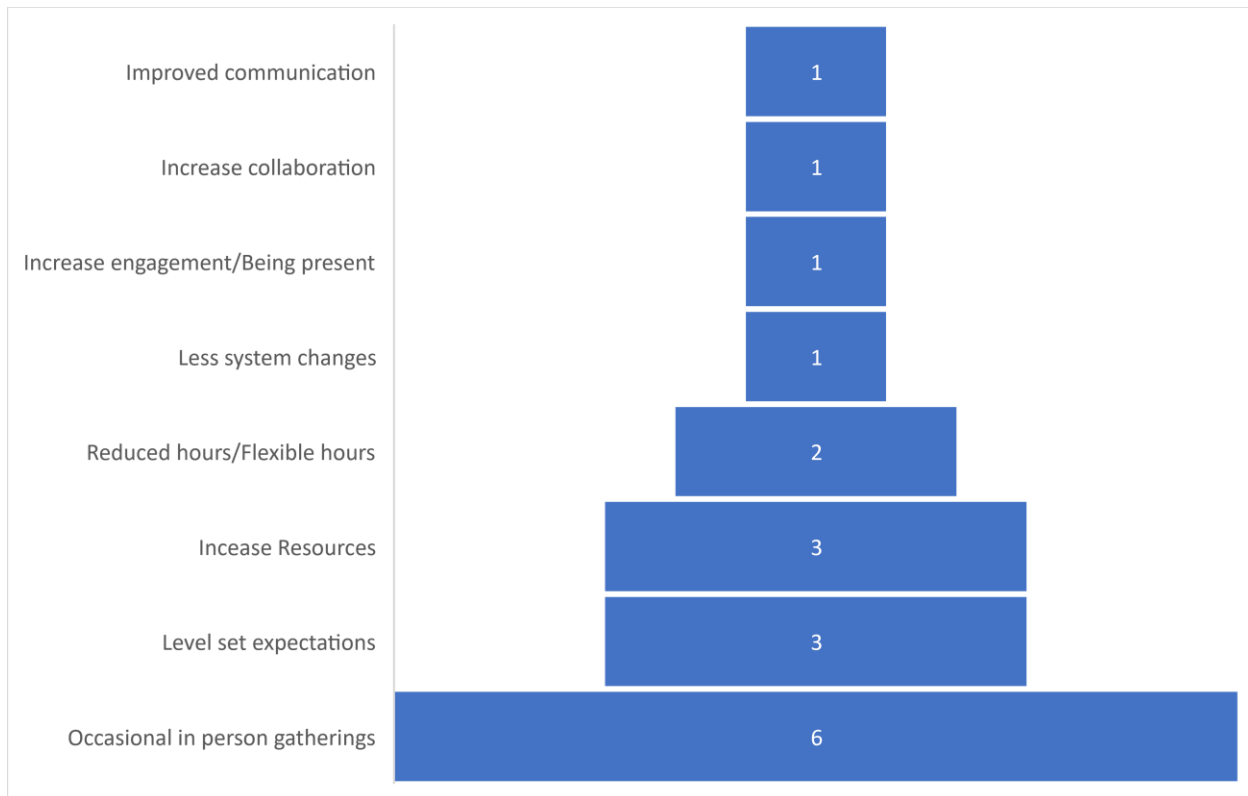
When asked how leaders keep their teams engaged, a combination of methods and tools were used to engage with their staff, approximately 73% or 19 leaders cited Microsoft Teams, a real time messaging and collaboration software application, as the most used tool and method use for meeting and communicating with their staff and keeping their teams engaged in the remote environment. Other tools and methods leaders use to engage with their staff are outlined in Figure 11 below. Some leaders, at least 2 leaders, mentioned using virtual forms of acknowledgements like thank you emails, Bravo-gram, or handwritten notes to recognize milestones such as birthdays and anniversaries. Emails, and virtual team building activities were identified as tools and methods leaders use to keep their teams engaged. A couple leaders

indicated that they have monthly in person day or periodic off-site gatherings to keep and

maintain connection among the members of the teams.

Figure 11

Methods & Tools of Engagement
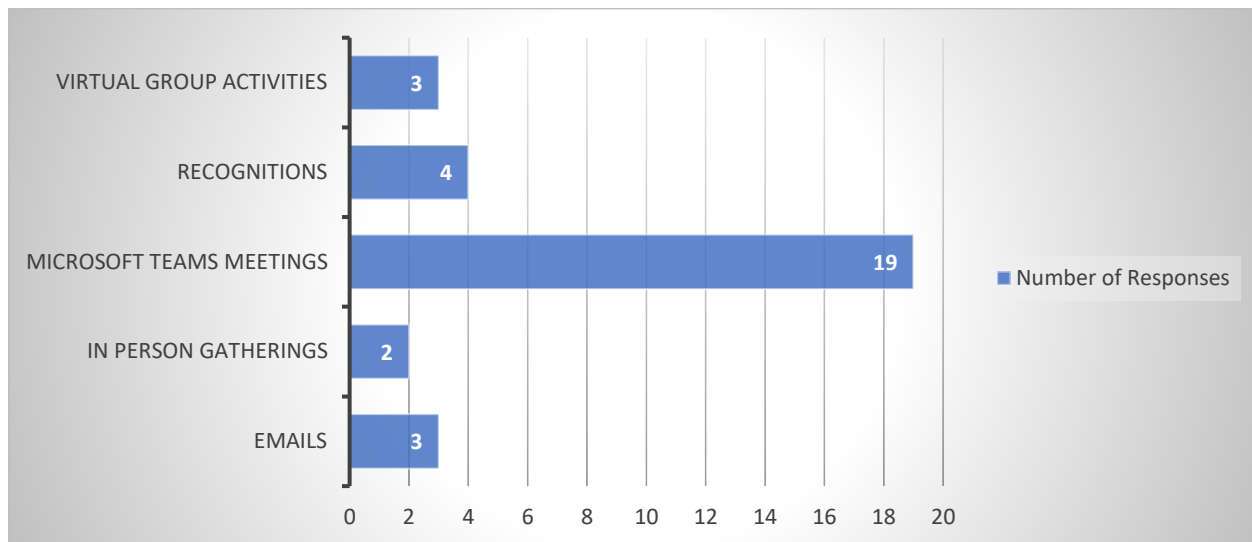
A comparison of the key benefits and challenges of working remotely appears consistent

with both staff and leaders as shown in Figures 12 and 13 below, respectively. that is, not having

to commute was the one benefit that had the most responses from both the staff and the leaders.

Figure 12

Figure 13

Benefits of Remote Work for Staff & Leaders
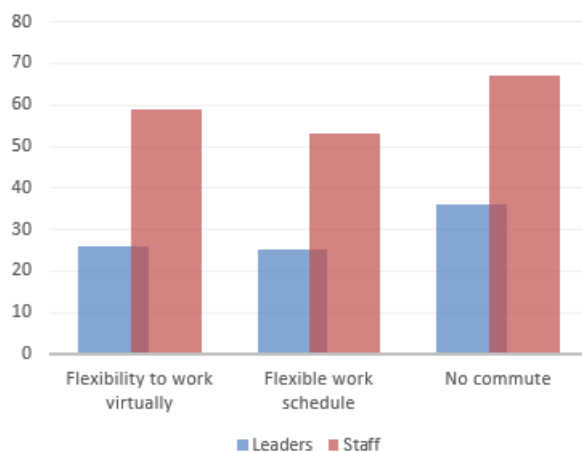
Challenges of Remote Work for Staff & Leaders
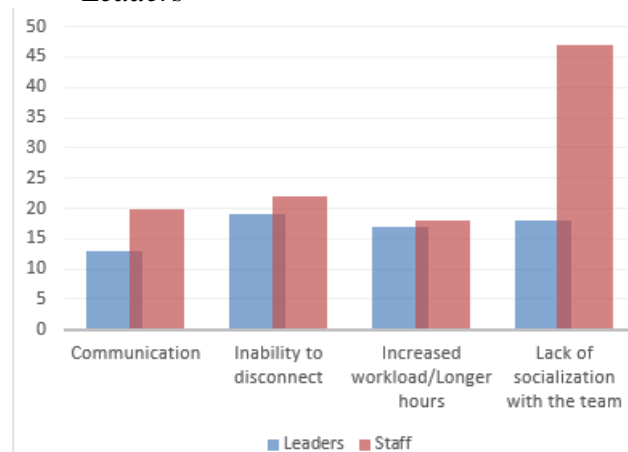
The flexibility of being able to work virtually or remotely, followed by the flexibility of being able to manage their work schedules were the other two key benefits identified by staff and leaders alike. There seems to be consensus amongst both staff and leaders on key challenges, like increased workload, longer work hours, and the inability to disconnect. However, a lager number of staff in proportion to the number of leader who responded, agreed that a lack of socialization and communication were areas that presented challenges for them while working remotely.

Interview Results

Interviews in qualitative research studies allow participants to share their personal experience, perception, and opinion about the research topic through their real-life stories.

Some study participants consented to participate in a follow up conversation by responding 'yes' to question #12 on the Employee Survey, and question #13 on the Leader Survey, end of survey questions that asked participants if they would like to be contacted to share more about their experience working remotely. For participants who responded 'yes' to questions #12 on the Employee Survey, and 'yes' to question #13 on the Leader Survey, provided their email address to be contacted for a follow-up conversation. A total of 25 participants, 18 employees and 7 leaders responded 'yes' to these questions and subsequently individual 30 minutes Zoom meetings were scheduled, to learn and understand more about their individual experience working remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 18 employees, one of the email addresses provided was invalid, so a total of 24 follow-up semi-structured interviews were scheduled and completed, 7 with leaders and 17 with staff. Of the participants interviewed, 4 of them worked in a remote or hybrid capacity prior to the pandemic, 3 female participants who were pregnant and had children and raising a family during the early stages of the pandemic, 7 participants were hired and onboarded during the pandemic, and everyone else

worked in the organization prior to the pandemic and continues to do so. For those who were

hired during the pandemic, they were intentionally seeking remote work because their previous

employers were requiring employees to return to the office full-time or to a hybrid work model,

and for that reason, these participants were seeking remote employment options.

After conducting 24 interviews, data saturation was achieved as no new categories of

themes emerged. Sentiments in the surveys about the benefits of remote work were echoed in the

interviews. When asked if they would consider returning to the office to work, a couple

participants replied:

- "No, I think I really don't. I mean there are definitely moments I would like to see

  people face to face, my coworkers face to face. But I don't think I could. I don't

  have any desire to go back into the office."

- "I know for me, there's no way I would be able to go back."

While no new major information or themes emerged from the interviews, there were

perceptions that were shared that should be considered to solidify the future concept of remote

work for the present and future workforce generations. Thematic analysis was used to identify

patterns, similarities, and categories from the transcribed interview data. An inductive analysis

process was used to determine the meaning of the interview data, the data was systematically

coded to derived themes and create a narrative. Firstly, the transcription texts were saved in

Microsoft Word, the texts were read through a few times before highlighting common words and

phrases that captured the critical points. Secondly, the highlighted texts were copied, some

verbatim and other words and phrases conveyed and captured by participants during the

interview from Microsoft Word to Microsoft Excel. Thirdly, labels or codes were assigned to

categorize the words and phrases from the data using member checking to ensure validity and

credibility. Lastly, codes were used to develop themes that were derived from the data. The themes gathered from the interview data were generally aligned with the responses from the surveys and were consistent with the benefits and challenges noted. Following are the themes that were derived from the follow-up interview conversations:

1. Remote work is not for every organization, team or individual – It is understood by leaders and subordinates that not every industry or job could accommodate a remote work environment, because of individual preference or the actual nature of the job. Below is what one leader had to say about individual preference when it comes to the remote work option:

   - "Within my larger but immediate department you know, there were some younger folks there that were kind of counting on coming into work every day as being their social aspect of their life. I mean it got them out into the world, and when the opportunity arose to stay in their apartment all day, some of them left actually. Some of them really said, no, you know what, I'd actually rather come in knowing what the risks were, simply because they knew that emotionally it was not going to be good for them to be that isolated."

As mentioned earlier, the transportation industry, healthcare, and other organizations with location critical jobs require workers onsite. Having interviewed staff with introverted and extroverted personalities, it is noted that one's temperament could also dictate preference for working remotely. The consensus seems to be that employees with an introverted personality really appreciate working remotely, and extroverts miss

being in the office and see it as a con to the remote work environment. Following are some comments from some of the participants who were interviewed:

- "I work much better at home. I think my personality, which is a lot more of on the like introverted side is much more suited to remote work."

- "My experience with remote work and working from home has been completely positive. I was able to adapt really easily so it wasn't much of as an issue like I didn't miss that face-to-face connection."

- "I love working from home. I think you have to have a certain temperament for it."

- "I have a wonderful experience working remotely, it works for my personality as an introvert. I get to focus better. Distractions are reduced and I don't have to worry about trying to get away from colleagues who like to talk."

- "I think I'm more extroverted. I gain energy from people than lose energy from people. The biggest con for me is that you don't get that personal interaction."

- "I'm a very people person. I love to talk to everybody, you know that. And I would talk to so many people in the course of a day, and that companionship was always there, and then, all of a sudden, it wasn't."

- "The interaction with other coworkers, because I was able to go to people cubes and say, hey, how are you? But now I can't really do it. I get to do it, you know, via zoom, and that's the disadvantage."

- "There's a drawback. Yes, one of the drawbacks is the people touch. You know, I mean I haven't seen you except on Zoom."

- "For me it was kind of the reverse. It was like the co-workers coming over to chit chat, they were my distractions and I find myself much more productive at home because I don't have those interruptions. I can get my work done and have a much easier time focusing when I need to focus cause there's nobody else around to interrupt."

Overall, introverts can concentrate and focus on their work more without the distractions and interruptions from conversations with people and other things in the office and find themselves being more productive. For the individual whose personality is extroverted, and who thrives on human connection and gains energy from having other people around, and while they appreciate working remotely, they were the ones who strongly suggested having occasional in-person on-site gatherings. The introverts thought the gatherings would be good but would be content if it did not happen. One leader noted that some staff left the team because they wanted to work in an office setting for socialization.

2. Cost saving from not having to commute – By design, and for economic reasons, most organizations' office buildings are located in major urban or metropolitan areas and commuting was a natural part of most employee's routine prior to the pandemic. However, most daycare centers, schools, and even medical centers tend to be situated closer to or in the neighborhood and communities in which many people live and tend to be more easily accessible to employees and their families. For example, being able to schedule a doctor's appointment earlier in the day because you do not have to factor in

commuting time from the work office to the doctor's office. Commuting time for those who were interviewed was 2 to 3 hours on average per normal day without taking into consideration accidents, detours, and other delays that could easily increase that time significantly.

Interviewees shared the personal cost savings they experienced from things like, downsizing to one vehicle, vehicle maintenance from reduced wear and tear, from purchases like gas, tolls, parking, public transportation fares, before and after childcare costs, food (having healthier choices at home), and clothing. There were savings identified for the organization as well. In addition to the facilities maintenance and reduced usage of the utilities, office supplies, printers, ink cartridges, paper and just the ability to repurpose the usage of space, that always seems to be an issue for most organizations.

Here are some of the comments made as it pertains to cost savings:

- "I've been able to cut back on commuting time and the cost associated with that, parking rates were just increased to like $15 a day for parking, tolls are $5 a day, gas, I would say, 30 $35 a week. So right there, that's $130 a week commuting costs."

- "I've saved so much money, I'm eating healthier because I'm able to prepare the meals at home. The cost savings is insane, thinking about how inflation has increased since then."

- "It's a flashback for me. Couldn't this have been, when my (child) was born, a lot of things going in your mind, you know. You could have saved several thousand dollars and gives you peace of mind."

- "I have to get a new pair of snow boots, because last year your snow boots were worn down. It's just like I mean, even health wise I find myself grabbing something in the morning, quick, you know a lemon cake from Starbucks. I'm able to make myself breakfast, that was important when I was pregnant because I wanted to make sure I was having nutritious food snacking all day. That would've cost me."

- "Returning to work after having a baby, I would have had to get a whole new business casual clothes which impacted our budget."

- "Yeah, we're down to one car, because we don't need another. So that's another financial impact."

3. Home office space – It was mentioned several times in some of the conversations, the importance of having a dedicated space in the home to perform work duties, and to have a transition from work, setting a boundary for separating work and disconnecting. Several employees who did not have dedicated space in their homes have since relocated and/or moved into a new house that provided a room or office space specifically for work. A few interviewees stated:

- "We bought a house last December and of the living room was a back bedroom, so this is my little office now, and I can shut the door."

- "And just having a space that I know, this is my workspace. I mean, it's exclusively my workspace. I'm at my (parent) now, and I'm at the dining room table, and it just doesn't feel the same."

- "So, we bought a house during the pandemic. My (child) was an online school, my (spouse) was working from home, and I was working from home. (Spouse) will be in a meeting, and we're all sitting at this tiny table, because the apartment

is so tiny. And we were driving each other crazy. So, I said to my (spouse), we need to do something. We need to move and find a place."

- "I was not logistically prepared for it. I was prepping for 2 days at home, and I live in a one-bedroom apartment, so I wasn't necessarily planning on needing desk space and multiple monitors and lights and all of these other, ancillary things."

In addition, having an ergonomically furnished workspace was just as important. Once the decision was made for some groups to transition permanently to a remote work model, the organization provided ergonomic chairs to the impacted employees. Having a well-furnished ergonomic office supports physical well-being and overall mental health and work life balance.

- "I have information on someone who I could contact to get an ergonomic assessment done."

- "Some things that could be great in a situation where you're fully remote is having more access or easy access to ordering supplies. Some kind of stipend or something to offset maybe the cost of getting like ergonomic equipment."

4. Technology and communication – While not frequently, some interviewees mentioned experiencing issues with internet and virtual private network (VPN) connections, especially when resolving the issues requires getting the equipment onsite to be fixed. This presents a major inconvenience, particularly for employees who do not live near the office, the delay in getting the repaired or new equipment, and causing interruptions in getting their work done.

5. Onboarding and training – There are many ways of learning, which can present a challenge for some when it comes to onboarding and training new employees in a virtual setting. Everyone has their own unique learning style whether auditory, kinesthetic, visual, or read and write, or a combination of any of these, and if the trainer is unable to adapt to the teaching style of the learner it can create a challenge.

- "One of the challenges is having trained 2 people under me even before I was officially a manager, is difficult. I do miss being able to tap someone on the shoulder and say, hey, can I show you this? And now you have to set up a meeting and all that. But I don't know, I think people have to be more self-motivated in this environment, and we have people on our team who are very self-motivated."

- "In the office staff would either be sitting in my small room watching my computer screen. So, either way, the physical training of the job is absolutely easier, but we help them face to face by meetings on Teams."

6. Improvement in quality of work life balance and flexibility. Several interviewees commented on the major improvement to the quality of their work-life balance from working remotely.

While remote work has made employees more comfortable working after hours, some have been able to disconnect more easily than others, which could be based on their specific role and responsibilities. Concerns about mental health issues, depression, and suicide linked to isolation and the lack of socialization was also mentioned as it pertains to remote work as not being a good fit for all employees, and individuals know what environment they strive best in.

- "To bring it back to like being a parent my OB's office is literally 2 min from my house. So that was a huge thing being able to schedule this for my lunch break, or maybe I'll leave, I'll adjust my time instead of having to fight for those like after 5 o'clock appointments that everybody else needs, I was able to get those during the day appointments. Get that out of the way."

- "When my (parent) visited last summer, I was busy or 2 summers ago I was really busy, but I knew (parent) was around, so I could finish work, and I can go down and (parent's) there. I can eat lunch with (parent) every day. Right? So you know just small things, very small things. But that makes a big difference in life. I think that is what the remote work really helps nurture, if you would call it that."

- "My (child's) daycare is only like 12 min away from our house, and that's if we like, hit all the traffic and every stop light. It's usually closer to 8. One day I took (my child) to day care, and there was so much traffic because they were doing some construction on the highway. So, everyone was taking the main roads. And I just remember thinking like, Oh, my gosh! Like, how did I do this before? This seems like this is so much too many people on the road."

7. Leadership support – When asked about the part leadership plays in the remote work experience, one participant stated:

- "Having great leadership when you're working remotely, I think it's absolutely important, at least for me. And then, also having leadership that is communicative is absolutely important.'

- "I like that, especially with my manager style. I'm on (manager's name) team who I very much appreciate, (manager's name) tells us make sure you're balancing your work life and your home life."

- "We're empowered to take ownership over our work, and in a given week, you feel like our managers, leadership trust us to get our work done. We need to live up to that and for me, and I speak for me. I don't want to mess up my situation. I got to gain the trust."

- "In a remote setting is empowering for women especially as we always get the burden with child, care and all of that, I'm eternally grateful for it."

All 7 leaders who were interviewed lead rather small teams consisting of 1-5 staff members, and all have a staff member or more living in a city or state away from the office, and all but one manager is led a hybrid team prior to the pandemic. They all appreciate the opportunity to work and lead a team remotely, and shared the same sentiment that having their teams on-site in some infrequent cadence would be great for team building and comradery. While building relationships is easier in person and takes longer in a remote environment, a couple leaders noted that leading a team remotely has its challenges and is different from leading in the office where you can pick up more on the non-verbal cues. It is important to build trusting, open relationships to have a level of trust developed to ensure that work is getting done and not having to micromanage since it is impossible to interpret what is going on in their minds in the absence of body

language, since most of the work is not that easily measurable. A couple of leaders shared

that they have experienced a level of intimacy by being invited into their staff's homes

virtually, in building relationships that they were unable to do in the office. The following

comments align with the outcomes outlined in Figure 1 – Preliminary Model of Remote

Leadership developed by Kelly and Kelloway (2012), that is, manager trust,

organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.

- "The face to face is nice, but being in person is just different body language, just seeing someone's head and sometimes that can affect decisions."

- "I feel the remote environment really sheds light to know that people who you work with are human beings."

- "I lead a team where most people don't have children, but that is also to say, not to take it for granted to say, oh, you know you have the time to work. I think what I have realized over time is, no matter where you are in your life, there's always something personal that is very important to each of us that we want to take care of. It could be anything, a small doctor's appointment, or maybe I sprained my leg, or whatever it is already, even like mental health, mentally to say, I want to take a lunch break, take a 20 min walk."

- "I think I'm more connected with people like with my team members, much better focus attention. You're able to engage with them. One on one, so even if we think about the coffee break and we can be sitting in the kitchen at a table trust me, the distractions are there. Somebody might walk into the kitchen, and you say, Hi! So that has taken away some of the engagement."

- "Remote work actually made me think more to say, how do I keep my staff engaged more even like from a work perspective? Now everybody's remote how do I manage them? What do I do? But in that process, I have realized that when you trust people and let them, take ownership, knowing that you have trustworthy people, I think people also model to the trust that you put in them."

- "If this meeting was in person, I would have left at 4 0'clock trying to catch a train. But now I'm sitting here till 4:30. That always happens. But I also think that that's the way we prioritize work, and sometimes you have to do it, whether it's in person or remote. And I think that comes with every job. But I don't see that as a negative, not in the leadership we have here for sure that's been a blessing."

In thinking about adaptability to remote work as a concept, a new work environment, available to the future workforce, a generation raised in a social media world, with knowledge and experience and expertise with the ever advancement of technology relevant to their world, the thought is it would be rather easy for them to adapt, be more agile, and successful in a remote environment. Some interviewees think that there are skills learned and developed from working in an office that the future remote workforce would miss out on, that are not attainable from social media. One interviewee noted:

- "It also impacts the way people see each other going forward. There's no stepping on your toes and say, I'm sorry, and learning to apologize, and those things are missing when you don't have direct interaction."

Another interviewee stated:

- "I am old school in the sense that I really find that brainstorming sessions real open-ended brainstorming sessions work a lot better when everybody's in the room."

Notably, flexibility, autonomy, improved work life balance, not having to commute, time and financial savings are all great benefits gained working remotely, and enormously outweigh the challenges encountered like interruptions caused by technology, having better communication, training, and socialization, all of which are areas employers have an opportunity to evaluate and address as remote work continues to evolve.

The viewpoints of remote work shared by participants who are young parents during the follow-up interviews were very insightful. Following are a few comments made:

- "Like a month after, everything shut down is when I found out I was pregnant with my first (child). Okay, so it was kind of like I felt blessed to be able to even still have a job with everything. But I like that I do not have to commute. I was near my fridge. I felt like, wow like this is, I was seeing the silver lining in the whole situation with that, yeah, you definitely needed that flexibility to be able to take a walk during the day especially, you know, through pregnancy, and how you know, during those trimesters, you can have. I don't know how women did it when they had to go into the office. My second kid, too, so I've never done like the actual get up and go to work while you're pregnant, or when you have a newborn, I've never had that experience, so I feel even more like, Wow! These are super women able to do all of that while still going to work I couldn't imagine."
- "I can't imagine the parents who had to do it before. I really, you know, I can't imagine even being pregnant and having to take trains."

- "And so that's like, you know, my kids are growing up in a new world where mommy and daddy are home."

- "I'm sure other people have other needs, but for what my needs are and what I'm prioritizing in my life of having that balance. Making sure that I can do the things I want to do with my children as a stay-at-home parent, it's fitting in so far, I mean, even when my (child) starts kindergarten, the kindergarten is in walking distance, so I'll be able to walk (child) to school and come back."

The interesting concept is that there is a new family dynamic emerging out of the remote work environment where some children are being nurtured and raised by parents who work remotely, compared to families where the parents do not work remotely, presents another perspective of remote work that is yet to be explored.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The entire world was impacted by COVID-19 which is caused by the novel SARS-COV-2 virus in 2020. The challenges of quarantine, the mortality rate, increased mental health concerns, and economic stability to name a few are areas where people around the world continue to grapple. This is also true for the organizations and the work force that continues to progress after experiencing the effects of the great resignation that occurred during the pandemic.

While some organizations have reverted to the traditional on-site office workplace environment, and/or introduced a hybrid model, some organizations that initiated remote work at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 have maintained this work model and did not reinstate the traditional work office model or environment. It is also important to note that the remote work model was not an option for some public administration civil service professionals like doctors, nurses, police officers, first responders, and paramedics as these jobs were critical in trying to eradicate the spread of the virus.

This closing chapter recapitulates a response to the research questions by highlighting some of the benefits and challenges of remote work from the perspective of staff and leaders who continue to work remotely after the pandemic, and some leadership skills and behaviors that are necessary to support remote workers' well-being and organizational success in the post-pandemic era. Chapter 5 concludes this research study discussing and analyzing the study findings, recognizing some of the study limitations, recommendations for future research related to remote work, and the implications of the study.

Discussion of Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic created a health crisis that impacted the entire world with over one million casualties in the United States of America alone. Not only did the pandemic put excessive strain on health systems around the world, but it also impacted the world's economic system causing organizational leaders to make drastic decisions to help curb the spread of the deadly virus. As a result, and to keep organizations operating, remote work was the alternative for many organizations.

Flexibility is one of the benefits of remote work that was mentioned by staff and leaders alike. The idea that you could work from anywhere in the world, if there is reliable technology and internet connection, makes it easier to visit family and loved ones who might be in a different state, or country, while also fulfilling your work responsibilities integrating the two together was noted by study participants. The flexibility that remote work provides is an invaluable opportunity and is immensely appreciated by remote workers who are now able to easily connect with loved ones, avoiding thoughts of uncertainty and concerns with the distance some may have experienced during the pandemic.

The benefits and challenges of remote work identified in this study are aligned with the findings from previous studies such as Kacprowska (2021), Street (2020), and Tremblay and Thomsin (2012), as mentioned in Chapter Two. Not having to commute in a remote work environment is consistently identified as the most resounding benefit of remote work by participants in the study and appreciated more by employees who live farther away from the office. This benefit in addition to the cost savings and the reduced stress that comes from contending with traffic or travelling, often translate to issues with work life balance has been highly noted as a major benefit by other researchers in other remote work studies.

Other considerations expressed by study participants include having an ergonomically furnished home office is considered to be essential for the physical health of remote employees, since remote work can decrease mobility for some during work hours. In contrast, autonomy and flexibility to organize and have more control over the workday when it comes to scheduling personal appointments, and incorporating family activities has been noted as an improvement in the work life balance by some study participants. Additionally, the importance of having reliable technology and communication systems would be beneficial to enhance efficiency and productivity in accomplishing assigned objectives in a remote environment.

Noted by staff and leaders, it seemed easier to train new hires and be trained or learn while in the office and more difficult while working remotely. Developing trainers with the skills needed to train remote workers should be considered a worthwhile investment for organizations that are experiencing this challenge with their remote population.

As defined by Eikenberry and Turmel (2018), leadership is often considered to be a noun, associated with a role, or a person but in fact it is not something that we have or possess, but something that is acted on, it is also a verb, indicating that someone is performing an action of leading or exhibiting behavior. They also noted that leadership is a responsibility and an opportunity that is focused on serving others while creating new results that makes a difference in the organization and the world. Transformational leaders do not settle for the current situations, but propose, appealing and challenging future vision, and are expected to think differently about the way in which they lead those who are following them, to successfully achieve the goals of the organization (Eikenberry & Turmel, 2018; Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Leadership of any organization plays a critical role in its overall success. This is no different in the remote work environment where the role and expectations of leaders are crucial

to the success of flexible working arrangements. The role of the leader is important in making decisions for the implementation of remote work and should not be overlooked because there must be a mutual understanding between employers and employees to successfully create and implement a remote work environment (Martin & MacDonnell, 2012 as cited by Adekoya et al., 2022).

It was suggested by a participant who worked remotely prior to the pandemic, that there should be updated policies or the creation of best practices for working remotely and managing remote teams. It would be critically important for employers and leaders to establish norms or a level of agreement for remote workers. Scheduling regular check-ins or having team huddles with individual staff members and their teams, at some cadence, either daily, weekly, or multiple times a week, to be aware of pending and outstanding tasks to be accomplished, to help set priorities, and find out and understand if help is needed to complete the tasks would be beneficial. It is also important for leaders to model the behavior necessary by promoting what they permit for a successful and meaningful remote work experience. For example, expectations about turning on cameras for virtual meetings, calling someone after the third time of back-and-forth email messaging, and what it looks like showing up for work, being present and ready to be engaged.

As remote work continues to evolve, and with all things considered, from the lens of the known benefits, challenges, and transformational leadership skills and behavior from this and other research studies, remote work has been embraced by many although there is still work to be done by organizations, leaders, and staff to enhance the remote work environment and experience that is here to stay.

Limitations of the Study

Qualitative studies are often characterized by a small sample size, presenting its own limitation. Additionally, the size of the research population only represents a sample of the many employees around the world who are working remotely after the pandemic, which skews the data gathered for this microcosm of the remote work population. As mentioned in Chapter One, there are several limitations of this research study that can be reiterated here. The very narrow scope representing a small subset of the many other organizations in various states within the United States of America, and even organizations in other countries, given that COVID-19 impacted the entire world, does not consider how certain variables would interact with each other in the larger remote work environment. Subjectivity and criticisms can be considered as predetermined limitations that naturally come with a qualitative research study. Additionally, although the sample size used in reference to the overall remote work population, insufficient resources, time, and the researcher's restricted research experience all presented limitations to this study, using surveys and interviews as study instruments, allowed for capturing rich data about the research topic.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in this research and while the process provides a simple way of identifying patterns and themes of the thoughts and feelings of participants, it can be vague and potentially lack rigor and consistencies overlooking subtle nuances of responses.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the remote environment continues to evolve and take its place in the post COVID-19 era, it is important for employers to update or create workplace codes of conduct, policies, and best practice guidelines for their remote and hybrid employees. While remote work may allow

greater flexibility to employees, they are still required to comply with appropriate workplace conduct policies. Employers and leaders should outline safe working practices to ensure the health and safety of all their employees including those working from home. Safe practices include ensuring employees are adequately supervised, are not working unreasonably excessive hours at home, and the ergonomics of an employee's home workstation. In addition, employers should also provide adequate well-being or mental health support for their remote workforce that would provide strategies for disconnecting from work during after work hours, managing a work life balance, stress, and burnout.

All three participants who had children during the pandemic made a comment stating that they do not know how working parents raised their children while working in an office. From the perspective of these young parents who started having and raising children in a society where one or both parents are working remotely, it would be interesting to follow this new phenomenon with the generation of children born during COVID-19 to explore the differences in advantages and disadvantages of raising a family as a remote working parents versus parents who work in the office, and similarly for the children.

There are many other concepts to explore as it pertains to the study of remote work as this new work model continues to evolve. Identifying and implementing adequate mental health resources to support the overall well-being of remote workers would be another great area for further research. Understanding how the remote work environments impact the different personality types of employees to determine if the remote environment is a good fit for them when it comes to their well-being.

Implications of the Study

Transformational leaders display unconventional and creative behavior and serve as innovative role models providing intellectual stimulation, by providing an explorative way of thinking and encouraging followers to think "outside the box" (Howell & Higgins, 1990; Jung et al., 2003, as cited by Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

One implication of this study is that the focus was on a selected population, where we are unable to conclude that the results would be the same across every organization that has implemented a remote work environment after the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that further research should be done on other population of remote workers, both staff and leaders.

The findings of this study align with that of other studies in respect to the benefits and challenges of remote work, and the importance of leadership skills and behavior for organizational success and employee well-being. Remote work gives employees more flexibility and available time because they are not spending that time on the road, and access to excellent talent throughout the world, all of which help boost the average employee's performance (Graves and Karabayeva, 2020 as cited Meiryani et al., 2022). The transformational leadership style has begun to be considered useful when it comes to organizational changes with empirical evidence that shows transformational leadership affects organizational effectiveness and employee performance. Research also shows that the employees of organizations that provide a remote work option are more motivated and experience better work life balance that paves the way for increase productivity (Keller,1992 & Stevens, 2019 as cited by Meiryani et al., 2022).

The data gathered, analyzed, and interpreted can provide employers who have already established a remote environment in their organizations and employers who have not but might be considering doing so, information to ensure that policies, guidelines, and best practices are

implemented for an effective transition from the typical nine-to-five office environment to a virtual one. Having reliable systems for effective communication, ensuring that staff home offices are ergonomically furnished, and ensuring that well-being support is available to their remote employees are all things to be considered for an effective and successful remote work environment and experience.

Concluding Discussion

The research finding in this study addressed the research questions by identifying benefits and challenges with remote work for staff and leaders, and the leadership skills and behaviors that align with the characteristics of a transformational leaders necessary to support remote workers' well-being and organizational success. Notably, some of the characteristics of a transformational leader includes charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and personal recognition (Aboramadan & Dahleez,2020).

The consistency of the data gathered and analyzed among and between the staff and leaders provides a level of confirmation and validation to the research finding based on the narrative from the participants. Not only did similar themes emerge from the data analyzed from the survey responses and interviews from the staff, but there was commonality in the data gathered from the perspective of the leaders in the leader survey and interviews conducted. Furthermore, comparison of all the data reveals common themes between the staff and leaders as it pertains to remote work.

There was consensus on the benefits of remote work from both staff and leaders when it came to not having to commute and the flexibility of being able to work virtually and managing work schedules. Similarly, shared perspectives were identified with some of the challenges faced

working remotely, namely, communication, the lack of socialization, increased workload that could lead to increased work hours, and the inability to disconnect.

As remote work continues to evolve in the post-pandemic era, it will be important for leaders to guide the navigation of what has truly been transformational for many employees in this new remote work environment in a post pandemic age, where research has already shown positive effects on employees' job performance. It is also important for remote employees to understand that this type of change takes work, time, and effort to develop an organizational culture where transformational remote leaders can develop along with effective communication systems that leads to employee engagement, well-being, and overall benefits of job satisfaction.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms would be used as defined below:

COVID-19 – (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2. It can be very contagious and spreads quickly. Over one million people have died from COVID-19 in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). COVID-19 is an acute disease in humans caused by a coronavirus, which is characterized mainly by fever and cough and is capable of progressing to severe symptoms and in some cases death, especially in older people and those with underlying health conditions. It was originally identified in China in 2019 and became pandemic in 2020 (Yahoo, 2024).

Grounded Theory – A qualitative research methodology that aims to generate theories based on data that are grounded in the empirical reality of the research context. The method involves a systematic process of data collection, coding, categorization, and analysis to identify patterns and relationships in the data (Hassan, 2023).

Hybrid Work – a contemporary employment framework that features a mix of traditional in-person work with off-site remote work. It acknowledges the reality that various tasks, projects, and individual work styles benefit from different degrees of physical proximity and remote collaboration (Masionis, 2024).

Phenomenology Approach – an empirically based approach that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon or an experience by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. The goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience both in terms of *what* was experienced and *how* it was experienced (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019).

Qualitative Research – research that involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data via text, video, or audio to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2023).

Remote Work – a workplace model where employees perform their job duties at a location other than at a central office workspace operated by their employer. It refers to performing work duties from any place that isn't a traditional office setting and a step toward a more balanced life. For instance, an employee who lives in a rural town might like working in a traditional office, but their commute might be draining, and may enjoy starting their day without the rush of catching a train or sitting in traffic (Lowe-MacAuley, 2024).

SARS-COV-2 – the virus that causes COVID-19 disease that continuously evolves as changes in the genetic code (caused by genetic mutations or viral recombination) occur during replication of the genome. SARS-CoV-2 has consistently mutated over the course of the pandemic, resulting in variants that are different from the original SARS-CoV-2 virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023)

Transformational Leadership – a leadership style that empowers people to accomplish positive change through big vision, inspiration, and a call to action. Transformational leaders enable change by emotionally connecting with their team and inspiring them to achieve something greater than themselves. They communicate a positive vision of the future, they motivate and encourage their teams to keep pushing forward, resulting in a collective action that leads to innovation, massive transformation, and the betterment of society (Baker, 2023).

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs | West Chester University | Ehinger Annex
West Chester, PA 19383 | 610-436-3557 | www.wcupa.edu

Nov 16, 2023 1:04:21 PM EST

To: Liza Craig
Col of Business & Public Manag, Public Policy and Administra.

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - IRB-FY2023-377 Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Dear Liza Craig:

Thank you for your submitted application to the West Chester University Institutional Review Board. Since it was deemed expedited, it was required that two reviewers evaluated the submission. We have had the opportunity to review your application and have rendered the decision below for Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era..

Decision: Approved

Sincerely,
West Chester University Institutional Review Board

IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155

Appendix C: IRB Modification Approval Letter

WCU
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs | West Chester University | Ehinger Annex
West Chester, PA 19383 | 610-436-3557 | www.wcupa.edu

Feb 15, 2024 11:45:56 AM EST

To: Liza Craig
Col of Business & Public Manag, Public Policy and Administra.

Re: Modification - IRB-FY2023-377 Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Dear Liza Craig:

Thank you for your submitted modification to your West Chester University Institutional Review Board approved project Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era.. We have had the opportunity to review your modification and have rendered the decision below effective February 15, 2024.

Decision: Approved

Sincerely,
West Chester University Human Subjects Review Board

IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155

Appendix D: Consent Form (1)

Project Title: Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Investigator(s): Liza Craig; Kristen Crossney

Project Overview:

The aim of this research is to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home, or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. Another objective of this research is to analyze ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success.

The purpose of this study is intended to provide guidance and help to current and future leaders of remote workers, to identify areas and create ways to keep employees engaged and motivated in a virtual environment, while accomplishing the goals of the organization.

It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey. There is minimal risk to this study in that some questions may make participants feel slight discomfort as they recall their initial experiences working remotely during the onset of the pandemic. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, however, the results of this study may provide insight into how remote work continues to impact the work force, in a post pandemic era.

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being conducted by Liza Craig as part of her Doctoral Dissertation. If you would like to participate, West Chester University requires that you agree to and sign this consent form.

You may ask Liza Craig any questions to help you understand this study. If you don't want to participate in this study, it won't affect any services from West Chester University. If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. **What is the purpose of this study?**
   - o The aim of this research is to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home, or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. Another objective of this research is to analyze ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success. The purpose of this study is intended to provide guidance and help, to current and future leaders of remote workers, to identify areas and create ways to keep employees engaged and motivated in a virtual environment while accomplishing the goals of the organization.

2. **If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:**
   o Complete survey
   o This study will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.
3. **Are there any experimental medical treatments?**
   o No

4. **Is there any risk to me?**
   o Possible risk or source of discomfort is minimal. Some questions may make participants feel slight discomfort as they recall their initial experiences working remotely during the onset of the pandemic.
   o If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Researcher - Liza Craig; Faculty Chair - Kristen Crossney; and or ORSP - Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.
   o If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time.

5. **Is there any benefit to me?**
   o There are no direct benefits to the participants.
   o The results of this study may provide insight into how remote work continues to impact the work force post pandemic.

6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
   o The session will **not** be recorded.
   o Your records will be private. Only Liza Craig, Kristen Crossney, and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
   o Your name will **not** be used in any reports.
   o Records will be stored:
     ▪ Encrypted File
     ▪ Password Protected File/Computer
   o Records will be destroyed Three Years After Study Completion

7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
   o No

8. **Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**
   o For any questions with this study, contact:
     ▪ **Primary Investigator:** Liza Craig at 610-324-1118 or LC944488@wcupa.edu
     ▪ **Faculty Sponsor:** Kristen Crossney at 610-430-5838 or kcrossney@wcupa.edu

9. **What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimens?**
   o Not applicable.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

Appendix E: Consent Form (2)

Project Title: Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Investigator(s): Liza Craig

Project Overview:

The aim of this research is to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home, or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. Another objective of this research is to analyze ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success.

The purpose of this study is intended to provide guidance and help to current and future leaders of remote workers, to identify areas and create ways to keep employees engaged and motivated in a virtual environment, while accomplishing the goals of the organization.

It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey. There is minimal risk to this study in that some questions may make participants feel slight discomfort as they recall their initial experiences working remotely during the onset of the pandemic. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, however, the results of this study may provide insight into how remote work continues to impact the work force, in a post pandemic era.

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being conducted by Liza Craig as part of her Doctoral Dissertation. If you would like to participate, (organization name) requires that you agree to and sign this consent form.

You may ask Liza Craig any questions to help you understand this study. If you don't want to participate in this study, it won't affect any services from (Organization). If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. **What is the purpose of this study?**
   o The aim of this research is to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home, or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. Another objective of this research is to analyze ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success. The purpose of this study is intended to provide guidance and help, to current and future leaders of remote workers, to identify areas and create ways to keep employees engaged and motivated in a virtual environment while accomplishing the goals of the organization.

2. **If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:**
   - o Complete survey
   - o This study will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

3. **Are there any experimental medical treatments?**
   - o No

4. **Is there any risk to me?**
   - o Possible risk or source of discomfort is minimal. Some questions may make participants feel slight discomfort as they recall their initial experiences working remotely during the onset of the pandemic.
   - o If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Researcher - Liza Craig and (Organization's) IRB Office.
   - o If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time.

5. **Is there any benefit to me?**
   - o There are no direct benefits to the participants.
   - o The results of this study may provide insight into how remote work continues to impact the work force post pandemic.

6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
   - o The session will **not** be recorded.
   - o Your records will be private. Only Liza Craig and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
   - o Your name will **not** be used in any reports.
   - o Records will be stored:
     - ▪ Encrypted File
     - ▪ Password Protected File/Computer
   - o Records will be destroyed three years after study completion.

7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
   - o No

8. **Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**
   - o For any questions with this study, contact:
     - ▪ **Primary Investigator:** Liza Craig at 610-324-1118 or (email address)

9. **What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimens?**
   - o Not applicable.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the IRB Office at (Organization's IRB office email address).

Appendix F: Consent Form Email

Project Title: Transformational Leadership for a Remote Work Environment – Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era.

The aim of this research is to identify and examine some of the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, for employees who work from home, or from some alternative location other than a physical office space 100% of the time. Another objective of this research is to analyze ways in which leaders could transform their leadership style and behavior to align with employees' well-being and organizational success.

There is minimal risk to this study in that some questions may make participants feel slight discomfort as they recall their initial experiences working remotely during the onset of the pandemic. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, however, the results of this study may provide insight into how remote work continues to impact the work force, in a post pandemic era.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time. For any questions about this study, contact: Liza Craig at (email address) or the IRB Office at (organization's IRB office email address).

Appendix G: Participant Recruitment Email - Leader

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am surveying remote employees as part of a research study with West Chester University to explore "Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era". As a leader who works and leads a remote team, you are in the ideal position to give valuable first-hand information from your experience.

The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, there is no compensation for participating, and your decision to participate or not participate in this research would not affect your performance evaluation or employment status.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study and thank you in advance.

By clicking the link below, you consent to participating in this study.

Survey for Remote Leaders

Sincerely,
Liza

Appendix H: Participant Recruitment Email – Staff

0

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am surveying remote employees as part of a research study with West Chester University to explore "Transformational leadership for a remote work environment – post COVID-19 pandemic era". As someone who works remotely, you are in the ideal position to give valuable first-hand information from your experience.

The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, there is no compensation for participating, and your decision to participate or not participate in this research would not affect your performance evaluation or employment status.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study and thank you in advance.

By clicking the link below, you consent to participating in this study.

Remote Employee Survey

Sincerely,
Liza

Appendix I: Survey Questions for Remote Staff

1. What is your gender?

   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-binary/third gender
   d. Prefer not to say

2. In what State do you reside?

Alabama ▾

3. Did you work remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not Applicable

4. Was leadership supportive in your transition to remote work?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not Applicable

5. What is your experience working remotely?

   a. Extremely positive
   b. Somewhat positive
   c. Neither positive nor negative
   d. Somewhat negative
   e. Extremely negative

6. What are some benefits of working remotely? (Select all that apply)

   a. Ability to have a flexible work schedule
   b. Flexibility to work virtually from home
   c. Not having to commute
   d. Ability to spend more time with family
   e. Other _____

7. What are some challenges faced working remotely? (Select all that apply)

a. Lack of socialization
b. Inability to disconnect
c. Increase workload/Longer hours
d. Communication
e. Other _____

8. I am able to effectively stay engaged in a remote work environment.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Somewhat agree
   c. Neither agree or disagree
   d. Somewhat disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

9. What is most rewarding, beneficial, or valuable to you working remotely?

   _____

10. What would you change to make your remote environment more effective?

    _____

11. How do you manage accomplishing your professional goals along with integrating your personal needs and expectations?

    _____

12. Would you like to be contacted to provide additional information about your experience working remotely?

    ○ Yes

    ○ No

13. Please provide your email address to be contacted.

    _____

Appendix J: Survey Questions for Remote Leaders

1. What is your gender?

   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-binary/third gender
   d. Prefer not to say

2. In what State do you reside?

   Alabama ▾

3. Did you lead/manage a remote team prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not Applicable

4. How many remote staff do you currently manage?

   a. 1-5
   b. 6-10
   c. 11-15
   d. 16-20
   e. More than 25

5. My leadership/managerial style has changed leading a remote team?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not Applicable

6. How is your experience working remotely and leading a remote team?

   a. Extremely positive
   b. Somewhat positive
   c. Neither positive nor negative
   d. Somewhat negative
   e. Extremely negative

7. What are some of the benefits of leading a remote team? (Select all that apply)

   a. Ability to have a flexible work schedule

      b. Flexibility to work virtually from home
      c. Not having to commute
      d. Ability to spend time with family
      e. Other _____

8. What are some challenges faced leading a remote team? (Select all that apply)

      a. Lack of socialization
      b. Inability to disconnect
      c. Increase workload/Longer hours
      d. Communication
      e. Other _____

9. Working remotely has changed my expectations of my staff.

      a. Strongly agree
      b. Somewhat agree
      c. Neither agree or disagree
      d. Somewhat disagree
      e. Strongly disagree

10. What is most rewarding, beneficial, or valuable to you as a remote leader?

      _____

11. What would you change to make your remote environment more effective for you and your team?

      _____

12. How do you keep your team engaged in a remote work environment?

      _____

13. Would you like to be contacted to provide additional information about your experience working remotely?

    ○ Yes

    ○ No

14. Please provide your email address to be contacted. _____

Appendix K: Semi-Structured Follow-up Conversation Guide for Remote Staff

Did you work remotely prior to the pandemic?
Describe your experience as a remote worker?
How is leadership supporting you as a remote employee?
What could leaders do in the span of their control, that they are not already doing, to enhance your remote work experience?

Appendix L: Semi-Structured Follow-up Conversation Guide for Remote Leaders

Did you manage and remote team prior to the pandemic?
Describe your experience as a remote leader?
What post pandemic mechanisms have you implemented to support your remote team?
What changes if any, would you implement within your control, to enhance engagement with your remote team to make remote work more effective and rewarding for both you and your team?