

Exploring the Effects of Remote Work on Staff Performance. A Study of Selected NGOs in Abuja

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the issue of remote working and its impact on the performance of staff in the COVID-19 pandemic and the selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Abuja, Nigeria. The study takes the form of a descriptive survey with a structured questionnaire to 50 employees that had had a remote work experience. Simple percentages and mean scores were used to analyze data. The results showed that remote work had significant advantages, such as lower transportation expenses, closer contact with family, better flexibility, and perceived job performance improvement. Nevertheless, the work also singles out such challenges as higher operational expenses incurred by employees (e. internet and electricity), less interaction among staff members and greater risk of information security. The findings also reveal that employees mostly used communication platforms including email, phone calls, and WhatsApp to keep the work flowing during the remote operations. Although the results are both positive and negative, the study concludes that remote work has the potential of positively impacting employee performance provided there are proper infrastructure, organizational policies and incentives in place. It highlights the importance of employers to offer financial and technological assistance to reduce the risks of remote working, especially in developing economies with infrastructural constraints. The research is an addition to the expanding literature on flexible work arrangement by emphasizing the contextual realities that determine the efficacy of remote work in Nigeria.

Keywords: Remote work, employee performance, COVID-19, NGOs, Nigeria, work from home, organizational support, productivity.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

In 2020, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) emerged as a global pandemic, disrupting societies in unprecedented ways and forcing individuals to re-evaluate various aspects of life, including work, travel, and daily activities (Peter et al 2021). This situation affected not only individuals but also entire economies, bringing many sectors and activities to a standstill. This disruption occurred because the virus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets and close human contact. To control the spread, preventive measures such as mask-wearing, social distancing, and proper hand hygiene were widely adopted (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2021; Centre for Health Protection 2020). Following the World Health Organization's declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic in January 2020, the virus spread rapidly across the world. The virus has vastly spread worldwide, with over a million confirmed cases and over million confirmed deaths and the number has been increasing consistently (World Health Organisation 2020).

Although the spread has been largely controlled and mortality rates have declined, the virus remains a global threat, prompting governments to impose and re-impose lockdown measures. In many countries, including Nigeria, citizens were required to remain at home and limit physical interactions. Lockdowns and business

closures prevented a large proportion of the workforce from commuting to work. Consequently, both employers and workers adopted alternative work arrangements. Due to the pandemic, a good number of the workers experienced remote work (RW) (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2021). This shift was partly driven by the high risk of infection associated with office environments. (Hong Kong Economic Times Limited 2020). Before the pandemic, remote work was not widely practiced and was considered impractical in many settings. This is mainly because working from home requires a quiet and dedicated workspace, which may not be readily available.

Over the years, there has been a belief that workers need to be physically present in the office to carry out the job, but with the pandemic, RW has become an alternative of working to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection. However, remote work is not a new concept and has been discussed extensively in academic literature. The concept of remote work dates back to the 1970s and was formally introduced by Nilles (1988) as “telecommuting.” (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016). Some jobs, especially those related to healthcare, farming, and hospitality cannot be performed at home. The adoption of remote work has increased globally, offering benefits to both employers and employees. These benefits include reduced commuting time, increased flexibility, improved work-life balance, higher job satisfaction, and enhanced productivity (Mello 2007). Studies indicated evidence for these benefits; for example, the research in the Greater Dublin Area by Caulfield and Charly (2022) found employees saved travel time and value of travel time.

Also, some studies point out that RW can reduce turnover rate and increase employees’ productivity, job engagement, and job performance (Delanoeiye and Verbruggen 2020). However, remote work also presents challenges, including blurred work–life boundaries, distractions, and social isolation. According to Purwanto et al. (2020), there are certain drawbacks of RW, such as employees working at home having to pay for electricity and the internet costs themselves. Gorjifard and Crawford (2021) found that workers were isolated from their coworkers, and managers were concerned about reductions in productivity while working from home. Employees might be distracted by the presence of young children or family members while working at home (Kazekami 2020) along with blurred boundaries between work and family life lead to overwork (Grant et al. 2019). In a similar vein, the management of boundaries between work and family of remote workers studied by Eddlestone and Mulki (2017) revealed that RW relates to the inability of remote workers to disengage from work.

In Nigeria, many private and public organizations were temporarily closed during the pandemic. In the same way, some industries and agencies allowed their workers to remote work using electronic devices and teleconferencing gadgets like zoom; this enabled task to be done without any face-to-face interaction. Unlike developed economies with strong infrastructure, remote work in Nigeria faced significant challenges. In Nigeria, it was more difficult, and this is believed to affect workers’ performance. For instance, unreliable electricity supply often disrupted work processes and reduced efficiency. Against this background, this study examines the impact of remote work on employee performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, the first waves of the coronavirus pandemic that hit the entire world without any immediate combating measure seems to have immense impacts on workers’ productivity, welfare and made living more challenging and difficult. In Nigeria, a good number of the citizens work in private companies and several others are self-employed making a living from diverse businesses daily (Lain et al., 2021). As such, the physical lockdown directives from the government came with conditions that included reduced working hours and restrictions on the number of people that can be in the office at the same time. This has led to staff rotation, shifts, and reduced performance. Unlike in other developed economies, in Nigeria, the lockdown resulted in pay and incentive cuts or reductions. As a direct consequence of the economic effect of the pandemic on businesses and the ability of employers to maintain compensation at pre-COVID levels, and in some cases, the inability of certain employees to work optimally from home, issues such as pay cuts, freezing of promotions and other incentives were stopped with inherent effect on workers’ performance (Andam et al., 2020).

While federal and state government workers to a large extent enjoyed government incentives especially salaries during the COVID-19 pandemic, private workers faced the dire consequences of the lockdown. Many lost their jobs because the companies could not meet up with the rising cost of maintenance/production, while others allowed their workers to remote work without any work incentives. This policy has had diverse effects in workers' performance. Working from home is recognized to affect employees' work performance especially if employees are allowed to bear the operational cost and many have to pay for electricity and internet costs themselves which are provided in their offices. Incurring these costs without immediate compensation from the employers can have an immense impact on their work performance. Aside from this, the presence of young children or family members while working at home distracts workers and can also impact work performance (Raghuvir et al., 2020). The impact of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on employee work performance has received serious research attention from scholars all over the world. Due to its impact on employees, it has become a topical issue of concern. On this note, studies have been carried out to assess the impact of remote work on teachers' performance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Purwanto et al., 2020; Afrianty et al., 2020; Kulikowski et al., 2020); others assessed the general impact of working from home during COVID-19 on work and life domains (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2021). This study did not make use of empirical data but relied on published studies. However, studies that examine the impact of remote work on workers' performance in selected NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic are not well documented in the literature. It is against this background that the present study is carried out. The study will assess the impact of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria

Aim and objectives

The general objective of the study is to explore the challenges of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic on employee performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine how well or otherwise employees in selected NGOs performed while working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Understand the challenges employees faced while working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Ascertain the preferred mode of work for employees when they worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. To proffer solutions to the challenges employees encountered when they worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research questions

1. How well did employees of selected NGOs in Abuja perform remotely during the COVID-19 lockdown?
2. What challenges did employees of selected NGOs in Abuja face working remotely during the COVID-19 lockdown?
3. What are the preferred modes of working remotely for employees of selected NGOs in Abuja, during the COVID-19 lockdown?
4. What are the solutions to the challenges employees encountered when they worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significance of the study

The present study on completion will be relevant to the employers, employees, and society at large.

- a. To the employers, the study will suggest ways they can effectively manage their employees during periods of uncertainties (business shutdown) to enable them to remain in business or production. It will

also encourage employers to put in place incentives to motivate workers for improved performance during the disruption of production as well as prepare for business uncertainties.

- b. To the employees, the study on completion will identify the factor that has a substantial impact on employees' performance during periods of WFM. The factor so identified will enable adequate policies to be put in place by employers to ensure maximum performance from their workers and to remain in business while other businesses may have a shutdown. The employees will also be admonished to get prepared for uncertainties to enable them to remain productive and contribute positively to organizational goals.
- c. Society will benefit from the outcome of the study by making use of the findings for their day-to-day activities. It will enable them to know the importance to be prepared for business shocks and lockdowns by putting in place facilities that enable them to remain competitive and productive during lockdowns.
- d. It will serve as reference material for future studies.

Scope of the study

The study only examined the challenges of remote work during COVID-19 on employee performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria. The investigation was within the territorial boundary of the three selected NGOs (Ibadan Centre for Integrated Capacity and Resources Development, Community-based Initiative for Growth and Sustainability, and Environmental Research and Sustainability Resource Centre of Nigeria) based in Abuja. The area is ideal for the present study because it has several NGOs that adopted the RW policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study only explored the benefits, challenges, and modes of RW during COVID-19 among employees of the three selected NGOs. The study relied heavily on data collected directly from the field through the administration of a structured questionnaire to provide answers to the research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impacts of remote work from home

Since the outbreak of covid-19, RW arrangements were a policy implemented globally to reduce the spread of covid-19 and to maintain production and employment during a period in which workplaces are closed and travel curtailed (Arruda, 2020 cited in Afrianty et al., 2021). Jones (2022) stated that RW has beneficial effects for both employers and employees. The advantages include and are not limited to reduced commuting time, avoiding office politics, using less office space, increased motivation, improved gender diversity (e.g., women and careers), healthier workforces with less absenteeism and turnover, higher talent retention, job satisfaction, and better productivity. A study carried out in the Greater Dublin Area by Caulfield and Charly (2022) found employees saving travel time and value of travel time to be associated with WFM. In another study, Delanoeije and Verbruggen (2020) found that telework or WFM can reduce turnover rate and increase employees' productivity, job engagement, and job performance. In the same way, Grant et al., (2019) stated that e-working would improve work-life balance (WLB), and e-workers found it possible to combine work-life and non-work life. E-workers found that their productivity was improved by e-working (Gashi et al., 2022).

Bloom (2020) found job satisfaction to increase by working from home. The study of Arntz et al., (2019) found RW to be positively associated with family-life satisfaction. Kazekami (2020) studied the productivity of workers in Japan and discovered that telework (or RW) increases life satisfaction. Gohoungodji et al (2023) stated that from the employer's perspective, several advantages of offering RW included attracting and retaining highly skilled employees, improving employee commitment/engagement, and improved matching of time and workflows. On the contrary, Purwanto et al. (2020) stated that certain drawbacks as associated with RW; that employees working at home have to pay for electricity and the internet costs themselves. Vyas and Butakhieo (2021) found that workers were isolated from their coworkers, and managers were concerned about reductions in productivity while working from home.

Gajendran (2025) stated that the relationship between coworkers could also be harmed. Kazekami (2020) stated that employees might be distracted by the presence of young children or family members while working at home. Also, Grant et al., (2019) stated that WFM increases the blurred boundaries between work and family life which led to overwork. Dayaram and Burgess (2021) argued that one of the most observable changes which have occurred because of COVID has been the shift of many employees into RW arrangements across occupations even where this previously was not an option. Shareena and Shahid, (2020) further stated that apart from reducing the exposure to infection and the associated health risks, the implementation of RW during this pandemic has been found to cause challenges such as delays in service delivery, providing additional resources and training, and requiring investment in IT, software, and infrastructure to support RW (Shareena and Shahid, 2020). Jallow et al., (2020) stated that managing teams while working from home has also been found to be challenging, however, technological tools such as online meeting platforms such as Zoom, and Teams have proven to be effective in supporting project team meetings.

In India, the study by Shareena and Shahid (2020) found that working from home was stressful for some employees as the home environment was found to be uncomfortable, disruptive, and unsuitable for sustained periods of productive work. Chung et al., (2021) examined working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown on changing preferences and future of work and found that parents, especially mothers, struggled to find the space and time to carry out work during lockdown mothers identified increased housework and childcare as one key negative experience of working from home. The majority of women responded that they are doing more (or much more) housework and care – for example, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ say they do more children's education. Only 50% of mothers and 58% of fathers could secure a stable block of time to work during the lockdown, and only 15% of mothers had clear boundaries between work/family, underlining mothers' struggle to work during school/childcare facilities closures.

Assessing employees' performance in RW

Several studies have shown that implementing RW has a positive impact on efficiency and performance (Staples et al., 2020). A survey of IBM employees showed that 87% of employees felt that their productivity had increased with WHF arrangements (Sakhawalkar, 2023). RW employees can modify the work environment according to individual needs, such as balancing work and family so that efficiency can be improved as employees can better manage time constraints and workflow requirements (Afrianty et al., 2021). In line with this, Rimadias (2020) stated that individual and organizational factors play a crucial role in influencing the productivity of employees who engage in RW. The study further stated that digital orientation and digital capability are the individual factors regarded as being important in affecting employee productivity in the case of RW. On the other hand, organizational factors that have been identified as being important in influencing employee productivity include access to and provision of Information Technology (IT) training, management support, and digital infrastructure (Afrianty et al., 2022).

Khin and Ho (2018) stated that the digital orientation of individual employees is a recently identified condition impacting employee productivity. The study suggested that digital orientation is an extension of technological orientation. It is conceptualized as technology orientation in a digital technology context and is defined as an individual's commitment to the application of digital technology to support the accomplishment of the job. Thus, the stronger the digital orientation of an individual, the more open the individual is to the application of digital technologies. Moreover, a digital-oriented employee is committed to embracing digital initiatives for their day-to-day job and responsibilities. Selvasundaram and Dasaradhan (2020) examined employees' perceptions and experiences of remote work during Covid 2019. The study found that the employees willingly complete their work in remote work depending upon the occurrence of their kids and family, happy universe in-home, a discreet atmosphere at home-based, and virtuous network connectivity. Most of the respondents also of estimation that even if they are ready for remote work they do not like to work from home.

Raj et al (2023) found that remote work is helping the employees to balance and differentiate their office work from their routine work. The study also added that remote work saves time, increases productivity, and also helps the employees to give time for their personal life. In another study, Gajendhran (2025) revealed in their study that it is difficult to monitor a worker's effort at home, especially when occasionally being interrupted by private responsibilities and family members. In a competitive labour market, such productivity effects would

be respected in a worker's wage level. The study argued further that evidence on the productivity effects of remote work is inconclusive but seems to suggest positive effects more often than negative effects.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the different methods and procedures through which data for the study will be collected and analyzed. It also examines the appropriate statistical techniques to analyze the data collected from the administration of the questionnaire.

Design of the study

This study employed a descriptive survey design. This research design enables factual information to be collected from the study population. The descriptive survey design is chosen for this study because it enables detailed information that describes the phenomenon of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on employee performance to be collected through the administration of a questionnaire. Maylor and Blackmon (2005) averred that survey research design makes it possible for data on a particular research problem to be collected and analyzed by asking respondents questions to seek their opinion. In a similar manner, Bryman and Bell (2003) noted that in the survey research design, data is primarily gathered through a structured questionnaire or interview within a specific time frame. The descriptive research design, therefore, enables the questionnaire method to be employed in order to seek the opinion of employees on the research topic.

Research method

This research employed the exploratory research method in collecting necessary data to achieve the research objectives. Determining the research method is acknowledged by authors to be one of the essential things to do when starting up research (Bryman, 2016). This was achieved via the administration of a questionnaire to employees across three selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria who worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This method is chosen because it makes inference possible through the application of statistical tools (both descriptive and inferential) to ascertain the inherent impacts of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on employee performance. In this exploratory research method, the main tool for data collection is the questionnaire.

Population of Study

The population of the study comprised employees across three selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria. Only employees who have spent a year and above in the selected NGOs were administered copies of the questionnaire. This is because employees who have spent more years are able to give respond to the research problems or objectives.

Sampling technique

This study employed purposive and cluster sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria among the several ones that exist in the area. The three randomly selected NGOs include the Centre for Integrated Capacity and Resources Development, Community-based Initiative for Growth and Sustainability, and Environmental Research and Sustainability Resource Centre of Nigeria. They were selected because the NGOs allowed a good number of workers to RW throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the cluster sampling technique was used to administer copies of the structured questionnaire to all staff that has spent one year and above. The sample size was also purposively determined.

Sample size

The sample size for the present study was purposively determined due to the challenges faced in getting an accurate and exact record of staff strength or population. On this note, 50 copies of the structured questionnaire

were administered to staff of the NGOs. This number was chosen as a result of the low staff population of some of the NGOs. The characteristics of staff include both active and inactive employees.

Instrumentation

A well-structured questionnaire designed to answer questions in relation to the research objectives was the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A of the questionnaire measured respondents' socioeconomic characteristics; Section B measured the benefits of remote work using a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree = SA; Agree= A; Disagree = D, and Strongly Disagree = SD; Section C measured the negative impacts of remote work using a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree = SA; Agree= A; Disagree = D; and Strongly Disagree = SD, while Section D measured employees' performance during COVID-19 pandemic using a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree = SA; Agree= A; Disagree = D, and Strongly Disagree = SD.

Method of data collection

Prior to data collection, a formal letter was written to the management of the selected NGOs to seek permission to carry out the research. After the permission was granted, a memo was passed from the management to the employees informing them about the research, and employees were instructed to cooperate and assist the researcher with all the necessary information required to successfully carry out the research. After consent for the survey was given, the questionnaire was administered to members of staff of the selected NGOs with the help of two field assistants based in Abuja. Answered questionnaire copies were collected at the spot of administration, while others were collected four days after. The questionnaire administration lasted for three weeks.

Measurement of variables

Questions on benefits of working remotely, negative impacts of remote work, and employees' performance during the COVID-19 pandemic were operationalized or measured using the Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Rokeman (2024) noted that the Likert scale is often used in business research. The variable used in the study to assess the effect of organizational motivation on employee commitment and retention was measured thus:

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument.

The validity of the research instrument was ensured through content and face validity. Experts in the area of management and research methodology went through the questionnaire to ensure that it was able to capture the objectives of the study.

In order to find reliability, a pilot study was implemented on a small set of respondents that was similar to the study population. Cronbachs Alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the instrument; it resulted in a satisfactory coefficient of reliability (e.g., $\alpha \geq 0.70$), which demonstrates that the instrument was reliable in the study.

Method of data analysis

Data obtained from the administered questionnaire were analyzed using tables and simple percentages as presented in 7.0 Annex 1: Analysis below. While the study employed descriptive statistics such as percentages and mean scores for analysis, future research could incorporate inferential statistical techniques such as regression or correlation analysis to provide deeper insights into the relationships between variables. Chapter 4 presents the analyzed data and results.

Data analysis, presentation, and discussion of results

Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

The socioeconomic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. The sex of respondents showed that males dominated the survey. This is because 68.0% of the respondents surveyed across the selected NGOs were males, while 32% were females. This goes to show that the NGOs have more male staff which is attributed to the nature of jobs and the posts occupied. Information on the age of respondents showed that respondents between the ages of 26 – 35yrs had a high percentage (56.0%), followed by those above 35yrs, while those between the ages of 15 – 25yrs had the lowest proportion of respondents of 16% (Fig 1). The result simply shows that the majority of the respondents (84%) fall between the ages of 26 years and above. It means therefore that the NGOs are predominantly dominated by young adults. Similar age was reported by Umesh (2021) in India. The age range pattern observed has a far-reaching implication for the study; in that, the adults would be able to communicate their experience in the area in relation to RW.

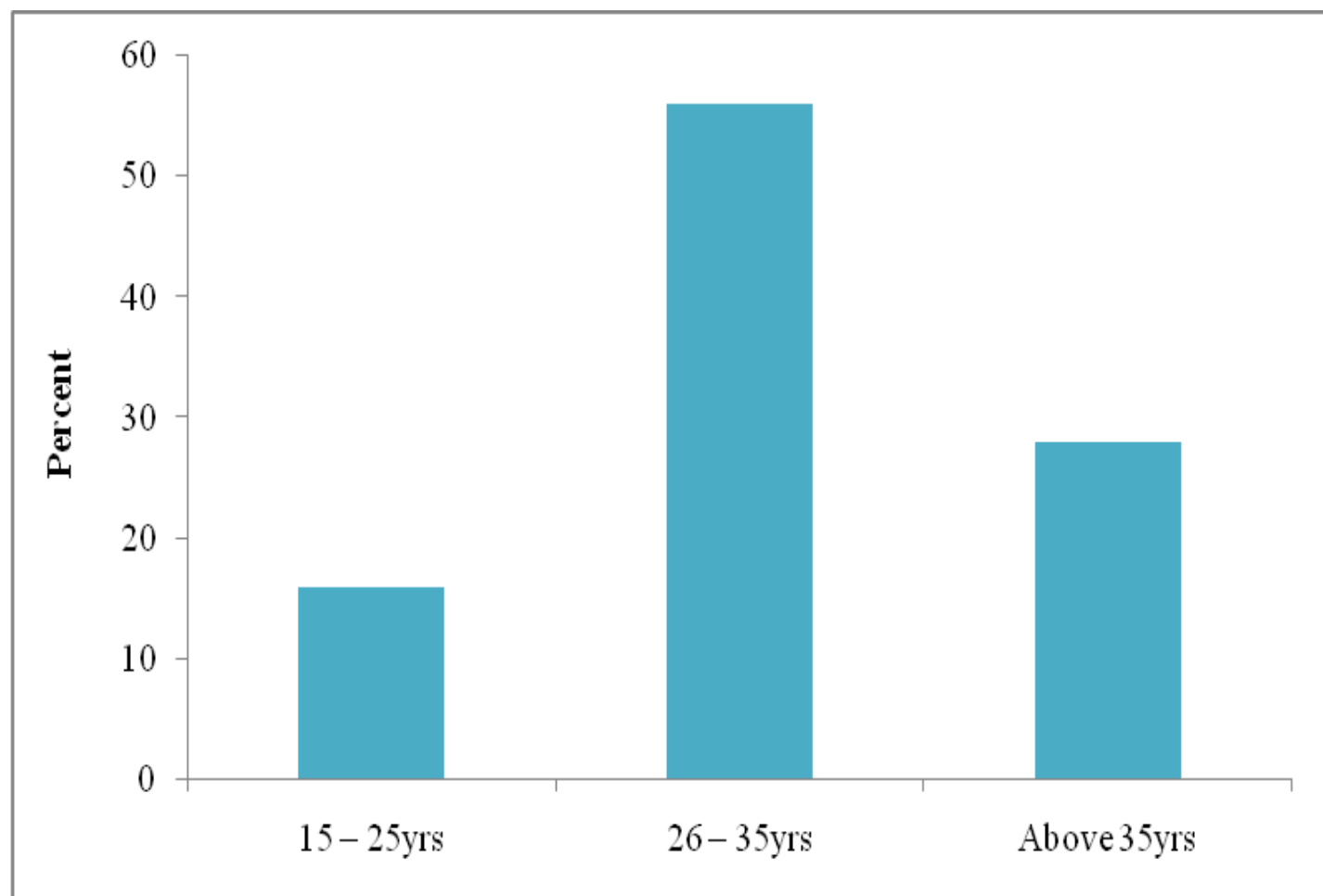


Figure 1: Age of respondents

The educational status revealed that the respondents had different qualifications, ranging from primary education to tertiary education. It showed that a significant proportion (68.0%) of the respondents had tertiary education, followed closely by postgraduate education and secondary education with 22% and 10% respectively. From the result obtained, it is apparent that a good number of the respondents precisely 80% have post-secondary (Fig 2). The result simply indicates a high literacy level which would to a large extent influence employees' level of awareness of RW and how it has helped to keep their jobs as well as the challenges encountered in the process of working from home. A similar high literacy level was reported among employees by Umesh (2021) that worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. The educational status of respondents could also influence the employee preferred mode of RW during the COVID-19 pandemic.

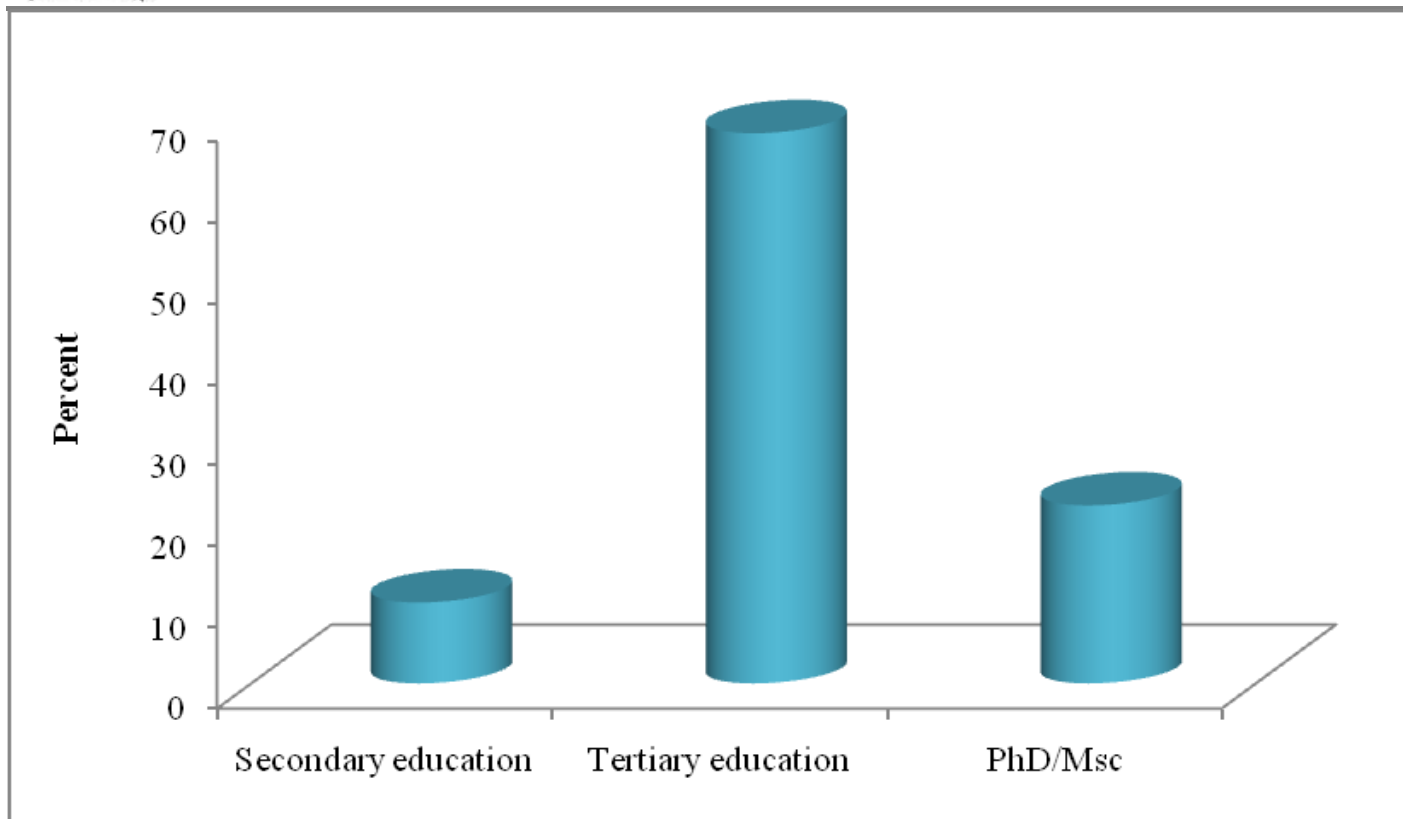


Figure 2: Educational status of respondents

On the monthly income of respondents, results obtained showed that a good number (38%) of the respondents earned ₦100,000 – ₦200,000 monthly, followed closely by those that earned ₦201,000 – ₦300,000 per month, while 9% respectively earned <₦100,000 and above ₦300,000 per month. The general pattern of income, therefore, implies that the employees earn different amounts of money monthly with a significant proportion earning ₦100, 000 - ₦300, 000 monthly suggesting that employees in the selected NGOs are predominantly medium-income earners. Information on the number of years employees have been with the selected NGOs revealed that 54% had been working with the NGOs for 3 – 4yrs, 30% had been with the NGOs for above 4yrs, while 16% had spent 1 – 2yrs. It goes to show that 84% of the employees have been with the selected NGOs for over 2yrs. It means no employees are new to the organization as such, they know how to operate as well as are aware of the preferable mode of communication between staff and management as well as among staff.

Table 1: Socioeconomic profile of respondents

Variables	Categories	Freq	Percent
Sex	Male	34	68.0
	Female	16	32.0
Age	15 – 25yrs	8	16.0
	26 – 35yrs	28	56.0
	Above 35yrs	14	28.0
	Secondary education	5	10.0
	Tertiary education	34	68.0

Education	PhD/MSc	11	22.0
Monthly income	<N100,000	9	18.0
	N100,000 – N200,000	19	38.0
	N201,000 – N300,000	13	26.0
	Above N300,000	9	18.0
Years of employment	1–2yrs	8	16.0
	3 – 4yrs	27	54.0
	Above 4yrs	15	30.0

Achievements of work from home

This part of the analysis gives an answer to the first research question which is *how well employees achieved working FH during COVID-19*. The population mean was used to determine the achievements of work from home. This was achieved using the responses of responses measured using the Likert Scale on 6 items. For simple interpretation and inference, only the first four items with the highest mean values were selected for discussion. The results obtained are shown in Table 2. The first ranked item showed that the majority (96%) of the respondents stated that RW reduces transportation costs. This indeed is one of the observable benefits or achievable gains of the RW policy mostly during the COVID-19 pandemic that paralyzed economic activities mostly movement. Being at home and working does not make employees to incur any transportation costs. The money that would have been used is rather used to meet up with other household needs. Also, RW does not put employees into undue traffic stress that is associated with transportation in the area. They do not have to wake up early to go to work and make long-distance trips to work and other places associated with the work environment. This assertion agrees with those of Purwanto et al., (2020) who reported teachers do not have to spend money to pay for transportation working from home and that teachers can save time on travel.

The second-ranked item showed that 86% of the employees stated that RW enables employees to be close to their families. This again is expected as being around without going to the workplace which could be some distance away from the place of residence provides the opportunity for employees to be with their families. It affords them quality time to interact with their family members while still meeting up with the policies of RW. It affords employees mostly women the opportunity to have a good time with their children and to monitor what they do. It also enables employees to control their work at the home office to achieve or perform optimally. Indeed, WFM makes it possible for family meetings to be held and for employees to be able to meet with family members who they did not have the luxury of time to check on and have detailed discussions on ways to make move the family better. It also enables couples to have quality time with each other and with their families and for them to know their challenges. In addition, the third-ranked item revealed that 84% of the employees stated that RW increases job performance. This is because it gives employees enough time to get work done. So many employees perform better at home than when in the office because being at home enables him or her to move from one place of the house to the other without any approval. The employee can work anywhere in the house as long as it appeals to him/her. They have a conducive atmosphere to perform maximally. Any existing condition that affects their performance is immediately put to rest. For instance, they can switch off the air conditioner if they observe the room is too cold for them; this is not the case when in the office. Employees create a working environment at home that is favourable to them; this results in improved performance. In line with this, the fourth-ranked item revealed that 83% of the employees stated that RW does not follow office hours. This makes it possible for workers or employees to have quality time to get work done. Under this condition, employees are not under any pressure to get work done. They decide on where and the time of the day to get work done. In a related study, Purwanto et al., (2020) stated that one of the advantages of Remote work is that teachers do not need to follow office hours. This approach makes the worker not to be

under any form of pressure. What this means is that employees can decide to work either during the day or at night; they work without any form of inconvenience. The result in Table 2, therefore, reveals that the majority of the employees strongly believe that RW reduces transportation costs, enables employees to be close to their families, increases job performance, and does not follow office hours.

Table 2: Achievements of work from home

Variables	Total % response		Mean	Rank
	SA	SD		
RW reduces transportation costs	96.0	4.0	3.46	1
RW enables employees to be close to their families	86.0	14.0	3.28	2
RW increases job performance	84.0	16.0	3.24	3
RW does not follow office hours	83.0	17.0	3.14	4

Challenges of working remotely

This part of the analysis gives an answer to the second research question which is about *what challenges employees faced working remotely*. Also, the population means were used to determine the challenges of working from home. Only the first-three items with the highest mean values were selected for discussion. The results obtained are shown in Table 3. The first ranked item showed that the majority (94%) of the respondents stated that RW increases information security risk. The risk of working from the house is enormous and one of it is that it exposes the employees to robbery attacks. Thieves and robbers could easily attack and collect the computer and other devices used to work at home. What this means is that RW puts employees into the difficult position of being attacked by men of the underworld. And when this happens, it paralyzes the connection between the employees and the management. RW makes employees an element of attack and this can impact work performance mostly when the company does not carry out an instant intervention. The second-ranked item 90% of the employees started RW affects staff interaction. RWM keeps employees from physical interaction and contact with their colleagues and this can affect performance. Some employees tend to do well when they are with their colleagues because they are able to share problems together which makes work much easier. Being in the company of coworkers makes employees happy and committed to their jobs because they are able to share their problems, have a walk together and share ideas.

Lastly, the third-ranked item revealed that RW increases operational costs (internet and electricity cost). This is expected because the employee provides the room, powers his/her generating set, and incurs other costs to get jobs done. This is not the case being in the office, where internet and electricity cost is borne by the company. Therefore, RW exposes the employees to unplanned expenditures which may not be repaid or reimbursed by the company. The result in Table 3, therefore, reveals that over 80% of the employees strongly believe that RW increases information security risk, affects staff interaction, and increases operational cost (internet and electricity cost). This agrees with the findings of Umesh (2021) and Purwanto et al., (2020) that when working in an office, the institution bears the cost of electricity and the internet which is different when employees work at home because electricity and internet costs will increase due to continuous use.

Table 3: Challenges of work from home

Variables	Total % response		Mean	Rank
	SA	SD		
WFM increases information security risk	94.0	6.0	3.34	1

WFM affects staff interaction	90.0	10.0	3.32	2
WFM increases operational cost (internet and electricity cost)	82.0	18.0	3.28	3

Preferred modes of RW

This part of the analysis gives an answer to the third research question *what is the preferred mode of RW for employees during COVID-19*. The result obtained is presented in Table 4. A look at the result showed that the preferred mode by the majority of the employees was email (50%), followed by phone calls (20%) and WhatsApp (18%). These social media platforms and modes are widely used by employees during the COVID-19 to get in touch with management and colleagues on issues that require immediate assistance. Email is more economical and makes it easier for messages, documents, and files as well as pictures to be shared for prompt action. It allows for sharing with its interactive components allowing for sharing, commenting, changing, responding, and critiquing information possible on a wide scope and in some cases in real-time. These social media platforms have the potential to amplify the speed and ease with which information is communicated as well as enable interactive communication flows within networks. Hence, through these modes, employees and workers are able to bridge the gap created by COVID-19. Therefore, the result in Table 4 identifies email, phone calls, and WhatsApp as the preferred modes of RW for employees during COVID-19.

Table 4: Preferred mode RW

Modes of WTH	Freq	Percent
Phone calls	10	20.0
Email	25	50.0
WhatsApp	9	18.0
Zoom	6	12.0
Total	50	100.0

Solutions to the challenges of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic

The employees provided some feedback when asked about the solutions to the challenges they encountered when they worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic? The result obtained is presented in Table 5. An analysis of the result presented indicated that accessibility and availability of internet data were the highest at (65%), followed by flexible working hours (25%) and working individually (10%). The availability of internet data mostly provided by employers during the COVID-19 lockdown ranks high mostly because it addresses the social and physical distance policy and protocol of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering that most NGO offices have a global spread, employees would find it easy to also attend to official work at odd hours and have no deadline to meet in delivering their tasks. Employees also identified working individually because working as a group will defeat the aim of social distancing if they have to come together.

Table 5: Solutions to the challenges of RW

Solutions of RW	Freq	Percent
Internet data	35	65.0
Flexible working hours	10	25.0

Working individually	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0

DISCUSSION

The discussion relates to such important themes as the perceived advantages of remote work, its challenges, outcomes of employee performance, and preferred communication channels in the framework of the selected NGOs in Abuja.

As the results of this study has revealed, remote work (RW) considerably lowered transportation expenses of employees, and a vast majority of the respondents confirmed this advantage. This is well in line with earlier research like Purwanto et al. (2020) and Caulfield and Charly (2022) who indicated that home working removes the cost of commuting and wastage of time on traveling. But, as much as these studies put this in the context of an economic benefit, the current study builds on this interpretation in the Nigerian NGO setting where transportation expenses might represent a significant percentage of the monthly wage bill of workers. Therefore, the commuting cost can be reduced more significantly than in developed economies and therefore it can have a stronger effect on disposable income and financial well-being.

In addition, the research discovered that teleworking ensured that employees are nearer to their families, which respondents viewed as a positive factor. This result is in line with Grant et al. (2019) and Arntz et al. (2019), who associated remote work with greater work-life balance and family satisfaction. Nevertheless, a sharp contrast can be made in comparison to Chung et al. (2021), who claimed that the closer the family, in particular, during lockdowns, the more domestic duties increase, specifically those of women. Although the current study has brought out the positive image of family closer, it has not delved into the possible gendered burdens, so there is a gap that can be filled by future research.

Concerning the performance of the employees, the results show that most of the respondents thought that working remotely enhanced their job performance. It confirms previous empirical data by Delanoetje and Verbruggen (2020) and Gashi et al. (2022) who reported that teleworking promotes productivity and engagement. Equally, Sakhawalkar (2023) said that a considerable percentage of workers felt more productive when they were not in the office. Nonetheless, the research offers a rather simplistic perspective of performance enhancement because it is based on self-reported perceptions and not objective productivity measures. This is contrary to Gajendran (2025), who warned that it might not be easy to monitor performance remotely and this can even blur the real level of productivity. Thus, the results are consistent with optimistic views in the literature, but they are subjected to overestimation of performance gains because of subjectivity biasness.

In spite of these advantages, the research also found that there were some major challenges that come with remote work. It is worth noting that, higher operational costs especially electricity and internet costs were cited as one of the main concerns. This observation greatly supports Purwanto et al. (2020) and Vyas and Butakhieo (2021) who observed that remote employees usually incur extra expenses that are usually financed by employers in physical workplaces. Nevertheless, the current study provides contextual details by highlighting infrastructural shortcomings in Nigeria, like unreliable electricity, which increases these expenses. This supports the point that the success of remote work greatly depends on the context, and it is possible that models that work well in developed economies are not as easily applied to developing ones.

The other important challenge that is noted is the decrease of staff interaction. The observation is consistent with the results of the research conducted by Gorjifard and Crawford (2021) and Jones (2022), who highlight social isolation and poor relationships in the workplace as the main disadvantages of remote work. Although this problem is partly addressed by digital communication tools, the present research indicates that the latter do not completely substitute the advantages of face-to-face communication, especially in collaborative settings like NGOs. This substantiates the claim that telecommuting can undermine teamwork, sharing of knowledge and informal learning.

Surprisingly, information security risks were also cited as a significant issue of the study, which is less accentuated in the reviewed literature. Although there is some literature that acknowledges risks in technology, the fact that this information is a major concern in the results could be due to local conditions, such as the increased susceptibility to theft or the lack of adequate cybersecurity infrastructure. This underscores a contextual difference with the literature and indicates that security issues might exist to a greater degree in the context of a developing country.

As far as communication is concerned, the result established that email, phone calls, and WhatsApp were the popular forms of remote work communication. This corresponds to some degree with Jallow et al. (2020), who have stressed the importance of digital tools like Zoom and Teams in remote teamwork. Nevertheless, the desire to use less complex and more convenient tools such as WhatsApp is based on the technological and economic reality of the study environment. Contrary to the developed nations where complex collaboration platforms have been embraced, the employees in this research were using cost-effective and familiar communication channels. This highlights the significance of flexibility in remote working policies.

Lastly, the research found the internet accessibility to be the most significant solution to the problem of remote working. This result aligns with those of Afrianty et al. (2022), who emphasized the role of digital infrastructure as the determining factor of remote work. Nonetheless, the heavy focus on the internet provision in this study also adds to the constraints of the infrastructure in the Nigerian context. It implies that remote work can have undue burdens on employees in the absence of proper institutional support, which can negate its advantages.

Finally, the results of the current study correspond with as well as go beyond the literature on remote work. Although it is consistent with the global evidence on the advantages of flexibility, cost reduction, and possible productivity increases, the research also draws attention to the contextual issues specific to infrastructure, cost pressure, and social interaction in the developing economies. The critical comparison shows that remote work is not always advantageous but it depends on the environmental, organizational and socio-economic factors. This highlights the necessity of context-based policies and organizational support structures to maximize the performance of remote work arrangements.

SUMMARY

The study explored the challenges of remote work during COVID-19 on employee performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria. In particular, the study finds out how well or otherwise employees are doing working remotely; finds out the challenges employees are facing working remotely and examines the preferred mode of work for employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was obtained through the administration of 50 copies of structured questionnaires to employees in the three selected NGOs who had worked for more than 1 year. Data obtained was analyzed using simple percentages and averages. The major findings from the analyses carried out are summarised below:

1. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 26 years and above, while a significant proportion of the employees earned ₦100, 000 - ₦300, 000 monthly.
2. The majority of the employees strongly believe that RW reduces transportation costs, enables employees to be close to their families, increases job performance, and does not follow office hours.
3. The majority of the employees believe that RW increases information security risk affects staff interaction and increases operational costs (internet and electricity cost).
4. The study identified email, phone calls, and WhatsApp as the preferred modes of RW for employees during COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are put forward.

1. Employers of labour should plan for uncertainties like the COVID-19 pandemic to enable them to remain in business and break, even during periods of lockdowns.
2. Organizations should make necessary efforts to reimburse workers who use their money to get jobs done while working from home. This is necessary to enable them to contribute effectively to organizational goals without any fear of repayment.
3. Organizations should try as much as possible to provide incentives that will positively impact workers' performance during periods of lockdown and uncertainties.
4. Employers of labour should ensure that communication during RW is largely through email while phone calls and WhatsApp can complement.
5. The capacity of staff should be built to help them improve their RW performance

CONCLUSION

The study has investigated the challenges of remote work during COVID-19 on employee performance among selected NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria. It shows that the RW policy provides several benefits to the employees as well as enables the organization to carry on with its operations. Some of the notable benefits of the RW policies are reduction in transportation costs, the ability of employees to be close to their families, increase job performance, and time convenience. Despite the notable benefits, the RW has several shortcomings during the COVID-19 pandemic mostly on the employees. Some of the shortcomings are increased information security risk, reduction, absence of staff interaction, and increased operational cost (internet and electricity cost). These costs are borne by the employees and can have a serious impact on their performance mostly if unpaid or unremitted. The study further reveals that several modes of RW were employed by organizations and employees to remain connected. The paramount or preferred modes during COVID-19 were email, phone calls, and WhatsApp.

Limitation of the Study

This research is subject to some limitations which must be noted. The sample size (50 respondents) used in the study was only 3 chosen NGOs in Abuja, which restricts the extrapolation of the results to other sectors or geographical areas. Also, a descriptive survey design and the use of self-reported data can contribute to response bias and limit the analysis of the relationships between variables. There was also a use of only descriptive statistical methods in the study, which might not be able to fully represent complex variable interaction. Further studies ought to embrace larger and diversified samples and include inferential statistics in order to improve the strength and generalizability of results.

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Annex 1: Analysis

Sex		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	34	68.0	68.0	68.0
	Female	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15 – 25yrs	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	26 – 35yrs	28	56.0	56.0	72.0
	Above 35yrs	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Secondary education	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Tertiary education	34	68.0	68.0	78.0
	PhD/Msc	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Years of service					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1–2yrs	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	3 – 4yrs	27	54.0	54.0	70.0
	Above 4yrs	15	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Monthly income					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<N100,000	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
	N100,000 – N200,000	19	38.0	38.0	56.0
	N201,000 – N300,000	13	26.0	26.0	82.0
	Above N300,000	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW is more flexible in completing work/task					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	D	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
	A	26	52.0	52.0	76.0
	SA	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW does not follow office hours					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	3	31	62.0	62.0	74.0
	4	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW reduces transportation costs					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	3	23	46.0	46.0	50.0
	4	25	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW minimizes stress					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	2	4	8.0	8.0	16.0
	3	24	48.0	48.0	64.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW enables employees to be close to their families					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	3	22	44.0	44.0	58.0
	4	21	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW increases job performance					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	3	22	44.0	44.0	60.0
	4	20	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW increases operational cost (internet and electricity cost)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	3	28	56.0	56.0	64.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW distract workers and can impact on work performance					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
	3	26	52.0	52.0	70.0
	4	15	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW affects staff interaction					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	3	24	48.0	48.0	58.0
	4	21	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW hinders problem-solving approach					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
	3	23	46.0	46.0	64.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

RW increases information security risk					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	D	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	A	27	54.0	54.0	60.0
	SA	20	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Preferred mode of RW					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Phone calls	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Email	25	50.0	50.0	70.0
	WhatsApp	9	18.0	18.0	88.0
	Zoom	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Solutions to RW

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Internet data	35	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Flexible hour	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Work individually	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	