Effects of Telecommuting on Employee Motivation and Productivity During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case of New Era Publication Corporation, Namibia

Helvy Helena Shaanika[1] and Thomas Bhebhe[2]
[1]University of Namibia
[2]Chinhoyi University of Technology

ABSTRACT
The Covid-19 pandemic brought global changes to all spheres of life, including the world of work. One of the major changes was the embracement of the telecommuting concept. The employment field is by nature highly regulated by labour laws, contracts and policies. Introducing changes which affect existing laws, contracts and policies without negotiating with employeescan affect production and staff morale notwithstanding the fact that international laws and pandemics take precedence and override other statutes. This study investigated the effects of telecommuting on employee motivation and productivity. The study involved 67 respondents. Mixed research methodologies (Pragmatism) were used for the study with questionnaires and interviews being the main data collection instruments. The research findings showed that despite not having been consulted, a majority of respondents were in favour of telecommuting as a Covid-19 pandemic mitigation strategy because it provided for social distancing and it delivered the advantage of work-life balance to employees. The study also found that telecommuting, also called working from home (WFH), raised staff morale and motivated employees to increase productivity. This research concluded that telecommuting is the best mitigatory approach for most office-based jobs during pandemics such as Covid-19. The study also concluded that while telecommuting motivates employees and increases production, it only works best for a certain category of employees whose daily duties are computer technology based. The study recommended that even in the absence of pandemics, organisations such as New Era Publication Corporation could still resort to telecommuting as one of the best corporate practices as it increases productivity and helps with cost-cutting in times of financial crisis.
Key words:*Telecommuniting, Working from home, remote working, productivity,motivation*

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background of the study

The Covid-19 outbreak shocked the world of work as companies were least prepared for the lock-downs that followed for the better part of 2020. Huge losses in revue were experienced, but more loss was driven throughsalaries paid to employees who were not rendering any service during lockdowns. Data from sectorial research conducted on the G3 economies made up of the USA, China and the European Union (EU), shows that imports and exports on some of the major sectors including clothing and vehicles fell by 20% and this was expected to worsen in a number of countries around the world (Stavros, 2020).China was most affected, especially the country's trade and diplomatic relationships with several countries, some of which ended or suspended trade. USA and the United Kingdom (UK) were the first countries to introduce travel bans against Chinese nationals and flights to or from that country were suspended (Besenyő & Kármán, 2020).

Africa was not spared as the lockdowns severely affected the continent's aviation industry. Severe financial losses totalling $4.4 billion were experienced. Such losses led to the closure of some airports and airlines. The World Bank estimates that economic losses due to Covid-19 stood between $37billion and $79 billion by the end of 2020.

In Southern Africa, Covid-19 wreaked havoc. For instance, in Zimbabwe,the first case was reported on 20 March 2020 and government responded by declaring stringent lockdown conditions (Chitsamatanga, Wayne, & Sandro, 2021). This led to loss of income as employees could not report for work. In South Africa, the government borrowedmore than usual, yet a significant reduction was observed in tax revenue. Analysts forecasted a contraction of 7.2% in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which represented a fiscal deficit of 12% and 81% Debt-to-GDP ratio by 2021 (Charl, Cerbone, & Van Zijl, 2020).

Namibia was no exception to the global challenges brought by lockdowns. According to Stephanus & Odada (2020), Namibia registered its first two cases of Covid-19 on 13 March 2020. This resulted in the

adoption of the telecommuting policy by the public sector including central, local government and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2020).

Doyle (2020) defines telecommuting as an employment setup whereby employees do not have to be physically at the workplace as provided for by their employers. With telecommuting, employees work away from the usual office space and use technology to interact with their employers/ supervisors as well as with their colleagues. Often this is referred to as working from home (WFH), teleworking, mobile working or home working. In some cases, the strategy worked well but it also encountered numerous problems.

Green et al. (2020) suggested that the WFH policy is beneficial to the performance of the organisation and it has positive organisational outcomes, productivity, retention, and business continuity in times of disruption. White (2020) highlighted that every company's situation is unique and employees in certain industries and facility types will be impacted differently by the new Covid-19 mitigatory strategies. This contradiction from different studies gave rise to this study.

1.2. Statement of the problem
Every company's situation is unique and employees in various departments of different organisations wereimpacted differently by the measures to control the spread of Covid-19. This studysought to establish how telecommuting, as a preventative measure against Covid-19 affected employees' motivation and productivity. Literature on telecommuting in general is scanty. There were no studies focusing on how telecommuting affected employees' motivation and performance in Namibia's public institutionsincluding media houses such as New Era Publication Corporation (NEPC) during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is what inspired this research in order to fill the knowledge gap.

1.3. Objectives of the study
The main objective of the study was to investigate the effects of telecommuting on employees' motivation and productivity during the COVID 19 pandemic at NEPC, Namibia.
The specific objectives were:
1.3.1 To assess the level of motivation among employees who telecommuted during COVID-19 pandemic.
1.3.2 To explore challenges faced by telecommuters at NEPC Namibia during the COVID-19 pandemic.
1.3.3 To establish if telecommuting was sustainable for productivity and business continuity at NEPC, Namibia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4. Hypothesis of the study
H_0:   WFH Policy had no effect on employee motivation and productivity during the COVID- 19 pandemic.
H_1:   WFH Policy had effects on employee motivation and productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.
H_1:   There isa relationship between telecommuting and employee motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
H_0:   There is no relationship between telecommuting and employee motivation during the COVID- 19 pandemic.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW
According to Ikwoche (2020), Covid-19 is SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). It is a pandemic which is made up of a group of viruses that are causative organisms (or vectors) for diseases in mammals. The virus attacks the respiratory tracts. Hence an infected person shows symptoms such as breathing difficulty, coughing and sneezing among other manifestations. This highly infectious virus can be fatal. WHO declared it a pandemic in 2020 as the world continued witnessing economic uncertainty. According to Worldometers (2021), Covid-19 infected 239,982,067 people and claimed 4,890,143 lives worldwide by the 13th October 2021. Because of this highly infectious disease, the world of work embraced the WFH practice as a mitigation and prevention measure against the spread of infection at workplaces (Asgari, 2020).

2.6. Impact of telecommuting on employees' motivation and productivity
There is a progressive relationship between telecommuting and employee productivity which can be described by various factors. Such factors include the time that telecommuting employees spent working while at home. They are likely to work more hours. Unlike the office based employees, they do no spent time commuting to work, but would rather spent an extra hour on work related activities.

Furthermore, teleworkers are likely not to be distracted by unbecoming counterproductive office activities such as office politics (Beauregard, Basile, & Canonico, 2019). The results of the study carried out by Thorstensson (2020), supports Beauregard, Basile & Canonico (2019), that working from home has an influence on employee productivity. This is further reflected in an experimental study carried out byBloom et al. (2017) which noted that there is an increase of 13% in employees' performance, of which 9% was from

working extra time on their shift period and 4% was attributed to working in a quieter environment when working from home. Furthermore, the rate of job attritions fell by over 50%.

According to Shareena & Mohammand (2020), telecommuting consists of both positives and negatives. Among others, the WFH arrangement provides workers with adequate opportunity to concentrate on their work tasks. This is as opposed to the office contacts with co-workers which reduce commitment. In the absence of physical monitoring, workers have greater freedom and a sense of responsibility when they work from home.

A study by Rahman (2020), collaborates Blooms findings that majority of employees relate their increased level of productivity to WFH. Some teleworking employees according to Fana, Milasi & Napierała (2020) are in favour of telework because it helps them to focus by keeping away distractive colleagues and controlling supervisors whose presence sometimes turn out to be a nuisance. Conversely, the lack of meaningful conversations among co-workers and between employees and supervisors are believed to be among the shortcomings of telework.

Findings of the exploratory study by Purwanto et al. (2020), suggest that there are several advantages and disadvantages to the WFH concept. Among many advantages, WFH offers flexibility in completing work, as employees do not need to follow office hours which gives the working masses more free time. It also comes with the sense of financial relief as employees save on transportation and fuel costs, it can minimize the level of stress experienced besides traffic jams from home to the offic*e* and vice versa.

However, WFH may have a negative impact and studies has proven that this practice can create a sense of isolation among the workers. While teleworking, employees have limited face-to-face interactions with their co-workers, and this may increase the sense of feeling out of touch with others in the workplace. Isolation among workers may negatively affect performance. (Beauregard, Basile, & Canonico, 2019).

2.7. Challenges faced by telecommuters
Findings from several studies have exposed a number of disadvantages of telecommuting. Paskov (2020) noted that WFH came with lack of organisational readiness, inadequate technology, and the potential sense of isolation that affected employees at a time when they needed their colleagues most to share the pandemic casualties among families, friends and workmates. Purwanto et al. (2020) further pointed out that high electricity and internet costs were endured by employees.

Daud, Turiman, Rahmat & Kasi (2021) feel that WFH disrupts employees' work-life-balance. The expectations on the employees to be 'online' and 'available' all the time, has been highlighted among challenges faced by employees as employers may stick to exercising the traditional management of employees based on their presence and visibility.

Contrary to the study by Daud et al (2019)which found that work-life balance of teleworkers causes higher job satisfaction and reduced intentions to resign from the organisation. Telework helps employees to save time, because it eliminates travelling time. While telecommuting, the boundaries between home and work are non-existent as homes are the common off-site work station. Rahman (2020), has however pointed out the boundary theory as an answer that would help solve challenges associated with working from home. The boundary theory suggests that individuals make and adhere to boundaries. Employees are therefore able to set boundaries between their personal time and their employers' time.

2.8. Sustainability of telecommuting after the pandemic
The study by Rahman (2020), suggests that the model of a workplace setting is not always ideal. Employees are able to work remotely and deliver better than when they are based in the same office with their colleagues and supervisors, which is referred to as the workplace model. As a matter of fact, freelancers have used remote working conditions successfully over the years. However, this new norm also creates a work-life conflict and ICT overabundance usage.

The study by Abdullah et al (2020) further shows that employees who work from home do have the advantage of being around their spouses. This may help couples to bond and improve their communication once they are aware of each other's schedules. This study further recognised that WFH comes with increased performance because of flexibility. Employees have freedom to determine their own working time and place. In addition, Bloom, Liang, Roberts &Ying (2017) maintain that numerous workers feel a positive satisfaction because of the flexibility they get from WFH. Working from home can increase performance; thanks to the absence of distraction from co-workers andless break time. It is therefore easy to concentrate on the tasks when working out of the office where employees spend company time on unproductive activities.

On the contrary, Etheridge *et al.* (2020) suggests that WFH can result in difficulty when performing a job and this can cause lower mental well-being. The findings of a survey carried out on 1,182 institutions in China by Wu & Bin (2021), reveals that SOEs' performance dropped by 50% during the Covid-19 pandemic. Daraba et al. (2021), also supported, referring to the latest working arrangements due to Covid-19 pandemic as

a turbulent era that calls for cross-boundary collaboration, public innovation and, perhaps most significantly, the event of improved and well thought of strong governance strategies that support adaptive and versatile adjustment for workers.

Additionally, other researchers argue that separating the workplace and the home causes negative outcomes. The absence of face to face communication between employees and supervisors may lead them to lose the advantage of seeking help from colleagues (Abdullah et al, 2020). Based on Yusof & Rahmat (2020), communication at the workplace helps build bonds among employees and employers. Shareen & Mohammand (2020) identified the decreased control by workmates or the supervisors as a crucial drawback experienced during the work from home.

Furthermore, Bonacini et al (2020), cites that WFH risks exacerbating pre-existing inequalities within the labour market, which may worsen if it remains unregulated. The study highlights the need to form policies that may alleviate inequalities like income support measures for brief term basis and human capital interventions (in the long run), to play a more important compensating role within the future.

Regardless of the aforesaid disadvantages, Daraba et al (2021) conclude that the advantages of telework outweigh the shortcomings. Adequate support to telecommuting employees including ample and low cost internet access are very helpful in this regard. Human resources in this case must also begin to be improved, in order to assist employees with the advancement in technology.

2.9. Theoretical Framework
2.9.1 Theories of Motivation

2.9.1.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory
According to Shikalepo (2020), Abraham Maslow is credited and well-known for having developed a theory of human motivation called Hierarchy of Needs Theory (HNT). This theory of motivation is predicated on assumptions that there is always something that somebody is trying to fulfil; once a requirement is fulfilled, it is not as compelling as an unfulfilled need; and, finally, needs are arranged into five categories that include physiological need, need for security, sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. Maslow's HNT has received wide recognition, particularly among practicing managers. It is therefore intuitively logical and straightforward to grasp and a few research has validated it. (Mihnas, 2019).

This same theory, has also been criticised for implying that people experience needs in the same order while failing to recognise cultural and individual differences. For instance, when the company employs a manager; such an individual may not be motivated by food and accommodation (Physiological Needs) nor the Love and Belonging nor Esteem Needs as he/she may already be self-actualised needing self-fulfilment. The Theory fails to acknowledge that needs can be influenced by different factors and situations (Steel, 2009).

In the case of NEPC, the Hierarchy of Needs Theory is important in that telecommuting should be structured in a manner which allows employees to rest and the employees' surety of tenure should be attended to. Only employees who feel they are loved and respected can telecommute and be productive.

2.9.1.2. Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory
Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory is viewed as one of the theories that have close links to the Maslow's Needs Theory. This theory categorised employees' work-related needs, named Two-Factor theory. In the context of Two-Factor Theory (TFT), Herzberg categorised human needs into two main groups namely, the Hygiene factors and Motivators.
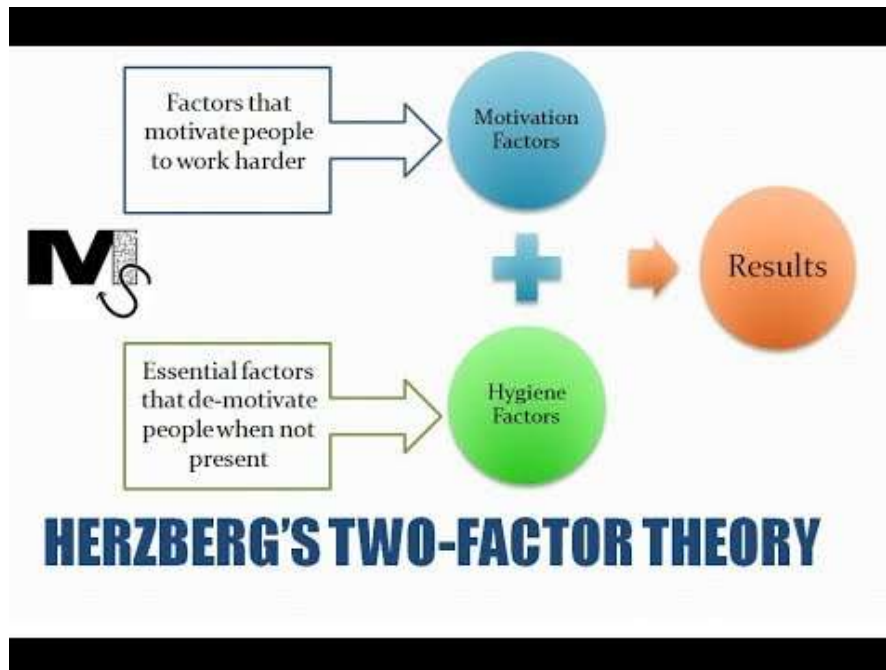
Figure 1: Herzberg's Motivators and Hygiene factors. Source: (www.slidesalad.com/, 2021)

Figure 2: Herzberg's Motivators and Hygiene factors. Source: (www.slidesalad.com/, 2021)

Herzberg argues that there are certain factors that a business could introduce that may directly motivate employees to work harder. These factors are called Motivators. While motivators encourage employees to work harder, there are other factors that will demotivate an employee if not present. Such factors do not in themselves actually motivate employees to work harder. These are called Hygiene or Maintenance Factors (Mihnas, 2019). Hygiene factors need to remain in place so that the motivators are able to motivate an employee. For instance, while recognition (a motivator) can motivate an employee, that motivation will soon end if the salary is too low (Maintenance/Hygiene factor).
Employers need to motivate employees using motivators but for that motivation to be maintained at the right level, Maintenance factors should come into play. These are critical for NEPC as telecommuting can involve job enlargement and job enrichment.

2.9.2. Theory of Production
The most prominent theory of productivity identified in this study is the theory of the factors of production, which was authored by J. B. Say and F. Bastiat in the 18th century. These authors attributed the capacity to produce value on three factors of production such as labour, land and capital. In short, the theory says in order for production to take place, there must be labour, land (place where the

production can be carried out) and capital. Similarly, for telecommuting to be productive and possible, NEPC will need the three means of production to be in place first. The theory of marginal productivity was later developed in the late 19th century. The marginal productivity theory (MPT) intended to resolve logical contradictions in the theory of the factors of production. Similarly, to the factors of production theory, the marginal productivity theory also acknowledges that the value of products is created by the three basic factors of production.

2.9.3. Theories of Working from Home
2.9.3.1 The Boundary Theory
This study looked at various theories and how they are related to working from home or telecommuting. In addition, the theoretical framework identified was also used to determine if telecommuting is a sustainable practice especially to the Namibian media institutions. Given the motivation theories: Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory and the Theory of Productivity as presented above, this study is underpinned by the Boundary theory which has been identified as the suitable theoretical framework.

Boundary theory suggests that individuals manage the boundaries between work and personal life through processes of segmenting and/or integrating the domains (Rahman, 2020). The boundary theory ismore suitable toflexible working arrangements where employees are required to set boundaries between their employers' and personal time when they are required to carry out their work and engage in their personal activities while telecommuting. With Covid-19 outbreak, WFH has become a new normal in Namibia and has been embraced to create a work-life balance in recent times.

2.10. Conceptual Framework
Teleworking has been viewed as a versatile work arrangement that permits social distancing by allowing employees to carryout work from their residence or from other locations other than the office. Based on Rahman (2020), 34% of business leaders have predicted that 50% of their full-time workers are going to be telecommuting by the end of 2020. This prediction seems to have realised the wide-reaching spread of Covid-19 which forced the globe into lockdown. WFH was therefore viewed as the best alternative to shield the world economy from a total breakdown.
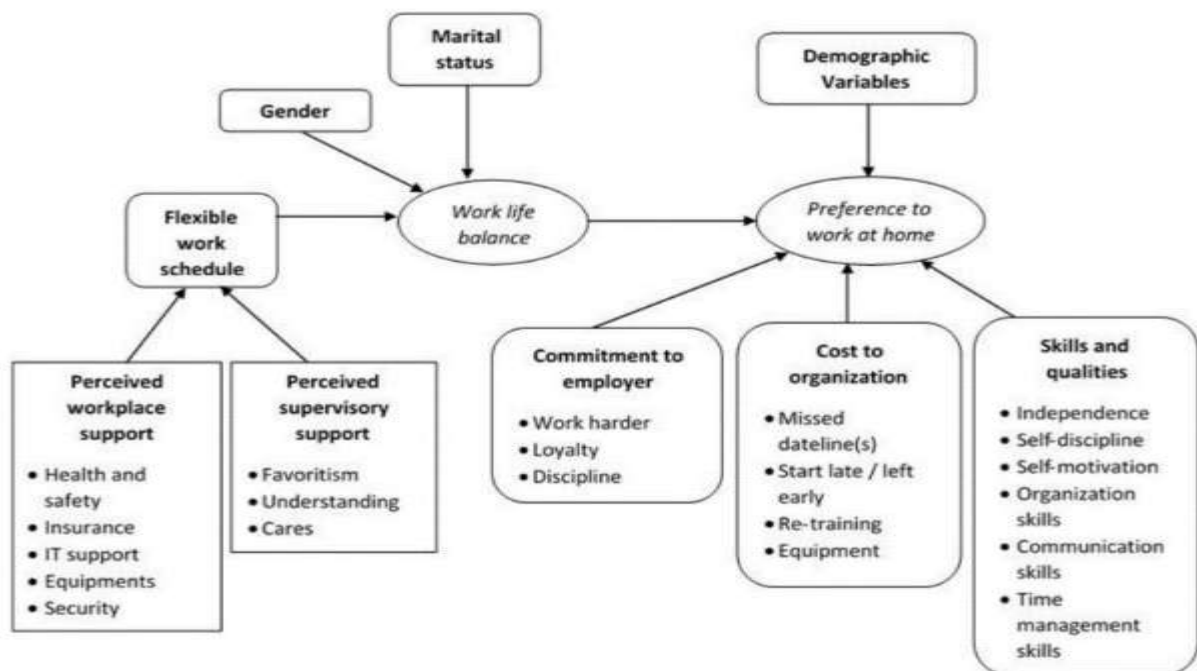
The aforesaid is illustrated in figure 3 below.

Figure 3. The proposed conceptual framework adopted from Asgari (2020)

III.   Research Methodology
This study was based on Pragmatism and it used both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies where the questionnaires and interview guides were the data collection instruments.

New Era Publishing Corporation (NEPC) has a population of 67 full-time employees. Using the census sampling technique, all the 67 employees were participants in the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
4.2. Analyses of data
4.2.1The knowledge and effects of the WFH Policy

The respondents were requested to state whether the company's WFH policy was clear of which 30.36% said 'yes' and 69.64% replied 'no'. On the contrary 83.92% affirmed that their WFH objectives were clear and only 16.08% indicated that their personal WFH objectives were not clear. The aforesaid outcome is an indication that while employees knew what was expected of them as individuals, the company had no clear policy to guide employees when telecommuting. The above is shown in figure 4.6.

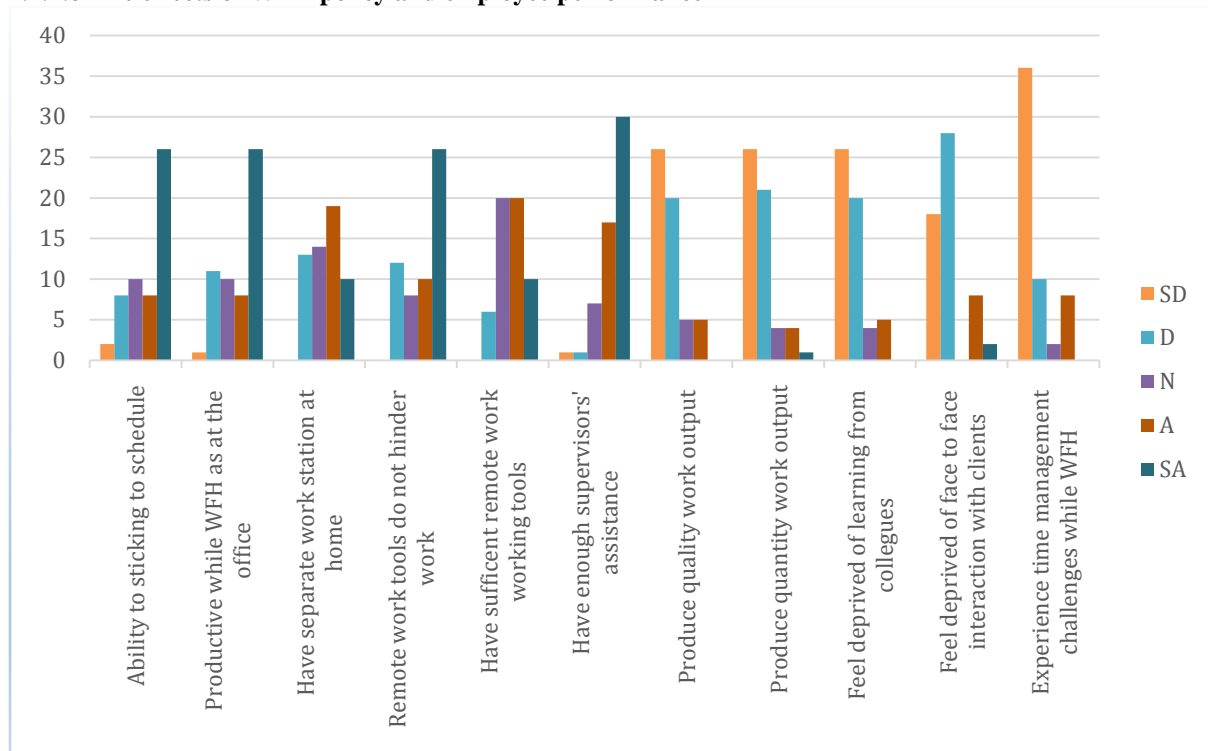### 4.2.1.6 The effects of WFH policy and employee performance

Figure 4. Effects of WFH practice on employee's performance

Ability to stick to schedule
On the question whether respondents are able to stick to a work schedule while WFH, 64% agreed, 18% were neutral, 18% disagreed. The aforesaid responses show that majority of employees at NEPC are able to stick to their work while telecommuting.
I am as productive while working from home as I am while in office
60% of the respondents further agreed that they are as productive while telecommuting as they are at the office, while 18% opted for a neutral box, and 22% disagreed. This shows that a majority of employees at NEPC are as productive while telecommuting as they are in the office setting.
I have a separate work station at home
Furthermore, 23% disagreed that they had separate and suitable space for working at home, 25% were neutral, 52% agreed. This also means that most of the employees had spaces suitable for work within their home settings.
I have sufficient working tools at home
At least 11% of the respondents felt that they did not have all the tools they needed to effectively work from home, 36% were neutral, another 53% of the respondents agreed. Based on these results, a majority of the respondents had necessary tools for telecommuting. The result also shows an overwhelming number (36%) of respondents were neutral which means quite a significant number of employees were not content with the tools given to them. This can be taken that while majority of the respondents felt that they had necessary tools they

needed while telecommuting, there is however a considerable number of respondents who were not too sure if they had all the necessary tools, hence the neutral option.

I have enough supervisor's assistance while working from home
Only 4% disagreed that they were getting enough help from their supervisors, 13% were neutral, 83%, agreed that they were getting assistance from their supervisors while telecommuting. This shows that majority of supervisors at NEPC, do render necessary assistance to their subordinates while WFH.

My quality of work is affected while working from home/ My quantity of work output was affected while WFH
On quality work output and quantity output, respondents scored the same;84% disagreed, 8% were neutral, another 8% agreed that quality and quantity of output was affected by WFH. The above outcome shows that telecommuting did not hinder the quality nor the quantity of employees' work output.

I feel deprived of opportunity to learn from workmates while WFH
82% disagreed, 11% were neutral and 7% agreed. It can be concluded that most employees are able to learn from one another, even while telecommuting. These findings are contrary to the conclusions arrived at by Beauregard, Basile and Canonico (2019) who noted that co-workers may perceive spatial distance as psychological distance (out of sight, out of mind) and teleworkers may lose on shared team objectives.

I feel deprived of face-to-face interaction with clients while WFH
82% of the respondents disagreed, 18% agreed that working from home makes it difficult for them to interact with clients. These results indicate that majority of employees do not feel deprived of access to their clients while telecommuting.

I have problems with time management while working from home
82% disagreed, 4% were neutral and 14% agreed that they found it difficult to manage time when telecommuting. The aforesaid responses show that a majority of respondents were able to manage their time while telecommuting.

4.2.1.7 The Effects of WFH policy on Employee motivation
 Respondents were requested to indicate on a five-point Likert scale. These experiences were divided into two categories such as: The effects of WFH policy on employee motivation and the effect of WFH practice on employee motivation on Table 1.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
a) I am aware of our company's working from home policy	20	71	5	4	0
b) I feel that the work from home policy is clear.	53	27	9	11	0
c) My working from home objectives are clear.	0	13	10	27	50
d) Company's WFH policy supports interaction between colleagues	53	27	9	11	0
e) Our company's WFH policy compels my supervisor to give me necessary support.	53	30	5	10	2
f) I am happy with our WFH arrangement	0	13	0	30	57
g) I take regular breaks	0	4	0	36	60
h) It is easy to "turn off work mode" at the end of the day	0	14	4	34	48

Table 1 represents the findings from the study on how telecommuting as a practice affects employees' motivation. The summary of findings are presented below:
a)   91% of respondents are not aware of the company's work from home policy (WFP). This clearly shows that there may be no work from policy at NEPC.
b)   80% noted that the work from home policy at NEPC is not clear. This may be cause the policy may not be there as noted in a) above.
c)   77% of respondents stated that their work from home objectives are clear.
d)   80% of the respondents disagreed that the company's work from home policy supports interaction among employees.

e)   83% disagreed that the WFP compels supervisors to give employees necessary support.
f)   87% were happy about the work from home arrangement although it was noted in responses above that such an arrangement is not backed by policy.
g)   96% agreed that when working from home they take regular breaks.
h)   825 agreed that when working from home it is easy to turn-off work mode and thus revert to normal work-life balance.

b) Table 2: The effects of WFH practice on employee motivation

	SD	D	N	A	SA
a) I feel motivated working alone without supervision	2	13	2	33	50
b) WFH makes me excel in my work	2	14	13	17	54
c) WFH is boring	35	36	13	14	2
d) In order to be motivated, I need my good work to be recognised. WFH makes it difficult for my superiors to recognize my good work.	11	21	27	23	18
e) There is no love and belonging when an employee is WFH	6	21	20	23	30
f) Theory says an ordinary employee does not want to work, WFH does not inspire an employee to work hard	50	37	0	9	4

Table 2. The Effect of WFH Policy and practice on Employee motivation

Respondents were asked to show their level of motivation, using a five-point Likert Scale as indicated on Table 2. In summarising their responses, Disagree and Strongly Disagree were added to mean the respondents disagreed with the statement, while Agree and Strongly Agree were also added to mean that the respondent agreed. Below is the summary of the responses:
a)   83% of the respondentsagreed that working alone without supervision motivates employees. This means employees desire autonomy, being trusted and being given full responsibility.
b)   71% agreed that working from home makes workers excel in their work.
c)   71% disagreed that working from home is boring. This implies that they find working from home exciting.
d)   41% of the respondents agreed that working from home makes it difficult for supervisors to see their good work, 27% remained neutral to mean that they either care or do not care whether supervisors see their good work. However, 32% which is a significant percentage disagreed that supervisors find it difficult to see their good work.
e)   53% agreed that love and belonging is reduced when employees work from home.
f)   87% disagreed that working from home does not inspire workers to work hard. This means that a majority of respondents felt that working from home also inspires them to work hard.

4.2.1.9. Telecommuting and work-life balance
Participants were asked to respond to a statement that telecommuting deprives respondents from enjoying their private life, 89% disagreed with the statement.This shows that only a few of the respondents felt that WFH interfered with their private lives.

My family does not disturb me, they understand that I am at work when I am working from home.
86% agreed that their families do not disturb them when working from home.

It was easy to separate home roles and work roles while working from home
82% agreed that it was easy to separate home roles and work roles while working from home.

The aforementioned results indicate that the respondents' household chores do not interfere with their employment duties.

It was easy to connect directly to the manager while working from home.
66% agreed that it was easy to directly connect to their managers while working from home.

4.2.1.10. Stress management among the telecommuting employees

Stress can easily build up when working from home:
91% of the respondents disagreed that stress can easily build up while working from home. These results also show that a majority of employees do not believe that stress can build up while telecommuting.

I was able to create a hard line between home roles and work roles
84% of the respondents agreed that that they were able to clearly demarcate work roles from home roles. This shows that employees are able to confine themselves and not mix work with house chores at particular times.

I am happy with my ability to work from home.
88% of the respondents agreed that they were able to work from home successfully. This means that a majority of employees are happy with their ability to telecommute.

4.3 Hypothesis testing
This study revealed that variable of WFH Policy and employee motivation are indeed dependent on each another.

Table 5: Hypothesis Test for the WFH Policy and employee motivation

Step 1	H_0: WFH Policy and employee motivation are independent. H_1: H_0 if false
Step 2	Test Statistic = $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Step 3	5% Level of Significance = 0.05 Degrees of freedom = (r-1) (c-1) = (8-1)(5-1)= 5 *4 = 28 Reject H0 if $\chi^2 \geq 41.34$
Step 4	Chi squared calculation = 524.77
Step 5	We reject H_0 because $524.77 > 41.34$. At a significance level of 5%= 0.05 there is statistically significant evidence that H0 is false or that the WFH Policy and employee motivation are not independent (therefore, they are dependent or related), $p < 0.005$.

Table 6: Hypothesis Test for Telecommuting and employee motivation

Step 1	H_0: Telecommuting and employee motivation are independent. H_1: H_0 if false
Step 2	Test Statistic = $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Step 3	5% Level of Significance = 0.05 Degrees of freedom = (r-1) (c-1) = (6-1)(5-1)= 5 *4 = 20 Reject H0 if $\chi^2 \geq 31.41$
Step 4	Chi squared calculation = 101.69
Step 5	We reject H_0 because $101.69 > 31.41$. At a significance level of 5%= 0.05 there is statistically significant evidence that H0 is false or that Telecommuting and employee motivation are not independent (therefore, they are dependent or related), $p < 0.005$.

4.2.2 Qualitative data and analysis
In order to explore the views, involvements, opinions and aspirations of key informants such as managers, telephonic interviews were carried out. They were given an opportunity to further express their views in their own wordsthroughout the interview.

4.2.2.1. Telecommuting and productivity
Respondents identified shortage of resources such as internet bandwidth and portable computers such as laptops and tablets, transport and VPN as the tools that hindered productivity of employees while telecommuting. Interviewee 4 had this to say:

Telecommuting came as a new idea. We had not budgeted for it as Covid-19 hit us unawares. This made us to proceed to implement telecommuting without major tools such as internet data, lap-tops, and tablets. We are happy that most of our employees used their personal gadgets because they were excited that their jobs were saved and they were able to be productive. Needless to say, the production levels lowered during WFH.

Employees further pointed out that productivity was also affected by the inadequate platforms for communication between employees and their supervisors or line managers.
Interviewee 2 remarked:

In future, to make working from home successful, we need to be prepared with enough gadgets. We also need to train staff in the techniques of holding meetings via Zoom or Microsoft teams.

The attitude of some of the supervisors when called by their subordinates, was also pointed out among the counterproductive issues.
A male manager, Interviewee 5 had this to add:

During evaluation, some employees claimed that some of the supervisors' where not cooperative when called by subordinates who needed guidance. They felt as if it was a bother for an employee to request guidance.

Interviewee 9 had this to say:

WFH is fraughtwith disturbances from family members, especially employees'children, given that during lockdowns, schools were closed and children were forced to also stay at home. This made WFH to negatively affect production. Moreover, supervising workers under the WFH mode is very difficult. It reduces managers to inspectors who drive from home to home to see if employees are really working.

Interviewee 7 added:

The comfort of WFH also comes with temptations including the urges to take a nap, indulging into alcohol or socialising with family members or visiting friends during working hours. I personally do not support WFH as it belittles the role of managers and supervisors.

The key informants expressed disappointment on some employees in the distribution department who were requested to collect newspapers for dispatch. Most felt that the company was infringing upon their rights to a safe working environment. Interviewee 6 had this to add:

In some cases, working from home could not work without blending with reporting for work physically to a few employees in the distribution department. These employees were not cooperative when requested to report for work and pick up newspapers for dispatch. They felt very insecure and complained that the company was only interested in profits and not the lives of employees

4.2.2.2 Future possibilities of WFH
While a majority of respondents indicated that they are as productive while telecommuting as they are when office based at the workplace, key informants, most of whom were managers, disagreed. They noted that production levels drastically dropped and performance levels were severely affected in certain departments.
There were also key informants (managers) who were happy with the WFH arrangements, but they felt that employees should alternate by having WFH for three days and physical reporting for duty for the remaining days in a week. They felt that telecommuting was good but it should not be a permanent arrangement.

V.   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2Conclusions
Most respondents who were drawn from among the workers welcomed telecommuting and noted that it increased production. However, key informants who were made up of managers disagreed. They said that working from home affected performance and production.
Respondents remarked that telecommuting should be continued beyond the Covid-19 pandemic because of its ability to increase production and performance but key informants proposed that physical reporting for work should not be entirely replaced by WFH. They proposed a blend of the two systems.

On the overall, Heads of Departments (Key Informants) had negative attitudes towards WFH. It was established that the managerial staff felt disempowered if employees work from home without supervision and still produced results. They appeared suspicious that WFH tended to render them useless.

5.3 Recommendations
The study came up with the following recommendations:

- The NEPC WFH policy needs to be reduced to writing and crafted in consultations with employees.

- To make the WFH policy more effective, there is a need to avail the required tools such as laptops, bandwidth and communication gadgets such as mobile phones which enhance communication among employees and their managers.

- There is need to train managerial staff and Heads of Departments about WFH and to educate them about its advantages.

- NEPC needs to come up with mandatory departmental virtual diary of meetings for all departments in order to mitigate the sense of isolation among the employees and promote a good manager-employee working relationship

- Managers need to be more accessible to their subordinates, by responding to their calls and e-mails at their earliest possible time.

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