

HR Department's Compelling New Role in Workplace Transition in Response to the Coronavirus

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Abstract: COVID-19 is a global health crisis that started in Wuhan, China, and spread rapidly around the world. This pandemic has resulted in restrictions on movement and the temporary closure of workplace premises, business organizations made provisions for implementing remote work. The objective of this conceptual study is to investigate, HR department's compelling new role in the workplace transition, in response to the covid 19 post-pandemic situations within the Sri Lankan context. The conceptualization was made upon, expanding the role of the HR department in the workplace. A comprehensive literature review was used as the method for this study to achieve the aforementioned study objective. Based on the literature, this study identified that previously HR departments focused on a day in life tasks, administering benefits, and drive to sustainable competitiveness. However, HR teams are now in support of their company's crisis management efforts. Based on the study it has identified, the HR department's compelling new role in four areas. Developing mental and physical well-being of employees, improving the efficiency of remote work, developing employee engagement through effective communication, and providing equal access to opportunities and resources. The practical implications are attempting to promote the HR department's expanding role in demonstrating a way for the positive results associated with workplace transition in the covid-19 post-pandemic situation.

Keywords: *Covid-19 Post – pandemic, the compelling new role of the HR department, Remote work, Workplace transition, Sri Lanka*

Introduction

COVID-19 outbreak is a global health and economic crisis, spreading over the world. Consequently, a huge number of workers are struggling with the loss of normality in their day in life at work (ILO, 2020). Most employees lost their jobs and income, but many others continue to work even in pandemic situations (Agbah, 2020). Suddenly arrived COVID-19 pandemic situation had a significant impact on the physical and mental well-being of workers' lives and impact on the world of work

changes. As a result of this situation, half of the global workforce, as well as the Sri Lankan workforce, was at risk of losing their jobs within the job market (ILO, 2019). Employees were not left out, even large-scale business organizations were on the incline of losing profits, and this had a substantial impact on the security of their employment and losing their jobs (ILO, 2020). The World health organization stated that employers are required to implement shift patterns, teleworking, and other practices to reduce crowding



by stepping up the situation (OECD,2020). Employers learned how to employ flexible workers, which would be a huge battle won for human resource management in this post-pandemic era (Harper, 2020). Furthermore, businesses were rapidly transformed and adapt to the new normal to survive within an organizational context due to the economic impact of this pandemic situation. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected most organizations' normal routine operations in physical workplaces and productivity matters (Mankins, 2020). Since this pandemic has resulted in restrictions on movement and the temporary closure of workplace premises, organizations have had to make provisions for staff to work remotely as a result of the implementation of lockdown regulations around the world (OECD, 2020). The HR department plays a vital role in ensuring the success of a business organization and drive towards the purpose and values of the organization (Thomas N. et al.,2019). HR departments articulate the mission of the entire organization and meet a new set of organizational needs in this pandemic situation. HR departments' evolved and transformed across all aspects of the HR lifecycle. (ILO, 2020)

The objective of this conceptual study is to examine the impact of the Covid-19 post-pandemic situation on the HR department's compelling new role in mainly four areas. Developing mental and physical well-being of employees, improving the efficiency of remote work, developing employee engagement through effective communication, and providing equal

access to opportunities and resources in the workplace transition. The pandemic creates extraordinary opportunities to enhance the HR function in business organizations. The researcher tried to bridge the gap between the COVID-19 post-pandemic situation and the field of Human resource management in a situation where a relatively new area for the business context to deal with workplace transition from a physical working environment to a virtual platform. This conceptual study, therefore, seeks to broaden the scope of research in this area in the Sri Lankan context.

This research paper is a study that contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of COVID-19 in the setting of HRM within the organizational context. Addressing 4 different forms of employee concerns and strategic initiatives that expanding the role of the HR department as a result of the workplace transition due to this pandemic situation. A comprehensive literature review is used as the methodology of this conceptual paper, in addition to logical assumptions and empirical observations to address the four areas methodically.

Workplace Transition in Response to the Coronavirus

According to McKinsey (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic created new ways of doing business, allowing business organizations to change how they work, as well as the involvement of workplaces in ensuring a secure and healthy working environment. Furthermore, COVID-19 presented rapid changes, from which many

businesses from around the world have demonstrated their ability to respond with pre-designed crisis plans (Vouzas,2020). Many business organizations started with a reduced on-site workforce and more flexible work conditions(Ancillo, 2020). Most organizations were initially unaware to experience a situation in which employees become expected to leave their offices and tend to complete tasks remotely from other locations or their homes. During the government-imposed lockdowns, business organizations inevitably adapted to continue work assuring that main operations in support services were done remotely (ILO,2020). Most employees suffered from job uncertainty and the risk of infectious disease causes a deep psychological effect and emotional response as a result of the pandemic (Lee, 2021). However, business organizations replicated what was done before the pandemic, by translating existing processes into remote working contexts. Redesign the particular way of work performed and located to prepare for the new post-COVID-19 situation (WHO, 2020). It would be essential to understand the structures and mechanisms required to develop tasks and workplaces according to their needs, depending on the nature of the job and the requirements to perform it. Business organizations were aligned with new processes, and technologies (Vouzas, 2020). The workplaces were redesigned using specific requirements that take into accounts, such as ensuring social distance, increasing the employee's scope of working hours, and occupational health and safety regulations. As mentioned in the Annual report in Central bank Sri

Lanka (2020), the pandemic has brought an emerging rapidly for many organizations to reconsider the significance of participation, accessibility, and workplace. At the same time, the WFH has challenges, as successful implementation of this approach depends on several factors, including shared responsibility, commitment, and mutual understanding between the employer and employee.

Managers and HR professionals who are inexperienced in remote working and work from home practices previously, rake place new ways to engage, motivate, and communicate with their employees. Business organizations need to have a complete sense of what remote work involves. Instead, remote work may be structured such that employees work partially from home and partially in the workplace, according to a predetermined calendar or rotating schedules (Lateef, 2020). Mostly in the future workplace, technology is a concern for employees returning to work safely, due to the risk of future pandemics or the lack of vaccinations for COVID-19, where employers must define how employees arrive at their workplaces, as well as the related health and safety considerations, such as sanitation and social distance. Remote working, work from home (WFH), flexible hours, and roster systems were all widely used as a result. Even though WFH had already been used in several sectors and jobs, it had become widely popular as a temporary solution of organizational continuity during the pandemic (CBSL, 2020)

Remote working arrangements have some limitations and difficulties in terms of practical execution. To begin with, remote working arrangements would not be appropriate for all industries, job categories, or functional areas. In Sri Lanka, the status of the impact of Coronavirus on workplace transition is not so worse relatively. However, it is considered to some extent that cannot be ignored. Due to several difficulties

with ICT infrastructure, ICT literacy, and manual processes and procedures, the efforts to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic were not entirely effective. Furthermore, given the current state of digitalization, most public sector job functions are less suited to perform in WFH setups, as public services offered to the general public should be performed in person. Refer to the Table 1.

Table 1 - Computer Literacy among Computer Aware Employed Population (aged 15 – 69 years) by Occupation group – 2018, 2019 & 2020 (during 1st six months)

Occupation Group	Computer Literacy Rate (%)		
	2018	2019	2020
Sri Lanka	61.7	63.7	64.5
Managers, Senior Officials, and Legislators	67.6	73.5	76.6
Professionals	85.8	87.1	90.2
Technicians and Associate Professionals	83.3	85.2	84.6
Clerks and Clerical support workers	89.4	90.7	92.7
Services and Sales workers	60.6	50.9	57.6

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Computer Literacy Statistics – 2020 (First six months), accessed 03 March 2021

“Computer literacy among the employed population who are aware of computers in Sri Lanka is around 64.5 % in 2020. The positions such as Senior Officials and Managers (76.6%), Professionals (90.2%), Technicians and Associate professionals (84.6%), Clerks and Clerical support workers (92.7%) have higher computer literacy rates.”

As stated in International Labour Organization (2020) the level of ICT literacy, required supervision, and the ability to perform work outside of the workplace in terms of adequate availability and quality of physical and ICT infrastructure and equipment, living arrangements, and other responsibilities of the employees should all be evaluated on a case-by-

case basis. As a result of the significant shift in the employer-employee relationship, new techniques of engaging, managing, regulating, and assessing employee performance should be created to sustain employee motivation and performance. Shifting from traditional direction and control management to results-based management (ILO, 2020) with frequent communication and reviews. In addition, new approaches to communication and engagement should be implemented to sustain business culture and team cohesiveness while also reducing employee psychological stress (Gittel, 2008). Meanwhile, keeping defined working hours should be a focus in the long-term adoption of WFH arrangements to

avoid overworking-related long-term impacts on employees' physical and mental health, work-family conflicts, and maintain an optimal level of productivity (Ancillo, 2020).

HR Department's Compelling New Role in Workplace Transition

Reviewing the growing importance of expanding the role of the HR department in this pandemic situation, it has been on the front lines, actively promoting attempts to make employees' lives easier as an essential service provider (ILO, 2020). The HR department is responsible for addressing employee concerns and frustrations in circumstances like pandemic situations, in addition to handling business requirements (Susilo, 2020). Traditional working methods have become obsolete as a result of the current changes caused by the pandemic situation (Agbah, 2020). The HR department must review policies and procedures to reflect the new normal. HR department's involvement in the workplace is expanding rapidly as new conditions are implemented (ILO, 2020). COVID-19 forced human resource management intervention towards social responsibility implementation (Brammer, 2017). Employees tend to employ in remote working and during the crisis have seen a massive drop in absenteeism for physical work premises. The changing effect from workplace to remote work has limited the economic impact of the COVID-19 and has limited the further spread of the virus. However, several empirical evidence suggests that working from home in many jobs and industries is

provide limited opportunities (Schymik, 2020; Susilo, 2020).

Business organizations have indicated impressive agility and perseverance to adapt to new working conditions in this pandemic situation (ILO, 2020). Working from home increases more common inequalities within a business context. According to the ILO (2020) Continuity of this pandemic situation, employees are suffering from difficulties of less ICT infrastructure, technical know-how, and poor internet connectivity issues, and significant skill shortage gaps for remote working initiatives Furthermore it increases existing imbalances between several industries and job varieties (G.Henseke, 2017). Moreover, HR professionals might responsible for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization. Since the HR department serves as a mediator and link between senior management and employees during regular working routines, it may be an essential element of a business organization's Crisis Management efforts (Taamneh et al., 2018). By the experience from previous attempts, the HR department can support their employees by constructively using readiness efforts. In such a scenario, as stated in OECD (2021) employees who have previously experienced and are aware of each other's strengths and limitations have a greater level of responsiveness to face continuing their work. HR department could also help organizations and their employees to return to some sense of normality during the crisis period and post-pandemic situation (Z. Khan et al., 2019)

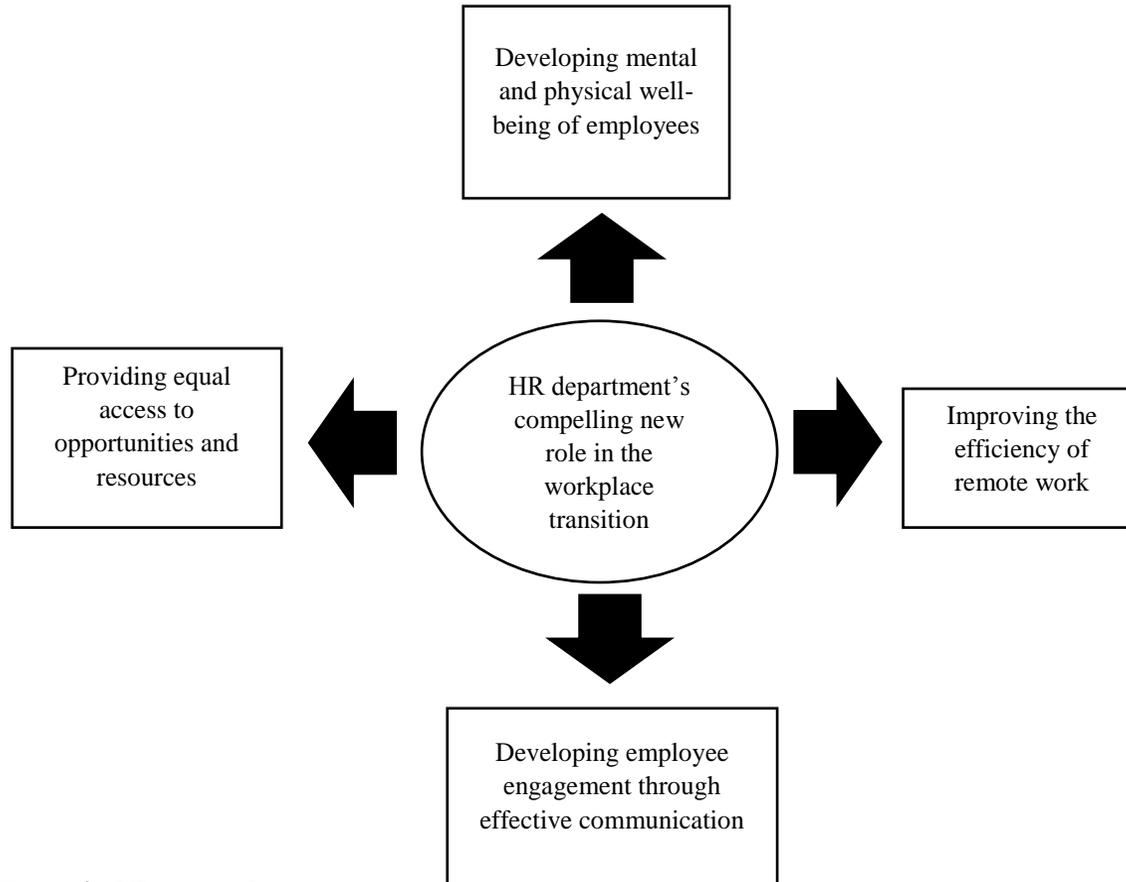


Figure 01: Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature, study it has identified, the HR department's expanded role in four areas of developing mental and physical well-being of employees, improving the efficiency of remote work, developing employee engagement through effective communication, and providing equal access to opportunities and resources. Refer to the Figure 01.

Developing Mental and Physical Well-being of Employees

High levels of psychological well-being and employee engagement play a crucial role in delivering some of the important outcomes that are associated with successful, high-performing organizations. Psychological well-being is linked to a range of important individual outcomes for employees, including a range of mental and physical health concerns, with lower levels of psychological well-being associated with poorer outcomes. (Quick, 2003) The COVID-19 pandemic has made a massive burden on employee lives and its long-term consequences might have an impact on overall physical and mental health. Employees' fear of external threats is adversely effective for generating feelings associated with uncertainty or risk as a result of negative behavior. Fear is an emotional state that leads to feelings of fear and the threat of harm or an unpleasant event. Employees may experience fear in the workplace as a result of a variety of external and internal sources. (Lebel, 2016)

External threat fear is characterized as fearfulness resulting from sources outside of an employee's organization. Economic or company downturns, such as covid 19 pandemic situation within the current context. Fear of external threats has been shown to cause employee absence in

organizations, limit their thinking of innovation, and affect employee wellbeing, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. As a result, overcoming employee anxiety and fear in the outcome of COVID-19's tragic outcomes is a crucial aspect of the global economic context. Traditional working methods have become obsolete as a result of the industry change. Human resource professionals need to review policies and procedures to address the new normal. In the last few months, HR has emerged of such a greater significance. HR teams are now in advance of their company's strategic planning efforts, previously having primarily focused on administering benefits and driving strategic growth across industry professionals. (Jeet, 2020)

HR should embrace the initiative to support and prioritize their employees' psychological and emotional well-being. Employees may experience anxiety and stress as a result of these unexpected events. The psychological needs and emotions of employees are prevalent during changes in the workplace. Changes in the workplace influence the emotional reactions of employees. The social support displayed confidence, open communication and empowerment ultimately lead to a sense of stability and security. The absence of support and autonomy in turn leads to poor emotional psychological safety. (Gittel, 2008)

The impact of psychological well-being can be identified broadly in two aspects (Claudia, et al.,2019). According to the first approach well-being associates with the experience of positive feelings such as emotions, moods, and factors. The other, approach to well-being considers the importance of the “purpose” in well-being. True happiness is found by “doing what is worth doing.” That gives direction and meaning to people’s actions, enhances the impact that positive emotions can have on psychological well-being. (Henry, 2007). People that have higher levels of psychological well-being learn and solve problems more efficiently are more excited about change, have more pleasant relationships with others, and are more willing to embrace change (Cartwright, 2008).

Organizational strategies to develop mental and physical well-being of employees

Many workers may be experiencing full-time WFH for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic, while simultaneously being isolated from coworkers, colleagues, and perhaps even family. Their daily lives have been interrupted, potentially causing further stress, anxiety, and physical and emotional hardships. When organizations suffer losses, there may be more shortages, layoffs, and terminations, prompting workers to experience increased anxiety, uncertainty, and insecurity, which can lead to depression.

- Contacting workers frequently to ensure that they feel supported, and being present, accessible, and

willing to listen when employees require assistance

- Establishing team chat groups using online methods or apps to create opportunities for collaborative interaction between groups
- Providing techniques and skills to promote mental wellbeing, as well as access to the employee assistance programs
- Responding appropriately to signs of worker distress and providing a contact point for workers to share their concerns
- During WFH, creating awareness of workers' responsibility to look after their own physical and mental health, includes encouraging workers to keep physically fit, eat healthily, and walk outside for fresh air regularly.

Improving the Efficiency of Remote Work

During the COVID-19 crisis, teleworking – also known as “work-from-home” was a necessary practice for employees. Many organizations are implementing telework (working from home) on a massive scale as a result of the continuous health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the required physical distancing measures. Extensive telework becomes a permanent feature of the future working environment, driven by the COVID-19 crisis's teleworking experiences. Those who had already employed telework found that the capacity to telework during the crisis was not available to all, and that differential telework access may have

increased keeps changing. During the crisis, for example, many workers – especially younger, less-educated workers at the bottom of the income scale – worked in positions that required physical presence. (M.E. Brussevich, 2020)

While the more extensive remote work has the potential to increase the efficiency and a variety of other economic and social variables such as worker well-being, gender equality, geographic discrepancies, housing, and pollution in the long term, its entire impact is unclear and offers threats, including to creativity and worker happiness. (Bloom, 2015) Constraints such as a lack of ICT skills, poor management practices, or tasks requiring physical presence prevent the use of telework and are more common in some countries or types of firms than in others. Cross-country or cross-firm variations in the prevalence of telework reveal the scope for increasing telework via better management practices and public policies aimed at expanding a pool of candidates. (Boeri, 2020)

The implementation of telework on a larger scale can have a variety of effects on organization performance and employee well-being. Policies are critical in allowing businesses and employees to take advantage of the numerous benefits that telework provides. The usage of telework on a greater scale can have a wide range of effects on organizational performance and employee well-being. Procedures are essential in allowing professionals and organizations to take advantage of all the benefits that telework provides. Which, in return, it can have a beneficial impact on overall efficiency

and wellbeing. Telework can affect a company's performance, and its overall impact is largely determined by two channels. A direct route affects organizational effectiveness by altering worker efficiency, motivation, and organizational learning, and indirectly it is for working remotely can facilitate cost savings that open up resources for productivity-enhancing innovation and reorganization. The operation of any channel requires a sufficient ICT infrastructure. It is discussed in more detail further below. Refer to the Figure 02.

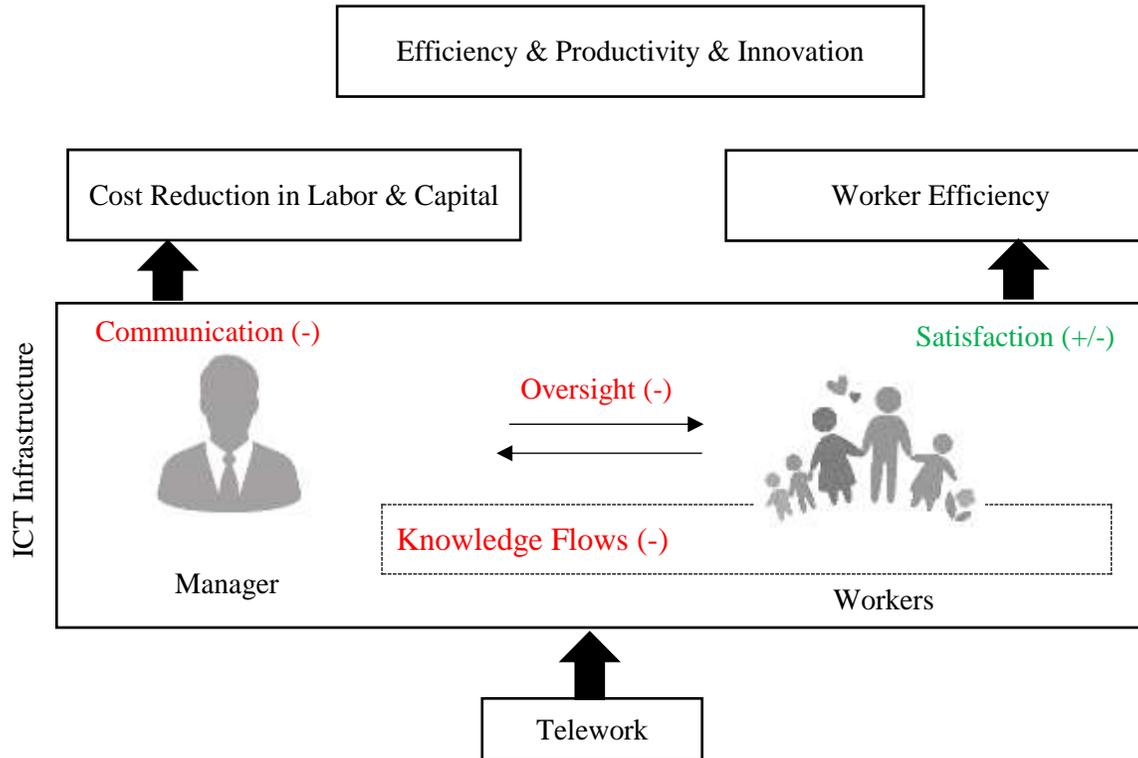


Figure 02: Teleworking in the post Covid-19 era (Salvadora, 2017)

Telework can boost organization performance by increasing employee satisfaction and hence efficiency, for example, through better work-life balance, less commuting, or fewer interruptions, resulting in more dedication to work or reduced absenteeism. Conversely, telework may reduce employee job satisfaction, for example, due to isolation, covert overtime, a mixing of work and personal life, or an inappropriate working environment at home (Olivier Godart, 2017)

Telework can indeed allow enterprises to reduce costs by allowing them to work from home. Telework can help business organizations become more efficient by lowering the amount of office space and equipment they need. Working remotely extends the number of skilled workers from which organizations can select, boosting skill availability and optimizing the match between tasks and employees, for example, by employing highly competent employees who are limited to a specific location for personal reasons. A complete move to remote working would result in a significant reduction in trade costs for companies, allowing them to access the global talent pool. (Nicholas Bloom, 2015)

Working remotely may decrease worker efficiency by reducing the number of in-person interactions, which hinders communication, the flow of information, and managerial control. Face-to-face interactions are more productive than more remote modes of communication like emails, chat, or phone conversations. Personal communication, for instance, has been proven to be more effective, to attract more attention, and to allow greater

awareness of "social clues." (Bohns, 2017)

Employee knowledge flows can also be limited by the lack of personal interactions. Workers who learn through interactions with peers may acquire skills more slowly through learning-by-doing. Furthermore, remote work may reduce competition and, as a result, long-term product development. The exchange of knowledge is important to innovation: "It's less important what each individual knows." (Salvadora, 2017) On the other hand, when knowledge sharing between remote workers becomes more frequent, the increased use of telework may become part of a greater, potentially more effective business restructuring enabled by digitization.

Finally, working remotely can inhibit managerial oversight and increase principal-agent issues to the extent that control over workers is performed through face-to-face contacts and physical presence. Improved knowledge on worker performance may become available to managers as a result of digitalization, providing more information for efficient monitoring of workers than is usually available in a traditional office environment. (Milgrom, 1991) Ultimately, for telework to boost organization productivity, employee job satisfaction should increase sufficiently to overcome the possible negative impacts on communication, communication processes, and managerial oversight. The relative strength of these mechanisms, in return, is likely to depend on the degree of telework and the negative impact related to a lack of personal

interactions likely becomes larger as opportunities for in-person communication decrease, whereas worker satisfaction improves with low levels of telework but may suffer from 'excessive' teleworking. (Salvadora, 2017)

Worker efficiency improves with low levels of remote work but decreases with 'excessive telework,' implying a 'perfect balance,' where worker efficiency and consequently productivity is optimum at intermediate levels of telework, however, it should be noted that the exact form of this relationship likely varies by industry and occupation. Along with the possible impact of remote work on worker productivity and well-being, measures aimed at optimizing its economic benefits are required. While worker satisfaction has become so crucial in gaining productivity benefits through telecommuting, such increases and improvements in worker well-being are expected.

Organizational Strategies to Improve the Efficiency of Remote Work

Addressing these issues aligned with remote work practices can enable leverage the potential efficiency gains from effective teleworking while also protecting employees from negative side effects and ensuring long-term innovation. Apart from increasing efficiency, such regulations also provide additional benefits in a variety of other key issues, such as contributing to gender equality, increasing job opportunities in rural areas, reducing traffic and housing

expenses in urban areas, and promoting work-life balance in general.

- Facilitate investments in telecommunicating infrastructure while contributing to the bridging of the geographic disparity, with high-speed broadband becoming less common in rural. Encourage investments in relevant skills, particularly among workers who are currently unable to telework, to promote overall telework and reduce socioeconomic and geographical imbalances. Because many employees with the skills needed for remote work, such as those in knowledge-intensive companies, are concentrated in metropolitan areas, up-skilling people in rural areas could result in significant increases in skill supply. Promoting online education is especially well adapted to providing training options outside the metropolitan areas. (OECD, 2021)
- By promoting flexible work arrangements for at least some hours per week in suitable locations, we can overcome reluctance to telework due to adherence to traditional working arrangements. (OECD, 2021)
- Strive to evolve and improve remote worker training, policies, and support, such as introducing a payment to continue paying home office setups, while also managing cybersecurity, compliance, and security. To guarantee that everyone has everything they need to work remotely, this work necessitates strong collaboration with departments such as finance

and IT. HR will also be in charge of figuring out how to keep businesses connected and company cultures healthy in the absence of crowded offices and frequent business travel. (OECD, 2021)

Developing Employee Engagement through Effective Communication

COVID-19 provides some favorable ways towards a few areas of a worker's life while also delivering some negativity to others. Employee-employer relationships have able to have the opportunity for both the employee and the organization's productivity and performance improvement. However, there is a relationship between employee engagement and productivity and performance. Employee engagement demonstrates an employee's commitment to a specific work. Employee involvement is defined as a commitment to and unlimited efforts toward the attainment of organizational goals. (Guleria, 2020) If employee engagement has been impacted as a result of this pandemic, this harms employee relations due to the lack of communication or face-to-face interactions. Maintaining a positive relationship with employees through frequent communication and involvement is critical in assisting them not only in the technological domain but also in engaging and retaining them through COVID-19 post-pandemic.

The continuing Covid-19 situation has largely affected the workplace culture. Every HR department in a working setting tries to balance his or her individual needs with the demands of

the environment. The term "remote working" has gained popularity and it is necessary not just for each worker, but also for each organization, the general public, and the entire world to adjust to this new situation. (Mangipudi, 2020) Due to the imposed lockdown regulations, people are living with social isolation, emotional and social distance. With the use of various online platforms such as hangout meets, Microsoft outlook, webinars, zoom cloud, telegram, and others, industries and companies are obliged to Work from Home (WFH). When there is no other option during COVID -19. Employee relations programs are typically part of a Human Resource procedure designed to ensure the best utilization of individuals to achieve the organization's goals. Online platforms are being utilized to offer a range of services online to the Employee relations programs that are normally part of Human Resource procedures.

Organizational Strategies that can be adopted to develop Employee Engagement through Effective Communication

The post-pandemic situation has compelled everyone to stay at home, and countries all across the world have imposed lockdowns to prevent the spreading of Coronavirus from affecting people's health. Businesses, offices, malls, educational institutions, transportation, and many other necessities of daily life are still closed temporarily. Employees are required to work from home or via other methods rather than attending workplaces in such a situation. That leads to

creating a communication gap, and perhaps even the avoidance of client and colleague meetings and face-to-face contact. Employees are finding it difficult to remain interested in their jobs in such a situation. Productivity and performance suffer as a result and it was leading to create negative outcomes. Jones and Kober (2019) addressed some strategies for improving employee engagement through effective communication.

- Keep focusing on the organization's core objectives and align with them to keep employees engaged through this crisis
- Actively promote employees for them to stay motivated
- Solicit feedback of employees and create a platform to freely share their information, including frustrations and suggestions for improvements in a constructive manner
- Communicating openly and honestly with employees and leaders should communicate clearly with employees to improve their as individual
- Commit to employee's employment and conversely, employees are committed to the organization. Employees can be occupied by a variety of difficulties during crisis times, the majority of them are with their employment condition. Working aggressively to protect employees' jobs sends a message about how much you appreciate them. To attract loyal/committed personnel, enormous businesses realize that being deserving of that loyalty pays

out considerably more in the long run than it costs in the short run.

Providing Equal Access to Opportunities and Resources

The pandemic is reshaping traditional workplace arrangements and prompting employers to reconsider how vital jobs may be completed, potentially expanding their views on workplace accommodations. For many workers, working from home became the "new normal" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Large numbers of people took cover at home and worked remotely, communicating with coworkers via email, mobile phones, and internet video conferencing. Working from home has potential drawbacks for employers, such as making it more difficult to supervise employee work and possibly reducing productivity and morale if employees get too distracted and alienated from peers at home. Workers' productivity, on the other hand, may improve if they are less stressed by commuting and less distracted by coworker interruptions. Employee turnover may be reduced as a result of their increased satisfaction (Lisa A Schur, 2020)

Working from home is a working arrangement in which an employee performs the essential functions of his or her job while working from home, using information and communication technology. (ILO, 2020) Alternative working arrangements, such as WFH, teleworking, telecommuting, and remote working, have been enabled and facilitated by advances in Information technology. WFH is home-based telework, the distinction is that teleworking can take place in a variety of locations other than the

primary worksite or the employer's office (such as mobile working). On the other hand, telecommuting is the use of telecommunications to replace commuter travel. There are some distinctions between the phrases "teleworking" and "telecommuting," mostly because telework is a broader phrase that may or may not be a substitute for commuting, but they are minor. The phrases "teleworking" and "telecommuting" are used equally in sense. (ILO, 2020) Companies may be able to implement WFH arrangements to achieve continuity of business operations, maintain productivity, and preserve jobs while securing the health and safety of employees when workplaces and premises are closed across the entire business as a precautionary measure or as a result of a government directive.

Organizational Strategies that can be adopted to ensuring providing equal access to opportunities and resources

Remote working arrangements are a shared responsibility that requires the effort of both employers and employees to succeed. When adopting WFH agreements, both employers and employees should be practical, flexible, and aware of each other's circumstances.

- Determine which job functions and tasks can be performed remotely. This could involve employing and identifying creativity and innovation to achieve results different from the usual
- Examine connectivity mechanisms such as regular video

conferencing, calls, and other meetings

- Assess the WFH infrastructure, facilities, and equipment, such as Internet access and the availability of a reliable power supply
- Assess the effects which the employee's home conditions. For example, Workers may be responsible for children or dependents, be experiencing relationship hardship, or have long-term health issues or disabilities.

Discussion and Conclusion

As a response to COVID-19, the work from home arrangement or remote working is in place to control the virus's spread, ensure service and productivity continuity, and minimize pitfalls and negative effects on work quality, production, or service quality. There may be workers who are not eligible for work from home based on the suitability of the employment, the home environment, and the manager's competence to handle remote workers. Most organizations have rules and regulations that contain a range of workplace responsibilities. It's crucial to remember that all WFH employees must obey all company policies that exist. All WFH employees must follow the company's policies, which include, Occupational health and safety, the ICT facilities, data security and confidentiality, intellectual property, use of the company's tools and equipment, such as laptop, software, and so on, uses in Social media, Anti-discrimination/ anti-harassment/ equal opportunities.

WFH's regular work hours, compensation, benefits, or tasks should not be affected. Nevertheless, given the current circumstances, some flexibility may be required with the agreement of the management and the employee in concern, as long as all applicable laws, rules, and company policy are followed. Employers have a responsibility to offer a safe and healthy working environment, thus the home workplace should be secure. Employers are responsible for their employees' physical and mental well-being. Workers must also safeguard themselves and others, as well as look after their safety, health, and emotional well-being. Remote employment requires clear communication. Employees and managers at WFH should agree on how they will communicate. It is important to realize that employees must be available to their superiors and coworkers during the consented core work hours.

Limitations of the Study

Remote working arrangements do not appropriate for all industries, employment categories, or job functions. Supporting a stable implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic-driven digital transformation of work, which had previously been less convincing for employers, would be a way of directing the economy to a better growth track and enhancing people's living standards, while also improving the

work-life balance and satisfaction of the employed population. In the beginning, the scope of this research paper's literature review is limited. As a result, the study does not involve any data analysis. Second, a literature review is carried out by examining research papers that were recently published between October 2020 and March 2021. Since the COVID-19 pandemic is still having an impact on people's lives, more research work would be published in the coming future. Third, the reliability of study findings is influenced by the subjectivity of article selection for the literature review.

Directions for Future Studies

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct more conceptual studies to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee perspective within business organizations. Moreover, empirical studies integrating mediating and moderating variables should be conducted to investigate the impact of the HR department's expanded role in the post-pandemic situation. COVID-19 is continuing, future scholars will have more research opportunities in terms of searching for new ways to improve the efficiency of remote work in this workplace transition due to post-pandemic and terms of the HR department's compelling new role in the COVID-19 prevailing situation within the Sri Lankan context.

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