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Exploring the perceived benefits and challenges of teleworking in South Africa

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Exploring the perceived benefits and challenges of teleworking in South Africa

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

Johannesburg, 2023

ABSTRACT

Telework has long piqued the interest of scholars and policymakers because of its potential to benefit individuals, organisations, and society as a whole. Telework has existed since the advent of information and communication technology, but despite substantial technological advancements, it did not attain mainstream use until the COVID-19 epidemic. Few studies have re-examined the employee benefits and challenges following the COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa, among the various facets of telework research. The function of employee perceptions that may favourably or unfavourably affect the adoption of telework are explored in this study.

This study tackles telework success as a multidimensional term by deconstructing the benefits and challenges of telework for people and organisations from previous literature. The system based telework framework was adopted for this study in particular the employee factors. Fifteen in-depth interviews were done using the purposive sampling approach. Overall, the findings supported the system-based telework paradigm since an analysis of the findings showed that the existing employee factors are still persistent. The study found that there are additional elements that are negatively impacting telework adoption in the South African context, such as load shedding, while a decrease in expenditures favourably influences telework adoption. Based on the findings of this study, the additional factors should be incorporated into the model for future research.

Teleworking proved that employees could meet their job responsibilities while being flexible with where they work. Therefore, telework should not be treated as a optional type of work to organisations, but should rather form part of the organisations competitive employee attraction and retention strategy. the study found that employees prefer a hybrid way of working therefore organisational mandates that require employees to return to working from the office on a full-time basis negatively affects the adoption of telework.

KEYWORDS

Teleworking, telecommuting, lockdown, remote working, working from home.

DECLARATION

I, **Nomvelo Carol Mpungose** declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name:	Nomvelo Carol Mpungose		**Signature:**	
Signed at:	Midrand			
On the	23	**day of**	June	20**23**

DEDICATION

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the individuals who have been instrumental in supporting me throughout my academic journey. Their unwavering love, guidance, and encouragement have been the cornerstone of my success.

To my dearest husband, you have been my rock, my source of strength, and my biggest cheerleader. Your unconditional love and unwavering belief in my abilities have propelled me forward even during the most challenging times. Your sacrifices, understanding, and unwavering support have allowed me to pursue my dreams with determination and dedication. I am eternally grateful for your presence in my life. To my precious daughter, you are my inspiration and the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge. I am proud to be your parent and hope to instil in you the same thirst for knowledge and perseverance that you have witnessed in me.

To my supervisor, your guidance, expertise, and mentorship have been invaluable throughout my academic journey. Your insightful feedback, constructive criticism, and unwavering support have not only shaped my research and growth as a scholar but it has also inspired me to strive for excellence in my work. I am truly grateful for your belief in my potential and for guiding me towards becoming a better researcher.

To the esteemed academic staff, your commitment to education and unwavering dedication to nurturing young minds have been instrumental in my development as a scholar. Your passion for your respective fields, tireless efforts in sharing knowledge, and commitment to fostering a stimulating academic environment have inspired me to pursue intellectual curiosity and strive for academic excellence.

To all of you, my husband, daughter, supervisor, and the academic staff, I extend my deepest gratitude for your unyielding support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities. Your presence in my life has made a profound impact, and I am honoured to have you by my side on this journey. I dedicate my achievements to each of you, and I am forever grateful for your unwavering belief in me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
ICT	Information Communications Technology
SBTF	System Based Telework Framework
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceived employee benefits and challenges of teleworking in the South African services sector post-lockdown.

1.2 Background of the study

Teleworking, sometimes known as telecommuting, is a type of flexible working in which businesses provide their employees the choice to perform job duties using information and communications technology away from their designated workplace (Nilles, 1975; Nortje et al., 2004). We live in an ever-changing environment where national emergencies such as COVID-19 delayed customer service delivery (Tokarchuk et al., 2021), prompting organisations to evaluate the need to be flexible in how they play their role in transforming the future of work by adopting telework.

Teleworking was reported to have many employee benefits, such as job satisfaction, work life balance, increased productivity, and reduced stress (Baard & Thomas, 2010). These reports observed that it is reshaping the way we work and making headway towards the future of work in the fourth industrial revolution (Santana & Cobo, 2020). Despite these known benefits of teleworking, Laumer and Maier (2021) reported that some employees choose to not telework even when provided the option to do so. The reported employee challenges of teleworking such as isolation, reduced career opportunities, and lack of support from the organisation could be driving employers to opt out of this form of working (Carillo et al., 2021).

According to Sachs (2020), some organisations chose not to offer teleworking to their employees despite the employees' outcry for more teleworking opportunities because of the known teleworking challenges. This all changed when the COVID-19 pandemic was reported. What once was a focus on work and culture soon became a focus on staying connected and productive due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Morganson et al., 2010). The COVID-19 global pandemic was an example of a national emergency that accelerate the adoption of teleworking, disrupting the normal work from the office routine, transforming

the way organisations operate by forcing them to participate in the teleworking phenomenon or risk being obsolete (Beauregard et al., 2019). According to Estrada et al. (2021), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, some organisations were considering the adoption of different digital transformation strategic initiatives, including teleworking. As a result, the pandemic served as a teleworking adoption enabler in many regions of the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the global economy and South Africa was no exception. South Africa is located in the most southern region of the African continent with a population estimated at 60 million as of July 2021 (Roger, 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2022). Mlambo and Masuku (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had an overwhelming impact on the global economy and devastated what was an already struggling South African economy. The effect of the pandemic added to several challenges facing South Africa including the rising rate of unemployment, deepening poverty, and the lack of essential infrastructure (Madhi et al., 2022).

Dintsi et al. (2020) reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a media statement in January 2020 with regard to the preliminary determination of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, stating that the virus was transmittable via human-to-human contact through droplets from infected people coughing or sneezing. Due to the increasing number of the COVID-19 infections, the WHO declared a public health emergency and recommended that people exercise social distance to combat the spread of this disease (World Health Organisation, 2020).

As per recommendation from the WHO and to combat the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the South African government introduced various restrictions that were referred to under the term “lockdown” (Government Gazette, 2020). The Minister of Cooperative Governance officially declared COVID-19 as a pandemic and introduced the state of national disaster in South Africa (Government Gazette, 2020). To curb the spread of COVID-19, the state of disaster imposed various restrictions and regulations as per section 27(20) of the disaster management act 2002 (Lim, 2020).

Lockdown restrictions included limited alcohol sales, alcohol dispensing or alcohol beverages, the suspension of public visits to government facilities, the closure of early childhood development centres, and prohibited the gathering of persons more than one hundred in one location (Lim, 2020). The lockdown restrictions were broken down to alert

levels one to five were aimed at governing the national state of disaster restrictions imposed on all South African residents. The Government Gazette (2020) elaborates on the criteria for the alert levels as summarised below:

> Alert level 1: normal activity with specified health guidelines to be followed.
>
> Alert Level 2: restrictions imposed on physical distancing, and social activities.
>
> Alert Level 3: restrictions imposed on various activities including workplace gatherings.
>
> Alert Level 4: restrictions imposed limiting community activities.
>
> Alert Level 5: drastic measures and restrictions imposed across all activities specified from level 1 to level 4.

The restriction pertaining to the gathering of persons meant that all persons in South Africa were required to stay at home except for permitted workers who provide essential services or when people were seeking essential needs such as purchasing groceries. Under national lockdown, specifically level 5, organisations were heavily impacted as this meant they needed to find alternative ways to continue their operations to meet business demands and customer needs (Vander Elst et al., 2020). Pre-lockdown, businesses were conducting their operations through the traditional way of working structure (Bhorat et al., 2018). Figure 1 illustrates the traditional way of working and the modern way of working making up the world of work (WoW).

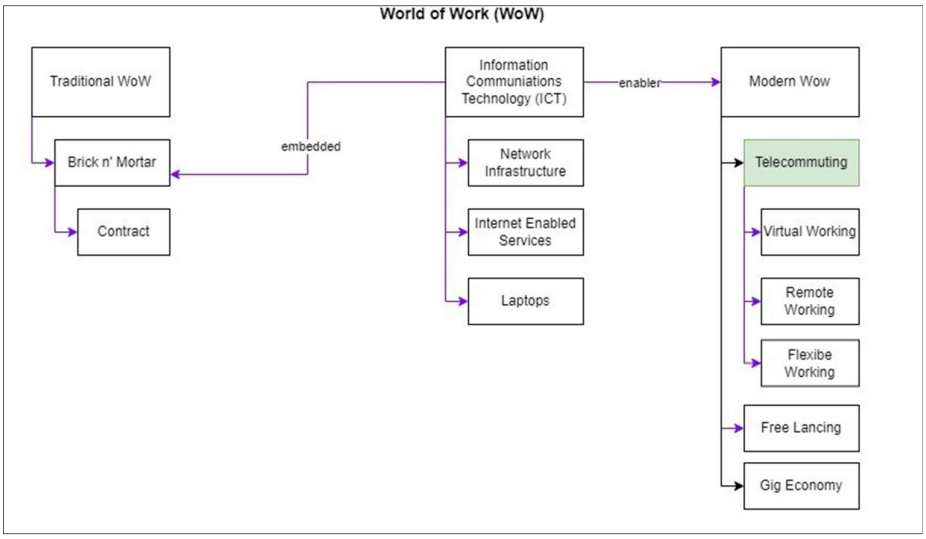


Figure 1.2-1: World of work (Santana & Cobo, 2020; Shin et al., 2000)

The traditional way of working is where employees conduct work related activities at their employers designated office space (Graham, 2002). Information Communications Technologies (ICT) such as network infrastructure, laptops, internet enabled services etc. are essential for employees to use in fulfilling their job responsibilities and these would predominantly be embedded within the employer's premises (Mungly & Singh, 2012). Given that organisations were not going to be able to deliver value through the traditional way of working due to the imposed regulations under lockdown alert level 5, businesses evaluated the modern way of working and implemented them during lockdown to keep their businesses running (Vander Elst et al., 2020). In this paper, the term 'modern ways of working' was used to refer to the collective terms defining work arrangements falling outside the traditional way of working.

As illustrated in Figure 1, teleworking forms part of the modern way of working where ICT plays the role of an enabler. As a result of the imposed lockdown restrictions, the adoption of teleworking increased amongst South African organisations (Dintsi et al., 2020; Van Heerden & Roos, 2021) allowing all eligible employees to experience the benefits and challenges of teleworking (Shin et al., 2000).

1.3 Research problem

In the South African context, employers were observed to be asking employees to return to working from the office post lockdown (FirstRand Group, 2021; Standard Bank Group, 2021). This trend was not observed only in the South African context, Barber (2023) noted that large organisations such as SNAP, JPMorgan Chase, Apple, Google and others announced plans to require their employees to work from their designated workplaces (Bloom, 2022) . The problem is that employees do not want to return to working from the office on a full-time basis therefore mandating employees to return to the office pose issues which could be regarded as benefits or challenges, for employees and employers respectively (Chambel et al., 2022). Therefore, conducting research to gain a deeper understanding of these issues from an employee perspective is essential to understand why employees do not want to return to working from the office on a full-time basis.

The COVID-19 pandemic raised awareness about health risks in shared spaces. Furthermore, telework offered employees more flexibility and a better work-life balance (Hunter, 2019). Returning to the office may disrupt this equilibrium, potentially causing stress to employees due to longer commuting times which may result in decreased productivity. From the existing body of knowledge, telework showed that employees can be productive outside of the traditional office setting hence looking at the benefits and challenges of telework post lockdown would aid in gaining an understanding of the importance of telework from an employee perspective. The findings from the study would aid employers, academia, and government to considering employee preferences when creating job requirements so as to implement best practices that maximise productivity for both parties.

By conducting research on these and other relevant areas, employers can make informed decisions about probing employees to return to working from the office. It allows for evidence-based policies and practices that consider the well-being, productivity, and preferences of employees while addressing any potential challenges that may arise. Teleworking has been around for more than four decades, but even before the lockdown, the traditional method of working from the office prevailed, and employees were unable to gain the benefits of teleworking (Lozano & Barreiro-Gen, 2021; Nilles, 1975). The lockdown restrictions in South Africa drove organizations to enable all qualified workers

to telework, boosting the adoption of teleworking and providing employees with real-world teleworking experience. Following the lockdown, organisations such as Standard Bank Group assessed the impact of teleworking and mandated that their employees return to the office full-time (Standard Bank Group, 2021). This created a conflict of interest between employers and employees, prompting the question, "Why are organizations reverting to traditional ways of working?".

Teleworking provides organisations with a unique chance to accelerate their digital transformation journey and upskill their personnel in the digitalisation journey (FirstRand Group, 2021), therefore reverting to traditional ways of working means that employees may struggle to cope if faced with unforeseen or unplanned national emergencies in the coming years (Naor et al., 2021; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). Since teleworking is not officially recognised as part of the South African Labour Laws (Nghiishililwa, 2022), organisational mandates that require employees who can telework to return to the traditional way of working have immediate consequences for employees. These consequences can be regarded as challenges. Existing studies have not explored how employees perceive the benefits and challenges of teleworking post-lockdown. Furthermore studies have not explored how the mandate to transition from modern to traditional ways of working impacts the adoption of telework. Additionally, how employees view the South African government's support for teleworking was not examined in previous research.

Teleworking is permitted when organizations decide to allow it (Van Heerden & Roos, 2021). As a result, there was a divide in the various industries where some employees benefited from teleworking while others who were qualified were not permitted (Mungly & Singh, 2012). The goal of this study was to explore the benefits as well as the challenges of teleworking from the perspective of employees, to further unpack the positive and negative consequences of teleworking, prompting them to reconsider their mandate of returning to the traditional method of working. The next section outlines the research objectives for this paper.

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives for this study are prescribed below:

Research Objective 1: Explore the perceived benefits posed by teleworking for employees in the South African services sector.

Research Objective 2: Explore the perceived challenges posed by teleworking for employees in South African services sector.

1.5 Rationale

The decision to telework may be seen from two angles: the employee's desire to do so and the company's ability and willingness to support the employee's intention to do so. Even when employees have the skills, tools, communication platforms and means to telework, the teleworking adoption decision is left up to the organisations (Mungly & Singh, 2012). When such decisions are made by a single party, there is a higher likelihood of limited perspectives, biased thinking, and conflict in interests, particularly to the parties not privy to contributing to the decision-making process. Existing research has not explored the how employees perceive the benefits and challenges of teleworking post-lockdown.

Numerous studies have shown that the benefits of teleworking support the future of work by aiding organisations achieve customer centricity and the expansion of their value chain. The modern ways of working present a plethora of opportunities for employers that offer teleworking to their employees (Gerard, 2022). Contributing to the field of digital business as well as adding to the local findings of the fourth industrial revolution, determining the teleworking benefits and challenges from an employee perspective post-lockdown could better inform organisations to consider formally retaining the teleworking practice and motivate government to step in by amending existing labour laws to recognise teleworking as a formal way of working. This study also seeks to educate the South African government on the benefits of teleworking, prompting them to consider enacting regulations to encourage this mode of employment.

Another gap identified in the literature was that studies predominantly focused on one form of teleworking commonly referred to as work from home (Nortje et al., 2004). This study aims to evaluate the benefits and challenges of teleworking as a whole. This would include other forms of teleworking such as mobile telework where an employee can work from anywhere without the employer requiring a specific designation away from the office location. This type of telework was understudied despite being prevalent in the

management consulting field as consultants are often required to conduct mobile telework to meet their client needs.

Baker et al. (2006) highlights that whilst the employee motivational factors for wanting to telework are a logical area of research, these are reliant on two factors that employees have no control over:

1. the employer offers formally or informally teleworking as an acceptable form of working,
2. the employer has the required policies and information communications systems to support the employee conducting work outside the employer's workplace.

Given factors, conducting a study focused on the teleworking phenomenon and not a specific type of teleworking would contribute to the development of new themes and research areas in the body of knowledge. In South Africa, teleworking has not been officially recognised as a formal working contract as there was no labour law explicitly recognising teleworking (Sanhokwe et al., 2022). Since there was no formal law recognising teleworking, research shows that teleworking was left at the employers' discretion. When compared to other countries such as the United States of America and Romania; South Africa was lagging in terms of teleworking laws (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021; Lozano & Barreiro-Gen, 2021). Having realised the benefits of teleworking, the United State of America's Congress passed a law mandating organisations to allow eligible employees to telework at least one day a week (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021).

Similarly, to the United States of America, a legislative mandate could be a driver towards the adoption of teleworking in South Africa. The legislative mandate would allow employees to reap the benefits of teleworking. Through uncovering employee benefits of teleworking post lockdown in South Africa, the study aims to uncover insights about how employees perceive the importance of labour legislation in designing a formal telework contract, an often-neglected aspect in the research literature as well as in practice.

The study aims to add onto existing teleworking literature as the perspective from which the study is based on is the notion that most employees were forced to telework to stop the spread of COVID-19 during lockdown, rather than on the behavioural desire to do so. The study will focus on the first-hand perceptions of the employees who telework

during and post lockdown. It will provide clarity to South African organisations as to the implications of teleworking post-lockdown.

This study will focus on the benefits of teleworking as a phenomenon, breaking the siloed existing research limitation of focusing on specific teleworking types such as remote working. It will also contribute to the existing body of theory on teleworking in the South African context and inform organisations of the employee perceptions on teleworking so they can gain insights and understanding on how teleworking can be incorporated in their talent retention strategies. The national state of disaster brought forth by COVID 19 has been lifted, meaning South Africans can return to the new normal.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

1. The employees participating in the study were teleworking during lockdown and are allowed to telework post lockdown.
2. The employees should be working for an organisation in the services sector although insights will be drawn from participants who may not be working in the services sector.
3. Employees who are freelancing or have primarily been participating in the gig-economy during and post lockdown will be excluded from the study.

1.7 Definition of terms

1. **Teleworking**: also referred to as telecommuting. This term refers to a form of flexible working where employers offer their employees the option to conduct their job responsibilities outside their designated workplace using information and communications technology (Nilles, 1975; Nortje et al., 2004).
2. **Teleworker**: An employee generally knowledgeable or clerical worker that accepts the teleworking offer and conducts work outside the employers' workplace (Shin et al., 2000).
3. **Lockdown**: This paper adopted the definition of lockdown as a collection of mandated COVID-19 transmission-reduction measures that are applied indiscriminately to a broad population and contain certain constraints on the existing pattern of social and economic activity as stipulated by Haider et al. (2020).

4. **Pre-lockdown**: The period preceding the imposition of lockdown restrictions; in South Africa, this was before March 26, 2020 (Government Gazette, 2020).
5. **Post-lockdown**: The period following the end of lockdown; in South Africa, this was after April 4, 2022 (Government Gazette, 2020).
6. **Knowledge workers** refers to individuals that utilise information communication technologies to attend to their job responsibilities (Nortje et al., 2004).

1.8 Assumptions

1. The employer has granted the employee the opportunity to telework post lockdown and the individual employee has taken the offer.
2. The employer has not granted the employee the opportunity to telework post lockdown and the individual employee would like to do so.
3. The participants of this study will reflect standard perspectives and experiences.
4. The participants are aware that their experience may affects their life choice and future decisions.
5. The participants will answer the interview questions in an honest and candid manner.
6. Participants are sincere in their participation in the research and do not have any other motives.

1.9 Chapter Outline

This research report is divided into six chapter as prescribed below:

Chapter one: introduction

This chapter outlines the conceptual foundation for the researcher's investigation, including research questions and fundamental research design. The relevance of the study was developed in the introduction by discussing how the study expands on earlier teleworking research by looking through the lens of teleworking from the South African context post lockdown.

Chapter two: literature review

This chapter provides a synthesis of the existing research about teleworking benefits and challenges, as well as a review of established teleworking policies. Furthermore, the analytical framework and the research propositions are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: research methodology

This chapter focuses on the data collection methods and strategies used to get the findings that will be analysed for the final outcome.

Chapter 4: presentation of findings

This chapter presents the results of the study, provides a narrative summary of the sample characteristics and demographics, and a description of the process that was used to analyse the data.

Chapter 5: discussion of the findings

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the study structure, including a recap of the topic's relevance and a brief explanation of how the study hoped to contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic.

Chapter 6:

This chapter presents the recommendations of the study and provides a narrative of the suggestions for future research. A brief overview of the study limitations is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conduct of the literature review of the teleworking phenomenon, the benefits, and challenges of teleworking for employees and employers as well as a review of existing teleworking legislation.

2.2 Background discussion

In this section, the teleworking phenomenon is introduced. The components of teleworking are outlined, the definition of teleworking is discussed as well as the different types of teleworking and teleworking schedules.

2.2.1 *The teleworking definition*

According to Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés (2020), teleworking is when the use of technologies allows employees to conduct some or all their work away from the main workplace through a formal or informal agreement with the employer. Building on to this definition by elaborating on which technologies allows teleworking to be possible, the International Labour Organization (International Labour Organisation, 2020) defines teleworking as work performed outside the employer's premises using portable ICTs such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Ionescu et al. (2022) elaborate on the agreement for an employee to conduct work outside the employers main workplace, as the definition of teleworking is described as an arrangement in which an employee has a specific designated area to conduct work at the employer's premises, but the employee is allowed to be upsent from their employer's premise and work from home on an agreed-upon basis a few days a week.

Current definitions, according to the available literature, only focus on the workforce; students who conduct their studies away from their learning institutions are not considered teleworkers. The notion of teleworking should include all forms of "work" that

is conducted outside the brick n' mortar of the applicable party. As a result, telework is defined in this study as the ability of employees to use information communications technology tools and platforms to perform work-related activities closely aligned with one's job responsibility in a physical location that is outside the employer's office workspace as conveniently chosen by the employee.

2.2.2 *Types of teleworking*

Although this study does not focus on a specific type of teleworking, teleworking has a lot of hats such as alternative work arrangement, e-working, virtual working, remote working, working from home and mobile working (Shin et al., 2000).

1. Alternate work arrangement: a work arrangement that is outside the normal tradition work arrangement (Shockley & Allen, 2007).
2. E-working: makes use of information and communication technology to enable work to be completed regardless of location (Beňo, 2021).
3. Virtual working: means that employees are not confined to a single physical area and are not constrained by any geographic borders (Li, 2022).
4. Remote working: refers to the bulk of knowledge and office professionals working from home (Spinuzzi, 2012).
5. Working from home: The International Labour Organisation (2020) defines working from home as work performed by a person regardless of who supplied the tools, materials for the employee to work and be paid to produce a service that meets the employer's specifications.
6. Mobile working: refers to working outside of the employer's facilities while utilizing portables (Nortje et al., 2004).

2.2.3 *Teleworking schedules*

According to the International Labour Organisation (2020), teleworking can be associated with various schedules depending on the teleworking agreement between the employer and employee. The most common forms of teleworking schedules are frequent, ad hoc and situational (Shin et al., 2000).

1. Frequent telework refers to a regular teleworking type and agreement between the employer and the employee. The agreement whether formal or informal

allows the teleworker to conduct all their duties away from the employer's workplace on a regular basis. This type of teleworking schedule requires the employee to inform the employer their designated regular (five days a week) working location and is frequently associated with the work from home type of teleworking.

2. Ad hoc telework is mostly formal and its common in organisational reward programmes. This teleworking type is associated to a teleworker whose employer has granted them the offer to telework on certain days of the week or month given the employee meets certain performance conditions. In this regard there is no requirement for a designated out of the office location since the telework agreement is irregular.
3. Situational telework is a type of teleworking schedule that describes the need to telework as a result of unanticipated events like severe weather, natural catastrophes, health issues, or statutory mandates like the national lockdown in South Africa.

This paper focuses on the situational telework arrangement with particular focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2.4 *Teleworking in practice*

Teleworking in practice pre-lockdown

Teleworking is largely dependent on technological advancements, ICTs, change in social dynamics and cultural changes. These categories contribute to new innovations that support different ways of conducting business for organisations (Hunter, 2019). These technologies are accessible to South African organisations, and even though that's the case, there has been a very low teleworking adoption rate (Nemteanu et al., 2021). Teleworking is not constrained by typical organisational structures, reporting ties, or job classifications as the percentage of employee activities accomplished through non-face-to-face contacts aided by information and communication technologies can be leveraged by any skilled employee with access to ICTs within the services sector (Allen et al., 2015). Ansong and Boateng (2018) state that workers expressed interest to participate in teleworking, but the option was not introduced by their employers hence it was not exercised.

Teleworking in a way promotes self-organising empowered employees who can effectively manage their time while contributing to the greater organisational vision. Graham (2002) states that teleworking is most effectively implemented for employees who reside beyond the local commuting area of the employment workplace. However, the researcher points out that if distance is used as the eligibility criterion, this approach may result in disparities in terms of who is allowed to engage in teleworking.

Teleworking in practice during lockdown

The Standard Bank Group (2021) reported that due to the imposed lockdown regulations, more than fifty percent of their workforce had to telework during lockdown. The lockout compelled Standard Bank Group to reconsider the implications of teleworking on their business practices. ABSA (2021) reported that the pandemic forced them to investigate modern ways of working as employee preferences changed and the traditional way of working was no longer practical when retaining key skilled resources. Absa's annual integrated report illustrates those teleworkers working from home heightened the risk of employee wellness. FirstRand Group (2021) merely indicated that they took the necessary measures of allowing their employees to telework during lockdown. However, the report did not elaborate on whether teleworking has been beneficial to the organisation nor if it's something they want aim to continue exploring post lockdown.

In light of this, it is crucial for employers to be transparent about the reasons behind their decisions to not allow teleworkers from continuing to telework post-lockdown, especially given the fast-changing nature of the workplace today. Given that employers have the authority to determine teleworking adoption, there should be transparent communication regarding this decision.

Government Involvement during lockdown

According to a survey done in France, teleworking is still regarded as an unofficial form of employment since the government had not prescribed the terms under which businesses should make teleworking mandatory, this is likely to remain the case (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021). The researcher noted that there have not been any official reports indicating that the South African government is thinking about updating the current labour regulations to formally recognise the practice of teleworking.

Teleworking lessons post-lockdown

Virtual working, a type of teleworking common amongst organisations that operate in multiple geographies. However, van Heerden and Roos (2021) noted that lockdown allowed organisations operating from one geography, for instance South Africa, to adopt teleworking as a form of working. This supported the notion that teleworking transforms organisations because it allows them to strategically participate in the future way of working (Georgescu et al., 2021). Arndt (2019) states that during lockdown telework experienced rapid growth leading to changes in the traditional way of working. The teleworking journey was not an easy as South African companies were forced to adjust the way they work through the adoption of teleworking (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). The lockdown's remarkable rise in telework gave rise to the notion that the improved organisational capability would probably lead to a long-term rise in the number of teleworkers (Allen et al., 2015).

This gave rise to three options that could be considered for the future of work, (1) bringing everyone back to the office to resume operations as per the pre-lockdown way of working; (2) embrace the hybrid working model where employees telework sometimes; or (3) provide teleworking as a formal work arrangement for all eligible workers (Aguilera et al., 2016).

Based on the existing research, teleworking in the South African context is something that was not a widespread practice in the world of work. Despite the increase in the teleworking adoption during lockdown, the South African government did not take a stance in offering legislation that would mandate telework as an acceptable form of working within organisations. The overall goal of this study was to assess the benefits and challenges of teleworking for workers following the post-lockdown. The intention was to add to the body of knowledge in the theory of teleworking from a South African context. This study also aimed at informing organisations operating in the service sector the reasons why teleworking encourages inclusiveness.

2.3 Perception on the benefits of teleworking

This section explored the benefits of teleworking for employees and organisations from existing scholarly literature.

2.3.1 *The perceived teleworking benefits for employees*

Based on the existing literature, from an employee perspective the teleworking benefits could be grouped into five categories, namely, environmental, financial, productivity, flexibility, and higher job satisfaction.

Environmental benefits

A rise in automobiles on the road adds to the already burdened road infrastructure in South Africa. The adoption of teleworking alleviates these issues since most teleworkers conduct their work at home or in locations closer to home. This results in a reduced number of vehicles on the road. The reduction in the number of vehicles on the road results in reduced carbon emissions, benefiting the environment (Hunter, 2019).

Financial benefits

Teleworkers spend less time on the road as their workplace would most likely be their home (Carillo et al., 2021). Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, there has been a constant rise in the price of fuel (Kalogiannidis et al., 2022). Cartmill (2020) states the less than frequent use of vehicles to drive to and from home benefits teleworkers as they spend less money on fuel. Furthermore, dramatically reduced travelling results in reduced expenses which in turn results in teleworkers earning a higher net income (Estrada et al., 2021).

Productivity benefits

Additionally, Morganson et al. (2010) noted that teleworkers reported increased productivity as a result of working in a calmer, more focused setting. There were less distractions when compared to an office setting. In addition to the financial benefits, Allen et al. (2015) claimed that teleworking also benefited employees' health through better productivity because there was less office politics while working remotely (Allen et al., 2015).

Job satisfaction

According to Morganson et al. (2010), teleworkers have greater job satisfaction than other employees since their stress levels are lower. Furthermore, teleworkers stated that they were able to plan how to fulfil their personal obligations as well as their professional

expectations when teleworking (Loia & Adinolfi, 2021). Teleworkers have also stated that because of job flexibility such as the flexibility to work in comfort was perceived as workforce empowerment (Ionescu et al., 2022).

2.3.2 *The perceived teleworking benefits for organisations*

Baard and Thomas (2010) stated that teleworking arrangements encouraged the creation of additional support for specific business units over the weekends. This allowed organisations to deliver customer service during peak periods. Adoption of teleworking was beneficial, owing to variables such as enhanced employee performance with noticeable dedication to the organization's goal, and an improvement in staff productivity (Martin & MacDonnell, 2012). Some of the benefits sought by organisations when considering teleworking, according to Heng et al. (2012), include improved organisational capability, lower physical accommodation costs, streamlined operations, increased productivity, employee attraction and retention, and offering employees flexible working conditions for continued loyalty.

In addition, organisations who have implemented teleworking say that the increased productivity led to an increase in company revenue as well as a decrease in absenteeism, including sick leave (International Labour Organization, 2020). According to Nkate (2020), teleworkers stay at a firm for longer periods of time, which promotes employee retention and saves hiring expenses, lowering total company turnover over time. Some organisations with management discretion would include teleworking arrangements as part of the incentive system, allowing dedicated and diligent workers to work from home, improving employee trust and loyalty (Ayling & McCartney, 2021).

2.3.3 *Proposition 1*

Higher levels of job satisfaction, positive environmental impact, financial benefits, and increased productivity are among the benefits that employees who are allowed to telework report.

2.4 Perception on the challenges of teleworking

This section explored the challenges of teleworking from existing scholarly research. The first subsection reviewed the literature and outlined the challenges from the employee perspective. The second sub- section outlines the perceived organisational challenges.

2.4.1 *The perceived teleworking challenges for employees*

Teleworking, according to a Malaysian study, blurred the lines between business and personal life because most teleworkers worked from home (Heng, San, & Lee, 2012). When employees telework, managers encountered the challenge of supervising them when they were not at the office (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). Teleworking enabled employees to be more flexible in how they spent their time to meet work demands. This conflicted with micromanagement responsibilities, resulting in the redefinition or obliteration of some jobs (International Labour Organization, 2020).

According to Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcé (2020), teleworking lead to isolation due to the lack of physical interactions such as face to face interactions with other team members (Palumbo, et al., 2021). Furthermore, Palumbo, et al. (2021) reported that because of increased work demands and the perception of reduced or no travel time to the office, teleworkers particularly work longer hours than they would if they were in the office. According to Ionescu, et al. (2022), when teleworking is not permitted for all members of a team, it has a negative impact on team morale, and this could lower the team's overall performance.

2.4.2 *The perceived teleworking challenges for organisations*

According to a study by Ipsen et al. (2021), knowledge workers used teleworking with greater frequency. This result confirmed the organisational issue of teleworking causing a drift because it was thought to favour those workers in the workforce who had particular job functions or skill sets. The job type and market conditions had the most influence on the acceptance of teleworking in this situation, which presented the additional problem (Baker, Avery, & Crawford, 2006).

Nemteanu et al. (2021) indicated that teleworking had been redirected as a benefit to reward employees working hard at an organisation. As a reward, hardworking employees

would be recognised by managers and then rewarded to certain employees being allowed to telework. Such teleworking adoption measures created inequality as only a select few individuals reaped the benefits of teleworking despite several employees being eligible to reap the same rewards (Campbell & Heales, 2008). According to the International Labour Organization (2020), several organizations used surveys to find out how their employees feel about teleworking. The main problem they ran into was that organizations never gender-disaggregate their data when they gather it, including data about the pandemic, to better understand how teleworking affects men and women to guarantee that senior leadership and management are conscious of, understand, and put into practice appropriate reaction methods to the varied teleworking consequences on women and men (Baard & Thomas, 2010).

Previous studies also noted that teleworking presented implementation challenges for organisations, and this was evident during lockdown when certain organisations were struggling to cope as a result some had to close shop (Dintsi, Mbanga, & Smallwood, 2020). In the event of another national emergency, challenges of teleworking adoption will remain if organisations revert to the traditional way of working and demand their employees to return to work. This study aimed to inform organisations the employee perceptions on teleworking so they can gain insights and understanding on how teleworking can be incorporated in their talent retention strategies (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, & Heelan, 2010).

2.4.3 *Proposition 2*

Employees who are permitted to telework express feelings of loneliness, increased work demands, and blurred lines between personal and work life.

2.5 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.5.1 *Theoretical Framework*

Businesses have benefited from telework as they transition to the new world of work. The COVID-19 outbreak forced organisations to find fresh approaches to meet organisational and employee expectations, and this is how telework became the current common working style (Stoian et al., 2022). This study focuses on the perceived

individual outcomes of telework, that is why it is underpinned by the Telework Behavioural Model (TBM) illustrated in Figure 2.5-1 (Hunton & Harmon, 2004). This model is based on the expectancy theory outlined by Vroom (1964), where they outline that motivation is made up of three factors, namely, expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is the self-reflected conviction held by employees that they possess the requisite abilities to carry out the tasks required to achieve the outcomes sought for themselves when carrying out their professional functions.

Employees' perceptions of their performance's relationship to desired outcomes that are consistent with their professional development are referred to as instrumentality. Valence is the subjective expected value that a person places on a desired outcome, such as being promoted to a new position when completing various tasks outside their immediate responsibilities. The relevance of the expectancy theory is that it was used as input into the TBM model which underpins this study.

The TBM begins by showing that organisations can enable telework if they have established a telework policy that details the range of telework possibilities that they would accept. Based on several personal incentive elements, employees will independently decide how they will behave when it comes to the telework policy. Employees may choose whether to use the telework option. If they do, they could also choose where to telework and how frequently. The decisions made by employees affect a variety of cognitions which could provide outcomes that could benefit or challenge the employee, in turn affecting motivation.

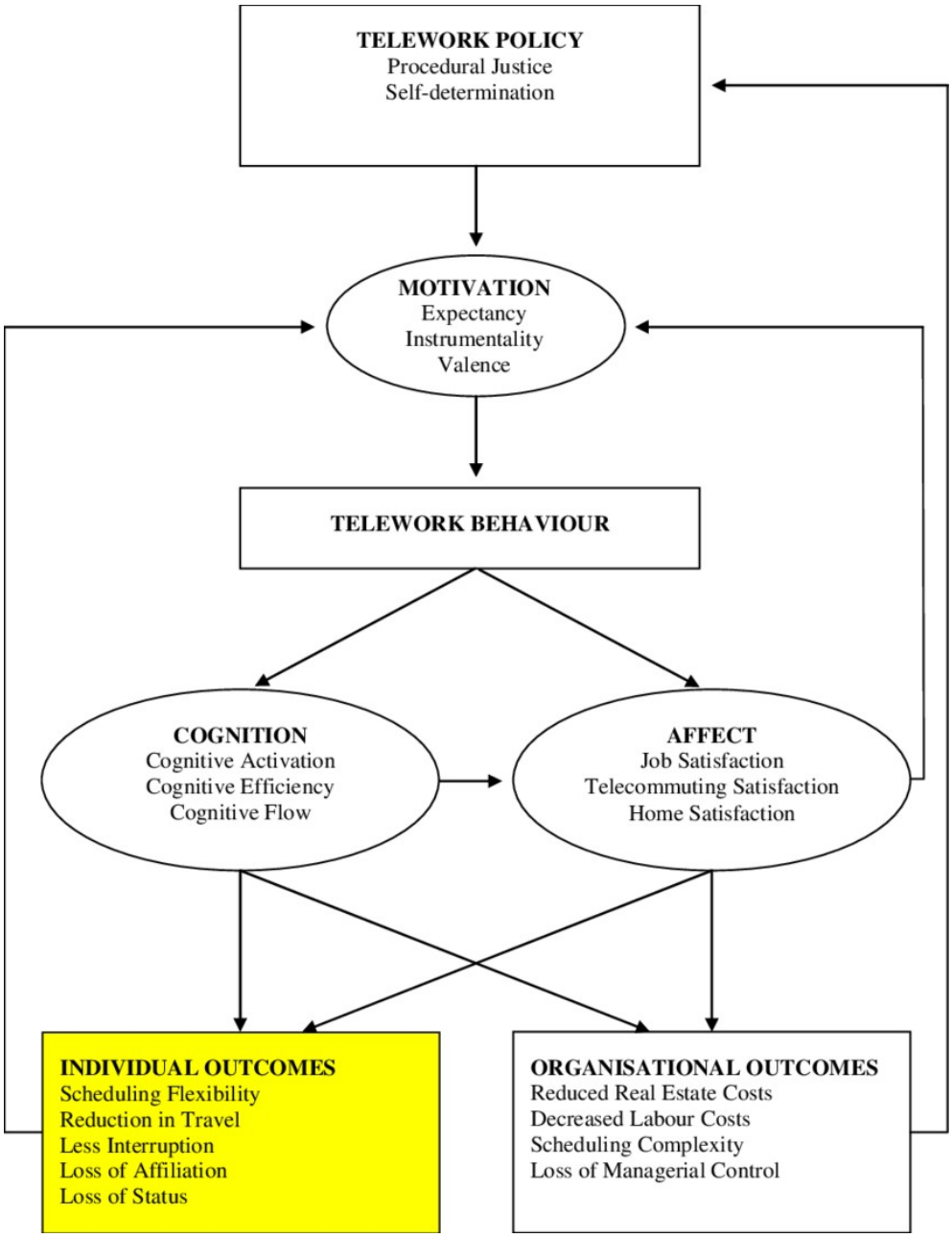


Figure 2.5-1: Telework Behavioural Model (Hunton & Harmon, 2004)

Another existing framework that was relevant to this study was the Systems-Based Telework Framework proposed by Campbell and McDonald (2007) illustrated in Figure 2.5-2. This framework comprises three structural elements of telework practice: telework drivers, telework processes and telework impacts. Since the objective of this study was to explore the perceived employee benefits and challenges, the applicable telework

driver was the employee preferences, the telework process was the employee support and the telework impact was the employee impact.

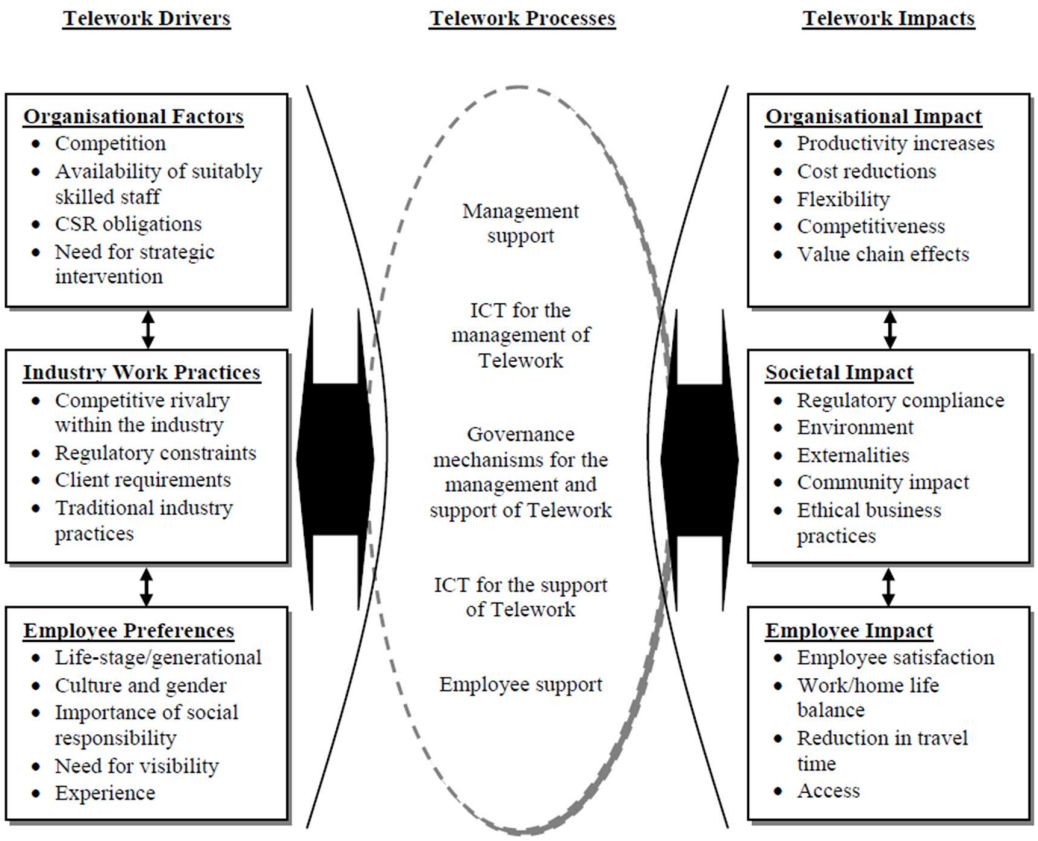


Figure 2.5-2 System Based Telework Framework (Campbell & McDonald, 2007)

Campbell and McDonald (2007) state that the motivational factors for embracing telework are captured by the interconnected telework drivers driven by the organisations, employees and industry factors, these drivers influence the kind of telework policies to be implemented. Furthermore, the telework drivers are liable to abrupt change in the case of a market shock or other unusual occurrence such as a dramatic increase in the petrol prices, or a heightened awareness of health problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic are a few examples.

The actual telework activities carried out by workers on behalf of the organisation were discussed as the telework processes, specifically the employee support factor that is applicable to this study. The availability of the correct technology and governance frameworks significantly affect how well employees adapt to the telework processes

(Baker et al., 2006). One aspect of management support that enables the benefits of teleworking to be achieved while limiting risk and ensuring quality was redesigning business processes to better able employees. Notwithstanding that the skill and attitude of the employee that teleworks plays a major role in the adoption of the telework processes and in gaining the support required when teleworking (Peláez et al., 2021). Therefore, this framework was applicable in the study as it spoke to the required employee support and would address disengagement while encouraging innovation from an employee perspective. This spoke to the objective of uncovering insights on the benefits of teleworking for employees.

Lastly, the framework speaks of the employee impact factor which is the impact of telework adoption on employees. Since this study is focused on unpacking the post-lockdown telework experience from an employee perspective, the impact could be deemed beneficial or challenging for the employee. The study models that have been created to date offer helpful direction for comprehending telework adoption. Despite significant efforts to create such a study model, Campbell and McDonald's (2007) contention that no one model offers a suitable theoretical foundation for understanding telework adoption remains valid.

2.5.2 *Conceptual Framework*

Figure 2.5-3 outlined the key concepts and boundaries for this study. The study's geographical scope was limited to South Africa and for people working in the services industry. The participants had to be engaged in either a regular, ad hoc, or situational telework arrangement to be able to participate in this study. The benefits and challenges of the teleworking concept were the focus of this study.

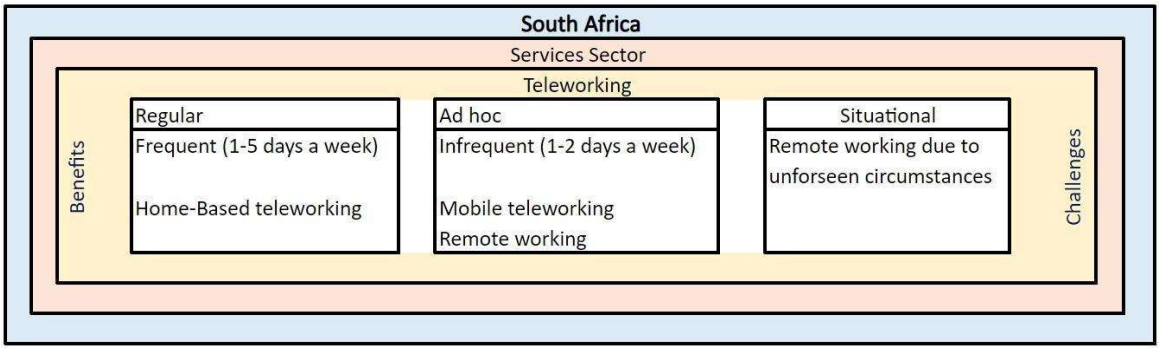


Figure 2.5-3 Boundaries of this study

Based on the stipulated boundaries in Figure 2.5-3, the conceptual framework for this study was created as illustrated in Figure 2.5-4. Based on Campbell and McDonald's (2007) SBTF, some the employee impact factors such as work/home/life balance, and reduction in travel time, were supported by literature as benefits of teleworking.

The benefits and challenges that employees face when adopting telework were crucial, but other elements had also been demonstrated to have a significant impact on results, as demonstrated by the system-based telework framework (SBTF) developed by Campbell and McDonald (2007). Given that this study concentrated on examining employee preferences, it explored the model by focusing on the relationship between various telework approaches and employee preferences.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the employee preferences stipulated in the SBTF could have changed so this study focused on unpacking the perceived benefits and challenges of teleworking before, during and post COVID-19 pandemic in an aim to see which employee preferences were still applicable today and to extend the employee preferences defined on the SBTF. Thus, this research was able to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to the effects of telecommuting on workers, thereby supporting the notion of "workplace flexibility" put forth by Campbell and McDonald (2007).

The conceptual framework adds on to these factors by below

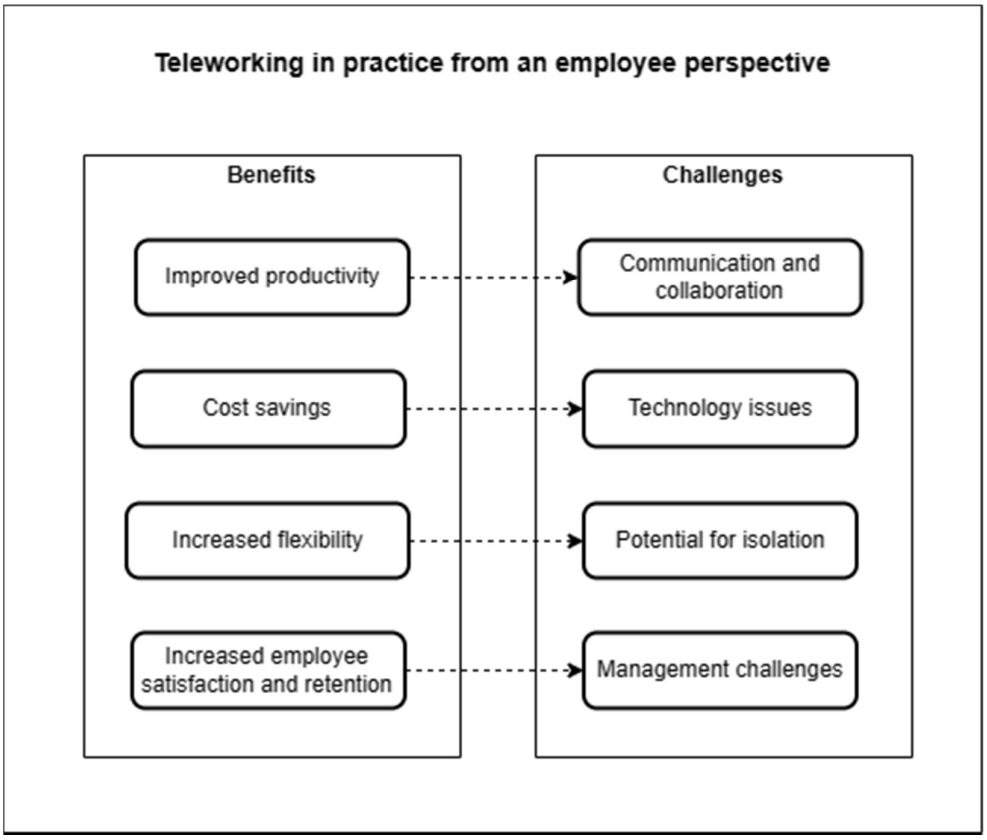


Figure 2.5-4 Conceptual Framework

Teleworking offers employees the flexibility to work from home or other locations, which could improve work-life balance and reduce commuting time and expenses. Palumbo et al. (2021) stated that teleworking could improve productivity as employees had fewer distractions and could work in a more comfortable environment. Teleworking could reduce costs for both employees through reduced commuting expenses. Furthermore, teleworking could lead to increased job satisfaction and retention, as employees appreciated the flexibility and autonomy offered by the work arrangement.

Teleworking could make communication and collaboration amongst co-workers more challenging, as employees may not be physically present in the same location as their colleagues. Teleworking relies heavily on technology, and technical issues such as poor internet connectivity or hardware problems could disrupt work. Teleworking could lead to social isolation, as employees may miss out on the social interaction and camaraderie of the traditional workplace. Managing teleworking employees could be more challenging than managing employees in a traditional workplace, as managers should find new ways to monitor and evaluate performance.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of teleworking benefits and challenges were complex, and these should be weighed carefully by both employees and employers before deciding to adopt a telework arrangement. While teleworking could offer many benefits, it also poses unique challenges that must be addressed to ensure its success.

2.6 Conclusion of Literature Review

According to the research, teleworking is popular in some nations, however there is some evidence that employers and employees believe it to have benefits and challenges. it is unclear whether the advantages exceed the challenges from the viewpoint of the employees or the organisation. However, it is apparent that an organization is the main driver of teleworking adoption because without the organization's approval and policies governing the practice, employees would not have the opportunity to do so. This research aims to aid organisations such as the ones mentioned above to evaluate the consideration of teleworking in the future as part of their recruitment and employee retention strategy.

There are other benefits for society that have been emphasized for teleworking adoption by the workforce, such as decreased carbon emissions due to fewer transportation, however there aren't enough studies to back this hypothesis up. An organization is the main driver of teleworking adoption because without the organization's approval and policies governing the practice, employees would not have the opportunity to do so.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the research paradigm and research approach adopted when the study was undertaken, and the data collection methods used. A brief discussion about the quality assurance measures was also discussed alongside the ethical considerations.

3.1 Research paradigm

Interpretivism is a philosophical approach to social research that emphasises the importance of understanding and interpreting the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). When considering the reasons why conducting a study about the benefits and challenges was still important from an interpretivist perspective, this study noted that individuals interpret their experiences subjectively. Using that understanding, the Researcher was able to delve into the diverse perspectives and interpretations of participants to better understand their own meanings based on their unique contexts, values, and beliefs.

By studying the benefits and challenges, the Researcher gained insights into how previously studied contextual factors and those identified in this study influence people's perceptions. This contextual understanding was crucial for appreciating the nuances and complexities that shaped the individuals' experiences. Since the qualitative research methodology was used in this study the qualitative research methods such as interviews, observations, and content analysis were used to explore the richness and depth of the participant’s experiences.

While there has been various studies conducted over the years about the benefits and challenges of teleworking, it’s inevitable that things change over time. This study aimed to provide a snapshot of the current state of affairs so as to gain a deeper understanding of how these dynamics evolve and adapt. This perspective was particularly relevant in the Researchers work domain where social, economic, or technological changes occur rapidly.

In summary, the interpretive view of studying the benefits and challenges aided in unpacking the importance of understanding the subjective nature of human experiences, appreciating contextual influences, employing qualitative research methods, emphasising empathy and recognising dynamic social realities.

3.2 Research approach

Most of the themes used in this study have occasionally been investigated even though research on the benefits and challenges of teleworking post lockdown in South Africa is not substantial. Given the exploratory state of the research, this study adopted the qualitative approach. The approach was used to explore how employees in the services industry perceive teleworking, its benefits and challenges. Qualitative research methods were valuable in providing rich knowledge about the complex nature of the teleworking phenomena. Through understanding the perception of teleworking from the individual employee's perspective, invaluable practical insights were uncovered and presented as per data findings and without bias.

The qualitative approach was flexible and allowed the researcher to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the teleworking benefits and challenges post-lockdown in a South African setting through one-on-one interviews (Nancy et al., 2001). The one-on-one interviews were appropriate for this study as it provided richer detail from the more descriptive interview results, allowing the researcher to track unique experiences of the participants and their interpretation of teleworking as a practice in South Africa. This made it less difficult for the researcher to draw inferences from the collected data (Rotchanakitumnuai & Speece, 2003).

The researcher assumed that this adopted approach was that the researcher would gain key insights required on the data collection phase. The insights would aid in answering the research objectives. The answers were found in the interviews and data gathered (Walters, 2001). The researcher had the flexibility to modify the research framework during the data gathering process with each interview.

3.3 Research design

A phenomenology research design was used in this study. This was because the aim of the study was to understand the participants perception of their teleworking experiences first hand. The phenomenological approach was suited for this study as it accommodated the exploration of how people made sense of their experiences instead of the evaluation of the cause for the phenomena (Welford et al., 2012). To determine employee perceptions about the benefits and challenges of teleworking, primary data was collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews involving employees who were teleworking post lockdown. Performing the interview process allowed the researcher to probe questions to participants to gain clarity that would provide more meaningful insights that were needed to be able to answer research objectives.

The main advantage of using this research design was because it allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences. This was an advantage as it meets the exploratory nature of the undertaken study and could result in the development of new theories. The main disadvantage of using this research design was that it was rigorous, systematic, and proved difficult at times, but the researcher had to use it to execute this research since the explored field commanded little knowledge (Welford et al., 2012). This allowed the researcher to contribute to the existing body of knowledge from a South African perspective.

3.4 Data collection methods

The in-depth one-on-one interview data collection method to gather data that would answer the research objectives used. Milena et al. (2008) reported that in-depth interviews allow the researcher to gain insights about the research area through the participants perspective. This perspective was adopted and as such the participants were able to share their personal perceptions of their lived experiences more confidently and the interview occurred in their natural setting (Milena et al., 2008).

Despite the fact that the interviews were done online, the participants agreed to allow the interviews to be recorded. This to gather information and observe the participants as much as possible during the interview. Furthermore, when the material was reviewed this strategy enabled the researcher to gather as much as possible about the participant

in order to better understand how the participants interpret the teleworking phenomenon and their actual experiences.

3.5 Population and sample

Pérez et al. (2005) stated that teleworking was predominant amongst knowledge workers hence this study's population consisted of knowledge workers in South Africa currently employed by organisations in the services sector.

3.5.1 *Population*

The population boundaries for this study consisted of employees who were knowledge workers, male or female, who had been teleworking in South Africa during lockdown and post-lockdown, who were within the age group of 18-65 and who were primarily based on the services sector. Qualities that were easily recognisable such as the type of organisation the participants works for and how they structured their day linked them to the experiences of interest related to the chosen population boundaries. The disadvantage of the population boundaries meant including people who did not exhibit the features the researcher was interested in while excluding those that did.

3.5.2 *Sample*

According to Hill et al. (2005), 8 to 15 participants are ideal when a researcher is thinking about using a qualitative approach. 9 interviews were originally intended as the sample for this study but a total of 15 interviews were conducted. While the number of interviews required varies depending on the research question, the desired depth of analysis, and the saturation point for this study required the Researcher to conduct 15 interviews so as to provide a robust foundation, gain rich insights and develop comprehensive understandings of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.5.3 *Sampling method*

The purposive sampling strategy was adopted in this study (Marshall, 1996). Marshall (1996) stated that the researcher must be careful when choosing samples for the purposive sampling strategy. To represent the population, purposive sampling was

utilised in this qualitative study. The benefit of utilising this strategy was that it enabled the researcher to conduct study with the most reachable subjects, producing research that is affordable, useful, and controllable. The drawback of this strategy was that it might be thought of as convenient. The researcher's employer is based on the service industry. They offer consulting to different industries. The organisation offered teleworking as part of their culture during lockdown and post-lockdown. The researcher approached the General Manager at the employer's workplace to get approval to approach other employees to participate in the study. The employer provided email approval to the researcher. Once approval was obtained, the researcher started approaching potential participants. The employer agreed for the researcher to approach the employees with the condition that they express to the participant that their participation is entirely voluntary, it is not an organisation sponsored research and the results of the study are shared with the general manager.

Hill et al. (2005) stated that when a researcher considers adopting the qualitative approach, a total of 8-15 participants are recommended. The sample for this study was originally planned to be nine interviews. A total of twenty-two people volunteered to take part in the study. Each participant was informed of their rights and the organisational imposed conditions. After some time, some participants withdrew their participation and after review, some interviews were deemed ineligible. A total of fifteen interviews were suitable since they had access to high-quality information sources through their teleworking experience and their characteristics were aligned to the population boundaries. The 15 interviews were deemed eligible because upon review of the interview transcripts they each contributed distinctive, in-depth information that was useful to the study (Hill et al., 2005).

3.6 The research instrument

The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach. The interview guide was created with a list of questions that were used to gather research insights with the aim to answer the research questions. The research instrument was piloted to gain insights on the easiness and the understandability of the research instrument. The insights gained were based on the flow and to understand if the questions made sense and how it could improve the flow of the interview. The final changes to the instrument were done before

the twenty-two interviews were conducted. The piloted interviews were excluded from the twenty-two interviews.

The interview guide began with unpacking the interviewee's demographic profile. Thereafter the interviewee was asked a generic question stated as "when you hear the term telework, what comes to mind". The aim of asking this question was to address the participants' generic understanding of the teleworking phenomenon. The follow up question confirmed the research participants eligibility "how often do you telework?". To gain clarity on the frequency the participant teleworks the question "how often do you telework" was asked. To further unpack the participants understanding of the teleworking phenomenon, the participant was eased into the core interview by asking them to refer to their pre-lockdown experience:

1. Before the declaration of lockdown, how would you describe your traditional work from the office experience?
2. Before the declaration of lockdown, how would you describe your teleworking experience?

The aim of the below questions was to understand if the participants' teleworking experience differs between lockdown and post lockdown. This aided when comparing the dataset responses with the reviewed literature.

1. During lockdown, how would you describe your teleworking experience?
2. Post lockdown, how would you describe your teleworking experience?

The participants were also asked about their perception of the government's involvement from the questions "How do you see the South African government's engagement in teleworking adoption?". Given that teleworking was mandated by the government through the imposed regulations, the study aimed to uncover insights about how people perceive the government's involvement towards teleworking post-lockdown.

Following that, the core of the interview will begin with these questions aimed at addressing the research questions.

1. From your point of view, what are the benefits of teleworking?
2. From your point of view, what are the challenges of teleworking?
3. What do you consider to be the main benefit of teleworking?

4. What do you consider to be the main challenge of teleworking?

The last question “Drawing from your teleworking experience, which do you prefer and why?” illustrated the working mode they wanted, giving insights into their preference. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked if they had any additional insights they wished to highlight as part of the study. The interview was closed and the interview ended.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

The research instrument served as a guide to get the answers required to answer the research questions. The researcher conducted a pilot on the research instrument with peers prior to the proper data collection to establish a more clearer interview guide that the participants would find easily understandable. The researcher approached individuals directly through communication modes such as Microsoft Teams or Slack and asked them to voluntarily take part in the study. Once feedback was received, email invitations were sent to the prospective participant with the information sheet, consent form and Microsoft Teams online meeting hyperlink.

The one-on-one interviews were verbally administered to the participants as per the predefined research instrument. The research focused on knowledge workers because they were both numerate and literate as such they didn't raise issues in understanding the questions. The researcher requested the participants to find a natural setting where they would be able to answer questions without distractions. The participant was also provided with the information sheet and the consent form for the participant to sign or verbally validate that they read and understood their rights before the interview.

All the interviews were held online using the Microsoft Teams applications, or the phone application. The length of the interview was estimated at 20-30 minutes. During interviews, the researcher probed the participant to elaborate on certain questions to gain more insightful data. Before and after each interview, the researcher made helpful notes detailing the thoughts and ideas about the interview. These notes were referred to during the interview transcription phase. After the interview concluded, the researcher stopped the recording, reminded the participant their rights, and thanked them for their participation. The researcher gave the participant the opportunity to ask any other information pertaining to the study, attended to the inquiries and ended the call.

3.8 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

The study was exploratory in character, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis technique. According to Jahja et al. (2021), thematic analysis approach results in a complete and thorough interpretation of the interview data. Given that there has previously been research conducted to investigate this phenomenon, a deductive thematic analysis approach was used in this study. This type of data analysis allowed the researcher to find trends in the data regarding the benefits or obstacles the participants encountered. This technique also allowed the study to evolve during the exploratory phase.

After each interview, the researcher began reviewing the auto generated Microsoft Teams interview transcript. When the researcher listened to the audio of the recordings alongside the field notes, the transcript was altered to correct any mistakes and illustrate the participants' feelings and impressions. It must be noted that the transcripts were all in raw format such that the repeated words were not removed so the researcher is able to draw on these events correctly when analysing the data. This enabled the researcher to draw conclusions regarding the sentiments and perceptions expressed by the participants during the interview procedure. As the interview reviews progressed, the order in which the questions were asked improved. This made it easy to move from one inquiry to the next and ensured that the researcher would eventually deliver solid data.

Once each participant’s transcription was complete, all the interview responses were grouped together under the applicable question. The coding and analysis were manually done by the researcher using the comprehensive interview transcript. Once the set of codes were identified, the data was further analysed in search for themes that would answer the research questions.

3.8.1 *Data analysis procedure*

The following systematic process was followed to derive meaningful insights and interpretations from the collected data. It's important to note that these steps were iterative, and the analysis process involved going back and forth between different stages. Additionally, the specific approach that was adopted in this study was the thematic data analysis approach which influenced some nuances of each step.

After the data was collected through the semi-structured interviews, the Researcher began with becoming familiar with the data. Time was heavily invested in the process of reading and re-reading the transcripts alongside the field notes. The initial notes captured during the data collection phase were reviewed alongside the transcripts and various observations were noted during the process.

The coding process was done at an interview question level so as to unpack the perspectives that would aid in answering the research questions. This process was repeated several times until all the interview questions were done. The Researcher identified and labelled open codes and assigned descriptive labels attached to segments of the data from the similarly raised benefits or challenges. To avoid imposing preconceived categories based on the previously reviewed materials, the process was first conducted independently of the literature review. This allowed the codes to emerge naturally from the data and ensured that the entire dataset was systematically coded prior to the literature review versus data interpretation phase.

Once the codes were assigned to the entire dataset, they were organised and connected to the open codes by searching for relationships and patterns in the data at a research question level. The purpose of using this coding framework was to develop themes that would aid in answering the research questions. The Researcher than focused on the core category or central theme that best captured the essence of the data by refining and consolidating the codes to build a more structured and cohesive narrative the relationships between the central theme and subthemes.

The Researcher then started analysing the similarities and differences across participant's responses and reviewed literature. The findings were documented. To ensure consistency and coherence, the Researcher reviewed and reflected on the documented finding iteratively so as to assess whether additional data collection is needed or if theoretical saturation has been reached. Once the Researcher was comfortable that saturation was reached and that the sample size was sufficient to address the research questions, 5 participants were contacted to review the results of the findings where they indicated that they were in agreement with the findings and found the results informative because they were surprised by some of the factors raised by the sample. Given this finding, the Researcher was comfortable that they had validated the documented findings and that the results were authentic.

3.9 Quality Assurance

This section outlines this study's qualitative assurance measures of rigor namely transferability, dependability and credibility.

3.9.1 *Transferability*

Transferability is defined as whether the level of effectiveness (or perceptions and experiences) of an intervention in a given environment or population will be similar to the observed level of effectiveness (or perceptions and experiences) in a systematic review (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). It is a concept commonly used in qualitative research to assess the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or populations beyond the specific study sample. In qualitative research, the goal is not to achieve statistical generalizability like in quantitative studies but rather to provide rich, in-depth insights into a particular phenomenon (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010). Transferability is often evaluated through the use of thick descriptions, which involve providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and the researcher's interpretations of the data (Janis, 2022). This allows readers to assess the similarities and differences between their own contexts and the context of the study, and determine if the findings are relevant to their own situation.

To enhance transferability in this qualitative study, the Researchers employed strategies such as purposeful sampling technique. This allowed the Researcher to select participants who represented a range of experiences, perspectives, and contexts. Furthermore, this increased the likelihood that the findings will be applicable to a broader population. The Researcher also provided comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and the data collection and analysis processes. This would help readers understand the context and circumstances under which the study was conducted. The Researchers also reflected on their own biases, assumptions, and perspectives throughout the research process to allow readers to critically assess how the researcher's perspective may have influenced the findings.

The Researcher included rich and illustrative quotes or examples from participants that could bring the findings to life and help readers understand the context and nuances of the study. The Researcher also compared the findings of the current study with existing literature or other similar studies could provide insights into the transferability of the

findings. By identifying similarities and differences, other researchers and readers can evaluate the extent to which the findings hold across different contexts. It is important to note that transferability in qualitative research does not aim for generalisability in the traditional sense but rather seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and to generate insights that may be relevant and useful in other contexts.

The interviews were conducted online, the participants were requested to be at their natural setting, during the interview. The interview was scheduled to transpire when it was most convenient for them, and in some cases, interviews were rescheduled to accommodate the participant. To establish transferability, care was taken to provide a detailed description of the sample studied, the demographic and geographic boundaries during the data analysis phase. The researcher used explicit data grouping approaches. Once the interview transcripts were documented, the coding frame was developed to characterise each utterance. To ensure there was no systematic bias in terms of who enters the study, participants' characteristics are reviewed at the end of each interview session, through this exercise the researcher reflected on the field notes when analysing the data.

3.9.2 *Credibility*

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research findings are believable, trustworthy, and reflective of the participants' perspectives and experiences (L. Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). The researcher used multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, to gather diverse perspectives and increase the credibility of the findings. By cross-referencing different data sources, the researchers could validate and strengthen their data interpretations. The researcher engaged in self-reflection and acknowledged their own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions that may influence throughout the research process. By openly addressing their subjectivity, the researchers demonstrate transparency and enhance the credibility of the study.

The researcher shared the findings with the participants to ensure accuracy and alignment with their experiences. By allowing participants to review and validate the data, the researcher could verify the authenticity and credibility of their interpretations. Overall, credibility in a qualitative study is established through rigorous and transparent research practices, including triangulation, reflexivity, member checking, peer debriefing, data saturation, detailed methodology, and thick description. By employing these strategies,

researchers can enhance the believability and trustworthiness of their qualitative research findings.

Since the interviews were conducted by the Researcher themself, this allowed the Researcher to comprehend the participants experiences and perceptions first hand. The Researcher inquired with each participant if they wanted to review the results of the research so that they can validate their perceptions of teleworking benefits. Furthermore, post the interview, the participants were asked for any commentary remarks about the study so as to inform the Researcher their feedback. Helpful insights were derived from this approach, as some feedback pertained to the interview method. Through reviewing the individual transcripts, and evaluation of similarities in the participants and their responses, the Researcher to the best of her abilities presented an accurate view of how the participants perceive their teleworking experience.

3.9.3 *Dependability*

In a qualitative study, dependability refers to the consistency, stability, and reliability of the research process and findings over time (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Janis (2022) stated the dependability relates to the extent to which the study's results can be replicated or produce similar outcomes if the research were conducted again under similar conditions. To ensure dependability in this qualitative study, the Researcher employed several strategies. The Researchers reflected on their own role, biases, and potential influences on the research process. They documented their decision-making, assumptions, and personal reflections to increase transparency and allow for evaluation of their impact on the research. The Researcher strived to maintain consistency in data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout the study. This included using consistent interview protocols, observation techniques, and data analysis methods to ensure that the research process was standardised and reliable.

The Researcher kept detailed records of all research activities, including field notes, audio/video recordings, and analysis memos. These records helped establish an audit trail that allows for transparency and replication of the research process. The Researcher engaged in peer review or debriefing sessions with other researchers or experts in the field. This external input helped identify potential biases, inconsistencies, or alternative interpretations, enhancing the dependability of the study. By employing these strategies,

researchers can enhance the dependability of their qualitative study, ensuring that the research process and findings are consistent, reliable, and replicable.

3.9.4 *Data analysis in connection to the theoretical framework*

3.10 Ethical considerations

When the study was provided to participants, they were notified that their participation was entirely optional and that they were free to participate or withdraw at any time during or after the study. As previously stated, the study would be completed at the convenience of the participants to ensure that they do not feel forced in any manner. Before the interviews proceed, the participants were read their rights, also emphasising that there were no repercussions to withdrawing their participation in the study.

The participant's rights will be provided to them prior to the interview session. The rights will also be explained to them on the consent form that will give and read to the participant before the interviews begin. The consent form will emphasise the message that they are permitted to withdraw from the study without any repercussion.

The consent form highlighted what the study was about, the perceived risks and benefits of partaking in the study, the researchers contact information and the supervisor's contact information. Participants were asked to submit demographic data, such as their age, gender, role, where they reside and years of service. The researcher pseudonymized the data to guarantee its anonymity. Each participant's information was known to the researcher alone. A number was assigned to the various participants to separate their survey data from any personally identifying information. The participant-specific code was the only way that the survey data may be connected to personally identifying information.

The researcher took precautions to protect the survey data's confidentiality and avert any data privacy concerns. As per the Wits Business Schools' data protection and privacy policies, electronic documents were password protected. In compliance with the Wits Business School's data privacy and retention policies, only other researchers certified by the Ethics Committee will be able to access the study data.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The research study explored the perceived employee benefits and challenges of teleworking in the South African services sector post-lockdown. The empirical data was obtained by conducting a qualitative analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews with knowledge workers in South Africa currently employed by organisations in the service sector. The study findings were presented in this chapter beginning with an overview of the sample study, the relevance of empirical data, discussions of the themes of the study, the summary and the conclusion.

4.2 Overview of the study sample

The overview of the study sample was obtained from the profile or demographics of the participants as well as the relevance of the empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with members of the private sector organisations.

4.2.1 *Profile of the participants*

To ensure inclusiveness participants were interviewed from various departments such as, the IT department, the sales department, and the human capital department. The level of seniority also varied, there were three leadership positions, which would ensure that the study was inclusive, and sampling also represents the minority of respondents such as Junior Software Engineers which would normally be overlooked in such studies.

This subsection present participants demographic profiles which consists of the gender, their age, their profession, the number of years between a service the organisation and what they do daily (Table 1).

- **Gender**: The sample participants were made up of eight males and seven females. This gender representation level could not have pre-empted if this study was neutral on gender. Although the participants' demographics were captured, the research felt that they had no bearing on the results derived.

- **Age**: 8 participants were between the ages of 25-34, 5 were between the ages of 35-44 and 2 were between the ages of 18-24.
- **Location**: Ten participants reported to be residing in Gauteng, four of which resided in the Western Cape, and one resided in the Eastern Cape.
- **Employment**: during the data collection phase all fifteen participants were employed in the private sectors. Thirteen participants reported to be employed by a large organisation while 2 reported to be employed in a medium sized organisation. Thirteen participants reported to be working in a professional industry and two reported to work in an administrative industry.
- **Occupation**: there were three participants that were in a leadership position and 12 participants were specialists in the IT industry. In the leadership positions, there were two team leads and one account manager. On the specialist team, there were three business analysts, one data analyst, one recruitment specialist, one sales consultant and five software engineers.
- **Work experience**: There was an average work experience of 4 years across the participants profiles. During the data collection phase, some participants had found themselves in new positions with as little as one year of experience while others had been in the same role for little over seven years' experience.

Participant	**Sector**	**Role**	**Experience**
Participant 1	Finance and Business Services	Project Lead	7 years
Participant 2	Finance and Business Services	Technical Business Analyst	7 years
Participant 3	Finance and Business Services	Data Analyst	5 years
Participant 4	Finance and Business Services	Sales Consultant	2 years

Participant	Sector	Role	Experience
Participant 5	Finance and Business Services	Recruitment Specialist	9 years
Participant 6	Finance and Business Services	Team Lead	10 years
Participant 7	Finance and Business Services	Senior Software Engineer	7 years
Participant 8	Finance and Business Services	Intermediate Software Engineer	6 years
Participant 9	Finance and Business Services	Account Manager	5 years
Participant 10	Finance and Business Services	Senior Business Analyst	8 eights
Participant 11	Finance and Business Services	Senior Auditor	1 year
Participant 12	Finance and Business Services	Senior Software Engineer	10 years
Participant 13	Finance and Business Services	Junior Software Engineer	1 ½ years
Participant 14	Finance and Business Services	Senior Business Analyst	9 years
Participant 15	Finance and Business Services	Junior Software Engineer	1 ½ years

Table 4.2-1: Showing the sector, role, and experience of participants.

4.2.2 *Relevance of study sample*

Research Participation Eligibility

A key determinant of whether the participant is eligible for the study, was to determine if the participant uses a laptop to do work and understanding what they do daily. To gain a deeper understanding of what the participants do daily the question "how would you describe your workday" was asked to each participant. Several the participants engage in meetings and perform a variety of tasks that are related to their profile or job description during their workday.

The participants in the leadership position would interact a lot with their team's while managing client expectations and corresponding with the clients. The software engineer's category advised that most of the work would be developing software and new technologies for their clients. The specialist category is made up of business analysts, data analysts as well as some of the recruitment specialists whose day involves writing documentation as well as submitting project reports to different stakeholders.

"I would describe my day as busy, mentally draining but not physically" **- Participant 13**.

A word cloud showing the dominant words of the study was generated using a statistical tool, Atlas Ti. The word cloud revealed that the words time, home, work, office, Working, teleworking, lockdown, company, and office were very dominant in the study as they were at the centre of the word cloud (Figure 1).

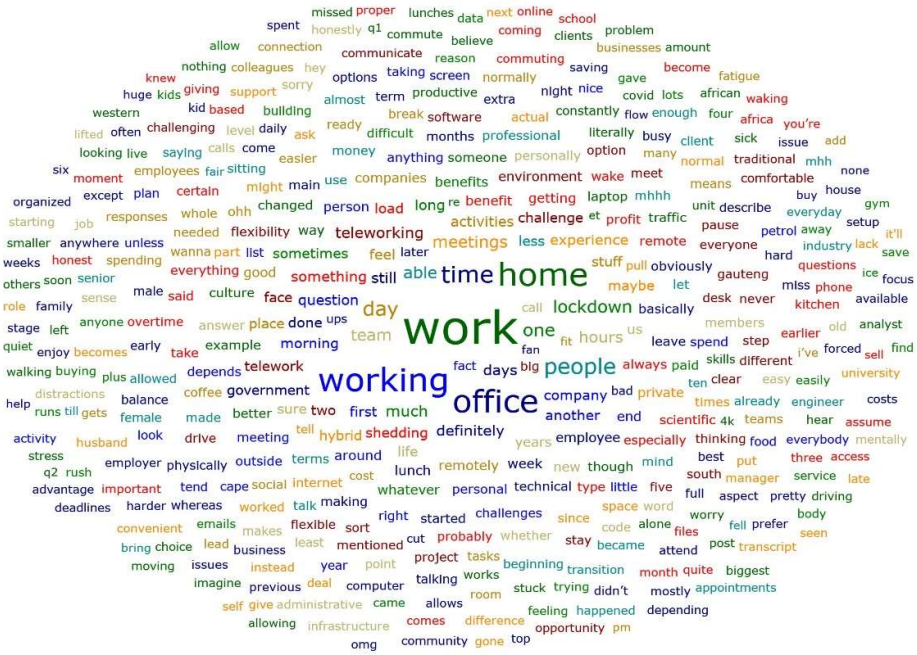


Figure 4.2-1: Word cloud of the study

4.3 Themes of the study

The study had two objectives which were: objective 1, to explore the perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the South African services sector and objective 2, to explore the perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector.

Using the inductive process, the objectives were mapped alongside the applicable interview questions. During the transcription process, the answers from all the participants were grouped under each question to aid in the coding, and theme identification process. From the study 7 themes and 17 subthemes were generated.

Research objective	Themes	Sub-themes
Explore the perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the	- Participants telework experience.	- General working day. - Participants interpretation of telework. - Frequency of telework
	- Pre – lockdown working conditions	- Workday pre lockdown

South African services sector		- Teleworking experience before lockdown
	- Telework experience during and post lockdown.	- Teleworking experience during lockdown. - Post lock-down telework experience
	- The benefits of teleworking	- Decrease in travel. - Decrease in expenses. - Increased Productivity - Flexibility to Schedule - Improved work-life balance
Explore the perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector	- The governments engagement in teleworking	- The Governments role in teleworking.
	- The challenges of teleworking	- Benefits versus Challenges.
	- Hybrid vs teleworking or working from the office	- Hybrid - Teleworking full – time - Working from home

Table 4.3-1: Showing the research objective, themes, and sub-themes of the study.

4.4 The perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the South African services sector.

The first objective was to explore the perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the South African services sector. This study objective was explored by four themes which were participants telework experience, pre – lockdown working conditions, tele- work experience during and post lockdown and the benefits of teleworking.

4.4.1 *Participants telework experience.*

General working day

The general working day of participants ranged from a routine day of being logged into a computer and answering emails, blocking the diary for work purposes to busy days filled with meetings with clients or teammates completing status reports and project managing various projects. However, for most of participants mentioned having a lot of meetings with various stakeholders on a daily basis, responding to client emails while tacking their daily mundane responsibilities. The participants often mentioned prioritising what needs to be done during the day by using a daily to-do list, which helped keep track of their productivity during the day.

> *"First thing I would do is review my to-do list and prioritize tasks for the day. Also, I would review my team's tasks and ensure that everyone is on track to meet their deadlines. We have daily stand-ups where we would check in with each other, answer any questions the team might have, and offer support and guidance as needed."* **- Participant 6**
>
> *"You mean a 9-5. I guess the routing is to login to my computer, check emails, make sure I'm logged into Teams (chuckle). Start working until my next meeting and then work again so on and so forth."* **- Participant 8**
>
> *"So, my workday mainly consists of. It's normally meetings, so meetings with the team or with the client, with the team teammates, it's normally around ways of working. And what? The client is normally around asking questions about the requirements or problem solving."* **- Participant 10**
>
> *"When I'm ready to start working I will start off writing my to do list, I normally compare that to yesterdays' list and start from there. Once the list I done I then tackle the things on it top to bottom and attend meetings."* **- Participant 3**

Participants interpretation of telework.

The participants of the study were asked what came to mind when they heard the words telework. Their views to this question ranged from hearing the term for the first time to thinking remote working. Some participants mentioned telework being

about using technology to do work, having the convenience of not leaving home to work. Other participants mentioned tele work bringing up the thought of endless MS meetings, emails. Managing a remote team and ironing communication disputes which brough some negative connotation to the word teleworking which was different to the positive connotations brought up by other participants such as conducive home-work environment and portability.

> "*Honestly speaking, this is the first time I am hearing this term (chuckle). Based on what I can deduce from the term I would say something that has to do with telephones. Like the use of telephones to do work.*"**- Participant 5**
>
> *"Working from home yeah working from home with your portables."* **- Participant 14**
>
> *"When I hear the word telework, convenience I think comes to my mind and that's a convenience again of not having to leave home. For me that's convenient because I'm leaving home to go to work, required like for me personally, a lot of prepping to actually be ready for going to the office*." **- Participant 2**
>
> *"When I hear the term telework, I think about the endless MS teams meetings, endless emails, managing a remote team, ironing our communication disputes, never-ending strategy meetings for maintaining team cohesion and ensuring that remote team members have the resources and support they need to be successful in their work. It's basically a never-ending tale of more management work, basically remote working."* **- Participant 6**

Frequency of telework.

The participants frequency in teleworking ranged from once a week to five days a week. The was one participant who tele-worked once a week, 2 participants telework twice a week and the rest of the participants worked from teleworked for 3-5 days a week. Either because they lived far from the office or because it was just convenient that they worked from home. Many of the participants who teleworked mentioned that they tried going to the office at least once a week or once or twice a month. Which meant that the participants were mainly teleworkers or remote workers.

"I don't go into the office often because I live so far away and because I am not a morning person, so waking up even earlier, its more difficult than me. So, I'd say probably like. You know, every day of the week I telework." - **Participant 13**

"I usually go on Tuesdays and Thursday of each week. Yeah, I try, the rest of the time I'm at home. I like the balance and I also find that I get to know more like information about what other teams are working on, so I think that makes me feel like I'm you know working with like real human beings and not just a face on screen." - **Participant 14**

"Every day if I can. I would say, majority of the time. Most days I telework I would only go into the office. Maybe. Once a month or once in two weeks at max." **- Participant 2**

4.4.2 *Pre – lockdown working conditions*

Workday pre lockdown

The traditional day for participants before the lockdown was for many of the participants filled with driving to work, as most of the participants had to work from the office. This offered a separation of work and home life as they would leave work at the office and come home to other activities. This meant that participants commuted to work daily. Some of the participants were allowed to work from home however, that rarely happened and some of the participants were not allowed to work from home due to the sensitivity of the data they worked with. Some of the participants wondered how they were able to do the same amount of work, without taking any work home as they do now, which further showed that they predominantly worked from the office and rarely and for some never worked remotely. Very few of the participants (only one) mentioned that they worked from home or remotely even before the lockdown season. The participant had been remote working for the past five years ever since they began their job.

"Taking me back a little bit there. At my previous company we only worked from the office, hold up. Yeah, sorry about that I was just thinking that yeah like I drove to work every

day. I worked in Sandton, so I needed to leave home early if I'm going to miss the Grayston Drive traffic." - **Participant 14**

"Well before COVID-19, I was working at an office full time, Monday through Friday, 8 to 5. Thinking about it know it was a lot of work, wake up early, get ready for work. I am not a night preparer so you can imagine the rush in the morning (chuckle). By the time I'm done getting ready I am so late I will be stuck in traffic for at least an hour."**- Participant 7**

"It was normal, so I think even though there was there wasn't locked down then already in the IT industry we did have a work from home experience. We were allowed to work from home as much as it wasn't an everyday thing." **- Participant 10**

"There was no teleworking experience. Let me think, yeah not there was none at my old company. Because of the sensitivity of the data, they wouldn't allow us to work from home or take work home with us." **- Participant 11**

Teleworking experience before lockdown

It was apparent in the interviews with participants that there was no teleworking experience for the participants before the lock-down and if there was it was random and done so sparingly (that was according to their definition of what teleworking was, which included working remotely with use of technology to help do the work). Many of the participants did not telework often, unless if it was an emergency as this was not a normal occurrence or culture before lockdown. This then led to negative feelings raised towards going to the office as participants were met with tasks such as the menial tasks one must do to get ready to go to the office, traveling time and traffic. such as the time it takes to get ready to go to the office, which was something often overlooked when thinking about energy expenditure for work or when considering how many hours one spends working.

A number of participants raised that prior to the lockdown they worked a lot of overtime hours, and this was mainly because of the office chit-chatter that they would have throughout the day, during breakfast or getting coffee together. The chats in the kitchen and those social interactions counted as distractions from the person's work and finishing tasks on time. Thus, most cases they would need to work overtime to account for the lost time.

"I wouldn't say I had a teleworking experience before lockdown, no not maybe a couple of times, not enough to have a proper experience." **- Participant 12**

"Being in a place with people could be distracting at times because there was like discussions and coffee and then you would meet people in the kitchen and then that would turn into a discussion. And then or people would be like, hey, we're walking across, we're going to get lunch. And that what we're supposed to be a 30-minute lunch break becomes a one hour lunch break. And so, they can. There were definitely times where it was distracting, but then." ***- Participant 2***

"Like I mentioned before, there were days when I had to work overtime and so I would occasionally carry my work laptop home so I can finish things there, that's about it."- **Participant 1**

There were exceptions as there was only one participant that mentioned that they were allowed to work from home; however, it was uncommon for employees to work remotely although they were allowed to, this did come with a clause that expected them to be in the office for a certain percentage of their working hours. Another participant had been working from home even before the lockdown due to the covid – 19 pandemics. Thus, they had been teleworking even before lockdown which gave them vast experience.

"Not so common, yeah, as much as we were allowed to it, it wasn't as intense as lockdown. We had to have a reason to work from home, attend meetings remotely and then obviously not go to the office. So it was something that we had, had to have a reason to work from home instead of at the office." **- Participant 10**

"Well, we had a number of consultants working on some software initiatives that were based in India so we would work remotely with them during status meetings and so on. But this is something that was unique to them and not necessarily us. So, I guess that the teleworking experience I have had." - **Participant 6**

4.4.3 *Telework experience during and post lockdown.*

Teleworking experience during lockdown.

Many of the participants mentioned that there was a challenge in adjusting to teleworking during the lockdown. For many of the participants there was planned or scheduled transition from working from the office to working from home and as a result teleworking. This was an overnight transition and required participants to adjust and be able to produce the same quality of work in a different environment. Thus, there was much adjusting and adapting for the participants in terms of their working environment, schedules and even their psychological health and mental health.

Things were not all bad at as there were some perks of being home such as not having to commute to work, especially at such a time were commuting to work was dangerous or put them to the risk of contracting COVID. This was however, out lived by the challenges of working from home, such as finding adequate space to work in, with low noise levels, having the correct and adequate equipment to function for work purposes such as internet, laptops, desks and chairs.

> *"It feels all-encompassing and. I had no option but to do telework working I had to. learn fast with this new. That was happening in the world, which was the lockdown. Had to learn how to telework pretty fast because everyone had no other choice."* **- Participant 15**

> *"In the beginning it was like the best thing in the world because it was like wow, I can sleep until like 9:00 o'clock and wake up and turn my camera on and like a ten class and like not, you know, not really have to worry that much."* **- Participant 13**

> *"It took a while to adjust to, it was difficult in the beginning. But then, after finding a bit of a groove, and establishing a routine, then it became easier, and it became normal."* **- Participant 12**

The other things came in at later stages of working from home such as extended working hours and realising that there was a lack of community that they were used to before lockdown, which brought in a sense of loneliness and a lack of belonging for most of the participants. Some participants felt that they worked to the point of being emotionally drained as there was no separation between work time and resting time. This was due to the different nature of how they were conducting their workdays, the constant thought of being alone brought additional burdens. These burdens included the lack of

opportunity for a person to be able to walk and quickly address any concerns they might have about their delivery.

Despite the presence of communications technologies, initially bridging the communication gap, the person-to-person contact was very much missed when it came to getting information from the other party. Another challenge raised by participants is that during lockdown, it was difficult to promote that cohesive team culture. In some of the factors that were contributed to that was just merely people are being stuck at home, at the time everyone was back at home with her kids, or with their parents it was very difficult at first because there's just no space for them to be able to accommodate all the required work cultural meetings.

Some of the participants did indicate that their employer promoted sort of a virtual working culture where they would have to login during the day and if they wanted to do an errand, they would be required to message the whole team indicating their absence from their laptop.

Another big attribute that was really brought in was the fact that for telework to work in the favour of the employee there are a lot of additional hidden costs such as having a designated place to be able to execute work. The participants raised that an ideal home workplace would be a place that allows you to be free from distractions so that you are able to focus on executing tasks to a certain level of quality as well as participating in online meetings without background noises.

> *"I was so used to a community like vibe and feel and now I was so alone and disconnected. Like I like had days when I was like I want to go to the office and actually like hear people laugh but I couldn't. But I guess it wasn't all that bad, I mean I leant a lot of new skills and I've been like placed at like very exciting projects so its been like a journey but definitely not an easy one."* - **Participant 14**
>
> *"But as time went on I definitely did miss the other experiences that came with like before lockdown. But in the beginning was good, and then eventually it just became normal. It was like. I don't know. It just, it's just normal now. I can't, I can't even imagine how it was before then, like physically doing all that stuff. And I think wow, how would I even do that?"*- **Participant 13**
>
> *"As much as you know, I thought I was saving time on traffic and all of those things, but in actual fact I ended actually working a bit harder than I would be working at the office."* **Participant 10**

For some of the participants the transition was good what made the transition good was because of the access to technology such laptops, tablets, and phones. These tools made teleworking easier to adopt from an employee perspective. The support of the supervisors and employers also played an important role in in making the transition from working from the office to working from home much easier for employees.

> *"For me personally it was an easy transition because unlike the old days where Devs would use desktops to work, I use the work laptop you know, laptops are portable so working anywhere is not an issue. So, when lockdown happened, I just used my home office, I had to have one because of all the overtime I would do."* - **Participant 1**

Post lock-down telework experience

For most of the participants there was not much change to them telework post lockdown as the participants were given the option to either to continue working from home or come back to the office. This was because most of the companies and employees were already settled in remote working and work was still done even under such circumstances. The lifting of the lockdown simply presented an option for employees and employers about to re-evaluate working arrangements. This was not the case for some of the participants who when they lockdown was lifted were not given the option to stay home and work from there but were forced to then go back to working from the office full time as preferred by their employer. For many of the participants who were given an option, the participants chose to either stay home or use the hybrid model of working from home on certain days and others at the office.

The reasons that motivated the participants were that they already had established home offices and built a work routine that functioned for them and their personal life. Other reasons to predominantly telework were, the increasing cost of fuel, there was no need to drive to the office building, there was no need to make any preparations to go to work, there was no need to worry about an office desk if the organisation utilises the concept of hot desks, having load shedding alternatives (as loadshedding was a huge factor for employee productivity, especially for those working from home) , having reliable internet connectivity and having a clearly planned day.

> *"Whenever I've got screen fatigue, I just go to the office, and I think I'd say my experience is it's still a bit the same. So, nothing has really changed, and I've got a lot a routine*

lockdown or in place. So not much has changed really, except for now, if I want to go to the office, I don't have to organise or, you know, send the request that I need to go to the office. I can just, I can just go to the office." - **Participant 10**

"I think. They have been systems put in place to make it more efficient, more productive. And easier. Basically, so yeah. OK, so wait for one. You are less stressed in your home, I think. The traveling, the traffic jams and everything made like the start of your day, very, very unpleasant." - **Participant 11**

"For me I think it's been fairly a good experience. Since I have been doing this for a while, I have a dedicated workspace, extra monitors, and recently got solar for load shedding (long pause). I mean I get that flexibility, of working from anywhere if I have reliable internet connectivity." - **Participant 6**

"Like I said, the boss doesn't really like us working from home, so I still predominantly work from the office. When I work from home, I am much happier honestly. I could work comfortably - in my choice of clothing, at a decent room temperature, in my own chair. Where I work now it's almost always cold, year-round. I end up wearing my winter jacket at my desk." - **Participant 5**

4.4.4 *Benefits of teleworking*

The participants were asked to state their perceived benefits of teleworking. The following emerging themes were derived from their responses: Travel, leave, productivity, work-life-balance, distractions, work structure, costs, stress, office politics, flexibility, and personal management.

Decrease in travel

When exploring the advantages of teleworking, one of the themes identified from eleven participants was that teleworking has reduced the need to commute to and from work daily. The other benefits were found in that teleworking reduced the physical act of driving, reduced the time traveling to and from work and saved participants from the costs of travelling. The consensus was that a reduction in travelling to and from work can save time, money and reduce the feeling of being tired. Table 3 shows the participants views on how teleworking solves their challenges on traveling.

I think working remotely also just gives me the opportunity to live my best life working without worrying about commuting to the office every day. **Participant 3**

Table 3: Showing the views of participants on traveling and teleworking.

Physical driving to and from work	**Time spent travelling**	**Cost of travelling**
"I think spending less time in the road kind of like you means you have more time to work and you're not as tired as usual." - **Participant 4**	"*The benefit is it doesn't involve that rush of ok, now I need to get up early, get ready, sit in traffic, and then be at the office at a certain time.*"- **Participant 2**	*"Another advantage is I am spending way less on petrol because I don't have to go to the office and I can use that money for other things*."- **Participant 1**
"*I don't have to drive to the office, not that I really mind by the morning kumbaya really takes the energy out of you.*" - **Participant 7**	*"When you had to travel, maybe you had to utilise 2 hours in the morning. You must, but you have to eye, and you have to avoid traffic*"- **Participant 11**	*"Not spending money on petrol, that helps a lot, I mean have you seen the price of petrol...its ridiculous."* - **Participant 7**
"Not having to drive to the office is a lifesaver" - **Participant 5**	*"I think less commuting time, like I said I used to commute a lot and being stuck in traffic sucks so that's the plus there."* - **Participant 14**	"*By the way I don't have a car, so I don't have to worry about the cost of maintenance, petrol or insurance so I'm saving quite a bit of money.* "- **Participant 3**
"*I think there are trade-offs, like not having to drive to and from work.***"** - **Participant 9**	"*I save time. I'm not stuck in traffic. I'm not stuck on the M1 day in day out.*"- Participant **10**	"*From an employee's perspective, I also save on petrol. I save my car from maintenance."* -**Participant 10**
"*not having to deal with traffic.*" - **Participant 12**		
"I'm less tired because with the commute" - **Participant 15**		

Decrease in expenses

Over and above the reduced cost of travelling, the participants noted that from an employee perspective, there are hidden expenses associated with interacting with other colleagues. These expenses are derived from the various coffee runs, general water cooler talk, appropriate office attire, and other miscellaneous items such as laptop bags etc. Another participant noted that the employer also benefited from teleworking through a reduction in office related expenditure such as electricity. Saving time and money helps reduce the number of stresses factors an employee has to deal with on a daily basis.

> *"So, like previously I noticed I spend a I spent a lot on. Coffee runs and lunch runs when I was at the office and, it's not like some of it's not planned. So, some of it you would have like your budget. I know I'm going to spend this much in the month, or I'll buy myself lunch once or twice a week, but sometimes also it's unplanned*." - **Participant 2**

> *"Even though I miss the morning coffee's since working from home that expense is gone."* - **Participant 7**

> *"Working from home allowed me to re-evaluate what my needs are versus wants, I mean I think there were times when I would like get things for work which were not for work like for example buying a new bag laptop bag or something like that, I think now I realised what a need is versus a want so I guess I have developed some good habits.* - **Participant 14**

> "*The benefits to the employer is that they also save on things like electricity or any office odd, you know, material that employees would be using the office."* - **Participant 10**

> *"I also like the fact that I can choose comfort by working in my jammies over skinny jeans or expensive those corporate suits."* - **Participant 3**

Increase in productivity

The other benefit of teleworking brought up by participants was increased productivity given that the employee had fewer things to worry about, this increase in activity was mainly due to substituting commuting time with work. This substitution and subsequent increase in productivity benefited both the employer and the employee.

> *"So, productivity, because your kind of like work when you need to work, not you can't like, not forced to just sit there, and pretend as if you're working. So, you only like really logged in and worked when you need it too*." **- Participant 4**

Flexibility

The benefit of flexibility was very apparent amongst a number of participants. The perception was that the ability for each person to dictate their core working hours (8am - 5pm) of where and when they would be most productive was a major benefit of teleworking. This theme was closely associated with the time saved from less commuting and the ability to organise work with a personalised structure. Flexibility was also associated with convenience of being able to work during the time they would be most productive and at a time that was suitable for their personal life in their own personal space.

> *"I get to plan my time after core working hours. I think I get to enjoy my backyard and nature because on sunny days I can work outside it's amazing what working in a nice scenery breathing fresh air does to your creativity".* - **Participant 1**

> *"Be flexible in the hours that you wake up in the morning. Like you know that you don't have to. Spend time sitting in traffic going to work, so that allows you to wake up a bit later if you want to or spend that time in the morning. On doing whatever you want to do, if you're not going to wake up immediately and get to work, you can spend that time in the morning or going to the gym or doing whatever you need to do."* - **Participant 2**

> *"Working remotely is super-duper flexible, I mean I treat it as the company allowing me to make your own hours. I also get to like to have the working style that suits my personality."* - **Participant 3**

> *"It creates flexibility for the worker to be able to work when they can. So, I'm not restricted to the normal eight to five office hours because I'm at home. I'm in my space at whatever point where I feel that, you know, this is a conducive time for me to work, whether it's overnight or whatever, I can work."* - **Participant 10**

> *"So, you work 8 hours a day. You start from 8:00 to 4:30, So if you are working from home, you can even start at 7 and clock out earlier than 4:30 and if sometimes you delayed a bit on your work, you can do that work later in the evenings."* - **Participant 11**

Increased work-life balance

For many years employees have been baffled with not being able to spend enough time with their loved ones dur to their demanding work commitments. The flexibility of where employees work and when they work provided them with the opportunity to work from home, the participants reported that they can participate in the daily lives of their loved

ones by being physically present for the children when they are returning from school, having control of their work environment, and avoiding office politics.

A few participants noted that having worked from home, they do not have the need for supervision because they are self-managed. This allows them to work and produce quality deliverables. The balance privilege of being able to balance working and being there for the family was made possible from the convenience of not having to leave home. Another participant indicated they there is no need to deal with fluorescent light.

The other work life balance subcategory speaks to the participants raising that they are less stressed, and some reported that being able to work from home they had less noise to deal with and could get a lot more work done.

> *"Being there for my family."* **- Participant 6**
>
> "*For someone like me, having that responsibility of myself and not like, you know, worrying that someone's going to be looking over my shoulder every second allows me to work better. I don't need that constant supervision where I know some people do.*" **- Participant 13**
>
> *"I produce better quality work because of that and less stressed."* - **Participant 15**
>
> *"Less noise, like I mentioned earlier, the office gets a bit hectic with everyone making calls, so I really like working from home, the fact that there are less distractions."* **Participant 5**

4.5 The perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector.

The second research objective was to explore the perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector this objective was answered by three themes which were the governments engagement in teleworking, the challenges of teleworking and hybrid vs teleworking or working from the office.

4.5.1 The Governments engagement in teleworking.

Although the government handled COVID-19 rules and regulations appropriately. They gave businesses the freedom to do what they needed to do to suit them. The government gave companies the flexibility to choose whether they are offering the opportunity for

teleworking or not. However, the participants did not feel that the government were involved or engaged in teleworking. This lack of engagement by the government was seen by participants as a practice that could led to employers abusing their power over employees.

> *"I don't know how the like, I don't know like the governments like rules and regulations, and I don't know how they're involved in teleworking, adoption. I would say that just in my opinion I felt South Africa handled lockdown well. I was proud of the government and the decisions that they made during lockdown, and they were quiet."* **- Participant 2**

> *"But I don't think there is anything more the government has done, I mean if there has been I'm not aware of it. (pause). The SARS thing, maybe that's something worth noting. I mean the fact that you can claim back working from expenses I personally have not done that, so I don't know what that entails."* - **Participant 3**

> "*So I think since I think they only got involved like during the first few months and then they after they kind of like left everything to companies to see do what they see fit. So, it it's only from the starting point. I think when it was like really mostly talked about like during the first few months, that's when they were very engaged and just making sure that things are being done like according to the rules."* **- Participant 4**

One of the participants noted that for the government to be able to support the adoption of teleworking they need to be able to provide the infrastructure for teleworkers and currently in South Africa there's just no existing infrastructure to support this phenomenon. Furthermore, another participant observed that the government employees were unable telework simply because of the sensitivity of the data that they come across in addition industries such as auditors seemed to not be suited to have teleworkers because they primarily engaged with the government.

Many of the industries in South Africa were not digitally mature to allow workers and employees to telework which perhaps played an important role in the adoption and implementation of teleworking as a practice in South Africa. Furthermore, loadshedding and increasing hours of loadshedding was an obstacle and thus associated with the government's involvement or lack of involvement in the adoption of teleworking in South Africa. This is affected teleworking in that costed employees and employers a lot to sustain the teleworking as a result the employees resorted to hybrid models of working so that they could still enjoy the benefits of teleworking and still have access to resources such as electricity by frequenting the office space whenever they needed it. Another

participant highlighted some of the critical issues surrounding South Africa especially regarding the South African GDP and economy.

The recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 laid heavily on the government and hence maybe the adoption of teleworking was not in a priority as it may not have been an immediate need and why it could have been the reason they left that process to be handled by companies, giving them the free will to do as they choose.

> *"I can give an example, for example if you are working in the auditing space. My husband is an auditor. Sometimes you they require files so the government now is keeping manual files. Nothing now is digitized. So, if they need files and they need to go to the client, it's still they still need to go in. So, depending on the type of the work that you do, yes it's possible to telework, but also impossible if the government is not where it's supposed to be in terms of the digital maturity of the departments."* **- Participant 10**

> *"Probably engaged in a negative way in terms of load shedding becoming again another normal part of life like especially now that everyone's at home, I think probably power consumptions are increasing, but with that it's like. Power situation is getting worse. So, they do have engagement, but not in a positive way."* **- Participant 13**

> *"I am going to be honest here I think I think it's difficult for the government to do anything, I mean look at our economy, look at load shedding look at our GDP. All these things are just down there, I don't think remote working adoption is at the top of their list, but I will say it would be appreciated if they would help save the middle class some money and perhaps enforce laws that help us in a way, I guess yeah."* **- Participant 14**

4.5.1 *Challenges of teleworking*

The challenges presented by teleworking mentioned by the participants were that people are unable to physically interact with one another. However, human interaction was a very valuable aspect as human beings required it to effectively bounce ideas and brainstorm, especially for those working in the software development industry who spend hours in huddles, hackathons and other technology sessions brainstorming new solutions and talking about new technologies.

> *"Not being able to interact with people daily. Even back in the lockdown days, people use to go MIA speaking about bad internet connectivity but that hasn't changed much with load shedding also being a part of our everyday life*." **- Participant 1**

"*Another challenge is probably isolation, the psychological impact of being alone can be quite much.*" **- Participant 1**

The other challenges mentioned by participants were highly linked to the benefits of teleworking (Table 4.). these challenges included feelings of being isolated, increased extra working hours due to blurred working hours and a lack of separation between home and work time. There was a lot more effort required from employees to be acknowledged at work. Although there were many benefits teleworking presented with challenges such as loadshedding, internet costs, not being able to read people body language due to online meetings and increased number of meetings which took away from the amount of time employees had to do the actual work.

"*The hours are blurred. there isn't clearly defined working hours because home is now your office*." **- Participant 2**

Another especially challenging thing is making sure that someone who is a direct report or direct supervisor is able to see that you are like contributing value to the team. So whether you're working with who like is in charge of your like evaluation and things like that, people who are in charge of making sure you're growing professionally in the organization are able to see but you were like really working hard and see what you're passionate about see what your interests are so that they can be looking for opportunities.

"*I think the first one worth noting is that in my experience you are just not going to be close to your co-workers unless you try. I mean you can be like email friendly with them you know it is just not going to be the same as being their person.*" **- Participant 3**

"*I think working overtime, there is no start and end time because we work from home. This is a big issue because our client has employees all over so different time zones. This means a random call outside work hours when there are production issues.*" **- Participant 6**

"*I think load shedding is the number one. Load shedding makes it difficult to work from home, I mean one minute its stage two the next its stage four before you know it its stage six. It's too much because I don't have backup power unlike working from the office you know.*" **- Participant 5**

Benefit	Challenge
- Saving money on fuel	- Paying for internet connectivity

consumption and not buying unnecessary things at work. - Not having to take public transport to and from work	- Paying for other power supply due to loadshedding - More meetings and less time to work.
- Flexibility of time and not spending time to prep for the next day	- Extra working hours/ increased overtime working. - More meetings and less time to work. - You put more effort to be acknowledged
- Work life balance	- Working overtime - Blurred working times.
- Having your own office	- Being isolated - Not being able to read people's body language. - You get easily distracted with chores. - Lack of social engagement

Table 4.5-1: Showing the benefits versus the challenges brought by teleworking.

4.5.2 *Hybrid, teleworking or working from the office.*

In this section the participants were asked which model they preferred between hybrid working (Working at home and at the office), teleworking full-time and working from the office full-time. Zero of the participants preferred to work at the office full time, 6 out of 15 (40%) participants preferred to telework full time and 9 out of 15 (60%) of the participants preferred a hybrid method of working, with the flexibility of choosing their workspace and or environment whenever it pleased them.

4.6 Summary and conclusion

The study had two objectives which were: Objective 1, to explore the perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the South African services sector and objective 2, to explore the perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector.

The findings of the study showed that the benefits of teleworking according to the participants were decrease in traveling time and costs, decrease in other menial expenses, increased productivity, flexibility in schedules and an improvement in the participants work – life balance. However, with benefits came the challenges such as extra expenses such as Wi-Fi, power supply due to loadshedding, increased number of

meetings, increased working hours and a lack of separation between work and home time (blurred working times), being isolated, being distracted by other things and a lack of social engagement. These were the things to consider when choosing between teleworking and working from the office or having a hybrid working model. Most participants then opted for a hybrid model which had a great balance of the benefits and challenges of teleworking.

Research objective	**Research proposition**	**Themes**
Explore the perceptions of the benefits posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in the South African services sector	Higher levels of job satisfaction, positive environmental impact, financial benefits, and increased productivity are among the benefits that employees who are allowed to telework report.	Participants telework experience.
		Pre – lockdown working conditions
		Telework experience during and post lockdown.
		The benefits of teleworking
Explore the perceptions of the challenges posed by teleworking for employees and organisations in South African services sector	Employees who are permitted to telework express feelings of loneliness, increased work demands, and blurred lines between personal and work life.	The governments engagement in teleworking
		The challenges of teleworking
		Hybrid vs teleworking or working from the office

Table 4.6-1 Themes, propositions and study objectives

CHAPTER 5. Discussion of the Findings

The findings covered in this research paper have shed light on both the benefits and challenges of teleworking. However, given the limitations of the current research, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. This chapter provides a reflection on the research process, discusses the research limitations, their potential effects on the research design, and discusses the research findings in relation to previous research. Introduction.

5.1 Teleworking in practice – before and during lockdown

Teleworking is an extension that gives workers the freedom of a similar working from the office condition without the employer's physical location, according to Brunelle and Fortin (2021). The study's findings corroborated this because none of the participants recalled having to go to a specific location in order to complete their workdays, which is how most participants defined their workdays. The study also found that participants who teleworked spent majority of their time participating in online meetings with various stakeholders, planning their days and executing their job responsibilities. This finding supported the claim by Allen et al. (2015), that most activities conducted in the traditional ways of working can be substituted with teleworking as most skilled workers utilise information communication technologies to conduct work.

The study revealed that the definition of teleworking is not widely known. When prompted about their understanding of the definition of teleworking, it was observed that the participants were not clear on the definition. They illustrated that they either heard the term for the first time or they associated the term with keywords such as convenience and flexibility of working from home. Majority of the participants indicated that they were frequent teleworkers, meaning they worked outside the employer’s premises for three to five days a week. The implication of this finding is that even those who actively engage in teleworking, such as those who work from home, are unaware of the phenomenon. Understanding how employees felt about teleworking prior to and during lockdown was crucial to understanding the teleworking phenomenon post-lockdown.

The study found that there was no teleworking experience for the majority of participants pre-lockdown. Even those that were able to telework, the arrangement was not

acknowledged. This finding collaborated Brunelle and Fortin (2021) claim that teleworking was an informal working arrangement driven management discretion. The study also found that daily office work had its difficulties even pre-lockdown, although few people were aware of these difficulties because there were no other known options for employment. When evaluating the benefits of teleworking adoption versus working off-site, the energy expended on mundane tasks like getting ready for work, traveling to the office, and sitting in traffic was not taken into account. This finding is something that none of the previously reviewed research that was reviewed illustrated.

The study found that participants experienced a range of challenges as a result of the impending switch to teleworking during lockdown, including physical and mental health problems, prolonged working hours, feelings of loneliness, trying to find a quiet place to work, the absence of a sense of community that existed in an office setting, and not having the right and sufficient equipment, such as internet, desks, and office chairs, to be able to execute work and perform professionally

The study discovered that although the participants were initially overwhelmed by the overnight switch to working from home, there were benefits to teleworking. They emphasised that the benefits of teleworking during a lockdown included not having to travel to and from the office, being accustomed to the communication tools, and that the employees' ability to manage teleworking during lockdown depended on their supervisors' support.

5.2 The perceived benefits of teleworking post-lockdown

This section summarises the findings of the data obtained in relation to the first objective of this paper, which is to discuss the perceived benefits of teleworking. The limitations and consequences of the findings are also examined, and the section is concluded.

5.2.1 *Increase in productivity*

Studies have shown that employees who work from home are often more productive than those who work in the office (Criscuolo et al., 2021). The participants said that they were more productive because they were able to work in a quieter environment as such, they had less worries. This was in line with research by Goen et al. (2018) as well as Ionescu et al. (2022), who found that a quieter workplace increases productivity.

Teleworking helps to reduce stress levels because when employees work in a comfortable and familiar environment, they are less likely to feel stressed or overwhelmed (Pyöriä, 2011). This led to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

The absence of commuting to and from work enhanced productivity, according to the participants. The lack of office distractions such as water cooler talk, and the many tea breaks resulted in increased productivity. This is because employees are focused on getting the work done during core working hours and they are not interrupted by co-workers or distractions from the office environment. The participants noted the increase in productivity was also beneficial to organisations as stated by Martin and MacDonnell (2012). : As mentioned above, studies have shown that employees who work from home are often more productive than those who work in an office.

5.2.2 *Flexibility*

Another element that the study revealed to be strongly associated productivity, was flexibility. The study found that due to the flexibility to work comfortably, productivity increased as a result. Participants believed that teleworking allowed them to be flexible as they controlled how they spent their time while carrying out their duties at work. This was in line with Morganson et al.'s (2010) observation that teleworking is seen as workforce empowerment since teleworkers acquire control over their schedules and have the flexibility to complete tasks at their convenience. Furthermore, according to Georgescu et al. (2021) empowered employees contribute to the greater organisational vision. The flexibility of setting your own core working hours as opposed to the conventional 8:00–17:00 hours proved to be quite advantageous for the participants. Most participants saw teleworking as an entrepreneurial venture where they could work whenever it was convenient for the work environment while still delivering quality work.

5.2.3 *Decrease in travel*

The time saved from not having to commute was cited by the participants as one of the main advantages, along with feeling more adaptable and having less stress. The findings from Allen et al. (2015), which showed that teleworkers had noticeable health improvements since they were no longer stuck in traffic or required to arrive at the

workplace early to avoid traffic, were closely related to the findings of the saved commute time.

The participants also observed that reducing commutes resulted in lower expenses, such as money spent on fuel (Writer, 2022). The participants noticed that there was a decrease in costs associated with car maintenance and money spent on water cooler discussion in addition to the decrease in travel expenses. This is due to less frequent travelling to the office. The less people were required to be at the office, the less the need arose to having coffee chats or walking to get lunch. Participants indicated that the savings in time became a notable benefit that came because of these cost reductions. Teleworkers lessen the environmental impact of the number of cars on the road because they do not frequently commute to and from the office.

5.2.4 *Increased work-life-balance*

One of the biggest benefits of working from home is the ability to better balance work and life. The participants noted that having teleworked, they realised that they started planning work around their personal lives allowing them to have a different life experience where they got to watch their children grow while earning an income. This meant that before experiencing telework, employees were planning their life around work which lead to stress, and personal neglect (Allen et al., 2015). When employees are not commuting to and from the office, they have more time to spend with their families, pursue hobbies, and take care of personal errands. This can lead to a more positive work-life experience and improved mental and physical health (Palumbo et al., 2021).

The participants also noted that another benefit of teleworking, is that it enabled them to be learn a lot of systems, platforms, and tools. The inability to see people face to face allowed them to be proactive in unpacking which communication technologies would aid them get work done with the least amount of effort (Schur et al., 2020). Furthermore, the participants noted that since they were able to learn new skills this made them more competitive in the job market.

Participants who were provided the option to telework post-lockdown said there were no changes to their work environment. The added benefit of teleworking was that they had

a dedicated office space at home. This allowed them to be present in the daily lives of their family. The other noted benefit was that working from home was better than rushing to the office where they had no dedicated desks due to the concept of hot desks. Employees who are happy with their work-life balance are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave the company.

5.2.5 *Decrease in expenses*

Teleworking could save employees money and not just on regular office commute. Karunarathne (2019) stated that the business casual and casual dress are growing increasingly popular among employees, and this was collaborated by participants who noted that money spent on business attire was reduced as employees are not necessarily in the office so the formal attire guidelines are not applicable. They were able to wear comfortable clothing while working so the need to buy formal business attire was no longer there.

Although informally defined, water-cooler talks serve as an inspiration for office social interactions and educational cross-cultural encounters that build interpersonal relationships between employees (Sævarsson, n.d.). The participants noted that they would spend a lot of money buying coffee and lunch during these water-cooler talks as means of building relationships. Now that most of their interactions are virtual, the expenses went away seemingly because they were predominantly working from home, and they have their kitchen at their disposal.

5.2.6 *Additional insights*

Participants noted that the extra effort of preparing to go to the office was eliminated when they were teleworking. This means that the often-ignored background task of preparing to go to the office was no longer an issue. The time it took to get ready to go to the office and the menial tasks involved were no longer a need, saving participants time as they had one less thing to stress about. It is worth noting that this finding was not mentioned in the reviewed studies. Martin and MacDonnell (2012), stated that the managers perception of teleworking was that it improved the employees performance and their commitment to the organization. In this study, the interviewed managers or

team leads did not mention this benefit in relation to either their perception or their expectations.

Lebopo et al. (2020) had indicated that teleworkers appreciate the lack of office politics when working outside the office. Working from home can help to increase the diversity of the workforce by making it easier for people with disabilities, caregivers, and others who may not be able to commute to an office to work (Schur et al., 2020). However, none of the participants including the Managers and Team Leads highlighted these benefits. Some participants said that since they were technology-agnostic, the switch to telework was good even during lockdown. The adoption of teleworking was a smooth transition because the participants were skilled professionals, and the usage of portables was essential (Danielsson & Bodin, 2009). This study also showed how essential the managerial top-down teleworking adoption technique was, which is another point to remember.

5.3 The perceived challenges of teleworking post-lockdown

This section summarises the findings of the data obtained in relation to the second objective of this paper, which is to discuss the perceived challenges of teleworking. The limitations and consequences of the findings are also examined, and the section is concluded.

5.3.1 *Lack of teleworking regulations in South Africa*

The participants noted that they were unaware of any existing government policy regulating teleworking. In their perspective, teleworking was left at the hands of the employers, and this could lead to the abuse of their power. This was evident in the literature finding where South African banks were requiring employees to return to the office full time (Absa Group Limited, 2021; FirstRand Group, 2021; Standard Bank Group, 2021). This coincided with another challenge raised by participants where they felt that some employees were privy to telework, while others were required to work from the office. This approach speaks to the lack of regulations governing organisations to not employ such tactics that result in acts of discrimination.

During lockdown, employees were able to telework, and some banks reported good turnover despite the impact of the pandemic, which could be interpreted as that their

employees were able to telework and delivering value to the organisations. Another factor to be considered in the organisations potential abuse of power, was the teleworkers working conditions such as working overtime, screen fatigue and blurred working hours. These challenges result in higher mental health issues amongst employees.

5.3.2 *Load shedding*

When there is not enough energy generation to stratify the power demand from all end users, the power system balance is necessary, that is when load shedding occurs to cover the power system's performance (Madiba et al., 2022). Loadshedding and growing loadshedding hours were reported as an impediment, and therefore related with the government's lack engagement in the adoption of teleworking in South Africa. The consistent power cuts had a negative impact on teleworking because it resulted in additional cost to employees and employers. The additional costs would be related to getting additional infrastructure such as back-up power, UPS etc. There was a need for an employee to continuously spend a lot of money to continue to telework.

One of the participants mentioned that for the government to assist the adoption of teleworking, the government must be able to provide the infrastructure for teleworkers, which is presently lacking in South Africa. Due to the consistency of load shedding in South Africa, employees resorted to hybrid models of working so that they could still enjoy the benefits of teleworking while also having access to resources like electricity by visiting their designated office space whenever they needed it. From the reviewed literature, there was none that spoke about the impact of load shedding on teleworker nor the adoption of teleworking.

5.3.3 *Lack of face-to-face interaction*

Employees were originally supposed to work from each other hence the many years of brick n mortar (Danielsson & Bodin, 2009). The lack of face-to-face interaction continues to be a talked about challenge. The participants noted that despite the benefits of teleworking, the lack of face-to-face interactions continued to be a missed attribute in the ways of working. The longing for human interaction goes beyond the need for human

interaction but also speaks to having meaningful connections that are driven by an agenda when in online meetings.

The ability to see people and connect contributes to crucial social skills that are developed throughout one's life journey (Carillo et al., 2021). Despite technological advancements, the teleworking phenomenon promoted a lack of face-to-face interaction, which resulted in some participants noting that before the lockdown, they considered themselves to be extroverted and easily being able to initiate face to face conversations. However, after their experience with teleworking, they realized that the social skills they had acquired throughout their lives were diminishing due to teleworking, they now categorised themselves as introverts. When working face-to-face with people there is an added advantage that you can quickly identify how the person understands the conversation through their body language and facial expressions

5.3.4 *Working overtime*

There were some negative connotations to employees that preferred to telework. Some participants equated working from home with attending daily meetings and putting in extra hours to make up for it. This coincided with Ipsen et al.'s (2021) finding that teleworkers experienced longer working hours because of the perception that they had more time since they have little to no need to commute.

The participants also noted that because they were participating in online meetings the whole day, there was little to no time to do deep work. To mitigate this, they would do a lot of overtime than they would had to if they were working from the office (Palumbo et al., 2021). The other factor raised by the participants was teleworking gave them a sense or feeling of that they were not doing enough hence they tend to overcompensate by overworking. Whereas when working from the office, there was only so much that could be done within the dedicated working hours, and there was constant one-on-one feedback being shared through various office engagements, whereas when working from home, the participants expressed a strong sense of responsibility, leading them to do more than was required by working longer hours with insufficient break.

5.3.5 *Blurred working times*

The participants observed that there were blurred working times because of the variance in working hours and the ease with which teleworkers portray their working hours. The problem with this strategy was that they were unable to turn their brains off and completely engage in daily activities with their loved ones. The fact that most participants worked from home contributed to this view as well. Furthermore, participants were unable to mentally switch off from work because of the reduced or eliminated commute requirements (Lozano & Barreiro-Gen, 2021). Since their workspace was located at home, they were constantly thinking about the outstanding daily tasks, so they ended up working longer hours. The longer working hours were worse for those working with teams distributed across continents. Since there were no start and end times, communication between the distributed teams was especially challenging due to varying time zones.

5.3.6 *Isolation*

One of the biggest challenges of working from home is the lack of social interaction. When employees are not in the office, they may miss out on important social cues and relationships which could lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Segbenya & Okorley, 2022). The participants noted that unless an effort if made by the teleworker to actively seek out co-worker engagement, the feelings of isolation are inevitable.

According to the participants' perspectives, the isolation goes beyond a lack of engagement with other colleagues, but it included the notion of how much work the teleworker completed during working hours. The participants noted that unless the teleworker went out of their way to brief and illustrate what they were working on, their colleagues would not know (Nemteanu et al., 2021). This was especially difficult when teleworkers were obliged to evaluate each other's performance. Because they would not know what to say while grading the other person owing to a lack of involvement, performance review discussions such as salary increases would be hampered because the Supervisors themselves would be uninformed of what the participant is working on at times. Participants noted that some employees were privy to teleworking while others were not. The notion that teleworking was allowed for some and not for others in the same organisations created a divide within the organisations (Ionescu et al., 2022).

5.3.7 *Telework expenses*

According to the findings of this study, employees in South Africa were reported to have been struggling to make ends meet (Estrada et al., 2021). Employees faced significant hurdles because of growing living and fuel expenses. A teleworker had the added burden of financing the required infrastructure to creating their home office space. Things like a desk, a chair, extra monitors, back-up power, mic, and noise cancellation devices contributed to the added expenses which were not compensated.

A huge dependency of whether an employee could telework was their access to reliable network. Another recurring expense raised by participants in this study was the cost staying connected. The network providers generally increase the cost of data hence this undeniable cost became a true determinant of whether an employee preferred to telework or not. Some participants noted that they had to go to the office at times when the network was slow as this made it practically impossible to be responsive when teleworking. The participants noted that even during lockdown, there were many complaints from their colleagues stating that they were having network issues. These network issues added additional stress for teleworkers as this was something out of their control. This challenge was closely related to the 'load shedding' challenge discussed above.

5.4 Discussion of findings in relation to the theoretical framework

According to the Telework Behavioral Model, the adoption of teleworking was linked to certain outcomes including less travel, less interruptions, loss of affiliation, and scheduled flexibility (Hunton & Harmon, 2004). The researcher noted that these results aligned with the work/home balance and travel time reduction employee impact factors included in the SBTF (Campbell & McDonald, 2007). The study's outcomes corresponded with the conclusions presented in the conceptual framework because enhanced flexibility, cost savings, and increased were shown to be related factors as discussed in the findings.

Furthermore, the employee factors mentioned in the System Based Telework Framework (Campbell & McDonald, 2007) were also found in this study except for load shedding, the elimination of water-cooler talks, and the reduction in expenses such as business formal attire. The observed similarities between the framework and the findings

of this study were that work-life-balance and reduction in travel time factors also formed part of this study's findings. The observed differences between the findings of this study and the theoretical framework were that the challenges of telework were not incorporated into the framework and the access and employee satisfaction factors were not part of the findings. It could be that the employee satisfactions and access factors were not uncovered as the researcher used an open-ended question approach when collecting data.

The researcher would argue that while the benefits of telework play a major role in the adoption of telework, the challenges provide even greater insights into the risks of telework adoption. Therefore, the researcher would argue that factors such as load shedding, isolation, working overtime, and blurred working times should be included in the employee factors list on this framework. It is worth noting that factors such as load shedding may be specific to certain countries and not others and as such, further research into the impact of load shedding towards telework adoption may be required prior to the amendment of the framework.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The conclusion of the study findings for the first and second research objectives is presented in this chapter. The findings were included into the study objectives outlined in Chapter 1 by incorporating findings concerning the propositions. There is also discussion of proposals for employers, the South African government, and academics. Finally, new study directions are suggested.

6.2 Conclusions regarding research objective 1

The study findings showed that employees who are allowed to telework report less stress and higher production levels than those who work in organizations that do not allow teleworking. Participants did not illustrate the desire to stay in the organisation simply because it offered teleworking as an alternative. This could be because the participants regarded themselves as more competitive in the job marked because of all the technical skills they gained because of their teleworking experience.

The study found that teleworking can lessen the environmental impact of daily commutes. The participants noted that teleworking can help to break down boundaries between work and home life, as well as making it simpler for people with complex personal lifestyles to be able to enter the labour force. Since the study evaluated the perception of the participants before lockdown, there was the finding that there were various cost reduction benefits experienced by participants who teleworked.

6.3 Conclusions regarding research objective 2

Overall, the flexibility of where employees work and when they work can offer a number of benefits for both employees and employers. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges associated with working from home and to take steps to investigate how

these challenged could be mitigated. There were challenges raised by participants that were closed aligned to the second proposition. Challenges were unique to the South African context such as load shedding.

Participants noted that they felt lonely and in need of human interaction. Since the employees were allowed to telework, they felt privileged to be provided with that opportunity hence there was no perception that the organisation was not supportive towards them. The highlighted benefit that employees felt that teleworking provided them with the opportunity to upskill hence making them more competitive in the job market did not agree with the reduced career opportunities statement stipulated in the proposition. The contrast of the reduction in cost as highlighted in the benefits were somewhat balanced out with the cost of infrastructure for the home office setup.

6.4 Overall conclusion

The benefits along with the drawbacks of teleworking have already been discovered and researched in many forms of teleworking. New issues were found in the South African setting, adding to the research field. The circumstances following the prolonged lockdown varied so much that perceptions changed when comparing the research findings to those before or during the lockdown. The majority of participants stated that the hybrid style of working would be their preferred method of working since it allowed them to overcome problems such as load shedding. The frequently disregarded mundane everyday duties before employees' arrival at work were viewed as a challenge, and teleworking eliminated the necessity for such, adding to the perceived benefits.

6.5 Recommendations

Outlined below, recommendations to employers, the South African government and academia respectively.

6.5.1 *Recommendation to Employers*

Employers should be open to the idea of teleworking. However, employers that provide this offer this form of working should consider internal training to educate employees on what they can expect when teleworking. A brief overview of what their office expenses

could look like to promote a conducive working environment from their preferred location. The internal training could cover things such as network considerations, back-up considerations, online presence considerations.

Employers should also consider creating a teleworking agreement that encompasses some of the material in the internal training. This agreement should be read in conjunction with the internal training attendance. This would better prepare the employee to truly understand what teleworking means for them as an employee for the organisation, but it would also aid them understand what their career path would look like when adopting this form of working.

6.5.2 *Recommendation for the South African Government*

The South African government could consider reviewing telework policies enacted in regions such as the United States of America. Some of the regulations could look into how employers should not be abusing their employers. What is meant by that is, participants illustrated concerns about being overworked and working overtime. This is something that should be looked at by the government. There are various labour laws that ought to be relooked at to ensure that employees are also protected despite of where and how they are conducting their work. While this recommendation is made to the South African government due to the boundary of the study, the recommendation could be applicable to countries where teleworking is not governed by a set of policies enacted by the government.

6.5.3 *Recommendation for Academia*

This study aids to explore, clarify, and contribute to certain elements of teleworking practice, its benefits, and limitations in the post-lockdown South African setting. Several participants stated that they did not know what the phrase "telework" meant. This study highlights the need of maintaining a consistent understanding of what teleworking is and the necessity for academia to explain the agreed definition so that people comprehend the teleworking phenomena and its bounds.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

6.6.1 *The impact of load shedding on the daily life of an employee.*

Further research could be done to evaluate how employees are impacted by load shedding. The one theme that came strongly from this research was the perception that employees are not as productive due to the frequency of power cuts in South Africa. There are workarounds to this such as going to the office if load shedding is extended for longer durations. But, for employees who reside far away from the office, they are the most impacted as they would need to buy back-up power out of pocket to be able to work during load shedding or log time as unpaid because of their inability to work due to load shedding. In essence, load shedding poses a threat not only to employees but small businesses as well. Small businesses that rely on basic resources such as electricity are heavily impacted by load shedding. The impact could result in the closure of their business during load shedding hours, loss of forecasted revenue which would overall impact the businesses reputation or employee retrenchment.

6.6.2 *The career projection of a frequent teleworker.*

Earlier research had indicated that teleworkers perceived teleworking as a challenge to adopt because of the reduced career opportunities. The participants in this study also illustrated the challenges where due to the feeling of isolation they are unaware of what their colleagues are working on, vice versa. This finding somewhat correlated with the earlier research finding as participants also noted that they don't know how to review others during performance reviews. Further research could be done to understand what the career path looks like for a frequent teleworker.

6.7 Limitations

The main limitation was that this study had a small number of participants due to the research time constraints, and a number of participants withdrawing their participation. Although this difficulty is likely to remain, future researchers are advised to seek respondents via an organization's Communications department rather than through the People Management department. The results were limited to employees in a

professional role who had telework experience so the results may be different for non-professionals.

This study was focused on employee views where the goals set forth in this study could be re-evaluated in subsequent studies using direct assessments of the availability and quality of training programs, financial support, and other support variables. This study was only able to record the responses of workers who participated in telework at the specific time when the interviews were done. The precise adaptations and techniques that teleworkers, their families, and their co-workers go through could be the subject of further study.

A further limitation was that although this study included concepts relating to telework which were commonly reported in the academic literature and practitioner reports, additional variables could be studied in the future. In attempting to answer the research questions, the researcher approached the study with open ended questions. The limitation of this approach was that the responses varied and at times, it was difficult to compare the study findings to the reviewed existing literature.

The study evaluated the benefits and challenges of teleworking in only one country, South Africa. This was a limitation since the findings were based on the South African context. Another limitation was that the sample size did not represent the entire South African population. The researcher did not have the financial resources to conduct the study for the entire population, hence the sample size representing the population was selected. The researcher followed these steps in selecting the sample:

1. The individual must be employed.
2. The individual's employer must be based in the services sector.
3. The individual must be working outside of the employer's premises at least one a week post-lockdown.
4. The individual must be above 18 years of age.

Furthermore, even though insights pertaining to the below may be uncovered, this study did not aim to uncover the following:

1. The primary factors that influence whether or not employees choose to telework.
2. The primary factors that motivate employers to permit their employees to telework.

CHAPTER 7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A Research instrument

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
    a. 18-24
    b. 25-34
    c. 34-44
    d. 45-55
    e. 55 or older
2. How would you describe your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Other
    d. Prefer not to answer
3. In which province do you reside?
    a. Eastern Cape
    b. Free State
    c. Gauteng
    d. KwaZulu Natal
    e. Limpopo
    f. Mpumalanga
    g. Northern Cape
    h. North West
    i. Western Cape
4. Which statement best describes your employment status?
    a. Working paid employee
    b. Working self employed
    c. Not working
    d. Prefer not to answer
5. How would you describe the type of organisation you work for?
    a. Private for profit
    b. Private not for profit
    c. Government
    d. Self employed
6. How many employees approximately work in your organisation?

a. 1-99
b. 100-499
c. 500-100
d. 1000 or more

7. Please indicate the type of industry you work for *(please refer to transcript for the comprehensive list)*

Prequalifying questions

8. What do you do?
9. How long have you been doing this role for?
10. How would you describe your workday?
11. When you hear the term telework, what comes to mind?
12. How often do you telework?
13. Before the declaration of lockdown, how would you describe your traditional work from the office experience?
14. Before the declaration of lockdown, how you would you describe your teleworking experience?
15. During lockdown, how you would you describe your teleworking experience?

Research Questions

16. Post lockdown, how you would you describe your teleworking experience?
17. How do you see the South African governments engagement in the teleworking adoption?
18. From your point of view, what are the benefits of teleworking?
19. From your point of view, what are the challenges of teleworking?
20. What would you consider to be the main benefit of teleworking?
21. What would you consider to be the main challenge of teleworking?
22. Drawing from your teleworking experience, which option do you prefer and why?
    a. Teleworking
    b. Hybrid
    c. Work from office

APPENDIX B Consent form

Consent to take part in research study

I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that participation involves discussing the implementation, challenges, strategies to overcome challenges, benefits, and potential of robotics adoption in SMEs.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.

This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a MBA dissertation.

Participant Signature: _____

Date Signed:

APPENDIX C Permission letter

University of the Witwatersrand,

Unit 13, 2nd floor

3 Melrose Boulevard

Melrose Arch

Johannesburg

2076

08 August 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at Entelect Software

My name is Nomvelo Mpungose

I am studying for a Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to conduct research at Entelect Software.

I am conducting research on the perceive benefits and challenges of teleworking for employees post lockdown within the services sector. The purpose of the study is to inform organisations and government the employee perception of teleworking by gaining a better understanding of if its benefits or challenges from the employee's perspective. Through understanding these factors organisations can gain insights which can be incorporated in their recruitment and employee retention strategies and government can gain insights in the development or amendment of existing labour laws. The reason for choosing to conduct research within Entelect Software is due to the culture and the diverse teleworking employee experiences during lockdown and post lockdown.

The research will entail collecting data from the employees. I will invite individuals from your Entelect Software to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be asked to be interviewed. The prospective participant would be requested to set aside a maximum of thirty minutes which would ideally coincide with their lunch time. The data collection process may take place on the premises and/or during work hours. The participant's responses will be audio recorded for data analysis purposes only.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names and the name of the organisation) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. The results will be communicated dissertation.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

All research data will be retained preserved anonymously for reuse by other researchers for a maximum of two years from which thereafter it will be destroyed.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organisation. The permission letter should be on your organisation's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Nomvelo Mpungose
Mobile: (+27) 82 222 1527
E-mail: 985088@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor's name: Ayanda Magida
Contact number: (+27) 11 717 3953
E-mail: ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX D Information sheet

Study title: Teleworking in South Africa: perceived benefits and challenges post lockdown.

Dear Prospective Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

Introduction:

My name is Nomvelo Mpungose and I am doing research under the supervision of Ayanda Magida, a Lecturer in the Department of Digital Business towards a Masters of Management in the field of Digital Business at the Wits Business School.. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Teleworking in South Africa: perceived benefits and challenges post lockdown. In this study we want to learn about the perceived benefits and challenges of teleworking after lockdown and the re-opening of the economy in South Africa.

This study is being done to contribute to the body of knowledge by requesting practical insights of employees that were teleworking during lockdown and after. This research hopes to gain an understanding of the benefits and challenges of teleworking post lock-down so that it is able to affirm which benefits and challenges still remain as employees were forced to telework at a massive scale during lockdown.

Given that the economy has been re-opened with the end of lockdown in South Africa, it is crucial for us to understand the benefits and challenges of teleworking at the present. This will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of what the teleworking phenomenon has to offer post lockdown. As with most phenomenon, it always recommended to understand the before and the after results to gain a full understanding on the advantages and disadvantages of it’s implementation.

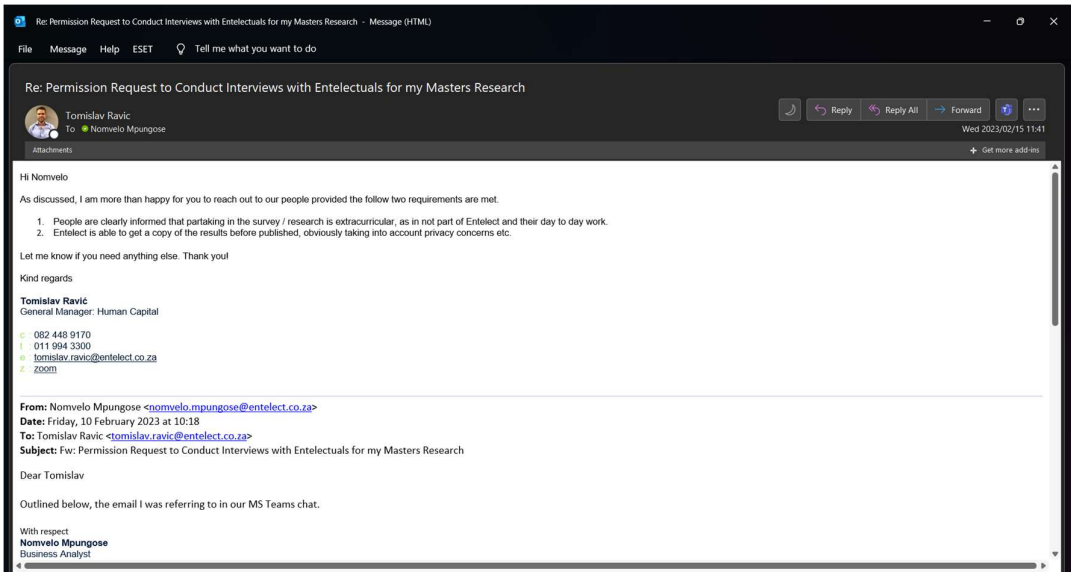
Invitation to Participate: We are asking you to take part in a research study. Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason during the interview process and thereafter. The questionnaire will indicate the identity of the participant, but the researcher will anonymise personal data – this will make it possible to identify the participant in the event that they want to inquire about the study or withdraw from the study.

What is involved in the study. This could include but would not necessarily be limited to such features as:

1. Study design, what the Participant's involvement in the study would entail;
    a. The study involves a research interview questionnaire that will probe the respondents answers pertaining to research questions. The participant will be asked a question which they can answer, or can refuse to answer.
2. If the study start and end dates can confidently be foreseen, please mention them;
3. Standard procedures being done in the study and procedures that are being tested in the study;
    a. The study may be conducted face to face. In such an event the COVID-19 protocols will be adhered to.
    b. The study can also conducted via non-face to face conduct using information communication tools such as Zoom, MS Teams etc. in such an event the calls will be recorded and there will be no video enabled on those calls. At the beginning of the call, recording consent will be requested and if the participant grants consent the call will be recorded. After the recording has started the recording consent will be asked on record once again. Thereafter the consent form will be read out to the participant and shared on the screen. During the interview process the screen will not be shared.

4. Where the procedures will be done and how long the procedures will take to carry out (how much of the Participant's time is required);
    a. The interview is expected to take a minimum of 20 minutes and a maximum of 30 minutes.
5. If a questionnaire is to be used, how is it to be distributed and collected, if in hard copy; if it is to be conducted online, please say so and remind the reader that engaging in the online process implies that he or she has consented to take part in the study;
6. What sort of questions would be asked and how long the questionnaire would take to be completed; and /or
    a. The study will collect generic personal information for the identification of the participant such as the name, gender, age, employment status, teleworking status
    b. The study will then collect information about the work format of the participant
    c. The study will then collect information about the teleworking experience, perceived benefits, and challenges of the phenomenon,
7. If blood samples are to be taken, then how much blood (teaspoons) and how frequently?
    a. There will be no blood samples taken in this study.

APPENDIX E Employer permission/approval



Re: Permission Request to Conduct Interviews with Entelectuals for my Masters Research - Message (HTML)

File Message Help ESET Tell me what you want to do

Re: Permission Request to Conduct Interviews with Entelectuals for my Masters Research

Tomislav Ravic
To Nomvelo Mpungose

Reply Reply All Forward

Wed 2023/02/15 11:41

Attachments

Get more add-ins

Hi Nomvelo

As discussed, I am more than happy for you to reach out to our people provided the follow two requirements are met.

1. People are clearly informed that partaking in the survey / research is extracurricular, as in not part of Entelect and their day to day work.
2. Entelect is able to get a copy of the results before published, obviously taking into account privacy concerns etc.

Let me know if you need anything else. Thank you!

Kind regards

Tomislav Ravić
General Manager: Human Capital

082 448 9170
011 994 3300
tomislav.ravic@entelect.co.za
zoom

From: Nomvelo Mpungose <nomvelo.mpungose@entelect.co.za>
Date: Friday, 10 February 2023 at 10:18
To: Tomislav Ravic <tomislav.ravic@entelect.co.za>
Subject: Fw: Permission Request to Conduct Interviews with Entelectuals for my Masters Research

Dear Tomislav

Outlined below, the email I was referring to in our MS Teams chat.

With respect
Nomvelo Mpungose
Business Analyst

APPENDIX F Ethics approval

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/DB985088/688
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Exploring the perceived benefits and challenges of teleworking in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Mrs Nomvelo Mpungose
Nature of Project	MM (Digital Business)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	2023-01-31
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

01 February, 2023
Date: