

MANAGING REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKFORCE: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND WAY FORWARD IN AFRICA

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Abstract: Managing remote and hybrid workforce has become expedient now more than ever because most organizations have begun to accept it as the ‘new normal’ after a compelling migration from face-to-face work to work-from-home (WFH), due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how remote and hybrid workforce has been managed, its benefits, challenges, and the way forward in Africa using reviewed literature. It was observed that there is more literature on remote and hybrid work in advanced countries than in Africa. This study, therefore, highlights the African perspective. It was revealed that although many organizations and HRM departments embraced this initiative and are willing to continue with it, sustainable policies such as flexible work schedules, cost reduction, work-life balance, etc., must be implemented to ensure its smooth running. Certain challenges with the initiative must also be addressed to ensure its success. Further, African governments’ (including Ghana) policies must address certain peculiar challenges that are beyond organizations such as continuous electricity supply and provision of strong information communication technology. Industries that can venture into hybrid and remote work are education, manufacturing, and the hotel industry. However, a uniform approach should not be used during implementation since organizations vary.

Keywords: Remote and Hybrid, Work, Benefits, Challenges, Way forward, Africa and Ghana

Introduction

It has been more than two years since the world was hit with the deadliest virus that has claimed millions of lives across the globe. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working was the prerogative of managers in certain organizations. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, transitioned routine face-to-face work to remote and hybrid. The shift to working remotely is not expected to change even after the pandemic. Most of the measures implemented during the peak season of the pandemic are likely to remain in the workplace for a long time. This is because the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taught organizations that at certain times, a significant amount of work performed at the workplace could be remotely carried out at home (Chan et al., 2020; Caringal-Go et al., 2022; Carroll and Conboy, 2020). The severity of the pandemic culminated with WHO and government measures to control the spread of coronavirus forced organizations and human resource management (HRM) departments to migrate their workforce into remote and hybrid working. As the years progress, more and more organizations are beginning to accept the switch from working in the office to hybrid and remote work. Balbontin, et al. (2021) developed a model to investigate the increase in the frequency of work-from-home (WFH) and its influence on the number of weekly office treks in eight countries namely - Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and South Africa. The result showed that statistically, employers in all the countries surveyed were in favour of WFH. Additionally, more employees preferred to work from home even after the ease of restrictions due to its benefits. This is affirmed by Cassidy& Rockbrune (2021) who indicated that in Canada, for every three employees, one worked from home during the pandemic. Mărginean (2022) also established that COVID-19 has shown the novelty of working remotely and it calls for review and reorganization of aspects of both professional and personal lives, time management, and discussion of job schedules as well as limitations to remote and hybrid work.



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This new paradigm of working has evolved, and employees are now desiring flexible work schedules which have proven to be the acceptable norm after the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic (Baskin, 2022). In a study among 200 chief executive officers (CEO) and 10,750 employees, Accenture (2022) revealed that 9,326 (83%) of the employees preferred a hybrid style of work. In another study involving 127 business leaders conducted on June 5th, 2020 (during the lockdowns, and closure of borders and airports as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic), Gartner (2020) found that 82 percent of company leaders in Virginia, US, permitted their employees to work remotely to a large extent even after the restrictions and work returned to normalcy. This is asserted by the study of Global Workplace Analytics which revealed that 77% of employees working in an office environment worked remotely full-time during the peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Saad & Wigert (2021) also mentioned that hybrid and remote working are likely to become increasingly popular over the decades of 2020 to 2030s because they offer flexibility to workers and are cost-effective for organizations. Hylton & Krutsch (2022) further established that the rise in remote and hybrid work during the inception of the pandemic was significant and one of the most remarkable changes that took place during that time, and it is anticipated to remain for many years.

Hybrid work has benefitted employers and employees equally (Hylton & Krutsch, 2022). According to Chan et al., (2022), it has broken the limits between home and work, requiring an assessment of the effects of the changes that accompany it in order to alleviate any adverse impact it may have on work-life balance. Global Workplace Analytics reported that in the US, many organizations changed their operations extensively by introducing massive telework policies which have brought about economic, fairness, and environmental gains to the organizations, their employees, and the local government at large. Arora & Kumari (2022) also confirmed that the benefits that come with remote working include manageability, access to international prospects, flexibility in work schedules, and significant influence on multiplicity hiring. One of the things that ensured continuity in business and organization operations by enabling hybrid and remote working is information and communication tools (Kulshrestha, 2022). Hylton & Krutsch (2022) asserted this in their study when they projected that computer jobs would increase by 13.4% within the next decade; a 5.7% increase compared to the 7.7% average on other jobs in the US.

A study was conducted in South Africa (in a state-owned organization) to ascertain the extent to which employees had adjusted to organizational practices and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was revealed that ICT has assisted in increasing employee productivity since it makes working facile, helps in effective communication and enhanced collaboration among employees and colleagues. Another recorded benefit was employees having ample time with their families, enhancing work-life balance (Dhanpat et al., 2023). The story was not different in Ghana, this new paradigm helped employees to sharpen their IT knowledge because most human resource departments of organizations had to apply hybrid and remote work strategies to ensure consistency and work delivery. Another remarkable advantage of implementing hybrid and remote work is giving career women and nursing mothers the opportunity to work while taking care of their children or at home.

In spite of the benefits, there were some difficulties associated with hybrid work not only in Africa but the world at large. Some of these challenges include an increase in workload, the conflict between family and office tasks, efficiency and effectiveness of task delivery just to mention but a few.

Some challenges that could be peculiar to Africa include poor or inadequate IT infrastructures, getting a permanent office space at home, reliable power supply, employees' expertise in implementing remote work models, and so on. The objective of this paper is to investigate how hybrid and remote work is managed, its benefits, difficulties, and the way forward in Africa using Ghana as a case.

The paper is structured into four sections; the introduction, materials and methods used, reviewed literature on the study, and a discussion and conclusion.

Materials and Methods

Understanding current knowledge of a particular discipline or research area and building a study around it by evaluating existing gaps, and providing recommendations and solutions is very essential in academia. Snyder (2019) describes a literature review as methodically gathering and integrating earlier studies. He stated that using well-researched literature as a method for further studies provides a solid basis for theory development and knowledge advancement. Danson & Arshad (2014) see literature as retrieving key issues, methods, materials, findings, and salient points from existing knowledge and integrating them into a relevant study.

Snyder (2019) argued that the art of putting together scientific evidence and perspectives makes literature review an effective solution to addressing research problems compared to one study. This research relies on literature to discuss the need for organizations to reconsider where their employees work and still maintain their productivity level as well as solve associated challenges in a sustainable manner, particularly in Africa. A systematic pursuit of information on hybrid and remote work was done using related websites, published papers, and reports as sources of literature to achieve the purpose of this study.

For data collection and relevant analysis, related secondary information was retrieved from online databases such as Google Scholar and Web of Science using related keywords such as “Hybrid and Remote work”, “Remote Working”, “Personnel”, “COVID-19”, “Hybrid Working”, Remote and Hybrid workforce in Africa and Ghana, etc. Information was also gathered from international sites such as Accenture reports, the local government commission (USA), and previous studies on the topic to achieve the aim of this study. Empirical studies may be conducted as a further stage of this study since it was discovered that there are not enough studies or literature in this area concerning Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa including Ghana.

Reviewed Literature

Working remotely has not been a new initiative, however, the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the shift toward hybrid work, which calls for relevant policies, strategies, and models to ensure productivity and sustainability at the workplace. Gupta (2022) established that software and information technology companies had been practicing remote working before the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic. Brooks et al. (2022) also indicate that this initiative has both benefits and challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left many economies across the globe struggling with high inflation and economic recessions, causing security and logistics risks for organizations as well as shifting customers’ demands and a tough labor marketplace. These necessitated faster changes in the usual mode of work (Accenture, 2022). In addition, it became expedient for individuals, organizations, and societies to maintain social distance to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. This assertion was confirmed by Wontorczyk & Rożnowski (2022) when they mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic brought not only complications to the workplace but its environment as well. Remote and hybrid work became the solution to prevent and protect employees from being infected. Grelle & Popp (2021) also emphasized that although hybrid work has been in existence for a long time, the high level of catastrophe and measures to curb the spread during the COVID-19 pandemic compelled many organizations to switch from face-to-face to remote working. Even employees who would under normal circumstances have not done that were obliged due to the prevailing situation. Managers and HRM departments had to work with IT departments and companies to deduce strategies and communication software to manage remote working employees.

Leonardelli (2022) describes a remote workforce as an “outgroup, a group of employees differentiated from leaders who will benefit from more autonomous work, whether by defining the work more asynchronously, empowering the workforce by assisting them to make their work remote-capable, or by selectively enacting team meetings”. Zachariah et al. (2022) also depict hybrid work as “relates to a flexible system whereby the employees are given the liberty categorize their workdays between work from home

and work from office”. And defined work from home or remote work as “a type of flexible working arrangement that permits an employee to work from a remote location, away from office premises”. Remote work enables workers to be in a location outside the workplace and the workers had no physical contact with other colleagues but can communicate virtually via technology (Wang et al., 2021).

Manko (2022) argued that all stakeholders involved in the implementation of remote work enjoy some quantifiable benefits and it serves as one of the main motivations. While employees save money and time commuting, as well as work-life balance, employers also save money on the provision of office facilities. It may enhance productivity too.

Wang et al. (2021) again mentioned four main characteristics of remote and hybrid working. These are job autonomy, monitoring, workload, and social support. These key elements impact remote workers’ effectiveness while working at home and their well-being. Table 1 indicates the various research on hybrid and remote work from different countries, the methods adopted and the outcomes to buttress the fact that it is an area that many authors are exploring to make its implementation more effective.

Table 1. shows some studies on remote and hybrid work, methods, and main findings

Author (s)	Method	Country (ies)	Findings
Matli, W. (2020)	To determine the perceptions of employees’ remote work experiences and the migration from the usual work environment to working from home, the study used an online survey, judgmental sampling techniques, and structuration theory to achieve their aim.	South Africa	The results show that in spite of the benefits derived from hybrid and remote work such as using developed technology, there were challenges associated with it. These include work stressors and excessive workload.
Pillai & Prasad (2023)	The study interviewed business executives and HR managers of IT companies to retrieve crucial challenges and success variables during an initial study conducted to further investigate perspectives on working in a workplace environment and remote and hybrid working.	India	Some of the benefits of working remotely the study identified include flexibility, particularly for women, work-life balance, de-stressors, and an increase in productivity. However, in the long run, it may lead to fatigue, employment turnover, risks to the health of IT staff, and lack of effective communication.
Adekoya et al. (2022)	The study used semi-structured interview questions with a sample size of 31 respondents focusing on the perceptions of employers and employees to identify elements that would effectively accelerate remote working during the post-COVID-19 period.	United Kingdom	They identified “self-discipline, smart working practices, leadership roles, flexible working preferences and expectations as facilitators of remote working”.
Khor & Tan (2022)	Using a qualitative approach to determine the main factors used for managing the workforce during the post-COVID era, potentials, and obstacles of Malaysian international organizations.	Malaysia	Technology remains the key enabler for operations and workforce management in the post-COVID era for organizations. Hybrid and remote working could have both positive and negative effects in the long run so organizations should provide the needed support to their employees and pay attention to their well-being.
Aleem et al. (2022)	A systematic literature review was conducted by using artificial intelligence-based educational devices to examine the details, multiplicity, and major topics on remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic.		They revealed eight study themes, and these are: “(1) Effect on employees at a personal level, (2) Effect on employees’ careers, (3) Family life and gender roles, (4) Health, well-being, and safety, (5) Labor market dynamics, (6) Economic implications, (7) Remote work management, (8) Organizational remote work strategies”. And further divided these into three main proposals for further studies

Brusaca et al. (2021)	Data were collected from 11 Brazilian employees by using Compositional Data Analysis and observation of behaviors, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic for 5 days including a weekend. The period was measured by using repeated-measures MANOVA.	Brazil	The findings showed that comparatively, Brazilian workers spent more time in bed at home during the COVID-19 pandemic than before.
Tracking Happiness (2023)	The study used a survey method to collect data from 12, 455 employees across the world to determine their employment conditions.	North and South America, Europe, and Asia	It was disclosed that remote working increased the happiness of employees who had that opportunity by 20 percent. Further, going back to the workplace after the pandemic and the increase in commuting time reduced employees' bliss.
Bloom et al. (2015)	Carried out a Work from Home Experiment on 16,000 employees of Ctrip, a NASDAQ-listed Chinese travel agency (9 months study duration).	China	The performance of employees who worked from home increased by 13 percent. They also had job satisfaction and reduced the turnover rate by 50 percent. However, the rate of promotion which was based on performance dropped.
Bloom (2022)	2 national surveys and interactions with hundreds of managers	USA	Companies are shifting towards a three-layered labor force. About 50 percent of all workers would work full-time in the workplace environment. This may include frontline workers such as health workers, retail and manufacturing workers. 40 percent would go hybrid (3 days in the workplace and 2 days at home on average), and they include chief executive officers, tertiary certificate holders, and professionals. The 10 percent remainder would continue to work remotely on a full-time basis. They are skilled employees such as finance, payroll, editing, and IT assistants.
Iwu et al. (2022)	The study used a qualitative approach and Atlas.ti for analyzing data collected from academics who have been cross selected from South African universities.	South Africa	Working remotely in academia is tedious because it demands personal, social, and organizational changes. It was discovered that organizations such as academics would need a customized strategy or model for remote and hybrid work that would suit their purpose.

Benefits

Studies have shown that hybrid and remote work could be as productive as in the office environment. (Cassidy& Rockbrune, 2021; Mehdi & Morissette, 2021; Allen et al., 2015). Telecommuting allows for a flexible working schedule, gives employees greater freedom to control their work environment, saves shuttling time, cost-effective in terms of professional clothing, dining out, and travel (Cassidy& Rockbrune, 2021; Allen et al., 2015). This was affirmed in one of the findings of Stasiła-Sieradzka et al. (2023) which compared the conventional style of work and WFH. The remote workers state that the hybrid and remote work model promoted flexibility and more freedom when it comes to task performance without compromising efficiency. Similarly, over 70% of 278 respondents who participated in a study to investigate the level of productivity of persons who changed from the workplace environment to working from home, confirmed that WFH made them creative in performing their assigned responsibilities, and nearly 50% thought the use of online platforms had increased their job satisfaction (George et al., 2022).

Gupta (2022) enumerated some of the benefits that employees, employers, and societies stand to gain when implementing remote and hybrid work:

Employers have a wider spectrum of talents to choose from during recruitment since they may not be limited by geographical locations, and this may promote efficiency and reduce the rate of turnover. In the event of ecological catastrophes such as the COVID-19 pandemic, because the labor force is geographically spread, work activities could continue, and risks would be drastically reduced.

On the side of employees, savings on transportation costs and additional expenditure, less commuting time, work-life balance, more time for recreation and family, flexible working time, and minimal interruption from work colleagues.

With regard to societal benefits, Gupta (2022) states that remote and hybrid work when managed well could reduce pollution from vehicles and traffic congestion. Particularly, in a metropolis where there could be lots of human and vehicular traffic congestion. He further stated that it would decrease the pressure on socially scarce resources, ease the pressure on governments, and would produce opportunities.

Gupta's assertions were in line with the studies of Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Gaura (2021) who found in their studies in Poland that the main benefit of remote work is “savings in commuting time (87%). Followed by the option of working anywhere (72%), the privilege of having more time to spend at home (67%), improvement in IT skills (63%), and the opportunity to decide on working hours (60%).”

Employees who work remotely prefer part-time jobs because of family responsibilities and other commitments that demand their attention at home. Employment owners, therefore, save costs on telecommuters. Jaqua (2022) reiterated that money saved from operating costs linked to employing remote personnel could be channeled into recruiting more workers. Furthermore, hybrid and remote working has become very attractive so organizations grappling with high turnover and retaining their employees could adopt this as a strategy to attract high talent. It has also been observed that comparatively, hybrid and remote employees were stress-free and much happier compared to their colleagues working in the office environment (Tracking happiness, 2023). Workers who had digital aids working from home were more engaged, productive, and satisfied with their responsibilities.

Challenges

In a bid to decipher employees' remote work experiences and the perception of the shift from the usual work environment to remote working in South Africa, Matli (2020) found that irrespective of the benefits derived from hybrid and remote work, there were challenges connected with it, which include work stressors (e.g., tight deadlines, long hours of work, etc.), excessive workload, and social alienation. These could jeopardize employees' work-life balance, as well as their wellness and welfare. This was established in the results of George et al. (2022) who showed that in practice hybrid work models also have their own challenges, which is evident in the drop in social, physical, and mental health. Brooks et al. (2022) also acknowledged that some of the disadvantages of remote and hybrid work comprise “inappropriate home ergonomics, absences of work-life balance and issues relating to technology.”

A study investigating hybrid work models and the future of the workplace environment with a total respondent of 200 chief executive officers and 10,750 employees, it was revealed that although many organizations promised some level of hybrid work after the pandemic, the majority had not empowered their employees with the needed technological tools, policies, and processes that could foster employees' well-being and productivity in their respective work locations (Accenture, 2022).

Challenges found with remote work in a study of universities in South Africa were long hours of work without breaks which may lead to burnout and background disruptions from televisions, as well as lack of communication with work colleagues (Iwu et al., 2022). A study conducted in the Netherlands involving 33,325 workers to determine how remote and hybrid work impacted their daily lives and their physical activity behavior from the period March 2020 to January 2021. The results showed that remote workers were engaged in fewer physical activities which may gradually affect their health (Loef et al., 2022).

Like previous studies, Wang et al. (2021) emphasized these four obstacles in remote and hybrid working – delay, poor communication, work-home intrusion, and isolation. And mentioned that they have harmful influences on people’s work effectiveness and well-being. Sometimes, it becomes difficult for remote workers to differentiate between their domestic chores and official work which may lead to delays in their deliverables. Employees who work remotely miss regular interactions with colleagues. This system depends greatly on technology, and any interruptions in ICT may cause a huge negative impact. Loneliness and interference from working at home are also significant challenges that must be addressed.

Arora & Kumari (2022) stated that their study found that the respondents were keen on surmounting the difficulties connected to remote work which is maintaining productivity, access to technology, and virtual distance due to its merits.

The African Context

It must be noted that the literature on remote and hybrid work in Africa is very inadequate compared to advanced countries. More studies have been conducted in South Africa than in other African countries. Africa had its fair share of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that some of the benefits and challenges cut across all continents.

In the initial stages of the pandemic when countries shut down their land and sea borders, airports, and other activities, some organizations in Africa especially large companies like the banks had HR and IT departments coordinated as fast as possible to apply remote and hybrid work models. The majority of small companies had no option but to shut down their operations. In Ghana, as a typical example, most organizations maintain a lean staff at the workplace particularly, functions and roles that could not be performed remotely. Most employees teleworked while others were laid off. After the lockdown, the decision to return to the work environment was gradual. Two years after the peak period of the pandemic, most organizations have had their employees returned on-site with the exception of some units and departments who were running hybrid working – two days at home and three days in the office. In some rare instances, employees with health or personal problems were permitted to work remotely.

Adopting hybrid and remote working in Africa has its own peculiar challenges. Africa lags behind with respect to development. The continent is beset with challenges that may negatively impact the effective implementation of hybrid and remote work. Africa’s electricity supply has been erratic, which affects solid and constant internet connectivity. Alternatives to electricity such as generators, inverters, and power banks were considered as additional costs for the already grappling businesses (Kokt & Chipunza, 2022). Further, Africa depends on advanced countries for technology. Hence, the financial resources required to create and implement technological innovation necessary for hybrid and remote work were virtually not available (Kokt & Chipunza, 2022). In Ghana, for instance, organizations that could afford virtual private networks (VPN) that establish convenient access to the organization platforms, had their human resource management departments collaborate with IT departments and provide this digitized service to hybrid and remote workers to enable them to have access to the organization platforms. Those who could afford, bought remote meeting software and online learning and working solutions from private IT companies. Most small and medium enterprises laid off their workers and shut down their businesses due to financial constraints. Apart from the fact that many workers did not have laptops, smartphones, or other necessary devices that could ensure effective remote and hybrid work, most of them lacked the requisite technical skills needed for it (Kokt & Chipunza, 2022).

Mostafa (2021) reiterated that sometimes it is difficult for hybrid and remote workers to detach themselves from their official work at the close of business and mentioned that the decision for organizations to opt for remote working brought only a thin line between work and private life. Another challenge unique to Africa is the fact that women are regarded as caretakers of the home and therefore spending more time on official work could bring problems to the home. Long hours of work could also lead to late eating which could give rise to a high rate of obesity. The cost of electricity is very high in Africa, hence, working remotely means an increase in utility bills

A study of some South African universities that turned to remote work during the pandemic identified four main problems associated with the model. (1) inability to adjust, (2) unavailability of office space at home (3) solitude and seclusion (4) lack of work-life balance. Most employees were used to the face-to-face type of work and were reluctant to adapt to the “new normal”. The lack of technological infrastructure to support the migration from the workplace environment to remote work is also peculiar to Africa. This point was also affirmed by Kock & Chipunza, (2022) when they mentioned that organizations were taken aback because they lacked the financial power to assist in procuring the required technology for remote and hybrid work. Remote and hybrid work means separation from social ties in the office. Most meetings and interactions are held virtually creating loneliness and isolation for employees. Being unable to balance home and work disruption could be stressful and may lead to mental health issues in the long run if not well tackled (Iwu et al., 2022).

African homes are in a communal setting, which is not too convenient for remote work. OSoba (2021) confirmed this when he argued that although some workers were privileged to have a home office or study, others had to create one by turning their dining area or living room into office space, some even live with extended family which obviously increases disturbances from the environment. The cost of energy and the internet is also another factor that can hamper remote and hybrid work. Some line managers, HRM practitioners, other officers, and general employees lack the technical know-how to manage and work from home.

Way forward

Grelle & Popp (2021) state that in spite of the successes enumerated in literature, employees with years of remote work experience may have had an extra burden of caring for children and may be sharing restricted office space at home during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, which may interfere work. They called for Industrial and organizational psychologists to do further studies in this area using other dependent variables and new specific differences that are yet to be examined.

Cassidy & Rockbrune (2021) in their policy brief report also listed seven key elements that organizations and leaders should consider when planning and developing policies for remote and hybrid work:

1. The first key factor to consider when planning and strategizing toward hybrid and remote working is the **personality traits, skills, and priorities of the employees**. While some employees may prefer working remotely because it brings about flexibility in the work schedule and makes one autonomous because working remotely means self-management. Other employees may prefer working in the office environment because they feel working at home intrudes on their private lives.
2. **The job to be performed should also be considered**. While some functions could be performed remotely, others may have to be carried out in the workplace because they demand specialized equipment that could not be assembled in the home environment. Further, shared jobs that require experiential or implicit knowledge could not be performed at home.
3. **Another main item to be concerned about is communication**: Remote and hybrid work reduce interactions among colleagues and therefore it is necessary to apprise employees across all spectrums about happenings in the organization, which helps employees to be consistent and abreast with the information required to successfully accomplish their individual objectives. Previous studies have shown that effective teams need clear and detailed instructions or codes of conduct.
4. **Organizational Culture** is also very important when drafting policies for remote and hybrid work. Cassidy & Rockbrune (2021) posited that organizational culture is developed through organizational stories, values, practices, and beliefs of the organization, which are communicated through behaviors and visual items like how individuals dress, office decoration, etc. This is obvious when working together. It is important for management to be explicit on the culture of the organization and document the mission, vision, and values of the organization for all employees to have copies since it may be difficult to notice such values or principles in remote work.

5. It is important for organizations to select the correct technological tools that would aid employees working remotely. There are several apps, platforms, and software applicable to remote work such as Zoom, Google Drive, VPN, Trello, Asana, etc.
6. The leadership principles and policies needed to support remote and hybrid working are the same as those of the workplace environment. However, there are additional responsibilities for managers who supervise remote workers. They need to act as mentors, coaches, and facilitators, with a focus more on outcomes. Remote workers are also expected to be clear about their goals and expected results and how they are linked with the overall organizational objectives.
7. **Relation:** Efforts should be made to build relationships since employees do not see each other on a daily basis and most conversations are online or on the phone, which turns out to be more job-oriented (e.g., group seminars, outings, extracurricular activities).

Leonardelli (2022) similarly recommended three main strategies that managers of the remote and hybrid workforce could adopt.

- Managers should set specific, measurable, accurate, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) work goals for hybrid and remote workers. Additionally, employees should be more autonomous, and independent in performing their assigned tasks to encourage the best performance.
- Employees assigned to hybrid and remote work should have and be empowered with the requisite technology skills to enhance their work. First of all, there should be an assessment of the job to ensure that it can be performed remotely. Leonardelli (2022) suggested that communication equipment should be made available to allow for communication with colleagues. Employees should be trained to use such technologies with ease.
- Most jobs performed in organizations demand some level of interconnectivity, brainstorming, or incorporation, hence, employees work in teams. The suggestion is that when it comes to hybrid or remote working, team or group meetings should be held selectively. Such meetings are held via technological communicative tools such as video or audio conferencing. Three measures can be used to identify when to selectively call for a team meeting. These are:
 - (1) When a new assignment is going to be performed, a team meeting could be held to explain the task and assigned roles, with random team inspection.
 - (2) Team meetings should be dependent on the intricacy of the work. The more complicated the job, it would be advisable to have input from colleagues.
 - (3) It is also important to consider the elasticity of team members. Organizations should define their teams with some flexibility so that as and when an expert or expertise is needed, it can be added since it is a virtual meeting.

In addition, African leaders must enact policies to improve electricity supply in both cities and rural areas as well as strong internet connectivity. Measures should also be taken to reduce the costs of bandwidth, electricity, and energy so that an average individual and SMEs can afford to connect to the internet wherever they are located.

HR managers and organizational leaders are coming to terms with the fact that remote and hybrid working has come to stay and therefore they should draft policies, strategies, and models that could assist in the implementation of successful remote and hybrid work. Managers and employees should be trained in ICT skills and digitally empowered to be able to work and manage virtual employees, particularly organizations that would want to implement remote and hybrid work. Employees should be given the needed support to make their work at home comfortable and convenient. Work-life balance and employee well-being should be paramount to organizations and HR departments. In the same vein, Sulaiman et al. (2023) suggested that there should be collaboration and communication among the hybrid and remote work teams. As well as the use of social media platforms to promote interactions and teamwork.

Conclusion

Remote and hybrid working has come to stay. Although it was this strategy that kept organizations, businesses, and economies running during the COVID-19 pandemic, more organizations and employees are embracing and migrating to remote and hybrid working, especially since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic is not in sight.

Literature has shown that there are several benefits to this practice as well as challenges. Some of the benefits are flexibility in work schedule, accommodating to career women, high productivity, and work-life balance just to mention but a few. The challenges include the cost of electricity, bandwidth, and energy. Also, in Africa, erratic power supply, poor technological infrastructure, a lack of technological skills, and so on.

It is imperative for more studies to be conducted in Africa to appreciate the African context and contribute practical solutions that would help in the development, advancement, and management of remote and hybrid work. It is also important for organizations to be careful and thorough in their approach, design, implement, and modify remote and hybrid work programs. HRM departments, managers, and supervisors should also make a cautious effort to build cultural support and recognition for remote working innovations as well as improve the conditions and well-being of remote and hybrid employees (Popovici & Popovici, 2020).

African governments and leaders should play their part by enacting policies that would enhance technological development and reduce the cost of power and energy. SMEs should also be supported in their bid to migrate into remote and hybrid working. Related IT training should be organized for all involved to ensure success.

In the researchers' opinion, industries where hybrid and remote work is likely to thrive in Ghana include, the hotel industry, manufacturing, and education. However, this can be feasible with appropriate technological tools, reliable connectivity, and power supply. It is worth noting that in implementing hybrid and remote work, a uniform approach should not be adopted since organizations vary and not all jobs can run such models,

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