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Human Services Caseworkers' Experiences Working Remotely During COVID-19

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Sandra Lachelle Brown

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Human Services Caseworkers' Experiences Working Remotely During COVID-19

by

Sandra Lachelle Brown

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

Human services caseworkers have shifted from traditional means of providing services to their clients since the onset of COVID-19. Providing services and/or resources to clients from the home environment leads to work responsibilities and family demands that may affect work-life balance. Researchers have studied working remotely, but they have not explored human services caseworkers and their experiences of providing remote services during a pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative generic study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services versus face-to-face services to clients during a pandemic. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 12 human services caseworkers in the United States. The adaptive structuration theory was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Saldana's thematic analysis was used for data analysis. Seven themes were identified: (a) communication tools improved services to clients in telework, (b) autonomy affected remote work role transitioning, (c) technology competence thrived during the pandemic, (d) challenges and positives occurred while teleworking, (e) productivity excelled with telecommuting, (f) satisfaction and achievements enhanced during the pandemic, and (g) organizational commitment emerged from telework. The participants found satisfaction in balancing work and home roles, and they had some good experiences working remotely during the pandemic. Human services caseworkers may benefit from the results of this study through understanding experiences that may have a lasting influence on balancing work and home lives, which may encourage a positive social change.

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Dedication

       I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Maxcine Brown, who did not see me complete this journey. She was my biggest supporter. Everyone that knew her knows that she lived her life praying, serving, and a being a believer of the gospel. She was a virtuous woman, Proverbs 31. Momma, I did it!!! I love and miss you so much!

       I also dedicate this dissertation to my late friend, Bennie Reamer, who supported me tremendously when I started this journey. When I asked him if it was okay to acknowledge him in my dissertation, I never thought I would be doing it posthumously. Thank you for the continued support! I miss you dearly!

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I thank my family for the continuous support and prayers—my dad, Isiah; my sister, Catina; my brother-in-love, Marvin; my nephews, Marvin Jr., Malcolm, and Ma'Kale; my niece, MaKayla; and my extended family members and friends. I must thank my Stonewall Baptist family for the prayers and encouragement—especially Pastor Uelyss Reed, Class #19, and the Sanctuary Choir. I also would like to extend thanks to my friend K. R. Duncan, who helped proofread my documents; my friend Mavis Williams, who continuously called nearly every day to see if I completed my daily goals of writing; and my friend Traci Burks, who encouraged me to start this journey. I have so many people to be thankful for, and I thank each one of you who helped me to make this accomplishment. Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

COVID-19 contributed to a shift from administering services face-to-face to arranging services virtually, which resulted in human services professionals having the opportunity to work from home. Some organizations offer remote working opportunities due to shifts in technology (Chiru, 2017). Some human services workers were forced to adapt their day-to-day routines to balance home and work lives. The helping profession shifted from in-office protocols to working remotely from home (Cabaniss, 2020). In an effort to keep Americans safe, individuals affected by COVID-19 had to embrace the limited alternatives of providing services remotely. Teleworking can have favorable and unfavorable consequences for employees' well-being and work-life balance (ter Hoeven & van Zoonen, 2020). The flexibility of working from home may prove beneficial to some stakeholders involved in the human services profession.

In this chapter, I provide the study background, and I explore human services workers working remotely from home. In the problem statement, I address the rationale for conducting this study and the research objective of gathering the perceptions of human services workers teleworking and balancing home-work lives using Desanctis and Poole's (1994) adaptive structuration theory for the conceptual framework. The remaining components of Chapter 1 include the nature of the study, relevant definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

Many organizations have implemented telework over the past decades for various reasons. Telecommunicating dates back to the 1970s, when Jack Nilles introduced the

concept to the federal government, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and U.S. Air Force (Chiru, 2017). The innovators of telework believed that the work should go to the employee to decrease traffic jams during daily rush hours and to improve the employee's work-life balance (Allen et al., 2015; Narayanan et al., 2017). Pioneers of telecommuting recommended the option of teleworking because of its potential economic benefits for companies and families.

The federal government/military founded many processes that came to life within the civilian sector, such as working remotely. In the United States, Control Data Corporation and IBM became the first civilian companies to test work-at-home projects (Allen et al., 2015). The introduction of work-at-home policies offered companies the ability to hire highly skilled and qualified employees outside of the geographical location of the organization (Chiru, 2017). Organizations have taken advantage of teleworking because of issues related to stakeholders' well-being.

Employers and employees attempted to decrease the spread of COVID-19 by social distancing, which led to human service employees providing services from their home or another remote location. The flexibility of telework requires the individual to become proactive in finding a balance between work and home lives (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Conflict may exist when work and home lives merge under the same roof, affecting the individual's psychological, physical, or behavioral boundaries (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Telecommuting has become an essential solution for some human services caseworkers to address clients' social needs (Trahan et al., 2019). Human

services caseworkers needed to find ways to balance assisting clients and maintaining

their family obligations simultaneously during the pandemic.

Work and family roles contribute to human services professionals' satisfaction

with their job performance in the home. The COVID pandemic has had the potential to

transform attitudes toward what is considered meaningful work for employees working

from home (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Challenges may occur when work and home roles

collide; however, solidarity from the community, work, and family can help in

overcoming such challenges (Fisher et al., 2020). A caseworker may balance dual roles at

home if established lines of communicating remain open.

Problem Statement

In December 2019, a respiratory illness, COVID-19, began in China, causing a

global pandemic that has changed the way human services caseworkers assist their

clients. The confirmed number of coronavirus cases has reached 123,209,438 and

counting across the globe (Worldometer, 2020). As of March 20, 2021, the United States

accounted for 30,434,541 cases of COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention [CDC], 2020). The recent pandemic has caused countries to swiftly

incorporate new practices to protect their citizens (Seijts & Milani, 2020). With the

current coronavirus outbreak, many organizations face new challenges in protecting their

employees and their stakeholders (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Human service

organizations have made substantial investments to allow their employees to work from

their homes, such as providing workers with access to technological programs and other

tools required to complete work-related tasks from home during the pandemic

(Evangelakos, 2020). In an attempt to prevent further spread of the coronavirus, employers have implemented work-from-home policies to continue assisting those in need of human services.

Over the past year, employees have changed how they work because of the COVID pandemic. The pandemic has led to a transformation of attitudes about employees' and organizations' roles, resulting in transitions in the labor market (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Remote work has increased significantly (Bathini & Kandathil, 2020). The federal government, one of the largest employers of human services workers, implemented a plan to transition many human service employees to telework as a result of COVID-19. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management guided federal agencies (i.e., Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Social Security Administration, and Health Resources and Services Administration) to implement a continuity plan that involved telework in minimizing the spread of COVID-19, ensuring that citizens continued to receive services (Cabaniss, 2020). Some caseworkers had to move the office setting into the home environment, which placed work roles and home responsibilities under one roof. When working from home, human services caseworkers may face challenges with work-life balance due to longer work hours because of increased phone calls, emails, and video conferencing within the home (Gerdeman, 2020). Due to the lack of face-to-face contact with clients, an increase in alternative communication forms occurred, resulting in human services professionals using more time to interact with clients using new communication methods.

Although researchers have examined working remotely, scholars have not explored human services caseworkers and their experiences of teleworking during a pandemic (Fisher et al., 2020). Further research is warranted on human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while working remotely versus face-to-face during a pandemic (Cho, 2020; Restubog et al., 2020). Human services caseworkers' use of telework may become the new norm of helping citizens, and scholars must understand caseworkers' perceptions of work-family experiences during COVID-19.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, generic study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services versus face-to-face services to clients during a pandemic. The target population for this study was 10–15 human services caseworkers whose employer required them to provide telework services. The restructured work environment for human services caseworkers required examination because of the entwining of work and family lives when providing services to citizens in need.

Research Question

The research question was as follows: What are the human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services to their clients during a pandemic?

Conceptual Framework

The adaptive structuration theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. Desanctis and Poole (1994) constructed the adaptive structuration theory in 1994.

This theory is grounded in the advancement of technology on change in the traditional work environment (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). It focuses on computer technology, organizations, and human interactions for workers working remotely. This theory may be used to examine exchanges of communication between an organization and its employees who use advanced technology to support changes to maintain work-life balance among workers (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). I used the adaptive structuration theory as a lens to explore how human services caseworkers incorporated strategies to make remote work successful by balancing their work life and home life during COVID-19.

Nature of the Study

I used a generic qualitative approach to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services during a pandemic. Using the generic design allowed me to account for the participants' knowledge of their experiences of balancing their work and home lives (see Kahlke, 2014). The generic qualitative approach allowed me to become more receptive to the questions and context of the material provided by participants (see Kahlke, 2018). Researchers benefit from a generic approach because of its methodological flexibility (Liu, 2016). I used a generic qualitative design to help me understand the common themes associated with caseworkers' work-life balance while working remotely during the COVID pandemic.

Definitions

Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic: A virus that has affected most countries around the world. The virus outbreak began in China in December 2019, with no known

vaccine or treatment to eradicate the severe acute respiratory infectious disease (Chong et al., 2020).

Human services worker: Employee who helps clients by offering assistance in learning new skills or recommending available resources in a time of need (Dice et al., 2018).

Job satisfaction: Employees' overall attachment to and contentment with the organization (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

Role boundaries: Existing boundaries that are a part of day-to-day work and home behaviors (Cho, 2020).

Telework/remote work/telecommuting: Occurs when the employee and employer have an agreement to allow the employee to work from home or another specified location away from the organization's brick-and-mortar facility while getting paid (Kazekami, 2020).

Work-family conflict: Physical or psychological consequences when work performance declines and work and family demands increase (Molino et al., 2020).

Work-life balance: An individual's challenges of balancing work and career (Restubog et al., 2020).

Assumptions

I assumed that human services caseworkers who teleworked during COVID-19 would agree to participate in semistructured interviews to collect data for this research project. I also assumed that all participants would provide accurate accounts of their experiences related to balancing home and work lives. I assumed that I would capture

clear answers and implied comments on the participants' experiences. I also assumed that the majority of human services workers who teleworked during COVID-19 supported remote working.

Scope and Delimitations

The primary focus of this study was on capturing the perceptions of human services workers teleworking during COVID-19. The study's scope included the provision of services from the home setting where work and home lives had merged, versus offering services to clients face-to-face. This study excluded human services professionals who held national/state licensure; other occupations outside of human services professionals were not considered for this study. Through the semistructured interview questions, I sought to facilitate transparent responses from the participants; however, limited transferability of the study findings may exist compared to other professions/populations due the representation of nonlicensed human services professionals working remotely.

I considered social exchange theory and sociotechnical systems theory as conceptual frameworks in this study. Using sociotechnical systems theory, it is possible to consider technology and the working environment; however, the theory focuses on employees' satisfaction and productivity rather than balancing the roles of home and work lives (Cummings, 1978). My study did not focus on the productivity of the human services professional; therefore, sociotechnical systems theory was not selected. Social exchange theory may be used to understand the link between employees' work-family practices when related to the employment organization (Haar & Spell, 2004). However,

social exchange theory does not consider technology or a remote working environment, making the theory unsuitable for my study.

Limitations

The small sample size of the study presented a limitation. Another potential limitation was the participants' represented organization or geographical location, in that the findings might not apply to other contexts and populations. The participants' insight came from their experiences in the natural setting, and validity and reliability might become compromised because of the difficulty of replicating the study (see Diefenbach, 2009). The participants' responses may not adequately represent the views of other human services professionals working from home.

As the researcher, I have a personal interest in providing the human services profession with a credible, dependable, and transferable study. I may have had a bias when interpreting the participants' responses. To mitigate bias, I avoided making the interview mimic a social interaction; instead, I collected data to ensure that the participant provided a genuine response (see Diefenbach, 2009). I used a journal for bracketing to document my preconceived notions about telework. A third party reviewed the research questions to reflect an unbiased opinion about the intertwining work and home roles.

Significance

With the recent changes in human services caused by COVID-19, this research fills a gap in the understanding of human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing telework services. The study provides information on caseworkers' views of remote working, which is needed as telework has become the

current norm of practice (Kazekami, 2020). Many citizens expect the human services professional to address societal needs when a pandemic occurs; however, the interventions in place focus only on preparedness, response, and recovery related to providing services within the community using the brick-and-mortar facility (Dice et al., 2018). The caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services during the pandemic can lead to improvements in providing future services to clients. The human services professionals' experiences while working from home during the pandemic will help outline the best practices that encourage work-life balance.

Summary

This study focused on human services caseworkers assisting clients virtually in the home setting and their perceptions of balancing their work and family lives. COVID-19 has forced many caseworkers to alter service delivery methods. The perceptions of the caseworkers may lead to future preparedness for other emergency situations that may require human services workers to balance home and work lives when remotely working from home.

In Chapter 1, I established the study's background, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research question, the conceptual framework, the study's nature, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. The articles selected for the background section highlight previous work concerning telecommuting. The problem and purpose statements described this study's focus by featuring the workplace modifications and explaining the justification for this study during the current pandemic. The research question explored the perceptions of human

services workers' ability to balance work and home lives in their homes. The elements of Chapter 1 promote insight into the study.

Chapter 2 will include current literature related to teleworking and explore the gaps in the literature. Additionally, the chapter will include information on theories related to teleworking and work-life balancing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

COVID-19 led to altered services being provided by some human services caseworkers. Government agencies called for social distancing by initiating lockdowns to prevent mass gatherings and stop the spread of the virus, which was responsible for millions of deaths worldwide (Islam et al., 2020; Seijts & Milani, 2020). The shift that occurred as some human services workers provided services from their homes may have caused conflict between their personal and professional lives, potentially leading to more work hours (Gerdeman, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020). Information about human services caseworkers' experiences of integrating work and home lives during the pandemic can bring awareness to organizational policies and standardize their diverse roles.

The pandemic caused many schools and businesses to close their doors, leaving many families confined to the home. In some instances, employers offered workers the opportunity to use work-from-home arrangements, resulting in unreliable boundaries that placed employment, education, childcare, and other activities under one roof (Lee et al., 2020). Virtual and remote services have become the new norm for many human services providers, who must continue to apply privacy and security regulations when working outside the traditional office (Limmroth, 2020). Experiences during COVID-19 have brought light to the new challenges of balancing work and everyday life, and the purpose of this study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences of teleworking during COVID-19.

This chapter features a comprehensive review of the current literature related to human services caseworkers working remotely. The chapter will be divided into sections addressing the following: (a) adaptive structuration theory, (b) telecommuting, (c) work and family roles, (d) work-life conflict, and (e) work-life balance.

Literature Search Strategy

The databases used for this literature review included Google Scholar, Business Source Complete, Supplemental Index, Science Direct, APA Psych Info, Medline, ProQuest Central, Open Access, IEEE Xplore, and PubMed. The keyword search terms included *telework*, *virtual work*, *COVID-19*, *pandemics in the United States*, *work-life balance*, *work-life conflict*, *work to home spillover*, *workplace flexibility*, and *work-life initiatives.* I focused on finding peer-reviewed articles published from 2018 to 2021; however, older relevant articles were included when significant. The literature search also included academic books and government documents that contributed to obtaining knowledge relating to telecommuting.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study was grounded in adaptive structuration theory. I chose adaptive structuration theory as a lens to understand the changes within an organization that had shifted from the office setting to telecommuting during COVID-19. Due to the pandemic's ongoing effects, adaptive structuration theory was the best theoretical framework to address human services professionals' interactions adhering to noncontact communication with clients using advanced voice and video communications. This study

contributes to adaptive structuration theory by examining human services caseworkers'

perceptions of adapting to remote work using advanced technology during a pandemic.

Adaptive Structuration Theory

Adaptive structuration theory is an acceptable framework to view technological

advances linked to new COVID arrangements within an organization that has become

altered or enhanced its processes, resources, or both. DeSanctis and Poole (1994)

constructed adaptive structuration theory and sought to interpret a connection between

technology and the work environment while exploring the changes within an organization

related to decisions and perceptions of the people using the technology. The theory was

used to explain the continuous change of social systems by viewing groups at the

microlevel of interaction between humans and new technologies (DeSanctis & Poole,

1994). DeSanctis and Poole's adaptive structuration theory considers human interactions,

rules and resources, and production and reproduction.

Human Interactions

Social interaction occurs when people interact with others, and people react to

how other individuals influence their social behaviors. DeSanctis and Poole's (1994)

adaptive structuration theory imported Giddens's structuration theory, which posits that

people's actions will impact the organization with balancing life and work roles. Humans

represent one of the structure's components, and humans assist in changing the structure

(DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Organizational change occurs because of the person's ability

to implement technology into the organization's mission (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The

theory is designed for researchers to take a realistic approach by considering the user's

knowledge and skillset when intentionally interacting with others using new technology communication methods (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). When people engage in social interactions, their productivity leads to the reproduction of new social systems by merging advanced technologies with their workload and environmental structures (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Technology alone does not introduce new organizational social structures; however, interaction and rules and resources may lead to new changes within an organization.

Rules and Resources

For the organization to meet its goals, members must apply the rules set by the employer and resources provided by the employer. The actions of a team member act as the rules the person should follow to get the job done, whereas the resources pertain to the available mechanisms that influence the team members' actions (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The technology features available to the user and their willingness to use the technology form the social interaction that can become contingent on other constructs that affect how the technology may apply to the organization (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). When the users apply the given rules using advanced technology, an action occurs that leads to production and reproduction, which can cause a change within an organization (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The lack of willingness from an individual to contribute their knowledge to the organizational tasks prevents them from being a resource that can influence a new social structure (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Appropriation occurs when a rule or resource becomes adopted from another source; a faithful appropriation requires application of the rule or resource as proposed from another organization (DeSanctis &

Poole, 1994). Unfaithful appropriations occur when an individual does not use the technology as intended by the organization; therefore, documenting the outcomes as an unfaithful appropriation assists in explaining any unintentional outcome (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Adopting rules and resources from another entity, known as appropriation, may become necessary if members are unable to find stability (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Members of a group have the capability to shape or control outcomes related to new social structures within an organization.

Adaptive Structuration Theory Use in Current Human Services Research

Technological advances continue to shape the human services professions by making new structures part of organizations. Barrett (2018) applied adaptive structuration theory using a mixed-method approach to study the implementation of electronic health records in a healthcare organization. Some employees at the healthcare facility decided to digress from the intended use of the software to make their jobs easier, which is construed as an unfaithful appropriation because it goes against the spirit of the structure (Barrett, 2018; DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The employees perceived that the electronic records were better than the paper records once they obtained knowledge and became experienced using the technology structure (Barrett, 2018). The workarounds eventually became a part of the organization's culture (Barrett, 2018). The adaptive structuration theory provided information as to how the unintended use of the advanced technology changed the attitudes of the members toward electronic medical records.

Effective communication may have the potential to ease the transition process when implementing new technology into procedures within an organization. A nonprofit

organization that provides food to those in need chose the adaptive structuration theory to highlight workshop attendees' ability to communicate in strategizing efforts using various office tools and computer software (Tavella et al., 2020). The qualitative microlevel analysis pulled themes from the participants' committed discussions that aided in successful outcomes in using the devices provided (Tavella et al., 2020). Tavella et al. (2020) applied DeSanctis and Poole's (1994) construct on social structures by becoming immersed in the group's interactions using the rules and resources to produce and reproduce through structuration. The stakeholders' abilities to communicate provided the needed interaction to facilitate understanding, which allowed everyone to organize actions with the available technology structures (Tavella et al., 2020). The collective group's ability to communicate using the given technology led to the members sharing their current expertise while gaining new insights via deliberations with colleagues.

Communication strategies may lead to new ideas and processes that have a lasting effect on society. Lubinga and Baloyi (2019) believed that political parties should use social media platforms such as Twitter to inform and help the citizens of Africa. The researchers applied adaptive structuration theory in a netnography approach, which involves observing interactions that occur online (Lubinga & Baloyi, 2019). Most founding individuals of social media platforms sought to keep families, friends, and communities interacting with each other despite any potential distances (Lubinga & Baloyi, 2019). Government organizations have invested in incorporating the technology to satisfy their needs, which has promoted the technology's spirit in an unfaithful appropriation (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994; Lubinga & Baloyi, 2019). A political party used

Twitter to promote its image, and the authors believed that the party should have focused on issues, information, education, and interaction with the public to address the needs of constituents (Lubinga & Baloyi, 2019). Exchanging ideas concerning integrating advanced information technology has the potential to influence and make major social changes throughout the world.

Literature Review

Telecommuting

Adopting advanced information technology in the job market has led to advances in how individuals work. Nilles et al. (1976) proposed taking the work to the employee instead of the employee coming to a physical location distant from their home. Pliskin (1997) stated that white collar workers were given the opportunity to telecommute since the 1970s. Telecommuting consisted mainly of supplementing traditional work, requiring the employee to work from home on the evenings or weekends (Pliskin, 1997). According to Narayanan et al. (2017), the beginning of telecommuting came from the need to decrease the amount of traffic on the roadways, which aligns with Nilles et al.'s (1974) initial introduction to telecommuting. The suggestion of working from any location at any time may affect the United States, the organization, and the employee.

The new possibilities of commuting to work using technology to connect with the organization and coworkers affect the stakeholders involved. The United States can benefit from telecommuting because workers will not become involved with congested traffic, which adds to pollution, on their way to the organization's physical location (Narayanan et al., 2017). Leaders within an organization may review their policies to

benefit employees when the need for telework arises (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Telecommuting allows companies to save on renting space for employees to work and

allows experienced upper level management teleworkers to become models to show

coworkers how to apply telework into their daily lives (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020;

Narayanan et al., 2017). Telecommuting gives the employee autonomy by allowing them

to decide to work from home when they have an illness, such as the onset of flu-like

symptoms (Ahmed et al., 2020; Narayanan et al., 2017). The advanced use of technology

aids in providing flexible work schedules that will benefit organizations/employees.

The use of technology allows workers to communicate using various methods.

Communication plays an important role in the success of working remotely, along with

the employees' willingness to effectively work with technology (Nilles et al., 1976). The

workers must have computer knowledge, and the teleworking location must support the

necessary information technology infrastructure, which includes high-speed internet

service, email accounts, and voice and video conference software (Allen et al., 2015;

Booth, 2020; Golden & Gajendran, 2019; Rohwer et al., 2020). Communication and

information technology must have successful implementation for teleworkers to

understand the benefits of working remotely.

Employees have the potential to benefit from policies that promote work-life

balance when teleworking. Remote working encourages joy and occupational fulfillment

while most likely decreasing work-to-family conflict (Bayazit & Bayazit, 2019;

Kazekami, 2020). Gimenez-Nadal et al. (2020) proposed additional benefits to

telecommuting, such as flexibility, time management, and feeling content about health

and safety. An employee working from home may have the perception of independence or freedom, which gives the worker the effect of not being micromanaged by a supervisor while being given the opportunity to save on transportation costs associated with going to an office (Mustajab et al., 2020). The benefits of teleworking have the potential to increase the feeling of maintaining a balanced life when the organization and the teleworker agree on the telecommuting arrangement.

Lack of support in the home can decrease the self-satisfaction of working from home. According to a European study on the work-life balance of public workers, individuals taking care of aging parents/relatives had trouble controlling the boundaries between family obligations and work duties (Dee et al., 2020). Likewise, Kazekami (2020) mentioned that Japanese male teleworkers had trouble balancing work and household chores. In some instances, Indonesian married women did not find work-life balance because of the husbands' refusal or inadequacy to assist with domestic duties (Mustajab et al., 2020). Attempting to balance household responsibilities and work can lead to strained emotional well-being.

Working from home can affect an individual's work responsibilities. People who do not have strong communication skills or identify themselves as a group member within the organization may feel isolated when telecommuting (Hoffman et al., 2020; Narayanan et al., 2017). An employee may not have the array of skills or the technology needed to effectively use the resources to complete their occupational tasks (Hoffman et al., 2020). Hoffman et al. (2020) identified distractions and lack of motivation as a challenge to remote working. Overcoming challenges related to working from home

requires discipline and information technology skills to meet the demands of the organization.

Work and Family Roles

Communication and information technology play roles in an individual's life that may manifest as a conflict due to lack of boundaries. The use of technology may occur anywhere and everywhere because of the affordability of accessing the internet using smartphones, tablets, and laptops (Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018; Gadeyne et al., 2018). Due to the convenience of accessing mobile devices, work hours can spill into time outside of work for employees who want to catch up or stay ahead of their workload (Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018; Gadeyne et al., 2018). Delanoeije et al. (2019) believed that access to work activities within the home requires the employee to establish boundaries to limit interruptions in the house. The telecommuting worker must set boundaries to maintain a balance between home and work lives.

Telecommuting requires the worker to transition between work and family roles when needed. Workplace habits become ingrained in the individual and may eventually seep into the employee's daily life within their home (Benlian, 2020). According to Delanoeije et al. (2019), a worker's ability to transition between home and work roles allows the worker to multitask, addressing pending home needs. Felstead and Henseke (2017) mentioned the benefits that teleworkers have in adjusting their working arrangements according to their personal circumstances to eliminate stressful working conditions. Flexibility with work schedules in the home environment provides the worker with more time to focus on regulating any derogatory thinking, negative memories, and

irrational behaviors (Benlian, 2020). A flexible work schedule helps the worker sustain balancing home responsibilities, leading to improved work-life balance.

Balancing professional and personal lives may come as a challenge with the demands placed by an employer, family and friends, and community. Kim and Beehr (2020) believed that employers should encourage autonomy to enhance work-home roles by fostering an atmosphere that creates empowering behavior among employees. Allowing the employee to select their remote location gratifies the desire for self-determination to manage the work-life balance (ter Hoeven & van Zoonen, 2020). Striving to create a balance among multiple roles is an integral part of improving overall well-being.

Work-Life Conflict

Work responsibilities can interfere with an individual's personal life and may cause conflict when the roles are unbalanced. Research involving role conflict dates back to the research of Stouffer (1949), and Stouffer addressed the different demands an individual faces in society when struggling with competing obligations related to role expectations. The work-life conflict came to replace work-family conflict due to the evolution of women entering the workforce in the 1980s and 1990s, including men and women (Dee et al., 2020). According to Skurak et al. (2021), hours worked had little correlation with work-life conflict; however, the pressure of being overworked and psychological disengagement increased the participants' work-life conflict. Work-life conflict may have lessened during the pandemic because some workers had fewer interactions with their organization due to constraints imposed by social distancing

(Schieman & Narisada, 2021). The strains of work spilling over into other life roles may cause an increased risk of work-life conflict.

Signs of reduced self-efficacy and disconnection related to work or life may lead to burnout. Burnout occurs when an individual has become mentally and physically drained from chronic stress related to their professional life (Kim & Wang, 2018). A person actively teleworking may decide to become a workaholic to prove that they are trustworthy, which leads them to not fully disengage from the organization (Bathini & Kandathil, 2020). At a healthcare facility in the United States, 45% of radiology oncology employees working from home self-reported symptoms of burnout during the initial COVID-19 outbreak (Hoffman et al., 2020). In Europe, studies have revealed burnout has a strong connection among working individuals who have an overload of responsibilities because of their multiple role engagement (Mensah & Adjei, 2020). The more demands placed on an employee, the greater the probability of experiencing work-life conflict.

The organization should consider and encourage needed resources to reduce work-life conflict. The functionality of completing work goals using personal labor, psychological efforts, group performance, or organizational policies identifies as a job resource (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2019). Vincent-Hoper et al. (2020) recognized the diverse coping behaviors used by social workers to keep up with work demands included working long hours and coming to work when sick, which classifies as health-endangering behaviors. The presence of job resources should decrease the employees' experiences of exhaustion, burnout, and depression, which are associated with work-life conflict (Kim & Wang, 2018; Skurak et al., 2021). Additional roles become present when

employees become more engaged in their work, which leads to increased chances of work-life conflict.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance requires a state equilibrium regarding an individuals' various life roles. Work-life balance looks different among individuals because of different views associated with balancing various roles within work and life contexts (Dee et al., 2020). Role transitioning encourages work-life balance by allowing an individual to switch between multiple roles to meet specific demands related to work and personal lives, termed work-life integration (Dee et al., 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019). The studying of work-life balance has occurred worldwide, and some organizations have implemented work-life balance programs to strengthen employees' initiatives on activities they pursue in life (Wong et al., 2020). Work-life balance arrangements aim to raise awareness of the benefits of maintaining homeostasis between the roles of work and personal demands.

For some organizations, policies and expectations have the tendency to support their diverse workers' choices to strive toward work-life balance. Work-life policies cannot come in the form of one policy for all because employees may fall into several social categories (Ryan & Briggs, 2019). Organizations that promote family-friendly policies to address childcare, maternity leave, and parental leave do not seek to consider the diversified identities within the workforce (Ryan & Briggs, 2019; Wong et al., 2020). General work-life balance policies do not provide functionality and limit employees who take care of elderly relatives (Murphy & Cross, 2018). Transformation of gender roles, LGBT, and other social categories needs practical policies to support their work-life

balance (Ryan & Briggs, 2019). Work-life policies should aim to motivate employees to achieve an optimal performance level.

Organizations alone cannot seek work-life balance for employees; however, the employee should foster a culture that favors balance. The personal self and the professional self can be hard to separate. Sometimes, individuals bring personal issues into the work domain resulting by the organization (Du et al., 2018). According to Dee et al. (2020), a person who considers their work and life as one unit instead of setting precise precedence of one over the other has found their life's calling known as work-life synthesis. The teleworker should strive to reach work-life harmony with positivity by focusing on the benefits of remote working.

Job Satisfaction

An individual who works toward obtaining work-life harmony may find their telework experience satisfying. Cernas-Ortiz and Wai-Kwan (2021) believed that an organization should encourage their employees to connect with family and friends to achieve and maintain job satisfaction. An employee's positive attitude about work contributes to increased job satisfaction when working from home (Kroll & Nuesch, 2019). Teleworkers who desire to have more autonomy at work experience more job satisfaction than office workers (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021). The individuals who implemented self-characteristic traits, such as rewards and goal setting, evaluated themselves in performance areas and had more satisfaction at the end of the workday compared to those working in a traditional location (Muller & Niessen, 2019). Telework does not automatically equal to an increase in job satisfaction; however, the self-

evaluations and recognizing how to balance work and family needs lead to an increase in job satisfaction.

Some individuals may feel that telecommuting decreases their job satisfaction. According to Nakrosiene et al. (2019), job satisfaction decreased among teleworkers who could not communicate with coworkers. In addition to limited communication among workers, a teleworker's dissatisfaction becomes noticeable when they are offered no support from leadership and no career advancement opportunities, and leadership forgets about an employee because they are not present in the facility (Smith et al., 2018). Employees who do not have experience working with advanced information technologies may find a decrease in job satisfaction due to the stress associated with changing the way they communicate and interact with others (Suh & Lee, 2017). A sudden change in the way the employee communicates may lead to job dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction may lessen the employee's commitment to the organization.

Employees who have a solid work commitment demonstrate their interest in setting work goals and seek to contribute to the organization's mission. Mothers working from home who had increased job satisfaction remain committed to their organization by exhibiting behaviors that benefited the organizations (Yemisi et al., 2020). A harmonious relationship between work and home lives leads to a positive telework commitment and increased job satisfaction (Morilla-Luchena et al., 2021). Telecommuting job performance across a variety of occupations varies, and improved job satisfaction and dedication occur when an individual's job demands high problem-solving skills (Golden

& Gajendran, 2019). An individual's work satisfaction and work performance may produce a high level of productivity when given the opportunity to telework.

Productivity

Remote working requires the teleworker to complete assigned tasks to meet their organization's goals. Some individuals' perception of productivity requires the lines of communication to remain open to discuss shared experiences within the work environment to maintain efficiency (Johnson & Zimmermann, 2021). Upper-level management assisted workers to improved productivity by using self-managing skills and creating favorable working conditions (Palvalin, 2019). The primary measurement of an employee's productivity correlates with the employee's work discipline; therefore, the productivity level directly links to the employee's discipline level (Umulkulsum & Suaji, 2020). Employees' knowledge of productivity may assist in understanding how much work the employer expects during a day.

Work productivity while working from home does not look the same for everyone because individuals have their own perception of productivity. Feng and Savani (2020) believed that disparities exist based on gender because women are more likely to take care of the home front and dependents when closures for school and daycare centers occur. Some people working from home cannot establish boundaries because of the lack of workspace within their living environment, leading to decreased work productivity (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). According to Wrestler (2020), working from home and incorporating daily chores during work hours increased productivity because the focus shifts to actual deadlines instead of the physical presence in the office. According to

Atiku et al. (2020), flexible work arrangements increased work productivity in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing employees to work from home while taking care of their children. The employee may need to adopt new practices to handle various roles to maintain their same productivity level that existed in the office setting.

Productivity may become an issue when balancing the roles of work and life within the home setting. According to Kazekami (2020), labor productivity decreases when an individual struggles with balancing work and chores. The remote worker may become successful at multitasking the roles by using time management to allocate specific times for tasks (Chang et al., 2021). Telecommuting offers a better opportunity to balance roles because the employee does not have to dedicate time to commute to an employer's physical location, and the employee has flexibility that allows them to spread their work hours throughout the day or workweek by setting their own times to engage in work activities (Gimenez-Nadal, 2020; Stadtlander et al., 2017). Remote work aids in reducing stress, which improves productivity when the worker remains connected to colleagues using advanced information technology to regulate time spent at the workplace (Ruiller et al., 2019). Dedicating time to communicate with coworkers using technology may aid in the telecommuter not experiencing feelings of social isolation.

Isolation

The use of telecommunication and computers provides an opportunity for organizations to offer working arrangements outside of the conventional workspace, which may lead to employees feeling isolated. Hajek et al. (2020) defined social isolation as not belonging to a group/organization. Employees may experience social isolation

when not connecting to coworkers spontaneously in an office setting (Charalampous et al., 2019). Individuals working from home become exposed to a higher risk of social isolation because of the inability to directly interact with colleagues and members within the organization (Marica, 2018). According to de Pedro et al. (2021), social isolation and other stressful situations related to COVID-19 can affect a person's mental well-being and physical health. Social isolation may affect an individual's ability to provide services to clients when teleworking.

Human services workers must effectively adapt and strive to succeed professionally when assisting clients remotely when feeling isolated. Professional isolation occurs when an individual feels or perceives no connection between others within their organization, and the person feels a disconnect when not working from the organization's physical location because they believe they will miss out on advancement opportunities within the company (de Vries et al., 2019). During the onset of COVID-19, professional isolation became a primary reason for teleworkers' increased stress levels, which hindered the teleworkers' ability to adjust to working from home (Carillo et al., 2020). Makarius and Larson (2017) suggested that upper-level management of an organization conduct assessments with workers and implement advanced information technologies to mitigate professional isolation. Professional isolation may occur when a teleworker cannot network with their colleagues and leaders within the organization.

The human services professional must implement strategies that may decrease feelings of isolation. Counselors in Singapore experienced decreased feelings of isolation with constant communication with supervisors to discuss their experiences and feelings

related to the work environment (Tan, 2019). Seeking help from a professional can help to minimize the feelings of isolation, and online peer-support groups may offer interventions to help with isolation (Greenawald, 2020). Using the virtual platform to conduct video meetings, send emails, and hold one-on-one phone calls allows interaction among staff members to decrease the feelings of professional and social isolation.

Employee Retention

The remote worker may feel connected if the organization encourages video conferencing and virtual team meetings, which may result in a high retention rates among telecommuting employees. Many organizations have identified goals to effectively reduce voluntary turnover using suggestions from the Telework Enhancement Act (Choi, 2020). Choi (2020) identified improving the employees' attitude, retaining talented employees, and including readiness for emergencies as three major goals taken from the Telework Enhancement Act. The employee's work attitude has a direct link to job performance; flexible work practices offer accommodations that may lead to positive nonwork attitudes, which results in a decrease turnover intention (Kroll & Nuesch, 2019; Onken-Menke et al., 2018). Flexibility contributes to a lower number of missed days from work, employee turnover, and stress related to the job (Merone & Whitehead, 2021). Ambrosius (2018) believed that strategic talent management offers potential employees a clear picture of expectations related to job performance, which has shown to decrease employee turnover. Some organizations address dependent emergencies (e.g., physician visits, dental visit) by offering family-friendly work arrangement to attract and retain highly skilled workers (Wiβ, 2017). Organizations must implement collaborative

resources for teleworkers to engage that will promote positive work and non-work attitudes.

An engaging and collaborative relationship shared by the organization and the employee may contribute to their willingness to stay with the company. The remote worker and the organization must play a proactive role engaging employees to make them feel appreciated in efforts to reduce employee turnover (White, 2018). Remote employees who engaged with the organization using various communication and support networks expressed little desire to leave their current employer (Choi, 2018). When an employee becomes engaged with their work, the person strengthens their commitment to the organization and the chances of them leaving decreases (Albro & McElfresh, 2021). The employee and organization have reciprocal roles to enhance the engagement process to meet organizational and personal goals.

Work engagement encourages the employee to remain with the organization to reduce the turnover rate by creating a bond to carry out the organization's mission. Several dynamics influence an employee's retention, such as work engagement, job embeddedness, and turnover intention (Rafiq et al., 2019). According to Rafiq et al. (2019), job embeddedness refers to multiple connections the employee shares with the organization and people within the organization, the employee's compatibility within the organizational environment, and the loss the employee takes when they leave the organization. Employees who desire to build or have high self-esteem and self-worth contribute to high work engagement and job embeddedness (Teng et al., 2021). People who become enmeshed in their careers have difficulty uprooting themselves from the

organization regardless of the potential benefits from other opportunities (Dechawatanapaisal, 2021). When an employee creates several internal and external links within an organization, the greater the chances the employee may remain engaged and committed to an employer.

Advantages of Telecommuting

Working remotely from home may come with many advantages for some workers. Mirela (2020) suggested the advantages of working from home include a greater opportunity for stability between personal and professional lives, the elimination of commuting to work, the flexibility to schedule work while considering personal preferences, and increased productivity because of fewer distractions. The home environment may seem ideal because the in-home work area provides personal comfort that the employee has tailored to meet their personal preferences, limiting interruptions (Aczel et al., 2021). Employees went to social media to express their enjoyment of flexibility and productivity remote working offers during the pandemic (Zhang et al., 2021). The advantages of working from home come in many forms among the diverse working population engaging in telecommuting.

Not only will the employee reap the benefits of working at home, but the employer may also find a few advantages of switching their staff to work from home. More than half of survey respondents verbalized that they would take a decrease in pay if given the opportunity of a flexible work schedule (Merone & Whitehead, 2021). The employees who have shifted to remote working have highlighted the increase in information exchange that allows teleworkers and colleagues within the organization to

remain connected using advanced technology (Sunday et al., 2020). The organization can benefit from the connectivity among employees when productivity increases, a reduction in employee turnover occurs, workers' days off become lowered, and budget cuts may lead to the company's potential to grow (Gandhi et al., 2021). The top preferred organizations to work for come from those offering flexible work programs because applicants view those organizations as caring about their employees (Wiatr, 2021). An organization may find several benefits that may improve the organization's position in offering services to citizens.

Remote work encourages collaboration between the organizations and virtual employees. Telecommuting allows the organization to reach beyond its geographical area to implement diversity within virtual teams (Zucca et al., 2021). Each member of a virtual team can bring their unique skill sets and resources to the organization without having to consider a member's status quo within the organization, which may lead to increase productivity (Baradello & Dibble, 2020). When the telecommuter maintains productivity using the flexibility of remote working, the virtual team member increases their loyalty to the organization, which leads to trust between the employer and employee (Kim et al., 2021). The loyal employee acquires a higher level of authority within the organization that may lead to advancement opportunities, increase pay, and continuing education (Wang et al., 2020). The virtual employee's loyalty allows the organization to retain skillful employees and providing career advancements for the loyal employee.

Disadvantages of Telecommuting

Despite the advantages, an organization and employee must recognize the potential downfalls working from home. Disadvantages may come from lack of morale among employees, communication barriers for some employees, unreliable staff, and accountability issues (Gandhi et al., 2021). Employees who do not work efficiently and have low productivity may not have available resources at home, which may result in the employee experiencing a decrease in morale (Avikshit, 2021). The home office may not have the required ergonomic setup, which may cause musculoskeletal issues (White, 2021). In addition to musculoskeletal concerns, mental health conditions may arise from the fast-paced changes of how to work at home during COVID-19 resulting in decrease motivation (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). An employee's morale may affect the individual's ability to communicate.

A teleworker's inability to communicate clearly and accurately may make telecommuting difficult. Some teleworkers have problems effectively communicating because they lack necessary resources, such as internet access or other computer accessories (Tavares et al., 2021). Some research participants felt that telework lacked authenticity when virtually communicating with employers (Nedelcu, 2020). Some research participants believed that project collaborations become hindered in the virtual realm because of potential misunderstanding that can lead to conflict due to no daily face-to-face communications (Zuofa & Ochieng, 2021). If an organization or employee does not invest in their telework, they may meet barriers and may not become a reliable team member.

An unreliable team member may cause the virtual team to fail a given mission. Organizational managers may find difficulty controlling employees when not in the office setting when dealing with team members of different skill levels (van der Lippe & Lippenyi, 2020). Lack of participation and accountability becomes a challenge for the whole team when a team member does not have the proper training (Zuofa & Ochienge, 2021). Accountability becomes an issue when the remote worker must deal with an overwhelming number of emails, increased workload, and unrealistic expectations (Pollock & Hauseman, 2019). Members of a virtual team project stated that they were too busy worrying about other members' accountability and avoided viewing their own accountability efforts (Lohle & Terrell, 2017). Virtual teams' constant engagement can lead to completing given tasks and goals to meet the organization's needs.

Coping Strategies for Telecommuters

The foreseeable future may include more workers providing services from their homes, which will require coping strategies to maintain balance. According to Beck and Hensher (2020), workers have adopted new strategies to reap the benefits of working from home during COVID-19. Setting up an ergonomic-friendly workspace helps to reduce any potential neck, shoulder, and back concerns (Lopez-Leion et al., 2020; White, 2021). Madhwani and Nag (2017) believed that a web-based animated ergonomics training provides a budget-friendly way of bringing awareness into the workplace. During COVID-19's lock down, women coped by learning new hobbies while limiting their exposure to news outlets and cell phones, and the women lived one day at a time (Goyal, 2020). Akanji (2020) referred to the changing the mindset as emotion-focused coping,

which an individual can find relief to cope with stress. Promoting a safe and healthy remote working environment contributes to the employee's overall well-being.

Communication becomes paramount when providing services from a remote location. Training opportunities will help staff to become proficient with various means to communicate, such as video conferencing, phone calls, and emails (Russell et al., 2021). One-on-one meetings between the employee and supervisor assist in building a connection when discusses the workload and expectations (Rysavy & Michalak, 2020). A virtual team's success stands on the ability to change when needed by using daily check-ins to discuss challenges (Bolton, 2020). Effective communication allows the virtual team to work together to make teleworking a success with various interaction channels.

Organizations and employees can take measures to ensure every team member becomes an active participant in meeting objectives. Success comes from overcoming the challenges of building virtual relationships that require leadership to take a proactive stance on reaching out to team members (Baughman, 2019). Social interactions using technology at home with colleagues help build reliable relationships, and the organization may encourage autonomy among competent and connected employees (Schade et al., 2021). Continuing to communicate with coworkers while working from home may assist in boosting the remote worker's confidence in completing daily work tasks.

Qualitative Methodology

Debrah et al. (2021) investigated student teachers' experiences who wished to obtain the teacher's certification during COVID-19. In response to COVID-19, human resources in the education system located in Ghana had to adopt online educational

programs to meet novice teachers' needs to become certified (Debrah et al., 2021). The researchers used a basic qualitative study to assess online teaching in a traditional face-to-face higher learning institution. Purposive sampling provided 200 teacher trainees, and the researchers used the telephone to conduct semistructured interviews for approximately 30 minutes with 180 participants over 4 weeks (Debrah et al., 2021). Debrah et al.'s semistructured interviews identified six themes: institutional support, course development, teaching and learning, course structure, student support, and faculty support. These findings may assist government agencies in implementing policies that will make online learning opportunities a requirement for colleges/universities. The policies will ensure that the universities invest in their advanced information technology infrastructure for professional development while recognizing the hindrances related to the high cost of internet service and mobile data.

In the profession of nursing, Dames (2018) studied recent graduating nurses' ability to survive or thrive when working in similar environments. The interplaying factors related to the novice nurses' ability to thrive consisted of support, protection, work schedules, violence/hostility, life roles, and self-compassion (Dames, 2018). The researcher adhered to a basic qualitative research design and questioned eight newly trained nurses using semistructured interviews (Dames, 2018). Data saturation existed after interviewing the sixth participant, and the inclusion criteria for the study required the participants to have 6 months to 2 years of new working experience as a nurse (Dames, 2018). The three face-to-face, semistructured and iterative interviews lasted from 60-90 minutes for each participant, and the participants validated their transcripts,

emergent themes, and collective themes (Dames, 2018). The researcher found that congruence and self-compassion influenced the participants' ability to manage workplace stimuli (Dames, 2018). Dames implied that leaders in the nursing profession should have a greater understanding of the role of interplay to incorporate transitional programs to assist new graduates in becoming acclimated to the nursing profession to reduce stress and burnout.

West and Greer (2019) used a basic qualitative design to research perceptions of how Black women student affairs administrators view their professional success and personal well-being. The 34 participants were attendees at the African American Women's Summit's professional development workshop, where the researchers held four 60-minute focus group interviews (West & Greer, 2019). The focus groups involved eight to nine participants, who offered their experiences/perspectives on their success and support system (West & Greer, 2019). The semistructured focus group protocol had seven questions, and two of the themes emerging from the focus group were self-care and work-life boundaries (West & Greer, 2019). The participants believed that they should model self-care to influence the same behavior in their students and subordinates by taking days off to focus on themselves and engaging in mental health services (West & Greer, 2019). On off days, the participants listed such activities as journaling, exercising, and traveling to establish work-life boundaries (West & Greer, 2019). An identified goal to obtain work-life balance requires a participant to leave work at work (West & Greer, 2019). Mentoring and technology identify as tools to provide constant support to the Black women working in student affairs (West & Greer, 2019).

Bento and Couto (2021) identified technological progress as one component that contributes to changes in behaviors in a socioecological system over time. The researchers studied the community's response to COVID-19 related to the cultural setting in Paraisopolis, located in Sao Paulo, Brazil (Bento & Couto, 2021). The researchers used a basic qualitative study to analyze cultural practices by using semistructured interviews to explore characteristics, focus, and context of social challenges (Bento & Couto, 2021). Bento and Couto interviewed four leaders within the community to obtain the perspective of how the pandemic will affect the community's socioecological system. The study aimed to understand the community's resilience during COVID-19 and whether the practices will remain postpandemic (Bento & Couto, 2021). The researchers decided to explore the contextual factors within the community because of restrictive social distancing measures in place by the country's government (Bento & Couto, 2021). The community's ability to self-organize without the leaders' input and create new social structures demonstrates the direct response to environmental change (Bento & Couto, 2021). The community's response may assist public health officials with developing new policies with the emergence of innovative responses resulting from COVID-19 (Bento & Couto, 2021).

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a historical review of the telecommuting literature, and the themes related to work and personal lives. The objective of the literature review was to develop a meaningful understanding of the elements associated with work and home lives. I studied research involving telecommuting, work and family roles, work-life

conflict, work-life balance, job satisfaction, productivity, isolation, employee retention, advantages of telecommuting, disadvantages of telecommuting and coping strategies for telecommuters.

Telecommuting often requires an individual to work using advanced information technology from anywhere other than an organization's physical place of business. The technology allows workers to effectively communicate with stakeholders when working remotely (Rohwer et al., 2020). The employee's ability to remain connected with others in the organization may decrease the feelings of isolation, and the company retain talented workers as a result of the constant connectivity (Charalampous et al., 2019; White, 2018). According to Mustajab et al. (2020), teleworking from home can provide autonomy for the employee, which aids the worker in reaching a satisfying goal of work-life balance. The worker faces challenges when attempting to balance multiple roles while telecommuting.

Teleworking from home has the potential to bring conflict to the home worker's life. The lack of boundaries may lead to a conflict between personal and professional lives (Delanoeije et al., 2019). The remote worker can manage dysfunctional thinking and behaviors if they apply a stress-free, flexible working schedule (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Dee et al. (2020) suggested that work-life balance may occur if an individual uses switching between roles into their schedule to meet a particular need. The teleworker's overall well-being posits the employee's ability to handle several things at the same time.

In Chapter 3, I will address the research design and rationale used to guide this study, the role of the researcher, the methodology used to explore the perceptions of human services caseworkers, and issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services versus face-to-face services to clients during a pandemic. The target population for this study was 10–15 human services caseworkers whose employer had required them to provide telework services. The restructured work environment for human services caseworkers required examination because of the entwining of work and family lives when providing services to citizens in need.

In this chapter, I provide information on the research design and the rationale for choosing the generic qualitative method and design to get an understanding of the human services caseworkers' perception of working remotely during COVID-19. I define and explain the role of the researcher. This chapter also includes the methodology, population sample, instrumentation, recruitment process, and participation process. Additionally, I show how the design aligned with the research question. Lastly, the chapter includes the data analysis, ethical procedures, and issues related to trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to address the following research question: What are the human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services to their clients during a pandemic?

The qualitative methodology allowed me to engage with participants to fully understand their perspectives as they expressed their experiences during the interview

process. The central purpose of qualitative research includes studying and learning individuals' practices and interpretations in their social world (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2014; Mohajan, 2018). A virtue of qualitative research involves the deliberate examination of participants' views (Kapoulas & Mitic, 2012; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The qualitative researcher must have knowledge of the previous research on their desired topic and the findings of that research they wish to study (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Researchers use qualitative methodology because of the hierarchical framework made of multiple tiers that connect the participants' various links with things and people (Barnham, 2010; Wong et al., 2018). When the researcher explores participants' experiences in their natural environment, the researcher should approach the study in a basic manner because of the multifaceted themes that may develop (Chenail, 2011; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher will obtain a better understanding of firsthand experiences by using a multifaceted approach to identify a relationship between the themes and the related extracts and the themes that may derive from the extracts.

I used the generic qualitative research to explore and understand personal experiences and shared challenges of telecommuting. A researcher who uses a generic qualitative approach seeks to understand participants' experiences and tries to recognize the meaning behind their interpretation of events using an approach not guided by traditional qualitative methodologies (Liu, 2016; Mihas, 2019). A researcher builds generic qualitative research based on qualitative traditions because the researcher aims to build on previous research (Jaakkola, 2020; Kahlke, 2014). A researcher must reveal their views, the link between their approach and data collection, the data's trustworthiness, and

the lens used for the study to provide transparency of the generic qualitative research (Caelli et al., 2003; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). When the researcher knows some of the themes that may emerge in the study, generic qualitative research becomes an appropriate method to explore the participants' subjective beliefs in their real-world experiences by not using defined qualitative methodologies (Kahlke, 2018; Kennedy, 2016). I determined that a generic qualitative research design was the most suitable qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of human services caseworkers because it offered methodological flexibility to address the research question.

Other qualitative designs were not suitable for this research. I considered using a grounded theory design, a narrative design, and a phenomenological design. Grounded theory involves the analysis of data to provide an explanation of a process, an action, or interaction to discover a theory (Yu et al., 2011). I did not choose a grounded theory design because I did not seek to discover a new theory. In a narrative inquiry, a participant tells a story of their historical experiences to the researcher, and the researcher uses the data collected to understand why (Butina, 2015). I did not choose a narrative inquiry because I did not wish to have the participants engage in storytelling. Researchers apply the phenomenology design when they seek a description of collected individual lived experiences and attempt to reduce those experiences to a simple principle (Mathotaarachchi & Thilakarathna, 2021). I did not choose phenomenology because I did not wish to break down the multiple experiences to one broad phenomenon. A generic qualitative research design fit best with the research question because I did not seek to

uncover a new theory, obtain data from a narrative, or understand the participant's

experiences from a world view.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers play an important role in generating and interpreting the data in

qualitative research. This involves bringing their whole selves to the research process

because the researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative study (Howard &

Hammond, 2018). The researcher also becomes a primary instrument who guides the

interview process by collecting data and analyzing themes without causing harm to the

participants (Karagiozis, 2018; Kristanto & Padmi, 2020). The analysis of the data

identifies themes and subthemes to obtain working codes of the data collected (Locke et

al., 2020). The qualitative scholar plays multiple roles, which include interviewer, data

collector, and theme analyzer.

Qualitative investigators must maintain awareness of personal feelings.

Qualitative researchers have the duty to identify any biases that may ruin the data prior to

conducting interviews with participants (Diefenbach et al., 2009; Zhang & Liu, 2018).

Moser and Korstjen (2018) suggested that the interviewer should hold practice interview

sessions with colleagues to assess the validity of questions. Such practice interviews will

assist in developing questions aimed to prompt the participants to give an in-depth

response. In addition, the researcher may keep a journal that allows transparency, and the

journal works as a tool for continuous analysis (Kahlke, 2014, 2018). Journaling adds

transparency and confirmability throughout a generic qualitative study, which aids in

auditing (Kahlke, 2014, 2018). A researcher may use note taking and bracketing to

identify personal beliefs and exclude their personal perceptions from the study while

referring directly to the data provided by the participants, which will mitigate biases

(Cope, 2014; Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). I served as the researcher and interviewer

during the interview process. I bracketed any preconceived ideas about working remotely

and the challenges of human services caseworkers balancing home and work roles in my

researcher journal. Bracketing allows scholars to engage with the data by separating their

personal experiences from the research topic, which requires feedback from others and

continuously reevaluating the data to choose the proper verbiage to communicate the

findings (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). I bracketed my subjective experiences and

remained open to change my perceived perceptions throughout the research process.

I remained aware of ethical issues that may have occurred throughout the research

process. I offered a recruitment incentive in the form of a $10 gift card from Amazon.

The recruitment incentive was not a coercive method to get individuals to participate in

the research study (Gelinas et al., 2018; Koocher, 1991). As the researcher, I expressed

my gratitude by offering the participant a $10 Amazon eGift Card for taking the time to

contribute to the study (see Anderson & Henry, 2020; Resnik, 2015). The informed

consent included a description of the incentives offered to the participant for partaking in

the study, and as the researcher, I had to ensure that the individual knew that they could

withdraw from the study at any point (Mumford et al., 2021). Incentives may improve the

participation rate in a study, and I addressed the incentive in the informed consent by

providing full details as required by the American Psychological Association's policy

(see Korn & Bram, 1988). I offered the same incentive to all participants in the form of a

$10 Amazon.com eGift Card that was given to the participants after completion of the interview.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this study was human services workers who worked remotely during COVID-19. The sampling strategy for this study included purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. Researchers choose the participants who meet specific criteria when using purposeful sampling (Hamilton & Finley, 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015). The researcher can set requirements for the participants to meet during the selection process, which allows the researcher to select the best participants to answer the research question (Hamilton & Finley, 2020; Suri, 2011). Unlike purposeful sampling, other sampling strategies may not offer flexibility and take too much time (Hamilton & Finley, 2020; Suri, 2011). I chose the participants based on the specified criteria established for this study because I wanted significant and reliable data that could be used to answer the research question. Purposeful sampling helps to expand the pool of participants if the number of participants becomes limited.

This study used an additional purposeful sampling strategy of snowball sampling because too few participants were found using purposeful sampling. In the snowball sampling method, the researcher finds participants by asking others to identify people who meet the criteria established to participate in the study (Naderifar et al., 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015). The snowball method allowed people to share information about the study with other potential participants who might share an interest in the research

(Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Parker et al., 2019). Baltar and Brunet (2012) and Koch et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of advanced information technology and how social media sites may be used to reach participants who might otherwise not contribute to the study due to geographical locations. The participants had at least 6 months of working remotely during the recent pandemic. Interviewing participants who worked for at least 6 months remotely allowed me to gather credible data necessary to complete this study. I chose participants who were U.S. citizens and over the age of 18 because 18 is the legal age of an adult in most states. In order to meet participation criteria for an initial interview, the human services workers had to provide a support service to citizens who need assistance. During the initial contact with potential participants, I asked questions to determine if an individual met the specified criterion. If a potential participant met eligibility requirements, I scheduled the participant for the semistructured interview.

In this study, I stopped collecting data when no new information was obtained during the interview process, and I recruited approximately 12 participants. According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation may occur within the first 12 interviews if no new codes are generated after the 12th participant. Dames (2018) reached saturation after the sixth participant when they interviewed novice nurses about striving to meet competency within work environments. I recruited participants via social media, specifically Facebook. I targeted groups that had the potential to meet the inclusion criteria, such as the National Organization for Human Services and the National Counselor Exam Study Group for Counselors. I chose Facebook as the method of recruiting because it provided potential participants the ability to inform other potential participants about the study

when they shared the information on their timeline or sent it using Messenger. I provided

a link in the posting to REDCap for potential participants to review the informed consent.

If the potential participant selected "I consent," the inclusion questionnaire populated,

which required the individual to provide an email address for communication purposes.

When a participant completed the consent and inclusion questionnaire, a participant ID

was generated. I notified everyone via email to inform them if they had been selected or

not as a participant in the study. If the participant met eligibility requirements for the

study, they received a link to schedule their interview using their participant ID. I

conducted semistructured interviews with 12 participants via Zoom. Data saturation

becomes an appropriate component of qualitative research when no new themes develop

(Liu, 2016; Weller et al., 2018). When information becomes redundant, the sampling

process ends after two or three more interviews occur to obtain confirmation of data

saturation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The final number of participants was dependent on

data saturation.

Instrumentation

I used Rubin and Rubin (2012) as a guide to construct the interview protocol. The

interview protocol contained semistructured questions. I designed a questionnaire, which

included nine open-ended main questions that allowed the participants to provide raw

data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The semistructured interviews assisted in gaining an in-

depth understanding of the human services worker working remotely during COVID-19.

The use of semistructured interviews offered a deeper dialogic discussion between the

interviewer and participant (Husband, 2020). Developing the questions from the literature

ensured that the content was trustworthy. I used open-ended questions as the foundation to guide the interview process using questions that were developed and grounded on a review of the literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Moser and Korstjens (2018) suggested using simple, conversational, open-ended questions to allow the participants to reflect on their personal experiences. Semistructured interviews allowed me the flexibility to encourage the participants to elaborate on their responses to obtain a greater understanding of their experiences.

The semistructured interview questions were reviewed by an expert panel to validate my interview protocol. The panel consisted of three professionals with expertise in the human services profession. The experts were asked to review and provide suggestions on the interview questions via email. Panelist 1 had served in research for more than 10 years and held a PhD in Public Health, Epidemiology. Panelist 1 felt that my questions were direct and suggested that I might want to add isolation/felt not engaged to the questions. Panelist 2, a nonprofit journalist with over 40 years of experience, held a PhD in journalism and stated that there were no issues with the content because it was comprehensive in nature. Panelist 3 held a PhD in Human and Social Services and was considered an expert in qualitative research analysis; Panelist 3 felt that the questions aligned with the themes and would generate a good amount of information from the participants. The third panelist reminded me that I could always create follow-up questions during the interviews. I incorporated all feedback given by the expert panel on questions to ask the research participants.

Each participant had to provide a valid email address to participate in the study, and the participants provided consent by selecting "I consent." The consent for each participant was electronic. Once the participant consented, I conducted each interview in the privacy of my office in my home, and I asked each participant to choose a private setting for the interview. Zoom was the instrument for recording the interview due to the safety measures of COVID-19. To ensure confidentiality, I conducted interviews via Zoom when home alone, and I recorded the audio of the interview only. Video recordings of the participants had the potential to compromise their confidentiality, and not recording participants visually helped to mitigate the risks of identifying a participant (Glegg, 2018). The recording of interviews occurred after the participants gave consent.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The Zoom application recorded the interviews using voice only, and the participant had the capability to connect to Zoom to complete the interview process. The qualitative research standard uses the traditional face-to-face interview method to collect data; however, internet video has become a new phenomenon (Weller, 2017). According to Hamilton et al. (2017), live video can provide the same precision and fact-finding as face-to-face interviews. The recording of the semistructured interviews started once the call began and lasted until the disconnection of the call. I took notes as the participant responded to ensure concise and accurate information from the capturing of the participant's perspective on the research topic. The data collection required my computer to conduct the Zoom calls and note-taking material to note the important responses discussed during the interview.

If the sampling strategy yields too few participants before obtaining saturation, I will distribute the flyer using other social media outlets, such as LinkedIn and Twitter. The recruitment efforts continued to occur using online recruitment strategies. I used the snowball sampling by reaching out to participants and asking them to solicit potential participants who meet eligibility criteria. The snowball sampling strategy and the incentive for participating in this study decreased the need to seek additional recruitment.

At the conclusion of each interview, I asked if the participant had any questions regarding the study. I reminded them that their participation is voluntary, and they may withdraw from the study at any time during the research process. I thanked the participants for participating in the study. I explained the concept of the study and provided contact information to the participant for any questions they may have later. I uploaded the recorded interviews to Otter for transcription. I informed the participant that they will receive a copy of the transcript for their records.

Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed my data following Saldana's (2016) thematic analysis, which required me to identify codes in the form of sentences and grasp the participants' interpretation of what they say. The coding strategies have cycles; the first cycle involved in vivo coding that allowed attuning to the participants' perception and categorizing themes based on meaning of the phrases or sentences (Saldana, 2016). The second cycle coding method involved examining the initial codes and assigning the codes to a more concise theme (Saldana, 2016). First, I coded the participants' statement. Second, I made a list of initial codes and tally the number of times the code appears. Third, I broke down the codes into

categories. Fourth, I evaluated the categories to create the themes. Lastly, I used the themes to answer the research question. Examination of the interviews, notes, and journaling entries was the beginning of the data analysis process. According to Jeffries et al. (2017), handling raw data requires coding based on the reviewed literature. Based on my research question, each code required an assessment that aligns with the research topic and the objective of this study. Thematic analysis allowed me to use open coding to identify themes and subthemes (Saldana, 2016). I uploaded the transcripts to Quirkos to assist me in organizing the codes, and I organized the categories and themes. While applying Saldana's (2016) suggestions, I color coded the different themes, using relevant data related to my research question.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, rigor, and quality are terms used in qualitative research to describe validity. The trustworthiness of qualitative research requires credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that validity and reliability relates to the centralization of trustworthiness. Researchers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmation to create trustworthiness in a study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Qualitative research requires appropriate strategies to maintain trustworthiness and credibility.

Credibility

Credibility is needed to guarantee rigor in qualitative studies. Internal validity in quantitative research equals credibility in qualitative research, which relates to trusting

the value of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Triangulation provides credibility to a qualitative study by using multiple data sources, including using data from different types of participants, using other researchers to assist in coding, and variations in data collection (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The flexibility of the generic qualitative method allows the researcher to keep a reflexive journal, which can add to the rigor of this study. I used open-ended questions and member checking as triangulation strategies to establish credibility. Also, I used member checking to explain my interpretations of the participants' experiences.

Transferability

Validation of the research requires transferability. Transferability requires the researcher to describe the participants' behaviors and experiences within their context to allow readers to have a meaningful understanding of the participants' experience and present the process in a manner that allows other researchers to replicate the design or findings in another setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To establish transferability, the researcher must convey the phenomenon to the participants and ensure the participants understand the studied phenomenon; the researcher must apply their expertise in recruiting and in the sample selection (Forero et al., 2018). Transferability requires effective communication among the researchers and the participants during the research process. I provided detailed information of my interactions with the participants and my data collection and analysis steps that will allow readers to easily translate what occurred during the study. Providing supportive information will permit other researchers to

duplicate the research's methodology, sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis.

Dependability

Qualitative research must have consistency, which is related to dependability. Dependability refers to the ability of others to follow the research process by reviewing the documentation (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), the audit trail will provide the foundation to ensure the interpretation of the data demonstrates transparency throughout the research process. If others can trace the process and the steps were logical, the researcher has established dependability (Munn et al., 2014). Dependability demonstrates one of the key factors to trustworthiness because of consistency and replication. To ensure dependability, I clearly explained my research process and accurately support the research with the use of audit trails to ensure dependability. I crossed reference and systemize the raw data, transcripts, and the notes in my reflexive journal to create a clear audit trail.

Confirmability

The researcher must confirm their findings, which relates to confirmability. Confirmability deals with other researchers' ability to verify and validate the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher must have an awareness of any potential ethical dilemma or bias that may influence the confirmability of the study, and the aid of a reflexive journal assists in keeping a clear picture of the research framework and decision-making process (Kahlke, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I remained neutral

during the research process will help me to continuously reflect on using audit trails,

bracketing, and reflexivity to ensure the correct use of confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

This research conformed to ethical considerations to ensure protection and

compliance when working with human participants. Before interacting with any potential

participant, I obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval to start any segment of

this study. The participants had to acknowledge informed consent that addresses

voluntary participation, understand the rationale behind the study and data collection, and

identify associated risks and benefits of participating in the study. I also provided

information about the financial incentive, which is a $10 Amazon gift card before any

interviews may take place. The participants had awareness that they may withdraw from

the study at any time via email. I emailed the consent form to the participant for their

required signature, and the potential participant returned the signed consent form via

email. Upon the distribution of confidentiality forms, I became accountable for all

information provided by the participants. I stored the participants' information in a

designated password protected file on my computer. I stored handwritten source

documents in a passcode-protected safe in my home. The destruction of the protected

files and documents will occur in accordance with Louisiana state law using a

professional shredding company 3 years after the completion of the study.

Summary

This chapter outlined a descriptive overview of the research purpose,

methodology, procedures, and guidelines for the proposed generic qualitative research.

Identification of the target population, participant criteria, selection, and sampling strategy occurred in this chapter. This research used semistructured, open-ended interview questions to explore the participants' experiences working remotely during COVID-19. These experiences assisted in providing information on their professional and personal lives merging. Chapter 4 includes a thorough discussion of the participants' experiences and demographics, the data collection, the data analysis, the evidence of trustworthiness, and the results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with balancing work and life roles during COVID-19 while working at home. I sought to identify the common themes associated with caseworkers attempting to balance work and home responsibilities simultaneously. Additionally, the goal was to contribute to the literature on how caseworkers perceived working from home during a pandemic. Therefore, I completed this study to answer the following question: What are the human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services to their clients during a pandemic?

In this chapter, I present a comprehensive account of the interview settings, the data collection, and the data analysis. Also in this chapter, I present the evidence of trustworthiness by describing what occurred to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as mentioned in Chapter 3. Lastly, I present the overall results of the study, ending with a summary of the participants' responses on their experiences working remotely during the pandemic.

Settings

I completed this study during the second year of COVID-19, which was recognized as a global pandemic in 2020. The public relied on technology to maintain social interactions. My initial research design was to conduct face-to-face interviews. The traditional approach to conduct interviews had to transition to virtual interviews conducted via Zoom due to the high risk associated with contracting COVID-19. I

conducted all research within the confines of my home remotely using Zoom. To maximize precautions, the Zoom videotelephony program ensured all participants' safety as well as my own safety. All research activities were conducted remotely, and this study did not do have any in-person contact. The participant and I communicated by sending emails and Zoom video communications.

On March 11, 2022, Walden's IRB gave approval for me to start collecting data, and recruitment commenced on March 26, 2022. Facebook and LinkedIn social media outlets were the instruments used to recruit participants. The participants were required to access the internet to view the social media posts, which included a link to the inclusion questionnaire. The link allowed participants to access the inclusion questionnaire and the consent form. After completing the consent form, the participant provided an email address to communicate with me, which allowed the participants to schedule their preferred date and time for the interview to take place.

The first virtual interview occurred on April 15, 2022, and the last was held on July 23, 2022. The interviews were conducted individually within the Zoom platform, which required the participant to have access to internet services to take part in the study. There were no technical concerns with the participants using the Zoom platform.

Demographics

The population for this study was human services caseworkers working remotely during COVID-19. No demographic data were collected for this study. All participants met the inclusion criteria for the study. The inclusion criteria consisted of the following: (a) at least 18 years old, (b) worked remotely for a minimum of 6 months during COVID-

19, (c) worked and maintained household/family responsibilities simultaneously while working remotely, (d) worked within the human services profession, and (e) resided within the United States. The participant must have had the capability to participate remotely using Zoom in addition to meeting the inclusion criteria.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from Walden's IRB to conduct research, I initiated my approved research plan in accordance with the IRB-approved methods. I recruited participants by making social media posts on Facebook and LinkedIn using my personal pages. Additionally, I posted to professional groups on Facebook that were applicable to the population I was requesting to interview, which was human services caseworkers.

When the participants completed the inclusion questionnaire and consent form, I responded with an email invitation to schedule an interview via Zoom. I had 19 participants express interest in participating in the study, with 12 responding agreeably to the invitation. I scheduled the appropriate date and time for the 12 interviews via Zoom. After I completed the interviews using Zoom, the audio recorded interviews were downloaded to a locked file on my computer.

The successful completion of each interview using Zoom lasted an average of 15 minutes. The interview started with a scripted introduction, which included an overview of the research process. Next, the nine open-ended interview questions were asked along with probing questions to obtain clarification and member checking. After completing each interview, I uploaded audio recordings of the interview to Otter.ai for converting the

audio recordings into a written transcription. The transcripts were downloaded to a locked file on my computer.

Data Analysis

The thematic examination started when I converted the audio files into written verbatim transcripts. In vivo coding was used during the first listening to characterize and reserve the participants' perspectives, as suggested by Saldana (2016). I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy as I listened to the audio files. Otter.ai allowed me to meticulously examine the transcripts with the highlighting of the words as they were spoken. The program allowed me to edit and correct any errors. I converted the Otter.ai transcripts to Microsoft Word documents, which allowed me to take notes and highlight specific statements. During the first cycle of coding, I read the transcripts multiple times to ensure that I identified and color-coded specific statements, and I wrote memos related to the participants' responses and reread the memos I wrote during the interviews. The memos included my thoughts and understandings of the participants' statements to ensure that I captured the participants' initial interpretations during the interview by asking probing questions, which assisted in avoiding assumptions and biases.

Quirkos allowed me to create a project by importing the participants' transcripts. I uploaded the participants' narratives to retain the original meanings and associations intended by the participants. Then, I created categories using colored bubbles from the participants' statements. The categories were separated and grouped together based on similarities from the participants' responses and codes. Similar statements among participants included, "I'm very comfortable with my communication tools," and "I

missed the interaction with other employees." The next step included coding the data, which caused the bubbles to increase in size as I added each participants' similar response. I discovered 58 codes, and some examples of the derived codes included video conference, phone, workload, work schedule, skills, interaction, challenges, experiences, and safety. Lastly, I was able to explore the data after coding all the transcripts. The content analysis generated 12 categories, and the categories identified were communication tools, comfort of using communication tools, areas of independence, autonomy level, remote work competency, competency impact on role, challenges, positive experience, level of productivity, reasons for change in productivity, satisfaction, and future with organization.

I was able to combine related words and phrases from the transcripts during the coding process. Then, I reviewed and grouped all of the data into categories using the similar words and statements provided by the participants. I used the data in the categories and identified the emerging themes with a detailed review, which allowed me to answer the research question. For instance, communication tools, comfortability with communication tools, aspects of autonomy, level of autonomy, satisfaction, challenges, positive experience, and remote working competency are examples of identified categories.

Development of Themes

I identified and determined that there were seven themes from the interviews. Theme 1, communication tools improved services to clients in telework, was created from the tools provided by the organization. Theme 2, autonomy affected remote work

role transitioning, resulting from the participants' ability to determine their responsibilities related to work. Theme 3, technology competence thrived during pandemic, originated from the human services caseworkers' ability to serve their population from home. Theme 4, challenges and positives occurred while teleworking, was developed from experiences encountered by human services caseworkers. Theme 5, workplace productivity excelled with telecommuting, came from the participants' level of productivity related to telecommuting and reasons for their productivity level. Theme 6, satisfaction and achievements enhanced during pandemic, includes the participants' personal satisfaction and personal accomplishments while working remotely. Theme 7, organizational commitment emerged from telework, includes the participants' future with their organization.

<div align="center">

Evidence of Trustworthiness

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Credibility

Credibility requires transparency and engagement. Transcripts of the interviews were typed verbatim and sent as a courtesy to the participant via email, which provided transparency. I acquired the participants' views by asking open-ended questions and taking notes during the interview process, which assisted the participants in providing rich and complex responses that offered triangulation to establish credibility. Further credibility was established with member checking during the interview by asking clarifying questions and summarizing and paraphrasing the participants' responses to ensure that the data collected represented the participants' truth.

Transferability

I maintained a detailed audit trail during data collection and data analysis to achieve transferability. Additionally, the rich data were derived from the participants' responses from the semistructured interviews, which may transfer to other professions working remotely during the pandemic. The methodical qualitative research strategies may assist other researchers in replicating this study to advance current practices and policies related to teleworking. Further, transferability in this study offers an opportunity within other occupations that require working remotely to gain insight on the experiences of telecommuters and the outcomes of working remotely.

Dependability

The steps approved by IRB were adhered to in completing this study, and I followed the detailed description of the steps outlined in the data collection and data analysis sections in Chapter 3, which provides a complete guide for other researchers. All participants met the inclusion criteria of working remotely for a minimum of 6 months during the pandemic. All interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai, and I documented an audit trail to include all of my works in coordinating this study. Additionally, the audit trail included the transcriptions with the interview protocol and the probing questions along with the informed consent.

Confirmability

I used the participants' exact verbiage when analyzing and coding the data to ensure confirmability instead of using my own perspectives to describe the participants' views. I self-reflected throughout this study to eliminate any personal beliefs and/or

assumptions by bracketing in my journal to show that the participants created the findings, rather than me as the researcher. I sought expert advice from my committee members, which allowed me to remain neutral.

Results

The research question for this study was the following: What are the human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services to their clients during a pandemic? To attempt to answer the research question and to gain insight into the participants' experiences and perceptions of working remotely, I asked participants questions during a semistructured interview. The participants' responses to the interview questions were grouped into the following themes:

1. Communication tools improved services to clients in telework.

2. Autonomy affected remote work role transitioning.

3. Technology competence thrived during pandemic.

4. Challenges and positives occurred while teleworking.

5. Productivity excelled with telecommuting.

6. Satisfaction and achievements enhanced during pandemic.

7. Organizational commitment emerged from telework.

Communication Tools Improved Services to Clients in Telework

The human services caseworkers used a range of communication tools, which included video conferencing, emails, telephone calls, messaging systems, Google Voice, and social media platforms. The tools for video conferencing were Zoom, Google Meet,

Skype, and Teams. One participant used the social media platform Facebook. The

participants were largely comfortable handling the communication tools available for

their remote work. Participant 18 said,

> Oh, very comfortable. In the beginning of the pandemic, I will say that I struggled
>
> using some of the different communication tools that that we're not using. But as
>
> time has gone on, I find myself becoming very comfortable with them and
>
> navigating them as well.

In the beginning, there were some human services caseworkers who only felt comfortable

to some degree using the communication tools provided by their organization and cited

some challenges handling the communication tools that they were not familiar.

Participant 16 said,

> Well, everything except a soft phone that was new to me, because I never heard of
>
> that before because every job I had was always within the organization with
>
> which what I mean by that was inside the building a hospital that I work in, so the
>
> soft phone was new to me.

Participant 2 said,

> I did have to reach out via email a lot. Sometimes communication is lost when
>
> you use email. So, once I realized that sometimes things weren't coming through
>
> clearly or were very wordy in emails, I came up with other solutions, like
>
> establishing a Google Voice number. That way, parents could contact me via
>
> Google Voice and it rang to my cell phone without me having to give out any
>
> personal contact information. So that worked out a little bit better as well.

All participants were familiar or became familiar with the communication tools provided by their organization, and they became comfortable with navigating the necessary tools to provide services to the population they served while working remotely.

Autonomy Affected Remote Work Role Transitioning

The participants offered various aspects of autonomy while working remotely. The control of their work schedule was an identifiable characteristic of autonomy. Participant 4 stated, "So, basically, I have control on my schedule." Some teleworkers had full autonomy working remotely. Participant 8 said, "I have full autonomy at work. And that autonomy just followed me at home also." Participant 18 expressed,

> I had full autonomy, I could meet with my students when I wanted to, as long as I wanted to. They didn't give us anything to say, hey, you have to do this or you have to do that. So, I have full autonomy over when we met, how long we met, as well as the material that we covered as well.

Some remote workers did not have autonomy. Participant 1 shared,

> Like um, so, the office open, if we were going into the office, it opened up at 8:30. So, we had to be wokened up at 8:30. Um, it closes at five, being stuck at home or being at home.

Caseworkers' level of autonomy varied across organizations based on work schedule, place of work, and workload, and the participants experienced various levels of autonomy, which included full, limited, or none.

Technology Competence Thrived During Pandemic

Caseworkers' teleworking competency level varied among participants when they were sent home to work remotely during the onset of COVID-19. Participant 11 made a comment about less experienced coworkers,

> But then, here you have all these other people who just been, you know, providing service in less than five years. And it was a learning curve. It was definitely, they were caught by surprise. Let's put it that way.

Participant 17 stated, "I mean, I'm pretty confident in what I do." Participant 9 explained, "So, I feel like my level, my competency, it pretty much allows me to continue to be productive and proactive as a caseworker and to continue to provide the services that are needed." Participant 8 said,

> Because with my job, I'm still do the same thing. Regardless, if I'm in the building, or if I'm working from home, it, the responsibilities and the job doesn't change, I still have to do the same thing, regardless, if I'm at the building or if I'm telework.

Participant 13 verbalized,

> At least when working remotely, I have all my stuff with me. I don't have to search for it. I know it's there. And I think my competency has gotten better improve, because I know where everything is on this desk.

The participants were competent with their skill levels of working remotely, and they did not feel their role as a human services caseworker was hindered because they possessed the necessary skills and had the required tools to complete their jobs remotely.

Challenges and Positives Occurred While Teleworking

Some participants faced challenges while attempting to complete their tasks remotely. Participant 1 said,

So, I mean, what a telephone people just put you on a block list and it's hard to get it, it was hard to actually get the job done during COVID. Like to investigate abuse and neglect because you forget something else. And a client use drugs, and we ask them to go for a drug screen. Um and, then, they never go or when we call they blow us off. Because we're having to call over the telephone. It was just a little harder of getting things we needed done to investigate the abuse or neglect completed by the client.

Participant 9 stated,

Some of the challenges that I experienced was, I guess, so self motivation, far as, trying to deal with working from home and changing my work area space. And try trying to maintain, just, my stress levels, and then not having it affect my productivity. But also just trying to find that self motivation to find a different routine and get readjusted, it was kind of a challenge.

Participant 1 stated,

So, I think that was, that was a part of it where the WiFi was dropping. I wasn't able to use Team or Zoom. And, I had to basically put trust in my workers that they did what they were supposed to do. I wasn't able to physically see the paperwork at some time.

Participant 11 said,

You know, some, it may not be my internet services, but another individuals'

internet service, and you like, I really need to get this information to that person.

But then their internet is down. You know, or next time my internet's down. So,

it's like, wow, you know, and then at one time, when, when we tried to get certain

funding information, which getting those things out are extremely important.

Everyone is like, Man, am I getting the correct stuff, and then you get things late,

because the internet is down. So, the internet dependency and the lack thereof,

either, you know, whether it was lost, either by myself or coworkers, that made

you really feel isolated. You know, you don't, there again, you don't even get the

one-on-one time with your coworkers as well.

Some of the participants' challenges included internet connectivity, communication,

interpersonal interaction, and switching from the organization's office to remote working.

Despite the challenges given by some participants, they found the positive

experiences outweighed the challenges they encountered. Participant 13 said,

Um, I enjoyed working remotely during the pandemic, I think I would prefer it

not be the pandemic to do the work because we weren't able to move around as

much as we should have. But I think working with remotely really help because

you think you think of innovative, innovative ways to get the job done.

Participant 15 stated,

Having the flexibility of either coming into the office or staying home was was

wonderful, because there were those days that maybe I was coughing or not

feeling well, and I didn't have COVID but just for the safety of others and

everybody's peace of mind. Being able to work from home is a great thing. I wouldn't change anything.

Participant 13 shared,

I can get up in the middle of the night and do it. Or, I can get most of the time I'm working and working. And I don't have to go home and cook or anything because I'm already at home, I can just, just get up and do my cooking and then come back to my work. And I think I did more hours than I ever did.

Participants shared their positive experiences of working remotely. Positive experiences included the flexibility that allowed them to switch between home and work roles, finding new innovative ways of helping the population they serve, and having a choice of where they would like to work, home or organization's facility.

Productivity Excelled With Telecommuting

Productivity among remote human services caseworkers varied depending on the services provided by the organization. Participant 17 stated,

I believe it was the flexibility. Because from what you just stated, the ability to those. Where there was idle time, I would actually just be comfortable to get on the computer and work on things. And I do feel like that flexibility gave me the ability to do more.

Participant 17 also added, "I was very satisfied. I love it. I feel like personally, I was more productive." Participant 8 stated,

Actually, I am more productive at work. I mean, I'm sorry, I am more productive at home than I am at work. Because when I'm at work, there are times when I'm

working, and I look up. It's almost one o'clock, and I haven't even moved from my

spot. I'm still working.

Some participants experienced an increase in their productivity, but there were some

teleworkers who experienced reduced productivity.

Participants who experienced reduced productivity stated the comfort of home

were contributing factors that lead to decrease in productivity. Participant 8 said, "The

only thing that I can think of that happened is when my computer couldn't connect to the

web to get connected to all the stuff that I needed to actually do my job." Participant 1

said,

Um, the the issue was, people weren't picking up their phone because as a

supervisor, I was working from home, but the workers were working from home

as well. And you know, even though we supposed to be up from 8:30 to 5:00

people are cooking, or people are are sleeping, and people are not answering their

phone. And, so, when we have a response times of zero to two hours. And, you

got to get from your house to the people house, or the client's house, where law

enforcement is requesting us within two hours. But, it's taking me one hour to

even get in touch with you. I think that was our biggest issue.

Participant 13 said,

Oh, yeah. It was hard because my, my family, they won't stay out of the room

when I'm trying to get things done. Animals kept coming around and barking and

making noises and just keep on I mean, it's just, it's horrible. That's the only thing

that, I had only problem I had other than that, and it still they still haven't learned.

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Participant 11 shared,

> One of the things that hit us hard with the level of productivity. There, again,
> everything was slowed down, which made, clerical personnel was kind of absent.
> And it all affected productivity, if we set a goal, and we threw tasks out, you
> know, the administrators say, we need to get this goal done, we got to get X
> amount of clients trained this and a third. Normally, you have a lot of clerical
> help. And, you have a lot of assistance from office personnel, that, you did not
> have a lot of administrative assistance, that you did not. So, therefore, those things
> fell back home on us.

Participants who found distraction and technical challenges in the home noticed that their productivity levels decreased. One participant's productivity decreased because they had additional tasks assigned to them because they did not have supportive staff.

Satisfaction and Achievements Enhanced During Pandemic

Overall, the participants were satisfied with their job performance, and some highlighted what they believed to be a personal achievement. Participant 1 stated, "I learned a lot. So I learned, you know, you know, made it a better skill of multitasking." Participant 9 said, "Overall had a really good experience working from home." Participant 13 said, "Good because I had I was able to move at my own pace and be at home. And I think sometimes I, I don't know if I want to go back. It was so good." Participant 16 said,

I think it was the best and the safest thing for a job to do is to let somebody work

telework because of the pandemic, and my number one reason like I say, I am a

parent, and a grandparent and safety. Safety was my main goal.

Participant 17 stated, "I was very satisfied. I love it. I feel like personally, I was more

productive as a teleworker. So, I, I'd rather enjoyed it." The caseworkers found

satisfaction with their organizations because they were able to provide services remotely

in the safety of their own home.

Organizational Commitment Emerged From Telework

Working remotely during the pandemic led to participants thinking about their

future in the workforce. Participant 19 stated,

I enjoy coming in the office. At least sometimes, you get to see people and

everything like this. So, as far as like being. If they were to make it all telework,

where I couldn't come in the office at all, I probably would have a problem with

that. But I have the flexibility of either working from home or coming in the

office.

Participant 9 said, "It makes me have confidence in an organization that I work with that

they do look after their employees so for me, it's that's an organization I still love to

continue to work with in the future." Participant 11 said,

Well, I'll continue working at the same location, well, the same organization.

Many changes have been implemented since then. I mean, like I told you, before,

there was a learning curve. And they put in place a lot of, a lot of things.

Participant 17 shared,

In the future, I may look for positions that would enable me to telework more. I think that would be the only influence that could possibly have on my future within the organization.

Participants acknowledged their satisfaction and with how their organization handled their working during the pandemic. Many of the participants look forward to continuing working remotely with their organization.

How Themes Answer the Research Question

The seven themes I identified through the interviews of human services caseworkers were communication tools allowed caseworkers to serve their respective population, level of autonomy was instrumental in transitioning between roles, competency levels were significant in completing occupational tasks, challenges and positives were identified while performing services remotely, working from home affected productivity, teleworking influenced caseworkers' job satisfaction and achievements, and appreciation/genuine concern leads to commitment to organization. The caseworkers' experiences with the comfortability of communication tools answered the research question because the participants did not experience conflict with work-life balance because they were able to master the skills that were needed to properly implement the tools required to assist clients while working in their remote setting. Many participants experienced flexibility of work, which answers the research question because the participants were able to alternate between work and home roles, which helped established a work-life balance. Telework impact on human services were not hindered because the caseworkers work remotely, and the research question was answered because

they were able to provide the same services and give the same resources while working from home. The challenges and positives of working remotely answered the research question because the participants were able to overcome challenges by finding ways to meet their clients' needs and maintaining their home and family roles when faced with technical challenges and other challenges. The participants found in many cases their productivity in the remote workplace remained the same or increased because they had less distractions in the home environment while working at home during the pandemic, which answers the research questions. Participants found job satisfaction within their organization because they were able to meet personal achievements of learning new skills to assist serving their targeted population during the pandemic, which answers the research question. Lastly, many participants are committed to their organization because they were allowed to work at home during a time when their lives were at risk of contracting coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2, and the caseworkers were able to accommodate their organization and continue with family roles simultaneous in their homes, which answers the research question. The interpretation of the results will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Summary

Chapter 4 reviewed the setting, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Seven major themes were drawn from the participants' responses to address the research question. The themes were directly related to the human services caseworkers balancing their home and work lives while simultaneously working at home during the pandemic.

The first theme involved the communication tools the participants used to provide services to their respective population. The primary tools used for communication was video conferencing platforms, telephones, and emails. Second, the flexibility of work came about, which included workload, place of work, and work schedule. The caseworkers described their level of autonomy related to their work, and the level of autonomy was diverse among the participants. Third, the theme addresses the caseworkers' competency level on completing their tasks within human services. All the participants felt that they were competent in providing services to their respective populations. Fourth theme that was generated was challenges and positives of working remotely. Despite the challenges experienced by the participants, they found a positive aspect of working remotely. For instance, many participants discussed problems with internet connectivity, but they found themselves more productive because they were able to do their work later if needed. Remote workplace productivity was the fifth theme, which related to the participants' productivity while in the remote setting. Most of the participants stated they had increased productivity because they were in their home with access to the available tools to meet the needs of the people they serve and the organization.

The participants telework efforts seems to impact how they feel about themselves as teleworkers. Based on their responses, the human services caseworkers found personal achievements related to their experiences of working remotely, which ties into the sixth theme, job satisfaction and achievements. The last theme related to the participants'

commitment to organization, which provided insight into the participants' future related to them continuing to provide services within their organization.

In Chapter 5, I will provide further interpretation of the findings, discuss limitations of the study, and offer recommendations to further the research on human services caseworkers working remotely during the pandemic. Also, I discuss implications of the results for positive social change and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences of working remotely during COVID-19. The data collected during this research may help human services caseworkers who telecommute in the future by providing insight on communication, challenges, and productivity within the home setting. The insight provided by participants may alleviate some of the challenges experienced during the onset of the pandemic.

The research question that guided this study was the following: What are the human services caseworkers' experiences with work-life balance while providing remote services to their clients during a pandemic? The main themes that emerged from this study included communication tools improved services to clients in telework, autonomy affected remote work role transitioning, technology competency thrived during pandemic, challenges and positives occurred while teleworking, productivity excelled with telecommuting, satisfaction and achievements enhanced during pandemic, and organizational commitment emerged from telework. In this chapter, I will present my interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion to this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Theme 1: Communication Tools Improved Services to Clients in Telework

The findings of this study aligned with the review of existing literature presented in Chapter 2, specifically in indicating that teleworkers used various methods to

communicate. The caseworkers had the required knowledge to effectively use the computer, software, and required information technology infrastructure to communicate with coworkers and their clients. According to Allen et al. (2015), employees must have the knowledge and the required advanced technology infrastructure in the remote setting to telework successfully. The multiple platforms used for effective communication allowed the caseworkers to feel connected to their organization despite working from home. When teleworkers employ strong communication skills, they will not feel disconnected or isolated from their organization (Hoffman et al., 2020). The communication tools provided by the caseworkers' organization made the transition to working remotely possible.

I found that the comfortability of communication tools theme aligned with the adaptive structuration theory. The organizations were able to change their service programs during the onset of the pandemic because of their willingness to implement technology into their mission. Incorporating advanced technology into the daily mission of the organization leads to communication changes within the organization (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The theme addresses the user's knowledge and skillset when interacting with their clients using the technology to communicate. DeSanctis and Poole (1994) believed that the telecommuter's productivity leads to new social systems when technology, environment, and workload become merged. The adaptive structuration theory aligns with this theme because the human services caseworkers were able to engage in social interactions with their colleagues and clients using advanced technologies.

Theme 2: Autonomy Affected Remote Work Role Transitioning

My findings aligned with the research literature reviewed in Chapter 2 in that advanced technology provided flexibility in the participants' work schedule and home lives. Several participants stated that they were able to complete household chores during work hours, which provided them with more leisure time after work. Working remotely strengthens the teleworker's personal and professional lives on account of the flexibility to move between work and home roles (Mirela, 2020). Flexibility of the work schedule allowed the remote workers to disperse their work throughout the day, week, or both. A flexible work schedule offers the telecommuter an increased opportunity to balance their work-life roles (Gimenez-Nadal, 2020; Stadtlander et al., 2017). Participants expressed that the flexibility of teleworking increased their satisfaction with familial roles, specifically naming no commute and flexible work schedules.

The flexibility of work theme aligns with the adaptive structuration theory in that participants found satisfaction with completing their household responsibilities before they ended their work schedule. Some participants transitioned between work and home roles by helping their children with homework and/or cooking dinner prior to completing their tour of duty. Participants completing household responsibilities during their work tour stands on DeSanctis and Poole's (1994) definition of unfaithful appropriations; unfaithful appropriations refer to an unintended use of technology. The remote workers were a resource for their organization because of their willingness to dedicate their knowledge to the organization's mission using advanced technology while completing other tasks simultaneously. When a remote worker goes against the constructed schedule

implemented by their organization and the tasks are completed within the designated time given by the organization, an unfaithful appropriation occurs because it goes against the spirit of the structure (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The human services caseworkers provided a new social structure within their organization by applying new rules or resources that allowed them to maintain or exceed their productivity while completing household responsibilities simultaneously.

Theme 3: Technology Competence Thrived During Pandemic

The findings of the telework impact on human services theme align with the literature in Chapter 2 because the caseworkers were able to connect with their colleagues and clients using advanced technology. The human services caseworkers played a proactive role in providing services to the specific population they served as they identified with being a part of their organization, and they possessed the skills and resources to fulfill their organizations' obligational duties while teleworking in their homes. Employees must have the necessary skills and the required technology tools to fulfill their occupational tasks while working remotely (Hoffman et al., 2020). The caseworkers were able to use self-managing skills and create the optimal working conditions in their remote setting to meet their clients' needs. Favorable working conditions and leadership encouragement lead to improved productivity (Palvalin, 2019). The teleworkers were able to create a remote working environment that was conducive to the services they provided using their technological skills, which had a positive effect on human services.

This theme aligns with the adaptive structuration theory in that human services caseworkers knew how to implement the advanced technology tools to provide services to clients. The connection between the work environment and the advanced technology tools employed by the caseworkers allowed exploration into the perceptions of the human services professionals. DeSanctis and Poole (1994) created the adaptive structuration theory to examine the changes that occur within an organization related to the decisions made by employees and their perceptions of connecting the work environment and advanced technology. The caseworkers were able to facilitate change in how they provided services to their populations because of their ability to apply the technology to the organizations' mission. The adaptive structuration theory analyzes the types of structures (new processes) that occur when people interact with advanced technologies (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The theory allowed me to consider the caseworkers' knowledge and skillset when using technology to interact with coworkers and clients.

Theme 4: Challenges and Positives Occurred While Teleworking

The theme of challenges and positives of working remotely aligned with the literature review in Chapter 2 because participants identified challenges and positives related to working from home. A few participants acquired additional resources to assist with serving their population because the workload increased during the pandemic, and some caseworkers felt that the workload was not realistic. Pollock and Hauseman (2019) wrote about accountability becoming a problem when the workload increases and presentation of unrealistic expectations occurs. Most of the participants practiced discipline and incorporated a schedule during the work hours to prevent conflict between

their work and home roles. Burnout from an individual's professional life can become a concern when they become mentally and physically drained due to chronic stress (Kim & Wang, 2018). Stressful work situations can become a challenge when working from home.

A few participants cited some challenges, but all participants found benefits of working remotely. Some participants were able to attend medical and other appointments during work hours and complete the remainder of their hours when they returned home. Having the ability to adjust the work schedule to fit personal circumstances aids in reducing stress related to work (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Participants stopped working briefly to aid to their kids with school work and return to their work duties immediately after helping their kids. Transitioning between the work role and family roles when needed encourages work-life balance (Dee et al., 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019). Participants found that switching between roles was a win-win situation because they could address issues immediately.

The theme of challenges and positives of working remotely aligns with the adaptive structuration theory because remote workers must use technology to interact with others. Several participants talked about connectivity issues because of their internet provider and the struggles they encountered trying to assist the individuals they served using alternative means. The theory addresses not only how the worker uses advanced technologies, but also the workload and the environmental structures (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The participants found alternative methods of helping their clients by communicating with other human services professionals. Participants may find stability

by adopting new rules and resources from another entity to complete the organization's

mission (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Finding an alternative way to use advanced

technology to get the job done can change the attitudes of caseworkers within an

organization.

Theme 5: Productivity Excelled With Telecommuting

The findings from the remote workplace productivity theme aligned with the

literature review regarding flexible work schedules leading to increased productivity.

Human services caseworkers realized that their productivity increased because they were

working at home, which many contributed to less distractions in the home.

Telecommuters who incorporate daily household chores during work hours shift their

focus to work based on deadlines versus physical presence, which increases productivity

(Wrestler, 2020). The caseworkers remain connected to team members using advanced

technology, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet. Remaining connected to

colleagues using advanced technology aids in improving productivity (Ruiller et al.,

2017). Overall, most participants found increased productivity working from home, and

some productivity decreased for a short period of time due to circumstances out of their

control, such as internet outage and down servers.

This theme also aligned with the adaptive structuration theory based on the

interactions between the caseworkers and advanced technologies. Participants were able

to complete assigned tasks because of the automation process that was implemented

during the pandemic. The theory explores the changes within an organization based on

the decisions made using technology and the work environment (DeSanctis & Poole,

1994). The caseworkers were able to prioritize their work responsibilities and implement a timeline to have tasks completed using advanced technology. When an individual applies the rules given by the organization and uses advanced technology, they are expected to produce and reproduce productivity within the organization (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The participants' willingness to use advanced technology contributes to intentional or unintentional change within the organization.

Theme 6: Satisfaction and Achievements Enhanced During Pandemic

The findings of this study aligned with the theme of job satisfaction and achievements regarding job performance. The participants found satisfaction with their work performance while teleworking. Job satisfaction increases when the individual holds a positive attitude about working from home (Kroll & Neusch, 2019). Participants were pleased with their increased productivity, flexible schedules, and level of autonomy. Remote workers who set personal achievements and rate themselves on performance experience more job satisfaction at the conclusion of the workday compared to traditional employees (Muller & Niessen, 2019). The participants found satisfaction in their work performance, and they were happy with the new skills they acquired from teleworking.

This theme aligned with the adaptive structuration theory because the participants were open to exploring the use of new technology while transitioning to work from home. The participants interacted with their team members to facilitate change while working during the pandemic using the rules and resources provided by their organization. The theory posits that the individual may make an impact by intermingling within a group using advanced technology (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Social interactions

occurred, which influenced the teleworkers' decisions on how to apply the advanced technology tools to complete their assigned tasks. DeSanctis and Poole (1994) believed that social interaction's foundation must include communication. A change within the organization occurred because the caseworkers found satisfaction using the advanced technology tools, which allowed them to remain safe in their home as they communicated with team members and the population they served.

Theme 7: Organizational Commitment Emerged From Telework

The findings related to the commitment to organization theme align with the literature review in Chapter 2 based on the employees' attitudes from their organizations' emergency readiness for COVID-19. The participants found satisfaction with their current organizations because of the efforts put forth to keep them safe. Employees with flexible work schedules have a positive work attitude that spills over into the individual's nonwork attitude, which increases the employee retention rate (Kroll & Nuesch, 2019; Onken-Menke et al., 2018). The participants believed that the organization prioritized their safety first and foremost when the pandemic started, which had generated a sense of loyalty to the organization. An employee who feels appreciated and has several ways to communicate with their employer may have little desire to leave their current organization (Choi, 2018; White, 2018). The participants were pleased with how their organization handled working remotely during the pandemic along with the tools given to work, and participants acknowledged that they planned to continue their career with their current organization.

This theme aligned with the adaptive structuration theory because the human services caseworkers were committed to implementing advanced technology to ensure that their clients had available resources during the pandemic. The caseworkers continued to provide necessary services and resources by moving their office into the home setting using advanced technology. An individual's unwillingness to use technology as a form of social interaction will not lead to the productivity of production and reproduction within the organization (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). The participants were able to complete their tasks by receiving assistance from coworkers when they were not familiar with a tool, such as a participant learning to use a softphone. An individual who refuses to contribute by not sharing their knowledge to complete the organization's mission aims to prevent new social structures from occurring (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Participants welcomed interacting with technology and, overall, had great attitudes about applying the technology structures.

Limitations of the Study

Various limitations occurred from the implementation of this study. The small purposeful snowball sample size may present a limitation because it may not have a large enough sample size for replication. The data obtained for this study came from 12 participants, and I assumed that the participants provided truthful experiences from working remotely during COVID-19. All participants were citizens of the United States, and no demographic information was collected for this study. Potential limitations may include the participants' represented organization or geographical location, which may not provide evidence that the findings can apply to other contexts and populations.

Researcher bias is another possible limitation to this study because I am a human services professional. Due to mutual similarity, some of my experiences may align with those of the participants. I used a journal for bracketing to document my preconceived notions about telework. Also, due to Walden University's IRB guidelines, the interviews were not conducted face-to-face; however, I conducted the interviews via Zoom because of the COVID-19 virus. I may have missed some of the participants' nonverbal language. I incorporated member checking established the accuracy of the data during the interview process.

Recommendations

I conducted this generic qualitative study to explore human services caseworkers' experiences with working remotely during COVID-19. Although researchers have conducted research on telework, I recommend further research to explore human services caseworkers' experiences of providing services remotely during a pandemic. I would increase the number of participants to gather more diverse data on teleworking during the pandemic.

Additionally, I recommend conducting a qualitative study using unstructured interviews to allow more patterns to develop among the participants. The semistructured interviews used predetermined questions that allowed limited comparison between the participants. I also recommend a quantitative analysis of teleworking during the pandemic to determine the relationship between teleworking and other variables, such as isolation, burnout, and job satisfaction, within the human services profession to establish

an association between the variables, which allows a larger sample size along with structured research instruments.

Implications

This study promotes positive social change as it provides a better understanding of human services caseworkers' experiences of working remotely during a pandemic. This study fosters positive social change as it provides awareness of how caseworkers explored various communication tools to provide services to their clients remotely. Other caseworkers can view the challenges and positive outcomes of working remotely presented in this study to increase their success at telecommuting and decrease avoidable challenges related to working remotely. Also, this study could encourage organizations to create new policies to give human services caseworkers more autonomy related to their work schedule, workload, and place to work. The study showed the insights of human services caseworkers providing services or resources throughout the pandemic using advance technology for meeting the needs of society. The information provided in this study should bring a greater consideration of incorporating remote services for citizens who need to be link with available resources.

Conclusion

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore human services caseworkers' experiences working remotely during COVID-19. The human services caseworkers used a range of communication tools, which included video conferencing, emails, telephone calls, messaging systems. Conferencing tools included Google Voice and social media platforms. The tools for video conferencing were Zoom, Google Meet,

Skype, and Microsoft Teams while the social media platform cited by the caseworkers for communication was Facebook. The participants were largely comfortable handling the communication tools available for their remote work; however, there were some human services caseworkers who only felt comfortable to some degree citing some challenges handling the communication tools that they were not used to at first.

The autonomy in the remote work by the human services caseworkers was described based on three aspects, which included work schedule, place of work, and workload. Some participants had a full autonomy for the work they did remotely. They could schedule the work according to their preference, choose their ideal place of work, and choose the amount of work to complete in a given schedule. However, some of the participants only experienced a limited autonomy as the schedule for work was already fixed by the organization; but they had control on the other aspects of the remote work other than the work schedule. Lastly, some of the participants experienced no autonomy, because they felt fully under control of the organization's regulations and had no control on any aspect of their remote work.

The competency of the caseworkers working remotely came into play, which affected their role as a human services caseworker. Those who were competent saw improved productivity and a positive impact on their role as human services caseworkers. However, some participants suggested that competency of working remotely had no impact on their role as human services caseworker regardless of whether they were competent or not.

The positive experiences from working remotely included engagement with family or having family time, gaining and improving on skills, flexibility when working remotely, safety from COVID-19, increased productivity, and solitude or alone-time. Some of the negative experiences cited by the participants as challenges included internet connectivity issues, communication tools, limited interpersonal interaction, dubbed isolation, lack of motivation, supervision difficulty, overwhelming workload, switching between office and home setting, and reduced productivity. While most participants experienced increased high productivity in their remote work, some participants identified times when productivity slowed while working remotely. The reduced productivity was because of distractions when working at home, technical challenges, lack of motivation, and breakdown in communication between coworkers.

The participants largely had a good experience with the remote working during the pandemic, and thus they were satisfied with working remotely. Some of the participants held a neutral stand about their satisfaction with working remotely; while they had good experiences, there were some challenges or negative experiences with the remote work setting that somewhat neutralized the satisfaction they had working remotely. However, none of the participants was dissatisfied with the remote working experience despite facing some challenges.

In conclusion, on the participants' future with their organization, some participants thought that their experience with working remotely could not influence their future with the organizations they currently work with. Others suggested that going forward, they would team up or collaborate with fellow coworkers in their organizations

because of the experience from teleworking. Other participants suggested they will ensure to improve on the teleworking resources to be ready in case of another pandemic or need to work remotely. Some of the participants gained confidence in their organization and vowed to continue working for the organization due to care provided to them during the teleworking experience. Lastly, some participants decided that they would ask for positions in the organizations that would enable them to frequently work remotely.

The findings of this study have shown that working remotely during the pandemic had a significant effect on human services caseworkers' personal and professional lives. The human services caseworkers understood that they had the responsibility to provide services/resources to the citizens they served. The participants were successful by using the advanced technology tools provided by their organization, and the participants went the extra mile to find other solutions when needed to meet the demands of their respective populations. From the study, the conclusion was that the caseworkers adapted well to balance home and work lives simultaneously under one roof, and the participants were able to adopt a work-life management strategy that allowed them to balance the multiple roles they had to juggle while working from home. Many human services caseworkers were able to prioritize and implement time management skills to ensure their telecommuting success.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, I am Sandra Brown. I am a PhD student working on my dissertation, which requires me to gather information for my research. I arranged this Zoom meeting with you to obtain information about your experiences as a human services caseworker working remotely during COVID-19. Before we start, I would like to know if you have any questions about the interview and/or data collection process.

As a research participant, you have the right to ask any questions, you may decide not to answer any question, and you may withdraw from this research at any time. Please remember your identity is kept confidential, which aids in maintaining confidentiality and privacy. Your responses will be linked to your participant ID only, which will be used for my records only. This interview will be audio recorded. Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. You may email me at sandra.brown7@waldenu.edu if you have any questions. If you want to inquire about your rights as a participant, please call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Do you wish to continue with this interview at this time?

Interview Questions

1. How comfortable are you with the communication tools while working remotely?

2. Describe any conflict that occurred as a result of working from home.

3. Explain your level of autonomy while working remotely.

4. How satisfied were you with your work experience as a teleworker?

5. Tell me about challenges that you may have experienced regarding productivity.

6. Explain any instances where you may have felt isolated or not engaged because you were not in the organization's building.

7. Explain how your experience with teleworking may influence your future with your organization.

8. How does your competency of working remotely affect your role as a human services caseworker?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your perceptions or experiences of working remotely during the pandemic?

Conclusion

Thank you for being a research participant. I have no more questions to ask. When I complete transcribing this interview, I will email you a copy. Once the analysis is complete, I will email you a summary of the overall results. Do you have any questions for me about the research process?

Appendix B: Inclusion Screening Questionnaire

Please respond to the following inclusion criteria questions:

1. Are you a human services professional at least 18-years old or older?

    a. Yes

    b. No

2. For age verification purposes, what year were you born?

    a. _____ (example XX/XX/XXXX)

3. Since the onset of COVID-19, have you worked remotely for a minimum
    of 6 months?

    a. Yes

    b. No

4. Did you have to work and maintain your household/family responsibilities
    simultaneously while working remotely?

    a. Yes

    b. No

5. What is your occupational title?

    a. _____

6. What state do you currently reside?

    a. _____ (city, state)