


Telecommuting Practices and Trends in the Digital Transformation

Elisha Ondieki Makori, University of Nairobi, Kenya*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1966-3253>

Norah Osebe Mauti, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The paper investigated insights of telecommuting practices and trends in the digital transformation. Critical objectives were to find the priorities behind telecommuting developments, examine disruption technologies and trends to transform and advance virtual teleworking practices, determine sustainable strategies and programmes for telecommuting arrangements, and explore lessons learned for future prospects from remote working practices. Teleworking practices have opened and expanded economies and business opportunities in organizations worldwide. Trending digital innovations advancing telecommuting in the knowledge economy include internet of things, enterprise mobility, cloud solutions, and blockchain. Robust technological infrastructure, management, communication, and cultural trust are among the top strategies for sustaining telecommuting programmes. In the post-COVID-19 world, telecommuting is fundamental and mandatory, and therefore, leaders, people, organizations, professionals, and communities have a lot to gain from the practice.

KEYWORDS

Digital Technologies, Digital Telecommuting, Digital Transformation, E-Communting, Information Organizations, Innovations, Kenya, Telecommuting, Telework, Teleworking, Virtual Teleworking

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic resulted to sudden transformation and change in governments, organizations, industries and professions across the globe. The pandemic has challenged society in ways once considered unimaginable, forcing people to reconsider a wide variety of practices, from work to leisure, basic travel and daily tasks (Lina & Nantapong, 2021). The crisis also created unexpected economic activities where employees began working from home using information communication technologies (ICTs). With no effective treatments or vaccines available yet for this novel disease, governments and companies ordered workers to work from home in order to remain safe (Yuhuan, Chungjen & Li-Fang, 2021). To these authors, one such response was the adjustment to modified work

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*Corresponding Author

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arrangements (DWAs), such as telecommuting. With another response being, where large number of businesses turned to digital technology to continue operating, with personnel working from home and using tools, such as videoconferencing, cloud services and virtual private networks (OECD, 2021). In the same spirit, Mihoko, Lauren and Diane (2021), talk of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) that involved flextime/flexible work schedules, formal and informal leaves, compressed workweeks, voluntary part-time work, job sharing, job exchange and phased retirement. In addition, these authors note that, telecommuting was much less common than these other types of flexible work arrangements. On the other hand, technology made telecommuting emerge as a viable option for library and information work. Flexible work arrangements require adequate technology and effective managerial communication that depend on the types of positions and individuals involved, according to these authors.

Digital transformation, in tandem with economic disruption and recession, changed and revived industries, organizations and professions through adoption of technologies. Telecommuting became the form of flexible work most often discussed in library and information science (LIS) literature beginning in the mid-1990s, when technological advancements made it possible (Mihoko, Lauren & Diane, 2021). Adoption and adaptation of digital technologies accelerated economic growth as well as increased productivity and performance in industries and businesses. The research explored and reviewed telecommuting practices and trends in the digital transformation. Thinking priorities behind telecommuting developments are reviewed. Disruption technologies and trends to transform and advance virtual teleworking practices after the pandemic and the new normal are discussed. Detailed insights on strategies and programmes to sustain telecommuting arrangements are analyzed. Potential lessons for future prospects are also presented. This research provides useful insights regarding emerging technologies useful in sustainable telecommuting practices and programmes in organizations.

DIGITAL TELECOMMUTING TRANSFORMATION

Telecommuting is a form of remote work in which organizational employees work from other physical locations (Susan, 2020). Telework implies work achieved with the help of ICTs and conducted outside the employer's locations (International Labour Organization, 2020). On the same note, telework refers to any type of work arrangement where workers work remotely, away from an employer's premises or fixed location, using digital technologies, such as networks, laptops, mobile phones and the internet (Eurofound, 2020a). This concept also includes the self-employed workers who work in a place other than their usual workplace using ICT. Evolution of telecommuting remains closely linked to the history of the internet and personal computers. Digital economy and emerging technologies, such as internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligent (AI), big data analytics and fifth generation (5G) have impacted on telecommuting transformation. These digital technologies have transformed teleworking arrangements in organizations and industries. Telecommuting or teleworking implies work arrangement and agreement often done by employees from homes or agreed places using digital technologies. This means that work is conducted and achieved from outside the locations or premises of the organization or employer through technological solutions.

Telecommuting or e-commuting is work autonomy and flexibility done by employees independently from the office premise or location through disruptive technologies. Working from home is currently known as an alternative working to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection, though the concept is not new and has been brought to the attention of several schools of thought for many years (Lina & Nantapong, 2021). Firms have switched to some type of hybrid work model, in which employees split their time between remote and office work, or mixed-mode model, which comprises of a mixture of full-time remote employees and full-time office employees (Longqi et al., 2022). Telecommuting involves three different types that often overlap: remote working, teleworking, working from home as well as telework and ICT-based mobile work (TICTM) (Sostero et al., 2020 & Eurofound, 2020a). Practice of telecommuting has also been described in various concepts and

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