TELEWORK IN TIMES OF CRISIS

by

Samantha Jones

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Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Liberty University, School of Business

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a digital transformation globally as office-based work shifted to telework. Low level positions within the office that were previously not permitted to telework had to during the pandemic. Clerical positions proved to be productive while teleworking. Managers may have had to adjust their management styles to fit their remote staff's needs. Since clerical staff was so productive while teleworking, they may continue to telework after the pandemic as a new normal. Organizations can take the lessons learned from this digital transformation to apply to uncertainty management planning to prevent future business disruptions.

Keywords: New normal, telework, uncertainty management, managerial styles

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Dedication

In dedication to my daughters, Ana-Sofia and Tatiana, who have been an inspiration to this study and encouragement to furthering my education. There is no goal too high. You can do anything you put your time and heart into. I would like to dedicate this to my husband, Alexander Hernandez, who has been a source of strength and encouragement. You are my biggest supporter and I love you. I am grateful to my parents, Vivienne and Bryan Jones, who have always been amazing support nets. I have been able to take risks and strive high because I know you will always be there if I fall. And finally, I dedicate this to my sister, Jaydalia Dunne, an actual genius, who has been an amazing woman to look up to. Thank you all.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In 2020, the COVID-19 virus became a pandemic causing people around the world to stay at home to control the spread of the virus and forcing many businesses into a state of uncertainty (Crowley et al., 2020). Over the course of the year, uncertainty loomed, and businesses prepared for what appeared to be a new normal (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Many businesses offered telework to employees for business continuity and telework became the only way many could continue to work (Colley et al., 2020). This study examined the previous reluctance to telework for lower-level clerical employees, identifies best practices of the sudden shift to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, and presents recommendations for organizations to plan for the unexpected

This research addresses the immediate shift in management styles that occurs in times of uncertainty, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the allowance for telecommuting among clerical staff and administrative staff, resulting in businesses disruption to those clerical positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions. This specific problem addresses the shift in management required by the COVID-19 pandemic and provide a framework for how organizations can prepare for future organizational shifts due to unforeseen business disruptions. The specific problem addresses the shift to telecommuting that arose during a pandemic and the guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) to provide clarity on employees suddenly working from home or taking a leave from work (Hoey et al., 2020). The specific problem further examines the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic effects on organizations to the ability of administrative staff that otherwise would be unable to perform work outside of the office.

Section 1 of this study comprises of a background of the problem stating the problem and purpose of this study. Research questions are presented that have been addressed within this study followed by the nature of the study. The conceptual framework is followed by definitions of terms, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The significance of the study is presented prior to a review of the professional and academic literature related to this study.

Background of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations to shift from conducting business in an office setting to allowing employees to work from home which caused the need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Managers that were used to managing staff in the office may not have been prepared to manage staff that worked remotely. Staff working at home did not choose to work remotely as the pandemic forced the shift to telework to avoid the spread of the virus between people. This study suggests that managers should adjust their management style to accommodate the uncertainty employees face during uncertain times. This study also suggests that management of office-based employees differs tremendously from the management of teleworkers and managers must understand the difference in managing projects versus managing employee time.

Telecommuting became a norm even in sectors in which it was previously discouraged (Susskind et al., 2020). Prior to COVID-19, lower-level employees were less likely to be offered the option to telework having been met with resistance from managers to permit working from home (Colley et al., 2020). The pandemic was a lengthy time that provided evidence that many positions can work remotely effectively. This study suggests that managers should permit more positions, namely clerical positions, the option to work from home.

Business changes that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and other times of uncertainty have long-lasting effects (Susskind et al., 2020). Times of uncertainty cause a disruption to management which requires proper planning to ensure the organization continues workflow during any future, unforeseen occurrences (Hoey et al., 2020). This study suggests a review of best practices during the pandemic that can be evaluated and utilized in uncertainty planning. This study suggests that the ill-preparedness businesses faced during COVID-19 can be used as a guide for businesses to avoid future business disruption.

The background of the problem addresses the immediate shift in management styles that occurred in the recent time of uncertainty, the COVID-19 pandemic. This uncertain time caused the requirement for many businesses to allow telecommuting in circumstances that normally would not permit it. This shift may have also caused businesses disruption to positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many businesses to shift to telecommuting from an office setting which led to managers requiring an adjustment in management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Telecommuting was permitted for positions that were previously discouraged from telecommuting and changes made during times of crisis will have long-lasting effects (Susskind et al., 2020). Management is disrupted during times of uncertainty which requires proper planning to ensure work continuity (Hoey et al., 2020). The clerical staff and administrative staff in the Northeast[1] region of the United States of America are analyzed in this study to uncover best practices that can be included in organizational uncertainty planning since these positions were normally discouraged from telecommuting prior to COVID-19.

Problem Statement

[1]This study refers to the United States of America Northeast region as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island.

The general problem that was addressed is the immediate shift in management styles that occurs in times of uncertainty, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the allowance for telecommuting in circumstances that normally would not permit it, resulting in businesses disruption to positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations to shift to telecommuting from an office environment causing the need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Telecommuting in sectors in which it was previously discouraged became the norm in during the pandemic and changes made during times of crisis will have long-lasting effects (Susskind et al., 2020). Management is disrupted during times of uncertainty requiring a plan to ensure the organization continues workflow (Hoey et al., 2020). The specific problem that was addressed is the immediate shift in management styles that occurs in times of uncertainty, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the allowance for telecommuting among clerical staff and administrative staff in the Northeast region, resulting in potential businesses disruption to those clerical positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this flexible design multiple case study is to ascertain, based on their handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, how managers of clerical staff can most effectively transition from working in the office to telecommuting within the United States if necessitated by future conditions. Simply put, the purpose of this research is to add to the body of knowledge pertaining to shifting management styles during times of uncertainty, specifically a shift to telecommuting in circumstances that would normally not allow it, such as administrative positions that are office-based (Alvarez et al., 2018; Attar et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Caroselli, 2020; Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020; Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al.,

2020; Escudero et al., 2018; Geciene, 2020; Hoey et al., 2020; Kabalina et al., 2019; Michalski et al., 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2019). The purpose of this research is to discover how management styles shift in relation to clerical staff and administrative staff during a transition from working in the office to working from home resulting in business disruption to positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions and how to prepare for future similar situations using a case study design. The purpose of this multiple case study design is to analyze the accounts of managers and clerical employees that were affected by COVID-19 and a sudden shift to telework to identify the best practices from their experiences. This research has sought to provide for a list of practices that organizations could implement when creating an uncertainty plan.

Research Questions

The following section presents the research questions addressed in this study. These research questions analyze how organizations can prepare for future unexpected events that could potentially disrupt business continuity, how to allow clerical staff who were previously discouraged from working remotely to telework, and how managers can effectively manage teleworkers. These research questions directly relate to the general problem and specific problem addressed in this study.

RQ1. How can organizations prepare management for future unexpected business disruptions?

RQ1a. How can times of uncertainty leading to a shift from working the office to telecommuting impact management styles?

RQ1b. How can management styles adapt during a shift to telecommuting caused by times of certainty?

RQ2. How can office managers manage administrative staff work effectively when a sudden shift forces staff to telecommute?

RQ3. How does having a telecommute option impact the need to work in the office during normal times?

RQ1: How can organizations prepare management for future unexpected business disruptions?

Management is disrupted during times of uncertainty requiring a plan to ensure the organization to continues workflow (Hoey et al., 2020). The guidelines that were developed in response COVID-19 can be used in part as a guideline for future times of uncertainty that may disrupt business operations. Hoey et al. (2020) suggested that consistency is key in managing during times of uncertainty and that if the organization creates a stance or rule in an updated public statement, this must resonate through the entire organization. This relates to the specific problem by addressing the need to plan for the unexpected and adjust management in times of uncertainty allows for continued business operation.

RQ1a: How can times of uncertainty leading to a shift from working the office to telecommuting impact management styles?

The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a digital transformation as the world relied on the Internet more than ever with telecommuting, e-commerce, telemedicine, and virtual learning (Susskind et al., 2020). This time of uncertainty has led to worker vulnerability and the requirement for employees to adapt to occupational transitions (Susskind et al., 2020). Telecommuting in sectors in which it was previously discouraged became the norm in during the pandemic and changes made during times of crisis will have long-lasting effects (Susskind et al.,

2020). This relates to the specific problem by addressing the shift from working in the office to working from home and the impact that has on management styles.

RQ1b: How can management styles adapt during a shift to telecommuting caused by times of certainty?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations to shift to telecommuting from an office environment causing the need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Various telecommunication applications have been utilized to allow for managers to communicate with employees during times of uncertainty (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Certain methods of communication are slower than others; a formal email may have a delayed response compared to a video chat (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Action dashboards may eliminate the need for managers to check in frequently with employees decreasing communication (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). This relates to the specific problem by addressing the amount of communication and the style of management that results from a shift to telecommuting during times of uncertainty.

RQ2: How can office managers manage administrative staff work effectively when a sudden shift forces staff to telecommute?

Trust plays a major role in managers allowing employees to work from home (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers that have determined an employee to be conscientious and trustworthy were more likely to allow that employee to work from home (Kaplan et al., 2018). The role of the manager could be viewed as positive in telecommuting, despite previous beliefs of a decreased worker-supervisor relationship, achieving work-life balance and effective management style (Park & Cho, 2020). Managers may take on the role of a supporter as employees may need encouragement during times of uncertainty (Park & Cho, 2020). This relates to the specific

problem by addressing how the role and style of the manager will require assessment when a sudden shift from working in the office to working from home occurs.

RQ3: How does having a telecommute option impact the need to work in the office during normal times?

If a job can be performed remotely during times of uncertainty, employees may question the need to return to the workplace. The shift to telecommuting may linger longer than the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). Management challenges do exist with telecommuting including reduced feedback to employees (Park & Cho, 2020). This relates to the specific problem by addressing the need for jobs to return to the office if they can be performed from home.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study is pragmatism paradigm, qualitative method, and a multiple case design. The pragmatism paradigm has allowed for a methodological approach to the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The qualitative method best incorporates real-life experiences in a non-numerical manner (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The case study design conveys the data obtained in surveys for an illustration of the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Discussion of the Research Paradigm

The nature of the study is pragmatism paradigm utilizing the qualitative method and a multiple case design. Dominant research paradigms include positivist, interpretivist, and critical/transformative paradigms and the pragmatic paradigm borrows from these three paradigms (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Each of these paradigms have been weighed for best applicability to this research.

Positivist/Postpositivist Paradigm. Positivist paradigm is a worldview to research which utilizes scientific methods of investigation to conduct research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). French

philosopher, Auguste Comte, introduced the positivist paradigm as a worldview based on scientific investigation methods (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Positivist paradigm relies on hypotheses, mathematical equations, calculations, and is based on predictions backed by measurable outcomes (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Postpositivist paradigm stemmed from the positivist paradigm and accepts that the truth is probable and not absolute and therefore cannot be fully understood (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Positivist paradigm is not appropriate for this research as this research is qualitative and not based measurable outcomes, equations, and hypotheses. Positivist paradigm quantifies results and is complimentary to quantitative research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is a worldview that aims to understand the human experience of a subjective world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm includes subjects or participants and the understanding of what those subjects think and how they interpret the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm may be referred to as the constructivist paradigm as the paradigm is based on the subject's reality which is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm consists of theory following the research which is consistent with grounded theory (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This research does not utilize the grounded theory methodology and therefore the interpretivist paradigm is not appropriate for this research.

Critical/Transformative Paradigm. The critical paradigm, also called the transformative paradigm, addresses economic, political, or social issues in the social justice system in research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm is often utilized to address an oppressed society or improve a social justice issue (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm includes action research, a respect for cultural norms, and is based on subjects' individual

conditions based on social position (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Due to the political nature of this paradigm, the critical or transformative paradigm would not be appropriate for this research.

Pragmatic Paradigm. Many philosophers found that it was impossible to discover the truth from one of the above-mentioned paradigms (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The pragmatic paradigm was conceptualized to provide a research method to best suit the phenomenon at hand (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm is pluralistic and practical combining methods to discover human behavior (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This mixed method approach utilizes every method that contributes to the research at hand without being wholly quantitative or qualitative (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The pragmatic paradigm is the most appropriate for this study as it examines the phenomenon at hand in a practical way that studies participant behavior, beliefs, and behavioral consequences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The pragmatic paradigm can rely on a mixed method methodology of qualitative and quantitative data to create a research that is most appropriate for the specific research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The pragmatic paradigm is most appropriate for this study as it is a value-laden axiology benefitting people (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Pragmatism is founded using the philosophical and/or methodological approach that works best for the specific research problem at hand as it utilizes a practical approach to solving the problem (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Discussion of the Design

The quantitative method is commonly used with fixed designs (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The quantitative method utilizes detail processes prior to commencing the survey or experiment used to collect data (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The qualitative research method is commonly used with flexible designs (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The qualitative method

encompasses preliminary planning however the procedural details are not set in advance (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In qualitative research, the focus of the study is likely to shift as the research proceeds (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The quantitative method is inappropriate for this research due to the lack of numerical data to theorize.

The purpose of the qualitative research method is to study and address the problem statement using non-numerical data and relying on unstructured data (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The qualitative method was selected in lieu of a quantitative method to provide a real-life experience and solution to real problems rather than a more formal, systematic process including cause and effect relationships. The qualitative research method can provide this research with more depth and complexities that can be essential to the specific problem. This research involves data that contains individual interpretations of experiencing times of uncertainty which requires soft science and subjectivity that qualitative research provides. Therefore, the qualitative method was most suitable for this research due to its non-numerical nature, complexities, and individual nature of the data.

A multi-strategy design, known as the mixed method, contains both quantitative and qualitative aspects (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Mixed method includes both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting, analyzing, and viewing data (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This method was not selected for this research due to the lack of numerical data this research will produce.

Fixed Design. Fixed research design is correlated with a predetermined process at the commencement of the research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Fixed designs often are theory based and these theories are used to guide the research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Fixed design is commonly used in quantitative research as the design consists of variables that must be

measured and controlled, and these variables are quantitative (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This design often uses specific questions and experiments (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Fixed designs can be descriptive, correlational, or causal-comparative/quasi-experimental (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The fixed design would not be appropriate for this research as this research is not quantitative. This research did not have a predetermined process nor theory which therefore makes a fixed design inappropriate to use.

      Flexible Design. Flexible research design is correlated with an evolving research process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Flexible design is often applied to qualitative research as it encompasses more open-ended questions and less quantitative variables (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Flexible design does not have a predetermined theory but rather allows the research to determine the course of the experiment by incorporating feedback as the research continues (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Types of flexible design include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

      The narrative design is a first-person account of an experience and allows the reader to explore the lives of the participants through the stories of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design would not be the most appropriate for this research as it includes individual experiences that may be too specific to apply to a broader demographic. The phenomenology design incorporates interviews of multiple participants with similar experiences to get a broad view of a specific phenomenon to get a universal essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is appropriate for this research but was not selected based on the specificity of the phenomenon. The phenomenon may not reoccur, but the knowledge gained from it can be applied to other types of uncertain times. Grounded theory design utilizes the collected data from multiple participants to describe a common factor and creates a theory from this data collection

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Grounded theory is based on a predetermined theory that this research does not pose which makes this design inappropriate for this research. Ethnography design uses shared beliefs or patterns, behaviors, and language of numerous participants or members of a cultural group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is inappropriate for this research because this research consists of participants from diverse backgrounds. The case study design uses surveys or experiments as a specific illustration to understand a situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Yin (2018) states that case studies can make research more compelling as they contain surveys and/or experiments. The case study design is an understanding of a situation utilizing a case as an illustration of a topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are numerous approaches to research that can be considered the design of the research, however, the best research design will be the most appropriate approach for the type of research being conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Other qualitative research designs include grounded theory, ethnography, narrative research, and phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The case study design was more appropriate for the specific problem of this research because it examines the exact situation at hand and includes first-hand accounts of the experience of the specific problem. A research design such as grounded theory, for example, may rely too heavily on a hypothesis when the objective of this research is to uncover best practices in order to create a future plan of action in times of uncertainty. The case study design allowed the experiences of the participants to determine the solution to the specific problem.

Mixed Design. Mixed research design is a flexible approach to the research process with elements of both fixed and flexible designs (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Mixed design can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Mixed designs

are used to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect, analyze, and view data to provide for a broader understanding of the experiment (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The convergent parallel design is an example of mixed design as it combines qualitative and quantitative research methods (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This design was the most appropriate design for this research as the flexible design would be better suited and there may be limited quantitative data to theorize.

Discussion of the Method

Various flexible design methods exist and include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, and ethnography. Each of these methods are suitable for use in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design was chosen for this study.

Narrative. Narrative design is a first-person account of a situation. Narrative design incorporates experiences of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), the narrative design allows the reader to explore the lives of individuals through the stories of their experiences. According to Creswell and Poth, narrative design should be used in a biographical study, autoethnography (cultural study), autobiography, or for an oral history. Challenges that may arise when conducting research with a narrative design are the requirement of extensive data and the understanding of the individual's life that are required, the amount of collaboration needed to reflect on their personal and political background, and the reorganization of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is also necessary to "restory" or rearrange the data you receive and analyze it to make it more cohesive. This method was not the most suitable for this study because it is not a biographical study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenologists use interviews of multiple people with similar experience to get a broad view on a specific phenomenon. The focus of this method is on

describing what all participants have in common as they experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of such study is to get a universal essence of the phenomenon. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study takes the story of several individuals and finds common meaning from their experiences of a phenomenon. Interviews are the best way to collect data for this type of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method was not chosen for this study because this study aims to be applied to future unforeseen times of uncertainty rather than be reflective on the events of COVID-19 alone.

There are four philosophical perspectives in phenomenology according to Creswell and Poth (2018). The first perspective involves getting away from science to return to philosophy and wisdom-seeking. The second perspective is to end judgement and presumptions to reveal the "natural attitude", state Creswell and Poth. Third, there exists a perspective that consciousness is directed to an object and how one relates to that object (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The fourth perspective regards an object's reality being dependent on how an individual utilizes that object (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection involves interviewing participants and analysis of the data followed by a descriptive passage describing the "what", "how", and "essence" of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Challenges include understanding the experience through several individuals despite group variables and other assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It may also be difficult to exclude the assumptions of the researcher from the interpretations of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Grounded Theory. Grounded theory uses data collected from multiple participants to describe a common factor and then uses that data to identify a theory from it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Grounded theory aims to find an "unified theoretical explanation" (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). This qualitative research design method urges the researcher to compute a theory based

on the views of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding is used to decipher the data and to categorize the information. Challenges with the grounded theory design include the researcher needing to remain unbiased and unpresumptuous when coding and presenting the information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the researcher should avoid having overly saturated categories when coding versus sufficiently detailed information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method was not selected for this study as the research does not suggest a theory.

Ethnography. Ethnography is the study of "shared patterns or beliefs, behaviors, and language" of 20 or more individuals who were involved in a grounded theory study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnography focuses on the shared culture of the group. The key to successful ethnography research is to search for patterns. Challenges of ethnography include the requirement of anthropology knowledge and social-cultural system knowledge. In addition, this process requires extensive data collection time. This method is not suitable for this study as the events of the topic at hand are not specific to a cultural group nor social-cultural system. Ethnography relates to grounded theory in that it is a part of it. Grounded theory, in contrast can exist without ethnography. Interviews and surveys would be an integral part of collecting data for this type of qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Case Study. A case study is an understanding of a situation using a case as a specific illustration of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Yin (2018), the case study design can make the case study easier to conduct and compile as well as stronger. Case study research traditionally uses surveys and experiments without a design to the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The case study design allows for organization and structure of the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is most appropriate for this study as it draws on the illustrations of multiple participants to analyze the topic.

There are four types of case study designs, stated Yin (2018). Type 1 is a single-case design that has a holistic approach (Yin, 2018). This occurs when there is a single unit to analyze. Type 2 is also a single-case design but has multiple units to analyze embedded into the case study. Type 3 is a multiple-case design that analyzes multiple cases individually. In contrast, type 4 is a multiple-case design that analyzes multiples cases embedded together with a holistic approach (Yin, 2018). This study utilizes multiple case studies to ensure the situation is appropriately analyzed with sufficient data.

Creswell and Poth (2018) categorize case studies into three groups: instrumental (single-case), collective (multiple), and intrinsic (where the focus is on the case itself). It is appropriate to use the case study design when there is a critical case that is crucial to one's theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). This design should be used when a case study would be the most relevant justification of a theory (Yin, 2018). One challenge that might arise using the case study design is during the data analysis phase. When analyzing the data, removing influences is necessary to ensure that data is not bias (Yin, 2018).

Yin (2018) stated that the data should be analyzed to include the views of possible rival explanations. Rival explanations can be a null hypothesis, threats to validity, investigator bias, direct rival, comingled rival, implementation rival, rival theory, super rival, or societal rival. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that one challenge in using the case study design is actually identifying the case. Cases may be broad or narrow in scope. To remedy these challenges, this study utilizes a specific research purpose and specific research questions to ensure the case is identified. The researcher also avoids investigator bias to prevent the data from being incorrectly analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

In summary, this study has featured a qualitative method to allow for in-depth complexities to the specific problem. The case study design is the most illustrative form of conveying the data collected through the qualitative method for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The pragmatism paradigm is a methodological approach that has best solved the problem presented (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework highlights the concepts, theories, and actors of the study. This section explains the main concepts discovered in the study and the connection between them. The theories discovered in the literature review are discovered and the relationship between them is discussed. The actors included in this study are included in this section and the relationship between the actors is discussed in this section. A diagram is provided to illustrate the conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
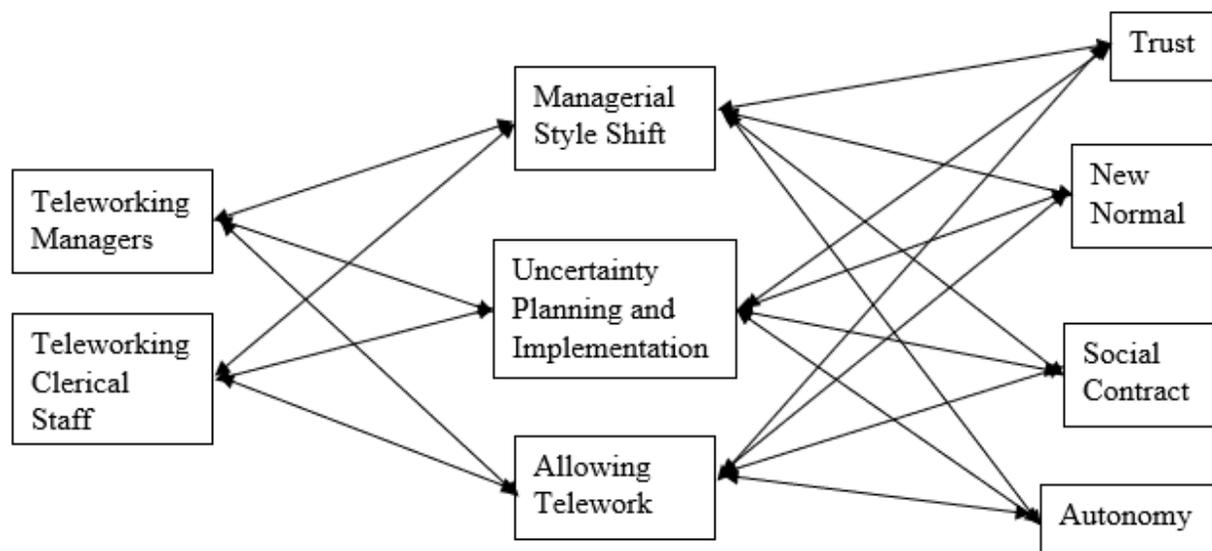
Concepts

The conceptual framework of this flexible design multiple case study is based on three main concepts. The first concept is formed on the difficulty an organization encounters during times of uncertainty to continue business and withhold usual management styles (Hoey et al., 2020). The second concept is based on the benefits an organization gains by implementing uncertainty planning to ensure that business continues as usual even during a shift from the office to telecommuting. The third concept derives from positions that were once discouraged from telecommuting requiring a plan of action if they absolutely must become telecommute positions for the workflow to continue.

Discussion of Uncertainty Requiring Management Style Shift. Many organizations were forced to shift from conducting business in the office to telecommuting due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing a need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Most of 2020 marked a time of uncertainty as a digital transformation took hold causing the world to rely on the Internet for telecommuting, e-commerce, telemedicine, and virtual education (Susskind et al., 2020). A time of uncertainty such as this has led to employee vulnerability which required employers to adapt to occupational transitions (Susskind et al., 2020). To manage effectively during times of uncertainty, consistency is critical (Hoey et al., 2020). If an organization takes a public stance, this must resonate throughout the entire organization to avoid further uncertainty and confusion.

Management styles will transition during a shift from the office environment to telecommuting and telecommunication plays a role (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Managers can utilize various telecommunication applications to communicate with employees during times of uncertainty. The type of telecommunication used can make a difference as certain methods of communication are slower than others. For example, a formal email will have a delayed response

in comparison to a video chat. A group application, such as action dashboards, may maintain the feel of teamwork. Managers can utilize action dashboards to oversee work while reducing or eliminating the need to check in frequently with employees (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020).

Kaplan et al. (2018) believed trust plays a major role in managers permitting employees to telecommute. Research performed on telecommuting has showed that managers that determined an employee to be conscientious and trustworthy were more likely to permit that employee to work from home (Kaplan et al., 2018). Despite previous beliefs, telecommuting managers could be perceived positively with strong worker-supervisor relationship, achieving work-life balance, and effective management style (Park & Cho, 2020). Employees may need encouragement during times of uncertainty and managers may need to take on the role of a supporter (Park & Cho, 2020).

Discussion of Uncertainty Planning and Implementation. A concept that arose during the shift to telecommuting and the shift in management required by the COVID-19 pandemic is the need to provide a framework for how organizations can prepare for future organizational shifts due to unforeseen business disruptions. In 2020, the shift to telecommuting caused guidelines to be set forth by the U.S. DOL, FLSA, the FMLA, and the FFCRA to provide clarity on employees suddenly working from home or taking a leave from work (Hoey et al., 2020). Times of uncertainty cause a disruption to management requiring proper planning. Therefore, to ensure an organization continues workflow during any future, unforeseen occurrences, it should include uncertainty planning in their business strategy. Management styles are disrupted and require adjustments during times of uncertainty to ensure the organization continues workflow (Hoey et al., 2020). The guidelines that were developed in response COVID-19 and a reflection on best practices can be incorporated into future uncertainty planning.

Using the COVID-19 pandemic as an example, if a future disruption to business, or uncertain time, requires a shift to working remotely, organizations should implement uncertainty planning which includes a shift from the office to telework. This uncertainty planning should include the benefits of telework. Employees that telework report higher employee satisfaction, work-life balance, and exhibit increased productivity (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Organizations can reduce overhead costs by reducing or eliminating office space (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020). Telework can also provide talent from beyond the immediate geographical area and reduce healthcare costs (Park & Cho, 2020).

Discussion of Allowing More Positions to Telecommute. One concept that arose during a review of relevant literature is that positions that were once discouraged from telecommuting require a plan of action if they absolutely must become telecommute positions for the workflow to continue. During the pandemic in 2020, telecommuting became a norm even in sectors in which it was previously discouraged (Susskind et al., 2020). Business changes that occur the COVID-19 pandemic and other times of uncertainty will have long-lasting effects. One issue that arises during a shift to telecommuting is the need to return to the office. The shift from the office to telecommuting may remain longer than the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). There are management challenges that exist with telecommuting which include reduced feedback to employees (Park & Cho, 2020).

Discussion of Relationship Between Concepts

The three concepts from a review of the literature are related. All three concepts are related to the problem statement as they address the shift to telecommuting during times of uncertainty and the effect this has from a business perspective (Hoey et al., 2020). The first concept addressed the difficulty managers face during times of uncertainty to maintain or adjust

management styles. This is met with the second concept which addresses the need to plan for times of uncertainty and implement strategic uncertainty planning in organizations. This planning relates to the third concept in that positions that were previously required to solely work in the office should require an option to telecommute to ensure workflow continuation. The actual findings' relation to the conceptual framework is provided in Section 3.

Theories

Several theories were discovered during a review of the current literature. Theories included the concept of managerial trust during uncertain times and for teleworkers (Beno, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Another theory that was discovered is that the shift to telework during COVID-19 may become the new normal (Caroselli, 2020; Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020; Colley et al., 2020; Hoey et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020). The theory of a social contract producing work reciprocity was also discovered from the literature review (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020). Finally, telework leading to autonomy and self-leadership was discovered from a review of related literature (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Trust. Supervisor trust and felt trust impact employees during uncertain times (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Managers of teleworkers may need to implement a more project-based style of supervision rather than a time-based management style because teleworkers respond well to flexibility with schedule and felt trust from their supervisors. Autonomy and social exchange theory play a role during uncertain times and managers must trust their employees are

performing well. Trust impacts turnover intention and employee engagement (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Under normal circumstances, telework is often provided by organizations but not implemented by managers due to lack of employee trust (Kaplan et al., 2018). Mangers often assume teleworkers will not perform well if not in their presence (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers should reduce resistance to telework and trust employees to work from home with a level of autonomy (Kaplan et al., 2018). Teleworkers must also trust that their managers support them (Park & Cho, 2020). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal (Beno, 2018).

New Normal. COVID-19 lead to uncertainty in businesses globally (Crowley et al., 2020). The shift to working at home for so many businesses due to COVID-19 may have a lasting impact on the way work is conducted (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Technology has aided in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Video conference calls facilitate personal communication among virtual teams (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Policies on masks and teleworking hours are new for businesses (Hoey et al., 2020). Effective leadership is crucial during COVID-19 (Caroselli, 2020). Crisis Management Teams can help address issues at the onset of an unforeseen problem (Thielsch et al., 2020).

Social Contract and Reciprocity. Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee that facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, and autonomy (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers are likely to accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil,

2019). This relates to managerial style in that managers should shift to managing projects rather than managing employee time (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020).

Autonomy and Self-leadership. A level of autonomy and self-leadership is beneficial for successful telework execution (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Self-leadership was exhibited in employees on days they teleworked more than on days they worked in the office (Müller & Niessen, 2019). With teleworking employees working autonomously, managers may need to shift their management style to allow for more freedom and trust of their teleworkers (Choi, 2020).

Discussion of Relationship Between Theories

The theories listed above are related in some ways to one another in the context of teleworkers and/or managing in uncertain times. During uncertain times, teleworkers require a shift in managerial style from their superiors (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Managers should trust their employees more in terms of working remotely since studies show teleworkers are productive and autonomous when trusted (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). This autonomy and self-leadership lead to productivity for the agency (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001**;** Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al**.,** 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019) due to the social contract theory or reciprocity (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Due to the success of telework in terms of productivity, it is predicted that a continuance of telework for positions that were previous discouraged or not permitted to telework would be beneficial and possibly a new normal (Colley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

Actors

Participants within this study have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research specifically examined the effect of the pandemic on the administrative staff and the work they produced from the managerial perspective. The research also examined the effect the pandemic had on the managers themselves and their ability to effectively manage. To determine how American business managers adjusted to the transition from working in the office to a telecommuting staff, potential participants had to be managers from an American business that underwent this transition. These groups were chosen as they are excluded from current literature (Colley et al., 2020).

Teleworking Managers. The teleworking manager is described as an employee in a supervisory role that manages employees that telework. This study specifically included managers of clerical or administrative staff who teleworked during COVID-19. The teleworking manager may have worked remotely themselves or worked from the office while their staff worked remotely. This study sought to examine managerial styles and any shift in managerial styles during the shift to telework during COVID-19 (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Collins et al., 2016; Park & Cho, 2020).

Teleworking Clerical Staff. Teleworking clerical workers are defined as part of this study as clerical or administrative staff that shifted from working in an office environment to working remotely during COVID-19. According to Colley et al. (2020), lower-level employees have seen resistance from managers to work from home prior to the pandemic. The shift to telework may have been new to clerical staff that previously were not allowed to telework and this study has examined the efficiency and productivity of teleworking clerical staff during uncertain times to discover best practices that can be implemented for future planning.

Discussion of the Relationship Between the Actors

Clerical workers can work remotely (Ramsey, 1997). Clerical teleworkers exhibit more autonomy with proper technology (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015). Social support of teleworkers and a shift in managerial style is necessary for successful telework execution (Collins et al., 2016). Managers should reduce resistance to telework and trust employees to work from home with a level of autonomy (Kaplan et al., 2018). Teleworkers must also trust that their managers support them (Park & Cho, 2020). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal (Beno, 2018).

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

In summary, the conceptual framework of this qualitative research is based on three main concepts that arise from a review of the literature. These concepts all derive from experiences that occurred during a time of uncertainty and how to plan for future uncertainty to ensure organizational workflow. Management styles should be evaluated during the time of uncertainty to provide best practices to incorporate in uncertainty planning (Hoey et al., 2020). The availability of telecommuting must be available for all positions to ensure continuous workflow during a time of uncertainty that causes offices to close their brick-and-mortar doors. Managers and clerical workers with a social contract will result in productivity for the agency (Choi, 2020). Trust (Beno, 2018), reciprocity (Choi, 2020), and autonomy (Müller & Niessen, 2019) both lead to productivity and successful teleworking which may lead to a new normal for businesses (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

Definition of Terms

This study includes terms that may have a specific, intended definition within this study. For the ease of understanding the terms as the researcher intends them to be used within this study, a list of terms is provided below.

Autonomy. The term *autonomy* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of self-leadership (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Job Burnout. The term *job burnout* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of an employee who feels overwhelmed due to stress leading to lower productivity, possible increased absenteeism, and possible increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019).

Mindset. The term *mindset* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of one's perspective, behavior, and displayed acceptance or resistance of a specific topic (Michalski et al., 2020). An organizational culture can conflict with the managerial mindset regarding specific policies or practices.

Productivity. The term *productivity* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of the amount of vigor, dedication, engagement, and work-related absorption an employee exudes (Choi, 2020; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Torten et al., 2016).

Project-based. The term *project-based* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of describing a management style or approach to supervision that gauges an employee's production on the satisfactory completion of a project (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Reciprocity. The term *reciprocity* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of the social exchange between employer or workplace and employee (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020).

Reward. The term *reward* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of incentives and recognition provided by management to employees or self-reward produced by

the employee that encourages the employee to perform well (Cascio, 2000; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Social Isolation. The term *social isolation* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of an employee's feeling of invisibility, unnoticed work effort, or lack of support which can negatively impact productivity (Choi, 2020; Collins et al., 2016; Klopotek, 2017).

Technostress. The term *technostress* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of technology related stress, usually experienced by those who are less comfortable with digital tools, that can impact an employee's performance (Benlian, 2020; Bentata, 2020).

Telework. The term *telework* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of work that is performed away from the office. This term is found in literature and used interchangeably with *telecommute, work from home, flexible work arrangement,* and *smart working* (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bae et al., 2019; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Beno, 2018; Bolisani et al., 2020; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Klopotek, 2017; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Tapsell, 1999) but will mainly be referred to as *telework* in this study unless referencing literature with other terms.

Time-based. The term *time-based* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of describing a management style or approach to supervision that measures an employee's success by the number of hours worked (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Work/*Life Balance.* The term *work-life balance* is used throughout this study with the intended definition of a harmony between an employee's work responsibilities and their personal roles outside of work (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Specifically, for this study, work-life balance requires boundaries of the

teleworking employee and is desirable for a productive employee (Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Koslowski et al., 2019; Lautsch et al., 2009).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

This study includes assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that impacted the study. The researcher has reduced risk when presented with any. Existing assumptions included participants responding to interview questions truthfully and candidly. Participants were also assumed to be knowledgeable. All participants were assumed to have had similar experiences. Participants were assumed to have no motives nor incentives for partaking in this study. Risk mitigation has been applied to ensure that any potential risks were properly identified, assessed, evaluated, and monitored. Limitations to this study included any unknown conditions, factors, or issues that existed beyond the scope of the interview questions that may have adversely impacted the participant responses (Yin, 2018). Unknown conditions, factors, or issues may have existed at the participants' home, workplace, or other realm. The researcher reduced these potential unknown factors by conducting video conference calls for the interviews. Another limitation of this study was the sample size and response rate. This research was delimitated by the selected part of the population being office managers with secretaries that telework. Another delimitation of this study was the level of leadership that was researched and the regions the participants reside in. Outside the scope of this study were higher levels of leadership that do not directly manage office staff.

Assumptions

Case studies may be influenced by the researcher's assumptions (Farquhar, 2012). This study included assumptions that participants have responded to interview questions truthfully and candidly. It was also assumed that participants are knowledgeable. This study assumed that all participants have had the same or similar experiences. It was also assumed that the experiences of

the participants in this study are similar to the population as a whole. Participants had no motives nor incentives for participating in this study. Risk mitigation was implemented avoiding personal bias to ensure that any potential risks were properly identified, assessed, evaluated, and monitored (Guest et al., 2012). Yin (2018) stated that any threats to validity pose a threat to the case study.

It was assumed that each participant experienced some degree of social isolation while working remotely, role boundary difficulties, and social contract reciprocity. It was also assumed that managers of teleworkers did not have experience managing teleworking clerical staff prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and that managing teleworkers required a shift in management style. Choi (2020) stated that teleworkers may experience social isolation and this study assumes that the participants felt socially isolated while working remotely. This assumption poses a risk as not all participants may have worked in isolation which would impact the validity of the data. To mitigate this risk, the researcher has questioned participants on their feelings of social isolation while working remotely.

Manager participants and employee participants may have experienced a social contract reciprocity while teleworking that is assumed in this study (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020). This social contract would have required a shift in management style as managers relied on trusting teleworkers (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020). Assuming this would pose a risk to this study as incorrect data would deem this study invalid. To reduce this risk, the researcher has questioned participants about whether or not they felt trust played a role in work reciprocity. Managerial participants in this study are presumed to have little experience with managing teleworkers (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). This assumption poses a risk to this study as incomplete or incorrect data would invalidate this study. The researcher has reduced this risk by gaining ample information on the managers' previous experience.

This study assumed that participants with domestic or caretaker responsibilities had personal roles that may have interfered with teleworking. Delanoeije et al. (2019) found that teleworking parents faced difficulties with their personal roles while working from home. This study assumed that teleworkers may have been successful at balancing work-life boundaries (Choi, 2020; Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020; Müller & Niessen, 2019) but that they faced some difficulties (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Koslowski et al., 2019) or worked unusual or long hours adding to stress (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018). The researcher has limited these assumptions by requesting as much information as possible from participants in order to gain clarity on any areas that would have been presumed.

Limitations

Limitation of this study may include the volume of data, time restrictions, time consumption, difficulty of replication, and researcher bias. Limitations to this study included any unknown conditions, factors, or issues that exists beyond the scope of the interview questions that may impact the participant responses. These unknown conditions, factors, or issues may exist at the participants' home, workplace, or other realm (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Koslowski et al., 2019). These unknown factors may pose a risk to this study if any extraordinary factors skew the data collected and cause this study to be unable to replicate. A study that can be replicated is more likely to be valid (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This risk has been reduced by the researcher collecting as much information as possible from the participants.

Sample size and response rate also contribute to limitations of this study. The depth of analysis may be impacted by the available resources and number of responses. This study has drawn on the experiences of a sample of the population but does not reflect the population as a whole. This study may be limited to the generalization of results to the wider population (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) stated that the data collected from a case study should be analyzed to include the perspectives of possible rival explanations. This limitation of size poses a risk to this study by excluding other possible outcomes which would deem the study to be inconclusive. This risk has been mitigated by the researcher obtaining a diverse participant base to ensure that the participants better reflect the population as a whole.

Delimitations

This research is delimited by the selected part of the population as participants were office managers with secretaries that telework and secretaries that telework. This study has also been delimited by the level of leadership that was researched and the region the participants reside in. Participants were narrowed down to residents of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island. Higher levels of leadership that do not directly manage office staff were outside the scope of this study. The specificity of this study may have contributed to the delimitation of the study as case studies may be too narrow in scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study was delimitated by focusing on the impact and potential lasting effects of COVID-19 (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). This study aimed to be applicable to any future times of uncertain but focuses on the events of COVID-19. This study was delimitated by the forced telework which is more likely to be resented by teleworkers, according to Bathini and Kandathil (2019) and Palumbo (2020). Therefore, this study may not be applicable to telework under certain times. This study was delimitated by job types that can be performed remotely. Not all job types are suitable for telework (Cascio, 2000; Schur et al., 2020) and therefore this study does not apply to all jobs. Jobs that typically exist in the office or in a technological field are more suitable for telework (Klopotek, 2017).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to fill the gaps of literature on uncertainty management, telework, managing teleworkers, and clerical teleworkers. There is extensive literature on uncertainty management (Alvarez et al., 2018; Attar et al., 2016; Escudero et al., 2018; Kabalina et al., 2019; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019) and telework management (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bae et al., 2019; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Beno, 2018; Bolisani et al., 2020; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Klopotek, 2017; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Tapsell, 1999), but these topics are seldomly combined. Additionally, clerical workers have been omitted from the scope of uncertainty management and frequently overlooked in the scope of telework management. This study adds to the literature as well as benefits businesses to plan for future uncertain negative events. This study relates to the leadership cognate and identifies best business practices. This study also identifies Biblical implications of managing during uncertain times.

Reduction of Gaps

This study reduces gaps in the literature with the specificities it provides. Telework has been a common literary topic (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bae et al., 2019; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Beno, 2018; Bolisani et al., 2020; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Klopotek, 2017; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Tapsell, 1999), however, telework caused by uncertain times has not been extensively studied. The studies that have been conducted on forced telework due to a pandemic are broad in scope and are not focused on specifically the impact on clerical workers and managers of clerical workers (Bentata, 2020; Bolisani et al., 2020; Caroselli, 2020; Chang et al., 2020; Charbonneau

& Doberstein, 2020; Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2020; Forero et al., 2020; Hoey et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Parker, 2020; Schur et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Uncertainty management has been researched in a broad scope (Alvarez et al., 2018; Attar et al., 2016; Escudero et al., 2018; Kabalina et al., 2019; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019) although uncertainty management of forced telework has not been extensively researched. Management of teleworkers is also prevalent in the literature (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Klopotek, 2017; Parker, 2020; Ramsey, 1997; Tapsell, 1999) however, managing clerical workers specifically is missing from the literature.

This study specifies uncertainty management of clerical teleworkers due to a pandemic or other unknown force to telework, which is missing from the literature. Collins et al. (2016) researched the supervision of clerical teleworkers comparing the office-based workers to those who work from home. The Collins et al. study is related to clerical workers but does not include the aspect of uncertainty management nor managing style shift due to a pandemic or other unforeseen event. This study specifically fills the gap by analyzing the experiences of clerical staff to uncover best practices for use in future uncertainty planning within organizations that will apply to lower levels of the organization.

Implications for Biblical Integration

This study has implications for Bible integration as certain themes were discovered in the literature review. One theme, uncertainty, was prevalent in this study. Uncertainty is referenced in the Bible. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, James 1:2-4). The COVID-19 pandemic affected everyone around the world. It was a

cause of uncertainty as the facts of the pandemic unfolded over the year. The Bible calls for perseverance to get through trials and tribulations. The Bible also states, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, John 16:33). The pandemic and any future unforeseen events will cause trouble, but the Bible calls for people to have peace and overcome.

This study suggests that businesses create a plan for unforeseen future events that may negatively impact business continuance. The Bible includes claims on planning for such events. "The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 22:3). Knowing how businesses were impacted by COVID-19, businesses would be diligent to create a plan of action in the case of a repeat or similar event. The Bible also states, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 21:5). As mentioned in the Bible, planning will be beneficial as those who do not plan risk loss.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected people, not just businesses, and this study suggests that management styles should adjust for teleworkers and for those facing uncertainty. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, 1 Peter 5:2). The Bible references managing others out of the will to serve as this is purer than managing simply because it is one's job. The Bible also states, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your her" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 27:23). This study suggests that management styles be more personable to gain or maintain trust between employer and employee.

With many working at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, work and home boundaries may have been tested for some. This study suggests that a sudden shift from working in the office to working remotely may have been particularly difficult for employees who are parents. This study also suggests that employees may have to adjust work/home boundaries when teleworking while caretaking. On caretaking, the Bible states, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, 1 Timothy 5:8). This study suggests managers adjust management style to measure completion of tasks rather than measure employee time to accommodate teleworking employees who are caretakers.

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

This study benefits business practice by determining best practices that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding managing clerical staff shifting to telework. Identifying these best practices allows for a smoother transition in the case of a future negative event that impacts businesses. This is beneficial to businesses by allowing them to create uncertainty plans and implement them into their business strategies. Planning for the unforeseeable can be attempted by learning from the past experiences. Since the shift to telework may have lasting affects (Susskind et al., 2020) it would benefit businesses to prepare for all levels of the organization to be able to work remotely.

This study benefits business practice by exploring the concept of management styles requiring adjustment during uncertain times. Teleworkers and virtual teams require a different management style than office-based employees (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Ramsey, 1997; Solomon, 2001; Tapsell, 1999) and this study suggests that managers that did not manage teleworkers prior to COVID-19 may not have been prepared to manage

teleworkers. This study benefits business practices by identifying how to manage teleworkers on a clerical level that suddenly must telework when telework was previously not permitted for clerical workers.

This study relates to the researcher's cognate, leadership, as the acceptance of telework and the organizational culture that promotes telework begin at the leadership level (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). This study suggests that when telework benefits are fully understood, accepted, and promoted at the leadership level, managers will be more likely to support and allow telework for all levels of the organization. This study also suggests that preparing for all levels of the organization to telework will provide for an uncertainty plan in the case of a future event that could disrupt business practices. Leadership should implement uncertainty planning in business strategies.

Summary of Significance of the Study

In summary, this study reduced gaps in the literature with the specificities it provides combining uncertainty management (Alvarez et al., 2018; Attar et al., 2016; Escudero et al., 2018; Kabalina et al., 2019; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019), telework management (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bae et al., 2019; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Beno, 2018; Bolisani et al., 2020; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Klopotek, 2017; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Tapsell, 1999), and clerical workers. This study specifically researched uncertainty management of clerical teleworkers due to a pandemic or other unknown force to telework, which is missing from the literature. This study specifically fills the gap in the literature to analyze the experiences of clerical staff to uncover best practices for use in future uncertainty planning within organizations that will apply to lower levels of the organization. This study benefits business

practice and relates to the leadership cognate by determining best practices that were

implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding managing clerical staff shifting to

telework. Identifying these best practices allows for a smoother transition in the case of a future

negative event that impacts businesses. This is beneficial to businesses by allowing leaders to

create uncertainty plans and implement them into their business strategies.

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A review of the relevant literature is provided in this section. The professional and

academic literature includes an overview of current business practices that relate to the problem.

Concepts are presented relative to the problem such as the organizational benefits (Aguilera et

al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Cho, 2020; Choi, 2020; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Park et

al., 2017; Parker, 2020) and disadvantages of telework (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020).

Recurring concepts that arose include trust, social contract, autonomy, and a new normal.

Autonomy and self-leadership are commonly found among those permitted to telework despite

managerial resistance towards telework for fear that employees will not actually work (Aguilera

et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al.,

2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Trust is necessary between the staff and

managers for successful telework implementation (Beno, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho,

2020). It is believed that trust and autonomy play into the social contract of work reciprocity and

that if managers allow staff to work remotely, the staff will rise to the opportunity and be

productive (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020). With the recent shift to telework due to

COVID-19, it is believed that telework may be the new normal for business (Caroselli, 2020;

Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020; Colley et al., 2020; Hoey et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy,

2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020). Various theories which

include constructs and variables are provided in the literature review along with related studies. This study provides both anticipated and discovered themes in relation to the problem.

Business Practices

Currently, many organizations allow managers to decide if their subordinates are permitted to telework (Lautsch et al., 2009). Managers of teleworkers require proper training to understand the benefits and disadvantages of telework and how to properly communicate with remote staff and train employees on working remotely (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers of office-based staff often rely on time-based management although they should shift to a results-based management style for teleworking staff (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999).

Managers often believe that being in the office leads to better communication between employees and fear telework will decrease communication (Kaplan et al., 2018). The solution to this fear is to provide and allow clear communication between employees and managers to promote social reciprocity and productivity (Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Ideally, telework should be presented as an option although COVID-19 caused many to work remotely without much choice (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Beno, 2018; Colley et al., 2020; Palumbo, 2020). The mandatory nature of telework during the COVID-19 pandemic removed flexibility for many employees which is crucial for successful telework implementation (Colley et al., 2020).

Business practices currently include intensified work and extended working hours in exchange for telework. The social exchange contract leads to employees feeling obligated to accept intensified work while they work remotely (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Palumbo, 2020). Teleworkers also are likely to work longer or unusual hours while working remotely as part of

the social exchange contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Both extended work hours and intensified work lead to fatigue and can increase employee turnover (Palumbo, 2020).

The Problem

The sudden shift to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a management shift where managers went from time-based management to results-based management (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999) and were required to rely on technology (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015; Bentata, 2020; Berghout, 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Solomon, 2001) to communicate while demonstrating trust in the employees to actually work while at home. Mutual trust between managers and teleworkers is essential for successful telework execution (Beno, 2018). Communication should be clear of what is expected of the teleworker by the manager for best results (Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

During times of uncertainty, much like the COVID-19 pandemic, uncertainty management can be implemented to provide a growth mindset (Michalski et al., 2020), develop trust (Skiba & Wildman, 2019), reduce stress and job burnout (Wu et al., 2019), and provide flexibility (Attar et al., 2016). A growth mindset is suitable for uncertain times as organizational shared mindset can impact the decisions made during uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020). Resilience is crucial to the sustainability of an organization during abnormal or difficult times (Geciene, 2020). Flexibility is necessary during uncertain times to allow managers to adjust to the changes and create solutions to unforeseen problems (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020). Uncertain times may also require policy changes which managers must be flexible and ready to change (Kabalina et al., 2019). Uncertain times may cause stress, increase absenteeism, or lead to job burnout in employees (Wu et al., 2019). Trust is essential between employees and

managers to facilitate a social exchange contract leading to autonomy and increased employee engagement (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Uncertain times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, may cause positions that were otherwise discouraged from telework to work remotely. Some jobs are unsuitable for telework (Cascio, 2000; Schur et al., 2020). Office jobs or positions within a technology field are more suitable for telework (Klopotek, 2017). Lower-level employees traditionally have seen resistance to telework from managers (Colley et al., 2020). Although clerical workers are commonly not permitted to telework under normal circumstances, clerical teleworkers exhibit high autonomy with the proper technology (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015) and therefore should be permitted to telework outside of uncertain times (Ramsey, 1997). If clerical workers maintain the ability to work remotely after COVID-19, the way working activities are managed will be considerably impacted (Bolisani et al., 2020).

Concepts

Numerous concepts arose during a review of the professional and academic literature. Main concepts that this study focuses on are discussion of allowing more positions to telecommute, uncertainty requiring planning and implementation, and uncertainty requiring management style shift. The following is an extensive list of the concepts discovered in a review of the literature.

Telework. The term *telework* was coined in 1976 and has recently been used to universally describe work executed outside of the office (Choi, 2020). Typically, telework includes working or communicating through the use of technology (Choi, 2020). Telework presents several organizational benefits along with some organizational disadvantages.

Organizational Benefits. Telework is found to boost productivity and performance (Choi, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018). Allowing employees to telework can lead to reduced retention turnover within agencies (Choi, 2020). Employees that telework report higher employee satisfaction, work-life balance (Müller & Niessen, 2019) and exhibit increased productivity (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020). Telework fosters reciprocation between the organization or managers and the teleworker (Choi, 2020). When employees are permitted to telework, they tend to live up to expectations as a result of the social exchange theory (Choi, 2020). The ability to work from home fosters autonomy and self-leadership (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Teleworkers also exhibit increased motivation, engagement, and satisfaction (Picu & Dinu, 2016). Although managers may have concerns over whether teleworkers are actually working at home, studies show that teleworkers are highly productive given some independence (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Autonomous teleworkers may use self-rewards and goal setting to self-motivate (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Organizations can reduce overhead costs by reducing or eliminating office space (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020). Allowing telework eliminates the cost of energy, rent, and supplies for an office (Choi, 2020). Telework can also provide talent from beyond the immediate geographical area and reduce healthcare costs (Park & Cho, 2020). Corporate social responsibility can be improved by reducing the impact on the environment when employees work remotely eliminating a commute (Brinzea & Secara, 2017). Teleworkers are likely to accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). This flexible work arrangement includes telework, unusual or extended working hours, and the ability to make certain work decisions for themselves (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Emergency preparedness is a

relevant benefit of telework (Choi, 2020). Less commuters means less air pollution which is beneficial to the environment which in turn positively impacts corporate image (Aguilera et al., 2016).

Agency willingness to provide telework has positive effects on telework implementation and effectiveness (Choi, 2020). Regardless of employee decision to accept telework, organizational support of telework displays employee welfare and support and promotes employee satisfaction (Choi, 2020). Today, there are more dual-income households facing childcare challenges, single parents with childcare challenges, and commuters than ever before (Choi, 2020). Working remotely also decreases distractions that would occur in the workplace and workplace conflict (sexual harassment, office politics) (Klopotek, 2017; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Offering the option to telework allows for improved work-life balance of employees (Choi, 2020). Reducing or eliminating long commutes decreases employee intention to quit (Elfering et al., 2020). In some cases, allowing telework has increased agency revenue and improved customer service (Cascio, 2000). Teleworkers can use less paid time off ensuring more working days (Park & Cho, 2020). Money is not the only motivator for attracting talent as employees of today are looking for additional benefits to include telework options (Choi, 2020).

Organizational Disadvantages. Telework requires proper planning for proper execution (Tapsell, 1999). Telework requires a level of autonomy that makes it unsuitable for weak employees (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001). This should be taken into consideration during the recruitment process (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001). Telework may lead to abuse of privileges (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Role ambiguity may be a result of unclear expectations of telework managers (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). With recent increases in telework availability, employees are viewing telework as an entitlement and not offering it may negatively impact organizations (Delanoeije et

al., 2019). Intensified work, working long and odd hours, and unpaid overtime can disrupt

employee work-life balance and lead to employee intension to quit (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Perception plays a role in unsuccessful telework as decreased visibility, employee status,

perceived fairness, and perceived deprivation of opportunities cause negative feelings toward

telework (Choi, 2020). Regardless of organizational availability, managers must trust employees

working remotely or they will have a negative impact on telework or not allow it for their

subordinates (Cascio, 2000; Kaplan et al., 2018). Social isolation is another drawback of

telework (Cascio, 2000; Choi, 2020).

In cases where not all employees telework within an agency, issues could arise from the

employees in the office regarding fairness (Choi, 2020). Jealously arises if some employees are

permitted to telework while others are not (Cascio, 2000). Setup and maintenance costs of

telework (supplying technology, software licenses) should be considered as well as loss of cost

efficiencies when no longer buying shared office equipment (Cascio, 2000). If operating

globally, international business practices must be implemented to avoid cultural clashes (Cascio,

2000). A lack of camaraderie could exist among virtual teams (Picu & Dinu, 2016). With the

lack of in-person contact, miscommunications could arise (Picu & Dinu, 2016). Internet

connectivity issues could become an issue among teleworkers using their personal home Internet

(Picu & Dinu, 2016).

Intensified Work. Teleworking employees are likely to accept an intensified workload in

return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social

contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Palumbo, 2020). Intensified work leads to employee fatigue

and poor work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020). When the intensified work is perceived as an

expectation of employees, intention to quit increases (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Intensified

work often accompanied odd working hours, extended working hours, and unpaid overtime (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). When intensified work is perceived as voluntary, the social exchange contract promotes the intensified work as part of the ability to telework (Choi, 2020). Intensified work may impair teleworkers' ability to maintain boundaries between home life and work roles (Bolisani et al., 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020).

Extended Working Hours. Teleworkers often work extended hours due to an unspoken social contract between employee and employer in exchange for the flexible working arrangement (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Working odd hours negatively impacts employees with families damaging their work-life balance (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). In some cases, employees that worked extended hours would feel excluded from their families since they were working while their family slept, and they slept while their family was awake (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). This social isolation within the home could add to the social isolation of telework (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Choi, 2020).

Productivity. Telework leads to greater productivity (Choi, 2020; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Telework promotes work-life balance, motivation, and job satisfaction (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Telework promotes worker engagement and increases productivity, work-related absorption, vigor, and dedication (Palumbo, 2020). Since telework promotes productivity, organizations should invest in and allow telework as human capital theory suggests (Torten et al., 2016).

Autonomy and Self-leadership. As telework continues to gain in popularity, an evaluation of managing teleworkers is necessary since telework promotes self-leadership (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001). Weak employees are not suitable for telework (Bogdanski & Setliff,

2001). Traits that work well for teleworkers include problem-solving, organization, technical skills, conscientious, communication skills, self-starter, self-confidence, prompt, accurate, high standards, troubleshooting, strong work ethic, focus, self-discipline, loyal, prioritization skills, honesty, and quick learner (Ramsey, 1997). A level of autonomy and self-leadership is beneficial for successful telework execution (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Self-leadership was exhibited in employees on days they teleworked more than on days they worked in the office (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Autonomy is crucial to self-leadership strategies in teleworkers and promotes self-goal setting, self-control, and self-reward (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Attract Talent. Salary is not the only motivator for workers as teleworking attracts talent (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Organizations often provide telework as way to attract talent (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Providing telework can retain and motivate skilled new-generation employees (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). This is a departure from how baby-boomers were attracted to organizations (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Additionally, an increase in nontraditional families, including single parents and dual-income households, created childcare challenges which can be remedied by telework (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Telework is viewed as facilitating work-life balance (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Candidate characteristics should be taken into consideration as telework is not for every personality type (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001). When recruiting, managers can look for traits such as problem-solving, organization, technical skills, conscientious, communication skills, self-starter, self-confidence, prompt, accurate, high standards, troubleshooting, strong work ethic, focus, self-discipline, loyal, prioritization skills, honesty, and quick learner (Ramsey, 1997).

Employee Satisfaction and Reduced Turnover. Teleworking employees report higher employee satisfaction than those that work in the office (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Job satisfaction is related to positive work attitudes, increased performance, and overall well-being. This employee satisfaction is corelated to saving money on transportation, saving time on commute, increased work flexibility, and tailoring the job to one's needs (Müller & Niessen, 2019). The flexibility to tailoring the job to the employee's needs is related to improved work-life balance (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Telework leads to reduced retention turnover within agencies (Choi, 2020). Employees who execute intensified work, work long or odd hours, or work unpaid overtime may have lower employee satisfaction and are more likely to leave the organization (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Commute and Intension to Quit. Teleworking can increase productivity and alleviate costs and stress associated with commuting within teleworkers (Beno, 2018; Choi, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Long commutes between work and home negatively impact work-life boundaries and affective commitment in addition to increasing intention to quit (Elfering et al., 2020). The time between an employee's home and work is not considered part of the working hours nor is it compensated. Studies show longer commutes relate to increased intention to quit. Commuting attributes to physical symptoms that can negatively impact work performance (high blood pressure, tiredness). Commuting negatively affects work-life balance which impacts performance and employee satisfaction. Telework and autonomy may alleviate the negative effects of commute (Elfering et al., 2020). Young workers seek positions with short commutes (Klopotek, 2017).

Work/Life Balance and Boundaries. Teleworking employees report better work-life balance (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Teleworking employees also report less stress (Delanoeije &

Verbruggen, 2020). Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility within their work roles are likely to have better work-life balance (Choi, 2020). Employees are often attracted to the flexibility telework can provide for their work-life balance (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Teleworkers may face difficulty maintaining boundaries between work and home (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Koslowski et al., 2019) in part by working outside usual business hours (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018). Teleworkers may face difficulty unplugging from work technology causing work to encroach on home life (Koslowski et al., 2019). Difficulty unplugging can include checking work emails or returning work calls outside of work hours (Koslowski et al., 2019). Work may be interrupted to handle domestic tasks while at home the same way domestic tasks cannot be completed while at the office furthering a difficulty to balance work and home life (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Certain moderators exist that can fluctuate work-life balance between employees including personality traits, home responsibilities, and work demand (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Boundary theory suggests employees transition roles between work and home to manage this balance (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Managers should encourage work-life balance of teleworkers (Lautsch et al., 2009).

Personal Roles. Having a flexible work arrangement such as telework is intended to alleviate stressors to work-life balance, however, working from home presents its own challenges for those who play a personal role at home (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). The struggle between balancing home life and work from home is a paradox most evident in parents or caregivers who work from home (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Teleworking parents face challenges maintaining boundaries between work and home (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Teleworking parents with intensified work are more likely to struggle to maintain work-life balance (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). This paradox unintentionally leads to work intensification which damages work-life

balance (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). For parents, a blurred line may develop between their role within the family and their role as an employee (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Single parents fear discrimination against teleworking (Bae et al., 2019). Telework organizational availability does not always equal the managerial promotion of telework and single parents and females often feel discriminated against for utilizing telework (Bae et al., 2019). Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility are likely to manage work-life balance more successfully (Choi, 2020). Telework disrupts work-life balance for caregivers (Palumbo, 2020). This disruption occurs when boundaries are unable to be maintained between roles. Telework does boost productivity and creates an atmosphere for work intensification so those who work from home are part of an overworked culture that are subject to fatigue. This fatigue is likely to negatively impact work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020).

Age plays a role in successful teleworking as young workers, aged 18 to 30, desire flexible work arrangements and short commutes (Klopotek, 2017). Young workers report they are more likely to remain at an agency that allows telework (Klopotek, 2017). Gender also played a role in review of the literature. The number of women exceeds the number of men who graduate college however more of these qualified women than men leave the workforce to care for families (Brinzea & Secara, 2017). Women did not report a higher employee turnover than men (Choi, 2020). Women who leave the workforce to care for families can benefit from telework (Brinzea & Secara, 2017).

COVID-19 forced many jobs into telework positions that were previously unavailable for telework (Schur et al., 2020). The ability to perform jobs remotely may be beneficial to people with physical or mental impairments. Currently, managers often are less interested in hiring disabled applicants and those who are hired face negative treatment or expectations. The ability

to perform work remotely would positively impact many people with disabilities. Some companies are permanently implementing telework which is beneficial to people with disabilities that would have difficulty working in an office (Schur et al., 2020).

Support. The willingness of an organization to provide the option to telework has a positive impact on telework success (Choi, 2020). Even among employees who opted not to telework, simply providing telework increased positive agency outlooks (Choi, 2020). Leadership support and commitment to telework programs are necessary for successful telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Bureaucratic organizations with strict rules and high surveillance should adjust to trust the social exchange theory since managerial trust fosters positive telework outcomes (Choi, 2020). How the agency commits to telework programs directly affects how telework is perceived within the agency (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Even with the agency allowing telework, it must be accepted and supported at a managerial level for employees to positively view their agency's telework programs. Employees must feel as though offering telework is truly a concern for employee welfare and not a gesture for public relations. For support of telework to be positively perceived by employees, leadership support is necessary and telework should become a social norm within the agency (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

Trust. Telework is often provided by organizations but not implemented by managers due to lack of employee trust (Kaplan et al., 2018). Providing telework but not promoting its use is counterintuitive. Not supporting telework programs also makes the agency appear unconcerned with employee well-being. Ultimately, this leads to job burnout, withdrawal behavior, and a cynical view of the organization. Studies show that managers are often the barrier preventing employees to telework. One main reason managers discourage telework is lack of trust. Managers often believe employees will not work if left unsupervised (Kaplan et al.,

2018). Managers often assume teleworkers will not perform well if not in their presence (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers should reduce resistance to telework and trust employees to work from home with a level of autonomy (Kaplan et al., 2018). Teleworkers must also trust that their managers support them (Park & Cho, 2020). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal (Beno, 2018). A lack of managerial trust in turn negatively impacts the social contract exchange (Kaplan et al., 2018). Manager support leads to improved job performance (Beno, 2018).

   Social Contract and Reciprocity. Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee that facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, and autonomy (Choi, 2020). In essence, the agency allows the flexibility of telework and the employee reciprocates this favor with productivity and autonomy. Employees also exhibit higher commitment to the organization and lower intention to quit (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers are likely to accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Essentially, employees see certain allowances as a kindness to be repaid (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

   Managing Teleworkers. Organizations rely on manager discretion to handle telework (Lautsch et al., 2009). Managers often fear decreased employee performance if they allow workers to work remotely (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers of teleworkers should rely on the social exchange theory as employees who are permitted to work from home have increased productivity in part due to the reciprocity between employee and employer (Choi, 2020). Reducing manager reluctance of teleworking will improve telework success (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Managing teleworkers requires training employees on new programs and making them aware of new policies (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers who telework often

spend less time on tasks that can only be performed in the office (Park & Cho, 2020). Diversity

management and supportive leadership aid in successful telework implementation (Bae et al.,

2019). Employee engagement is essential for successful telework programs and managers should

not force telework on employees under normal circumstances (Beno, 2018). Managers should

encourage work-life balance of teleworkers to avoid fatigue and job burnout (Lautsch et al.,

2009). Managers should change their managerial practices when managing teleworkers

(Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers of teleworkers must shift from time-

and activity-based management to results-driven management as they will not be measuring time

but results (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999).

 Communication. Clear expectations between employees and employers are beneficial to

telework success (Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Maintaining cultural norms is

most beneficial to successful telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). A supportive workplace

adds to the unspoken communication that telework is acceptable. Teleworkers should also

receive a reward for good performance as initiative (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Managers fear

telework may cause a decrease in communication between them and employees (Kaplan et al.,

2018). Technology should be utilized to aid in telework communication. Video conferencing and

other richer media provide greater physical and nonverbal cues than email. Utilizing richer media

allows for nuances and extensive information to be communicated. Managers and employees

should have access to richer media technology and use these tools regularly to communicate

(Kaplan et al., 2018). Employee engagement is essential for successful telework programs and

managers cannot force telework on employees under normal circumstances (Beno, 2018).

 Reward. It is necessary to reward teleworkers for exemplary performance with incentives

and recognition (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Performance should be encouraged with appropriate

incentives and incentives should be received by teleworkers in a timely fashion (Cascio, 2000).

Managers can ask teleworkers what rewards they value and tailor reward programs around their

selections. Taking in employee reward choices will allow them to see the reward process as fair.

Rewards can celebrate milestones or completion of projects (Cascio, 2000). Self-reward can have

a positive influence on teleworkers (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Autonomous workers may use

self-goal setting and self-reward when they reach their goals. Self-rewards for autonomous

teleworkers may include taking a break or cooking lunch for example. These types of self-

rewards do not distract from the workday for autonomous teleworkers since they are highly

productive and would require a lunch break anyway (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

Flexibility. Flexibility is required for successful telework execution (Choi, 2020;

Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016).

Flexibility leads to greater productivity, autonomy, and improved work-life balance in

teleworkers (Choi, 2020; Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Teleworkers should be flexible with their

boundaries between personal life roles and work roles as working at home may blur the lines of

each role (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018). When work-life balance is disturbed during telework, this is

called boundary permeability. Boundary permeability should be met with flexibility. Work roles

may interfere with personal roles when working at home as personal roles may interfere with

work roles. Ideally, a flexible teleworker should be able to be disturbed by personal rolls

momentarily and then return to work. Studies show that male employees perceive these

interruptions from personal roles to be more of an interference than female employees perhaps

suggesting that women are more flexible (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018).

Perceived Fairness. Employees working in the office may perceive an unfairness

towards teleworkers (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Ramsey, 1997). Employees who are unable

to telework due to technical or management support often have a perception of unfairness, low job satisfaction, and intention to quit (Choi, 2020). Office-based employees who had to perform extra tasks for teleworkers when they are not in the office especially experience perceived unfairness (Collins et al., 2016). A lack of managerial support telework was perceived more often in women than in men (Choi, 2020). Managers fear allowing telework may cause perceived inequity among employees (Kaplan et al., 2018). To prevent perceived inequity among employees, managers may refrain from allowing any teleworking (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers can alleviate perceived fairness among coworkers (Collins et al., 2016). Managers should ensure that office-based employees do not experience resentment towards teleworkers and do not perceive unfairness with the telework programs (Ramsey, 1997).

Social Isolation. Telework requires adjustment to both work habits and socialization (Klopotek, 2017). Teleworkers may experience social isolation when working remotely (Choi, 2020). Since the invisibility of teleworkers is more possible, teleworkers may feel unnoticed or as if the volume of their work is unnoticed (Klopotek, 2017). Working remotely may negatively impact interpersonal relationships with coworkers leading to frustration, job dissatisfaction, and depression (Choi, 2020). Managers should ensure proper support to reduce the feeling of social isolation among teleworkers (Collins et al., 2016). Managers should promote active work relationships and technological communication tools to ensure frequent positive interactions with coworkers (Choi, 2020). Collins et al. (2016) suggested managers provide social support within the workplace and among teleworkers to improve well-being, decrease stress, and improve job satisfaction. The isolation of telework often leads to perceived lack of job opportunities (Collins et al., 2016). Managers should implement informal communication with teleworkers to reduce feelings of isolation (Collins et al., 2016).

Technology. Information and communication technologies are related to high performance work practices (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015). Combining technology with high performance work practices creates a super-additive effect on employee performance. Managers must ensure that teleworkers are trained on using technology properly to ensure they can be productive (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015). Managing projects remotely requires technology for virtual teams to work effectively together (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Solomon, 2001). Slack, Zoom, FlipGrid, and an Action Dashboard in Notion have been proven successful technology applications for virtual teams (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom had been over-saturated with users who had previously not heard of the service (Berghout, 2020). Berghout (2020) suggested hologram-based technology may be used in the future to facilitate online group chats. Technology can be viewed as a distraction to some and beneficial to others as new generations have a greater ability to adapt to digital tools (Bentata, 2020). The reliance on technology during COVID-19 is part of a technological or digital revolution that will lead to increased innovation (Berghout, 2020). This digital revolution identified many areas that require improvement (Bentata, 2020). Cybersecurity is an issue that each organization must address when teleworkers utilize third-party applications to work remotely (Berghout, 2020).

Surveillance. Surveillance of teleworkers may be necessary, but managers must be certain not to offput employees or telework programs will not attract or retain workers (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020). Location tracking and facial recognition applications raise an issue of privacy (Berghout, 2020). Privacy concerns exist with biometric surveillance to monitor whether or not teleworkers are working (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020). Device security is a concern when teleworkers use their own devices, and this should be addressed with policies (Trziszka, 2018). Trziszka (2018) suggested that it is concerning to allow employees to

use their personal device for their private use in addition to work purposes. Governing devices used for work purposes is essential for security purposes to prevent data leaks, prevent legal issues, and to provide technical support (Trziszka, 2018).

Technostress. Technology related stress can transfer from the office to an employee's home (Benlian, 2020). Benlian (2020) suggested that employees who work in technology-saturated fields are more likely to experience technology related stress, or technostress, and bring that stress home. This stress was found to have a negative impact on their partners or spouses (Benlian, 2020). Technology related stress can be experienced by those who are less comfortable with digital tools (Bentata, 2020). Younger generations who grew up using technology may be more comfortable using technology in the workplace (Bentata, 2020).

Job Type. Not all job types are suitable for telework (Cascio, 2000; Schur et al., 2020). Jobs that typically exist in the office or in a technology field are more suitable for telework (Klopotek, 2017). Telework is suitable for accounting, finance, and legal services but not for social work, retail, or manufacturing industries (Klopotek, 2017; Schur et al., 2020). Most jobs that can be performed over the phone, via computer, or in person can be telework positions (Cascio, 2000). New employees may require adjustment to the company culture before being able to successfully telework (Cascio, 2000).

Recommendations. For successful telework execution, it is pertinent for managers to acknowledge and support the stress employees may face while working remotely (Choi, 2020). Managers should maintain frequent interactions with teleworkers to ensure proper communication and show support. Technology should be utilized to maintain communication to strengthen work relationships and prevent social isolation among teleworkers. Managers must trust teleworkers to execute their job and not be concerned over their lack of oversight. Managers

should alleviate any tension between teleworkers and office-based workers by offering the ability

to telework to all employees if possible (Choi, 2020). Organizations must set clear rules for

which employees are eligible to telework (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Managers must learn to embrace

telework and provide encouragement and support of telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

Identifying the best practices can be essential for successful telework (Forero et al., 2020). Best

practices may include the creation and implementation of routines, organization, sufficient home

office environment, adequate multitasking, networking, work-life balance, training on new

programs and platforms, responsibility, and enhancing productivity. It is essential the

teleworkers and managers of teleworkers learn from the challenges they encounter during

telework to improve upon it (Forero et al., 2020).

Teleworking Clerical Employees. Organizations with more clerical employees reported

high rates of voluntary turnover (Choi, 2020). However, clerical employees are less likely to quit

than administrators and professionals (Choi, 2020). Lower-level employees have seen resistance

from managers to work from home (Colley et al., 2020). Social support of teleworkers and a shift

in managerial style is necessary for successful telework execution (Collins et al., 2016). Clerical

teleworkers exhibit more autonomy with proper technology (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015).

Clerical workers are capable of remote work (Ramsey, 1997). If clerical workers remain

teleworkers after COVID-19, the way working activities are managed will be considerably

impacted (Bolisani et al., 2020).

Uncertainty Management. Uncertain times require specific management including the

right mindset, stress management, and trust (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba &

Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019). Uncertainty management encompasses crisis management and

preparing for future scenarios (Attar et al., 2016). Uncertainty management is reflective,

examining how past experiences were handled and how those experiences could be improved upon for similar future scenarios since it is difficult to prepare for the unknown. Personal style and tact could be considered in uncertainty management (Attar et al., 2016). Specifically, someone who possesses a growth mindset is more successful in uncertainty management (Michalski et al., 2020). Omitting uncertainty management studies from the concepts of management leads to managers who are unable to make real-time decisions (Alvarez et al., 2018). It is important to distinguish uncertainty management from risk management as risk management deals with decision makers understanding the possible outcomes of their decision and certainly knowing the outcome was unknown. Uncertainty management is when decision makers are uncertain of the possible outcomes of their possible decision and the probability of the possible outcomes occurring (Alvarez et al., 2018).

   Growth Mindset. Mindset during uncertain times impacts the outcomes of decisions made (Michalski et al., 2020). A growth mindset is most suitable for uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020). Sustainability and resilience play a crucial role during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Organizational resilience can be either operational or strategic. Organizational resilience is passive and focused on overcoming the crisis and returning to status quo by interpreting the situation and adapting to it. Strategic resilience is active and turns a crisis into an opportunity swiftly. Organizational size impacts the ability to thrive during uncertain times. Small and medium-sized organizations do not fare as well as large organizations through uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Geciene (2020) found that larger organizations fare better during uncertain times due to the establishment of organizational governance processes, human resources management, risk management procedures, technological development, strategic planning, knowledge development, social networks, organizational culture, and ability to be innovative and

have initiative. These factors large organizations tend to contain add to the resilience of the organization (Geciene, 2020). Studies on uncertainty gave way to studies on risk although uncertainty management is essential (Alvarez et al., 2018).

Flexibility. Uncertain environments require flexibility as change is inevitable (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020). Organizational structure may contribute to ability to manage uncertainty (Geciene, 2020). Hierarchal structures which are linear face difficulty when attempting to manage uncertainty. Both organic/adaptive organizations and modern organizational structures (virtual, network, and spherical modular) are best suited to handle uncertainty (Geciene, 2020). Managers will need to think on their feet during uncertain times (Attar et al., 2016). Managers must transform uncertain situations into manageable solutions and handle the anxiety that accompanies uncertainty (Attar et al., 2016). Exogenous uncertainty exists when there is a lack of knowledge of a situation and endogenous uncertainty is based on a decision-maker's investment to gain accuracy of a situation and reinforce the network (Escudero et al., 2018). Organizations must be flexible during uncertain times as policies may require adjustments (Kabalina et al., 2019). Outsourcing human resources activities increases organizational flexibility (Kabalina et al., 2019). Some changes that might be required include workload distribution, regular assessments, new skill development, strengthening organizational culture, business continuity, and problem solving (Geciene, 2020).

Stress and Job Burnout. During uncertain times, employees may face increased stress leading to job burnout, higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019). Workplace stress stemming from abusive supervisors can add strain on workers leading to negative organizational outcomes. Uncertainty can include role ambiguity, role overload, and/or economic hardship which can add to employee stress. Managers should avoid

passing their stress onto employees during uncertain times to reduce or eliminate job burnout among employees. Uncertain times may negatively impact employees' personal lives and personal finances as part of an economic hardship. Economic hardships add to job stressors and job burnout (Wu et al., 2019).

Trust. Supervisor trust and felt trust impact employees during uncertain times (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Autonomy and the social exchange theory are factors during uncertain times and managers must trust their employees are performing well. Trust impacts turnover intention and employee engagement. Trust between supervisor and employee impacts cooperation, creativity, job satisfaction, resource sharing, engagement, prosocial behaviors, job performance, and retention. An employee's perception of trust from their manager impacts their loyalty, organizational citizenship, and task performance. This *felt trust* enhances feelings of competence and autonomy leading to motivation and self-determination. A positive relationship between trust and workplace certainty exists. Trust aids in maintaining certainty during uncertain times (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Working at Home During COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift to telework for many and may have lasting impacts on the way business is conducted causing a new normal (Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Organizations have had to adjust to the shift to telework to maintain productivity (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Project management during the pandemic had to include managing remote projects by utilizing new forms of technology and communication (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Working at home during the pandemic required employee support as many employees were working while homeschooling or caretaking (Colley et al., 2020).

Chang et al. (2020) believed that COVID-19 brought on task setbacks, or *C19 task setbacks*, which could be identified as additional duties that were required due to the pandemic. Examples of C19 task setbacks include educators working virtually, exponential patients in hospitals for healthcare professionals to tend to, and government workers processing more cases for unemployment (Chang et al., 2020). These setbacks are specific to COVID-19, but this study will consider that future uncertain times can come with their own setbacks. Chang et al. considered that there existed a volatile workflow during COVID-19 and a result of this volatility, a conservation of resources occurred. The conservation of resources refers to employees being exhausted from the C19 task setbacks in addition to the other stresses of the pandemic and lifestyle changes and experiencing next-day work withdrawal. Withdrawal causes employees to avoid job duties in an attempt to avoid the stress associated with work. Withdrawal is more likely experienced by those who perceive little control. To avoid this behavior, employees ideally should choose whether to telework or not as well as gain control in aspect of their job. A smooth transition will also aid in the performance and stress of employees (Chang et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, work-life balance became a concern as workers transitioned to working from home around the world (Palumbo, 2020). Although telework does have positive effects on both the employee and the organization, forced or unplanned telework is less productive. Telework that is forced due to natural disasters or unforeseen events has negative impacts on the workers and organizations. Working from home during the pandemic increased work intensification, fatigue, and unusual working hours. Caregivers, in particular, were negatively impacted by attempting to balance work and life duties during COVID-19 despite the fact that telework normally boosts productivity (Palumbo, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, work surveillance and privacy became issues as organizations aimed to track employee activity using digital footprint technologies (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020). Forero et al. (2020) suggested identifying the best practices used during COVID-19 moving forward. Tracking hours worked during COVID-19 became an issue many organizations needed to address (Hoey et al., 2020). The shift to working from home may have highlighted the existing societal disparities as some were unable to shift to telework due to lack of Internet access (Susskind et al., 2020). While the pandemic may force a new way of life, one that is more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient, some fear we may return to life as it was (Susskind et al., 2020).

New Normal for Business. COVID-19 lead to uncertainty in businesses globally (Crowley et al., 2020). The shift to working at home for so many businesses due to COVID-19 may have a lasting impact on the way work is conducted (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Technology has aided in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Video conference calls facilitate personal communication among virtual teams (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Conservation of resources theory lends to the exhaustion employees face after teleworking and balancing home life during COVID-19. Working from home during COVID-19 imposes increased stress from poor work-life balance that is not present during normal circumstances (Palumbo, 2020). Surveillance is an issue with managers who wish to monitor teleworkers but exhaustion with the pandemic may cause employees to be too exhausted to argue with new surveillance measures (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020). Policies on masks and teleworking hours are new for businesses (Hoey et al., 2020). Temperature screenings may stay a policy for some time to come (Susskind et al., 2020). Effective leadership is crucial during

COVID-19 (Caroselli, 2020). Crisis Management Teams can help address issues at the onset of an unforeseen problem (Thielsch et al., 2020).

For workers with disabilities, the shift to telework may have leveled the workforce (Schur et al., 2020). Positions that were previously impossible for people with disabilities to perform in an office setting have proven to be able to be performed at home. As some companies are moving to permanently implement working from home opportunities, more jobs become available for people with disabilities who would have otherwise not have been able to work in an office setting to work from home. As long as the telework option is not forced, working from home leads to reduced stress and improved work-life balance. Telework may lead organizations to seek disabled employees for positions that can be completed outside the office (Schur et al., 2020).

The global shift to telework is seen as a technological revolution (Berghout, 2020). This revolution may impact not only the general workforce but improve and expand virtual education as well (Berghout, 2020). In precaution of future pandemics or outbreaks, the concept of social distancing may have lasting impact on the open floor plans that offices were previously adopting (Parker, 2020). Shared workspaces and shared office equipment may be reconsidered for employees that return to the office. The need for office redesign, frequent sanitation, touch-free technology, and motion sensors on doors may cost more than organizations care to spend when telework is a viable option (Parker, 2020). Management styles will require a shift from time-based and activity-based management of in-office employees to results-based management of teleworkers (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). If telework remains for clerical workers after the pandemic, there will be a significant impact to managing work activities (Bolisani et al., 2020).

Telework as an Employee Option. Teleworking employees that are forced to telework or feel deceived into teleworking are likely to have negative views towards the organization and intension to quit (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Palumbo, 2020). Telework that is forced may produce negative sensations towards work assignments especially when teleworking is forced due to unforeseen and contingent events, such as natural disasters (Palumbo, 2020). COVID-19 forced many employees into telework arrangements (Colley et al., 2020). The mandatory telework guidelines removed the aspect of flexibility for many employees. Teleworkers have increased stress under the unforeseen pandemic and sudden, forceful shift into working from home. Managerial support is crucial to teleworkers during the uncertain time of the pandemic. Flexibility is crucial for successful telework during COVID-19. Ideally, telework should be offered to employees as an option but not forced upon them as occurred during the pandemic. Lower-level employees who usually see resistance to telework availability continued to see some resistance during the pandemic (Colley et al., 2020).

Theories

Several theories arose during a review of the academic and professional literature including a new normal for business (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020), trust (Beno, 2018), social contract and reciprocity (Choi, 2020), and autonomy (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). The theory of a new normal arising derives from the experiences during COVID-19 and how this time will have lasting affects (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). The theory of trust relates to manager-employee trust and its effects on teleworking performance (Beno, 2018). Social contract relates to reciprocity and these theories claim that teleworkers will work hard if permitted to telework and this arrangement is an unspoken

agreement (Choi, 2020). The autonomy theory derives from the self-leadership that teleworkers exhibit (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019).

New Normal. The researcher of this study theorized that managers of clerical teleworkers during COVID-19 discovered best practices for allowing clerical employees to work from home. These best practices will be helpful to implement if businesses decide to continue allowing telework for positions that previously were discouraged from telework. Best practices during uncertain times can be implemented into business planning to ensure smooth transitions during future uncertain times (Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020). Susskind et al. (2020) suggested that there will be a global revolution to the way people work and a digital transformation.

Trust. Another theory is that clerical workers are capable of productively teleworking despite the lack of managerial support to allow clerical workers to work remotely under normal circumstances (Beno, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Teleworkers must also trust that their managers support them (Park & Cho, 2020). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal (Beno, 2018). Trust impacts turnover intention and employee engagement (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Organizations desiring telework program implementation must address manager mistrust and resistance to allow telework (Kaplan et al., 2018). The availability of telework programs is not enough; managers must promote telework program use (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers must trust that their physical presence is not needed for employees to be productive (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers often fear employees use the Internet for personal purposes during work hours (Park & Cho, 2020). Managers will be required

to adjust management style for teleworkers and introduce more trust of teleworking employees (Park & Cho, 2020). Teleworkers who feel their supervisors trust them have increased creativity, job satisfaction, job performance, corporation, resource sharing, prosocial behaviors, engagement, and increased retention (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Felt trust increases loyalty, task performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Social Contract and Reciprocity. Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee that facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, and autonomy (Choi, 2020). The social contract is an unspoken agreement that occurs when employees are permitted to telework leading to the development of positive attitudes towards their organization and positive organizational outcomes occur. Pleased teleworkers lead to reduced employee turnover, improved recruitment, and increased productivity. The social contract relates to the manager-employee relationship. When employees perceive managerial support for their general welfare, they reciprocate with positive work attitudes. This leads to increased job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and decreased desire to quit (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers are likely to accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Autonomy. A level of autonomy and self-leadership is beneficial for successful telework execution (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Self-leadership was exhibited in employees on days they teleworked more so than on days they worked in the office (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Self-leadership encompasses self-reward, self-punishment, self-goal setting, self-cueing, and self-evaluation beyond autonomous leadership. With teleworkers displaying autonomy, managers are not required to manage teleworkers time while working

remotely (Müller & Niessen, 2019). Teleworking may not be suitable for personalities that are less self-disciplined (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001). Weak employees may become weaker without direct managerial guidance as provided within the office. During the recruitment process, managers should consider if employees will be allowed to telework and if the candidates possess self-disciplinary skills. Managers of teleworkers will also be required to obtain the appropriate management skills to handle autonomous teleworkers (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001).

Constructs and Variables

The constructs of the literature review include managing teleworkers (Beno, 2018; Cascio, 2000; Collins et al., 2016; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020; Parker, 2020; Ramsey, 1997; Tapsell, 1999) and uncertain times (Alvarez et al., 2018; Attar et al., 2016; Geciene, 2020; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019) as broad concepts. Uncertain times as a concept is viewed as managing during uncertain times. The independent variable for both constructs is leadership style.

Telework Management. This construct is a broad concept that appeared during a review of the literature. Managing teleworkers requires leadership support and commitment to telework programs in order to be successful (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Even if an agency allows telework, it must be accepted and supported at a managerial level for employees to positively view their agency's telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Telework should become a social norm within the agency (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). It is counterproductive to provide telework at an agency level but dissuade its use at a managerial level (Kaplan et al., 2018). Agencies that do not support telework appear unconcerned with employee well-being (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers often discourage telework due to lack of trust as they believe employees will not work if left

unsupervised assuming teleworkers will not perform well if not in their presence (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers should reduce resistance to telework and trust employees to work from home since telework increases autonomy (Kaplan et al., 2018). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal for successful telework execution and leads to improved job performance (Beno, 2018). A lack of managerial trust negatively impacts the social contract exchange (Kaplan et al., 2018). A positive social contract exchange between manager and teleworker leads to increased organizational commitment, decreased intention to clip, reduced turnover, increased autonomy, and increased productivity (Choi, 2020).

Leadership Style. This independent variable appeared during a review of the literature. Leadership style of teleworkers differs from managing office-based employees. Managers of teleworkers must train employees on new programs and make them aware of new policies (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers of teleworkers should engage employees and shift from time and activity-based management to results-driven management (Beno, 2018; Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). To prevent fatigue and job burnout in teleworkers, managers should encourage and support work-life balance (Lautsch et al., 2009). Managers should maintain clear expectations of teleworkers and reward good performance (Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Managers can take into consideration what rewards teleworkers value and tailor reward programs around their selections (Cascio, 2000). Technology should be used to maintain sufficient communication between teleworkers and managers (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers should ensure proper support to reduce social isolation among teleworkers by implementing informal communication (Collins et al., 2016). Managers should promote active work relationships and technological communication tools among employees (Choi, 2020). Managers can alleviate perceived fairness among coworkers by

ensuring that office-based employees do not experience resentment towards teleworkers and do

not perceive unfairness with the telework programs (Collins et al., 2016; Ramsey, 1997).

      Uncertain Times. This construct is a broad concept that appeared during a review of the

literature. Uncertain times require specific management skills including a growth mindset, stress

management, and trust (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et

al., 2019). Uncertainty management includes crisis management and preparing for future

scenarios (Attar et al., 2016). Uncertainty management is reflective and examines how past

experiences were handled to improve upon for similar future scenarios since it is difficult to

prepare for the unknown (Attar et al., 2016). Uncertainty management is when decision makers

are uncertain of the possible outcomes of their possible decision and the probability of the

possible outcomes occurring (Alvarez et al., 2018). A growth mindset is most suitable for

uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020) as sustainability and resilience play a crucial role during

uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Organizational resilience during uncertain times can be either

operational or strategic. Organizational resilience is passive and centered on overcoming the

crisis and returning to existing state of affairs by interpreting the situation and adapting to it.

Strategic resilience is active and shifts a crisis into an opportunity rapidly. Organizational size

impacts the ability to succeed during uncertain times. Small and medium-sized organizations do

not perform as well as large organizations through uncertain times. Geciene (2020) finds that

larger organizations perform better during uncertain times due to the establishment of

organizational governance processes, human resources management, risk management

procedures, technological development, strategic planning, knowledge development, social

networks, organizational culture, and ability to be innovative and have initiative. Since large

organizations tend to contain these factors, they tend to be more resilient during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020).

Leadership Style. This independent variable appeared during a review of the literature. Leadership style during uncertain times is a variable of the construct of uncertain times. The structure of an organization contributes to the ability to manage uncertainty (Geciene, 2020). Hierarchal structures, which are linear, face difficulty when attempting to manage uncertainty. Both organic/adaptive organizations and modern organizational structures are best suited to handle uncertainty (Geciene, 2020). Managers will need to think spontaneously and be flexible during uncertain times (Attar et al., 2016). Managers must transform uncertain situations into manageable solutions and handle the stress that accompanies uncertainty for both themselves and teleworkers (Attar et al., 2016). Manager flexibility may include changes to workload distribution, regular assessments, new skill development, strengthening organizational culture, business continuity, and problem solving (Geciene, 2020). Uncertain times may cause employee stress leading to job burnout, higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019). Managers must not transfer their stress onto employees during uncertain times to reduce or eliminate job burnout among employees. Uncertain times may negatively impact employees' personal lives and personal finances as part of an economic hardship which in turn add to job stressors and job burnout (Wu et al., 2019). Positive manager-employee relations is helpful to maintain trust and workplace certainty (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Trust facilitates certainty during uncertain times (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

Related Studies

A United Kingdom study was conducted on clerical staff focusing on the effect of teleworking employees on in-office employees (Collins et al., 2016). Social support of

teleworkers and a shift in managerial style was necessary for successful telework execution. Issues that arose were perceived fairness and social isolation while manager trust was a beneficial factor (Collins et al., 2016).

Managing teleworkers requires training employees on new programs and making them aware of new policies (Park & Cho, 2020). Managers who telework often spend less time on tasks that can only be performed in the office. Managers should change their managerial practices when managing teleworkers. Employees working in the office may perceive an unfairness towards teleworkers which managers should aim to remedy (Park & Cho, 2020).

Allowing employees to telework leads to reduced retention turnover within agencies (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers exhibit increased productivity. Organizations can reduce overhead costs by reducing or eliminating office space. Perception plays a role in unsuccessful telework as decreased visibility, employee status, perceived fairness, and perceived deprivation of opportunities cause negative feelings toward telework. Social isolation is another drawback of telework. A level of autonomy and self-leadership is beneficial for successful telework execution. Organizations often provide telework as way to attract talent. Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility within their work roles are likely to have better work-life balance. Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility are likely to manage work-life balance more successfully. Women did not report a higher employee turnover than men. The willingness of an organization to provide the option to telework has a positive impact on telework success. Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee that facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, and autonomy. Managers of teleworkers should rely on the social exchange theory as employees who are permitted to work from home have increased productivity in part due to the reciprocity between employee and employer (Choi, 2020).

Flexibility is required for successful telework execution. Employees working in the office may perceive an unfairness towards teleworkers. Teleworkers may experience social isolation when working remotely. For successful telework execution, it is pertinent for managers to acknowledge and support the stress employees may face while working remotely. Managers should maintain frequent interactions with teleworkers to ensure proper communication and show support. Organizations with more clerical employees reported high rates of voluntary turnover. However, clerical employees are less likely to quit than administrators and professionals (Choi, 2020).

Anticipated and Discovered Themes

Anticipated Themes. The researcher anticipated certain themes to emerge during this study. A successful transition from office-based work to telework among clerical workers was anticipated with the help of technology (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). It was also anticipated that a new normal will emerge and positions that were previously discouraged to telework, but were forced to due to COVID-19, will remain telework positions (Susskind et al., 2020).

Successful Transition. It was anticipated that managers were able to successfully shift clerical work from the office to allow clerical staff to work from home (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Technology has aided in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers. Video conference calls facilitate personal communication among virtual teams (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020).

New Normal. It was also anticipated that job tasks that were previous seen as only capable of being conducted in the office (filing, meetings, and forms) were transitioned so that they could be completed via a computer. It was also anticipated that managers of clerical workers will be more likely to allow telework post-COVID-19. The shift to working at home for so many

businesses due to COVID-19 may have a lasting impact on the way work is conducted (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

   Discovered Themes. The researcher has discovered certain themes upon a review of the academic and professional literature. The advantages of telework were discovered to include cost reduction, increased productivity, and increased employee satisfaction (Choi, 2020). The disadvantages of telework were also discovered to include work-life boundary issues mainly for caregivers and parents (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). A growth mindset being beneficial to uncertainty management was also discovered (Michalski et al., 2020). Discovered themes included organizational benefits, managing teleworkers, and new normal. Within these broad themes existed various concepts that contributed to each theme. The researcher notes that due to the lack of clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during the pandemic, perceived fairness was not discovered in the findings. Also included in the literature review but excluded from the findings was the concept of autonomy.

   Advantages of Telework. A review of the literature uncovered themes of telework such as the advantages (increased productivity, cost effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and reduced turnover). Telework leads to reduced retention turnover within agencies (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers are likely to accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Employees that telework report higher employee satisfaction (Müller & Niessen, 2019), work-life balance (Müller & Niessen, 2019), and exhibit increased productivity (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020). Organizations can reduce overhead costs by reducing or eliminating office space (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020). Telework can also provide talent from beyond the immediate geographical area and reduce healthcare costs (Park & Cho, 2020).

Corporate social responsibility can be improved by reducing the impact on the environment when employees work remotely eliminating a commute (Brinzea & Secara, 2017).

Disadvantages of Telework. Telework disadvantages were also discovered (inconsistencies with work-life balance depending on personal roles, managerial lack of support, and stress). Intensified work, working long and odd hours, and unpaid overtime can disrupt employee work-life balance and lead to employee intension to quit (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Perception plays a role in unsuccessful telework as decreased visibility, employee status, perceived fairness, and perceived deprivation of opportunities cause negative feelings toward telework (Choi, 2020). Social isolation is another drawback of telework (Choi, 2020).

Uncertainty Management. The literature review also uncovered themes with uncertainty management such as the requirement of managerial support and organizational growth mindset. Mindset during uncertain times impacts the outcomes of decisions made (Michalski et al., 2020). A growth mindset is most suitable for uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020). Sustainability and resilience play a crucial role during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Organizational resilience can be either operational or strategic. Organizational size impacts ability to thrive during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Studies on uncertainty gave way to studies on risk although uncertainty management is essential (Alvarez et al., 2018).

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

Telework has many organizational advantages such as increased productivity, cost effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and reduced turnover (Choi, 2020). Telework also positively impacts corporate social responsibility and attracts and retains talent (Brinzea & Secara, 2017). Telework also comes with disadvantages such as inconsistencies with work-life balance depending on personal roles (Choi, 2020). Telework may also come with managerial

lack of support and stress (Choi, 2020). Stress can also accompany uncertain times (Wu et al., 2019). Uncertainty management requires managerial support and an organizational growth mindset (Michalski et al., 2020). Managers must ensure employees do not experience job burnout or this can lead to productivity loss or increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019). A digital revolution occurred because of COVID-19 (Susskind et al., 2020). The effects of the shift to telework will likely continue long after the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). Many positions were ineligible for telework prior to COVID-19 (Colley et al., 2020). The shift to telework that forced many into remote positions during the pandemic demonstrated that lower-level positions could be performed remotely (Colley et al., 2020). Clerical workers are capable of telework and exhibit the same autonomy as higher-level positions (Ramsey, 1997). Managers of teleworking clerical workers who can identify best practices of successful telework during the pandemic may help prove that clerical workers can telework under normal circumstances. Best practices identified during COVID-19 can lend to emergency management planning or uncertainty planning which helps with organizational business continuity (Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020). Organizations can plan for uncertain times to ensure that all positions within the organization can prosper despite unforeseen future events (Colley et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020; Thielsch et al., 2020). Managers of teleworkers require a shift in management style from the style used within the office (Choi, 2020). Office-based employees require time- or activity-based management and more face-to-face communication (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). Teleworkers succeed via autonomy and through technology and require project-based management (Choi, 2020). Managers should also support teleworkers to avoid social isolation

(Choi, 2020). Uncertain times require a shift in management style as well (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019). Uncertain times increase stress among employees, which requires more support from management (Attar et al., 2016; Michalski et al., 2020; Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Wu et al., 2019). Managers can use best practices from the COVID-19 pandemic to learn how to shift management styles during uncertain times or for teleworkers for future unforeseen events (Susskind et al., 2020).

In summary, Section 1 comprises an introduction to the study and its significance to business practices. COVID-19 caused a negative impact on unprepared businesses when forced to suddenly shift to allowing employees to work remotely. Managers were faced with a shift in management styles that they were ill-prepared for. Clerical employees who were previously not permitted to telework may have been forced to telework because of COVID-19. The general and specific statements identify the need for this research along with the reduction of gaps in the literature. Literature on related topics relate to uncertain times or telework but a gap in the literature exists when these two topics are combined. Furthermore, managing teleworkers was previously researched, but managing clerical teleworkers was excluded from the literature. This study analyzes the experiences of office managers and clerical workers regarding a sudden shift to telework due to a pandemic. Clerical workers who were previously excluded from telework required a shift to telework due to the pandemic. Managers of clerical workers required a shift in management styles to effectively manage newly teleworking clerical staff. This study analyzes these experiences. Analyzing these experiences will allow for a creation of best practices that businesses can compile. A compilation of best practices produced from these participants will provide for an implementation plan in uncertainty management. These experiences can provide insight into how to better plan in the case of another unforeseen, negative impact to business

continuity. This study utilized a multiple case study design to analyze these experiences to benefit organizational uncertainty planning and to expand on the existing literature. This study utilized a pragmatism paradigm as the research aims to solve the problems presented (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are identified to prevent added risk of error in presenting the data. Limitations included the small sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The following section will include the research project. In this next section, the role of the researcher has been defined stating what actions the researcher will take to conduct the study. A discussion of bracketing to avoid personal bias will be included. The research methodology will be presented. The appropriateness of the flexible design and chosen method will be explained. The appropriateness of the chosen method for triangulation for the research study has been presented. Operational definitions for each variable along with variable type will be presented. The participants will be described along with an explanation of who is eligible to be included and why they are eligible. Included in the next section is the population and sampling. A discussion of the population has been included along with why they are appropriate for the research study and what makes them eligible participants. The size of the population has been presented along with the sampling method, sample frame, and discussion of the sample size. The data collection and analysis has been presented in the next section. The data collection plan includes the plan of data collection and how the researcher plans to collect the data. A discussion of why this is an appropriate plan for the research project is also be included. Any member checking and follow up interviews that were performed will also be included in the next section. Instruments used to collect data, including interview guides, surveys, archive data, and a discussion of each of these will be included in the next section. The next section includes an explanation of how data was organized and gathered. A discussion of why the data organization

plan is appropriate for the research project is included. A data analysis presents any emergent ideas, coding themes, interpretations, data representation, reliability, bracketing, and validity.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 of this study comprises of a description of the role of the researcher. The research methodology is presented in this section. A description of the participants and an explanation of their selection is also included in this section. The population and sampling methods are described within this section. Finally, a detailed account of the data collection process, data organization process, data analysis process, and discussion of reliability and validity of the data will be presented in this section.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative research is to ascertain, based on their handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, how managers of clerical staff can most effectively transition from working in the office to telecommuting within the United States if necessitated by future conditions. Simply put, the purpose of this research is to add to the body of knowledge pertaining to shifting management styles during times of uncertainty, specifically a shift to telecommuting in circumstances that would normally not allow it, such as administrative positions that are office-based. The purpose of this research is to discover how management styles shift in relation to clerical staff and administrative staff during a transition from working in the office to working from home resulting in business disruption to positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions and how to prepare for future similar situations using a case study design.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was responsible for formulating research questions (Hatcher, 2011). The researcher was responsible for identifying, contacting, and interviewing participants, properly documenting the data collected, transcribing interviews, analyzing data, and presenting data (Fink, 2000). Bracketing has been utilized to avoid personal bias. In qualitative research, bracketing can be useful to exclude researcher assumptions from skewing the data (Fischer, 2009). The researcher has suppressed personal history, personal knowledge, academic reflections, culture, and experience from the research study (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Some researchers have attempted to manipulate variables in their favor (Hatcher, 2011). The role of the researcher is to present the collected data free of personal bias (Fink, 2000). The researcher formulates the research questions (Hatcher, 2011). The researcher identified, contacted, and interviewed participants and then properly documented the data collected, transcribed the interviews, analyzed data, and presented the data.

Research Methodology

The following section is dedicated to the chosen research methodology. The flexible design was selected for the open-ended questions of the qualitative research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The qualitative research design was chosen as a flexible approach to the research process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The multiple-case study design was chosen to analyze multiple cases individually (Yin, 2018).

Flexible Design

The flexible research design is appropriate for this research study as it is correlated with an evolving research process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Flexible design is often applied to qualitative research as includes open-ended questions rather than quantitative variables (Robson & McCartan, 2016). There is no predetermined theory in the flexible design which allows the

research to determine the course of the research by integrating feedback as the study continues (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Various flexible designs include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

The case study design incorporates interviews, surveys, or experiments as a specific illustration to understand a situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design is appropriate for the specific problem of this research since it examines the exact situation at hand and includes first-hand accounts of the experience of the specific problem. The case study design allows the experiences of the participants to determine the solution to the specific problem. Yin (2018) stated that case studies can make research more powerful since they contain surveys and/or experiments. The case study design is an understanding of a situation employing a case as an illustration of a topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are numerous approaches to research that can be considered the design of the research, however, the best research design is the most appropriate approach for the type of research being conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Multiple cases have been incorporated in this study to broaden the view of the situation.

Qualitative Method

The qualitative method is a flexible approach to the research process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The flexibility of the qualitative method allows the researcher to collect, analyze, and view data providing a broader insight of the experiment (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The chosen research design is flexible and the following research will follow that design utilizing interviews and previous research to answer the questions presented. Several questions will be presented as part of this research. These questions have been answered along with suggestions for further research. Triangulation was utilized to ensure the validity of the research.

Case Study

The case study is an understanding of a situation using a case as a specific model of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method can make the case study simpler to conduct and compile in addition to making the study stronger (Yin, 2018). Case study research traditionally uses surveys and experiments without a design to the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The case study method allows for organization and structure of the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study is appropriate for this study as it draws on the illustrations of multiple participants to analyze the specific topic. The multiple-case design analyzes multiple cases individually (Yin, 2018). This study utilized multiple case studies to ensure the situation was suitably analyzed with sufficient data.

Triangulation

Triangulation utilizes multiple methods to collect data then present for more saturated, rich results (Abdalla et al., 2018; Fusch et al., 2018). The multiple case study flexible design is appropriate for triangulation as it allows for flexibility in how data is collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collected via multiple case studies should be analyzed to include the views of possible rival explanations including a threat to validity which triangulation will assist with (Yin, 2018). This research has included data collected from several interviews along with member checking, field notes, and observations to create extensive data to increase validity. If any information was unclear after conducting interviews, follow-up interviews would be conducted to gain clarification. Validity utilizes triangulation to guarantee the accuracy of the data, analysis, and conclusions (Moon, 2019). This can relate to both qualitative and quantitative research. Moon (2019) depicted how researchers can use four types of triangulation: method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. In qualitative research, triangulation establishes legitimation, particularly credibility, within the study (Moon,

2019). The ultimate purpose of triangulation is to establish trustworthiness and accuracy of the research (Cypress, 2017).

Summary of Data Analysis

In conclusion, the multiple case study was selected as the best method of research for this research study. The multiple-case study design analyzes multiple cases individually to illustrate a specific situation (Yin, 2018). The flexible design was selected to implement open-ended questions into this qualitative research study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The qualitative research method was chosen as a flexible approach to the research process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Bracketing has been applied to avoid personal bias (Fischer, 2009) as well as triangulation for saturation of data (Abdalla et al., 2018; Fusch et al., 2018).

Participants

Qualitative research requires carefully selected participants to collect ample data (Sargeant, 2012). The participants determine the answers to the research questions as they express the phenomenon. Whereas in quantitative research, the participants are selected randomly, qualitative research requires careful participant selection (Sargeant, 2012). Office managers who oversaw telecommuting clerical staff during the COVID-19 pandemic within the Northeast region of the United States were included. Also included were clerical staff who telecommuted during COVID-19 pandemic within the Northeast region of the United States. Finally, clerical staff who were unable to telecommute during the COVID-19 pandemic within the Northeast region of the United States have also been included as potential participants. It was pertinent to get perspectives from the managers as well as the clerical staff who worked remotely and the clerical staff who were not permitted to work remotely in order to best understand the management shift that was required of managers during the pandemic (Sargeant, 2012).

The number of qualitative research participants for a case study should be limited to 20 to 30 qualified participants to provide significant detail of the data and reach saturation (Creswell, 1998). Twelve to 60 participants should be the number of participants with a mean of 30 participants (Adler & Adler 2011, as cited in Baker & Edwards, 2016). Saturation requires a sufficient number of participants so that the data is consistent and repetitious (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These participants must be able to supply ample data on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Yin (1994) suggested that selective (purposive) sampling be used in multiple case studies. Participants should be selected based on their anticipated contribution to the study (Yin, 2011). This selection occurs prior to data collection (Merriam, 2009). To reach saturation of the data, 15 to 20 participants will be interviewed as part of this study. Once the interviews were conducted, the researcher decided that saturation was reached.

Population and Sampling

This section includes a detailed discussion of the population and sampling methods used within this study. The criteria for population eligibility are included in this section. The screening method utilized on participants is provided and discussed in this section. A discussion of how the selected population were able to answer the research questions is included.

Discussion of Population

The population of this research study was selected to represent a total group of individuals with the common characteristic of being employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The population surrounded managing clerical staff during the shift to working in the office to telecommuting. Thus, the population includes managers of clerical staff. This includes the perspective of managers who had to shift managerial styles during the digital transformation (Park & Cho, 2020). In addition, the perspective of the clerical staff that were able to

telecommute during the COVID-19 pandemic was included. This provided a total view of how successful managers of teleworkers were (Choi, 2020). Therefore, the population includes clerical staff who were able to telecommute during COVID-19. Additionally, the potential population included clerical staff who were unable to telecommute during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to get the perspective from the office-based clerical staff. The perspective here intended to focus on the effect of teleworking employees on in-office employees (Collins et al., 2016).

The selected population have been selected from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island to narrow down the population to the Northeast region of the United States. It was pertinent to narrow down the population size to 15 to 20 participants to compile significant data (Creswell, 2014). Fifteen to 20 participants have been selected from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island who are managers of telecommuting clerical staff, telecommuting clerical staff, or clerical staff who were not permitted to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has allowed for a well-rounded, ample view of the need to shift management styles during a shift from office-based work to telecommuting.

Discussion of Sampling. Sampling is intended to create subgroups that mirror the greater population and to establish generalizations about the greater population (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). This study provided a sample size that is too small to provide a generalization of the greater population but rather provided insight into the specific problem. The sample should aid in answering the research questions (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). Probability sampling includes methods such as random sampling, which includes selecting participants at random (Creswell &

Poth, 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2017). Non-probability sampling includes methods such as purposeful sampling, which is a strategic sample to ensure the participants can contribute to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2017). Non-probability sampling is appropriate for this research study to ensure that the participants can contribute to answering the research questions. Purposeful sampling was the specific method utilized in this research study to select participants that relate to the research study. Only participants that can relate to managing teleworking clerical staff or the clerical staff that can relate to teleworking or not being permitted to telework can have a meaningful contribution to this research study.

Discussion of Sample Frame. The sample frame of this research study includes participants from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island. These participants are managers of clerical staff that was transitioned to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, clerical workers who telecommuted during the COVID-19 pandemic, or clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic. These participants have undergone participant screening to ensure they meet the criteria for participants. It was necessary to include these participants as part of the case study to understand the phenomenon (Reed, 2017; Yin, 2018). It was appropriate to include those who experienced the phenomenon to collect data on the event (Yin, 2018). The researcher has gained access to the sample population via correspondence electronically or through the postal service.

Discussion of Desired Sample and Sample Size. In case study qualitative research, the number of participants should be limited to 20 to 30 qualified participants to provide significant detail of the data and reach saturation (Creswell, 1998). Others suggests that 12 to 60 participants should be the number of participants with a mean of 30 participants (Adler & Adler, 2011, as

cited in Baker & Edwards, 2016). Saturation requires enough participants so that the data is consistent and repetitious (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This research attempted to saturate the data by including 15 to 20 participants. This allowed the data to reach saturation. These participants had to be able to provide sufficient data on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The sample was selected from the population following participant screening to ensure the participants meet the criteria. The criteria included (a) being from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, or Rhode Island and (b) managers of clerical staff that was transitioned to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic or (c) clerical workers who telecommuted during the COVID-19 pandemic, or (d) clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In qualitative research, there should be no more than four or five for multiple case studies in order to collect extensive details about a few participants (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 1994). Multiple case studies have fewer than four or over 15 participants (Stake, 2006). In a review of several qualitative studies showed a mean sample size which exceed the recommended sample size of Creswell (2013) likely due to the attempt to align studies with accepted quantitative studies (Guetterman, 2015). Qualitative research contrasts quantitative research, which requires sufficiently large sample sizes to create statistically accurate quantitative estimates (Gentles et al., 2015). In qualitative research, smaller samples are used to acquire information that contributes to understanding the complexity, depth, variation, or context encompassing a phenomenon. This contrasts with representing populations as in quantitative research (Gentles et al., 2015). Yin (2011) stated that the sample size should not be the focus and is irrelevant although a focus on various aspects of the case should become the focus. Various aspects of the phenomenon should be collected to ensure purposeful maximal variation during the sampling

process (Creswell, 2014). The sample was narrowed down to the 15 to 20 participants that best meet these criteria from each group. Fifteen to 20 participants provided ample data to collect the data necessary to answer the research questions reaching saturation. The researcher distributed a questionnaire to companies with employees that meet the criteria requesting research study participation in order to screen for candidates. Multiple research methods, multiple data gathering methods, and multiple sources of data have been used to ensure triangulation.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The population of this research study has included participants that can best contribute to answering the research questions. The participants were narrowed down to a region within the United States and then a sample of 15 participants have been purposefully selected based on the ability to contribute well-rounded data to the research study. The purpose of this sampling method and sample size was to collect ample data for the research study and to obtain saturation and a generalization of the greater population.

Data Collection & Organization

The data collection and organization process the researcher has used is presented in this section. The method the researcher has used to collect data includes interviews that have been recorded and transcribed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Coding has been utilized to identify any emerging themes within the data (Yin, 2018). The data has been organized, and a visual representation of the data was created.

Data Collection Plan

The data for this research study focused on the case studies of 15 qualified participants to provide significant details of the data (Creswell, 2014). Three to 10 participants are idyllic for qualitative research; however, this study was based on case studies therefore the ideal number of

participants will be 15. This study attempted to saturate the data by including data from 15 to 20 participants. These participants had to be able to provide sufficient data on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The sample was selected from the population following participant screening to ensure the participants meet the criteria. The criteria included (a) being from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, or Rhode Island and (b) managers of clerical staff that was transitioned to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic or (c) clerical workers who telecommuted during the COVID-19 pandemic, or (d) clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher collected the data via multiple case studies and used interviews to triangulate the data collected for validity and reliability once the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) approved the research. Upon receiving approval from the IRB, the researcher contacted suitable participants via electronic communication and United States Postal Service mail. The organizations in which the participants work have bene contacted for permission to solicit the participants. Next, participants were invited to partake in the research interview after a brief introduction on the topic. Confidentiality was also provided. The researcher provided clear and constant communication regarding the type of research and the nature of the research topic in order to engage the participants. A date and time to conduct the interviews was arranged with each participant individually and within a time frame of 30 days. The interviews were recorded and conducted over the telephone and through video conferencing at the participants' convenience (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Following each interview, the interview was transcribed and the transcription and then coded to discover emerging themes, if any. The participants were able to review the interview

after it was transcribed to validate the accuracy of their responses (Richards, 2005). This approach was appropriate for this research project to ensure validity and reliability of the data collected. Interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were intended to produce a robust outlook on the phenomenon. Besides the interviews, observation, field notes, and pictures were incorporated in the research as methods of triangulation. Field notes may have included any observations that were not included in the interview questions and answers. Observations may have included additional comments or children in the background which led to the difficulty of caretakers to work from home, for example. The researcher held the option to request that participants provide pictures of their office space setup both in the office and at home to make further additional observation of ease of use. Ultimately, the researcher was able to view participants' remote work arrangements during the interviews. These additional methods of triangulation have been noted in the research as part of the data collection report.

Member Checking and Follow-up Interviews

After conducting the initial interviews, participants have received a transcribed copy of the interview for review for accuracy and clarification (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Richards, 2005). Any miscommunications within an interview would have led to follow-up interviews. Any potential follow-up interviews will provide accuracy for participant responses (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Should any new interview questions have arisen from responses to the initial interviews, follow-up interview questions would have been added to the research study. This was not necessary in this study.

Instruments

The researcher was responsible for collection, analysis, and presentation of the data. The data was collected by utilizing one type of instrument: interviews. Data was analyzed by coding the interviews to find themes as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2017) and Yin (2018). Themes were then be presented as part of this research study. Yin stated that the role of theory development occurs at the creation of themes.

Interview Guides

The interview guide that was utilized as part of this research study is semi-structured. The interview questions were intended to be open-ended and allow for the participant to elaborate in their answer. A copy of the interview guide is provided in Appendix A. The interview guide consists of seven main questions and two subsequent questions that relate to the research questions of this research study.

The first question asks *Did you find that your organization encountered business disruptions during a shift from the office to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic?* This question directly relates to RQ1: *How can organizations prepare management for future unexpected business disruptions?* The interview question serves to verify that a business disruption did in fact exist within the organization. The second question asks *Did your organization seem prepared for this shift from office-based work to telework?* also relates to RQ1 in creating a foundation for perceived preparedness of organizations during a shift in uncertain times. The third question *Did management seem to require a shift in management styles during this shift to telework? If so, how did the management style change?* relates to RQ1a: *How can times of uncertainty leading to a shift from working the office to telecommuting impact management styles?* by examining the need for management styles to shift during a shift from office-based work to telework. The fourth question is *What management style would you say is*

effective for teleworkers since the shift to telework occurred? This interview question relates directly to RQ1b: *How can management styles adapt during a shift to telecommuting caused by times of certainty?* The correlation between these two questions is identifying the type of management style required for telework caused by uncertain times.

Interview question number five is *Did you discover effective tactics to telework? If so, what were they?* This connects with interview question number six; *Do you feel that telework was effective in your organization during the COVIDI-19 pandemic?* These two questions are directly related to RQ2: *How can office managers manage administrative staff work effectively when a sudden shift forces staff to telecommute?* Both interview questions serve to identify effective practices that were incorporated during the COVID-19 pandemic to adapt to the sudden shift to telework in order to create an emergency preparedness plan for any possible future business disruptions.

The final interview question is *Do you support permitting telework under normal circumstances, since experiencing it during a time of uncertainty such as the COVID-19 pandemic, if effective telework tactics were in place?* This question is correlated to RQ3: *How does having a telecommute option impact the need to work in the office during normal times?* This final interview question serves to identify the need to work in the office if telework was successful within the participant's organization. Whether or not telework was successful during the COVID-19 pandemic will have a large impact on the way this final question affects the research.

Data Organization Plan

The researcher has organized the data collected from the interviews for data analysis. The data collection process consists of transcribing interviews, visually reviewing the material,

creating notes and memoing, cataloging the data, arranging and sorting the information, and identifying any emerging codes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Coding commenced by examining sections of the transcribed text and creating a word that represented that text known as a code. After reviewing all of the data, recurring codes created a theme within the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Summary of Data Collection & Organization

The researcher has carefully conducted interviews by recording and transcribing them prior to coding the interviews for themes. Fifteen participants were interviewed to saturate the data. This saturation has made the research robust. The data was analyzed and presented along with visual representations as part of this research study.

Data Analysis

The researcher has analyzed the collected data by coding it in search of any common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2018). Discovering themes has resulted in the researcher interpreting the data. The data was then analyzed using triangulation to ensure validity and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Any emergent ideas were also included in this research study (Pailthorpe, 2017). The data was then been presented, along with visual representations as part of this research study.

Emergent Ideas

Emergent ideas occur when the researcher uncovers new concepts, findings, or ideas within a qualitative research study (Pailthorpe, 2017). Emergent ideas can contribute to fostering a robust study despite the information being unanticipated. Any emergent ideas can be incorporated into all stages of the research process (Pailthorpe, 2017). Any emergent ideas that occurred during this research study were memoed and incorporated into the study accordingly.

Coding Themes

The data derived from the interviews conducted were coded. Coding was utilized to uncover any existing themes within the collected data (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2018). Coding assists in identifying any recurring data themes that frequently occur within the interviews that support the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The interviews were coded by identifying common themes that reoccur between the case studies. This data organization process is appropriate for this research process because it allows for minimal impact of personal bias of research in order to present the most accurate data possible.

Interpretations

As part of the data analysis process, interpretations were made by the researcher to capture the essence of the themes presented in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). An interpretation could consist of a meaning discovered in comparing the findings and literature. The researcher used a theoretical perspective to interpret the ideas that call for action or change (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data Representation

Following the data collection, coding, and interpretation is the implementation of visualizing the data. Data was represented utilizing charts or tables as visual representation (Creswell & Poth, 2017). After coding data, the data can be represented in a table or figure. The researcher has created visualizations of the data after codes and themes are discovered to visually represent the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Analysis for Triangulation

Triangulation is a form of validity that ensures the accuracy of the data, analysis process, and conclusions reached (Moon, 2019). Both qualitative and quantitative research can apply

triangulation although it is typically associated with qualitative research (Salkind, 2010).

Qualitative research can apply triangulation by utilizing more than one method to the study and

is considered mixed method research (Salkind, 2010). Triangulation can be one of four types;

method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, or data source triangulation

(Moon, 2019; Salkind, 2010). The purpose of triangulation is to establish trustworthiness,

credibility, and accuracy of the research, especially in qualitative studies (Cypress, 2017; Moon,

2019). The researcher has incorporated triangulation by conducting interviews relating to the

research questions. This provided for robust data to answer the research questions and add to the

reliability of the data collected from either method. Additional tools were utilized to aid

triangulation, such as observation, field notes, and pictures. These are all types of method

triangulation (Moon, 2019; Salkind, 2010).

Observations, field notes, and pictures have added to the participant interviews to provide

additional forms of data to analyze as part of this research. Additional data provided more than

one method of data which makes the data more robust and accurate (Moon, 2019). These

additional methods created a type of mixed method data collection (Salkind, 2010). The

interviews of 15 participants were included in addition to any field notes the researcher took

during the data collection process. This was joined by observations. Observations included any

cues that added to the answers provided by research participants that appeared relevant to the

study.

Summary of Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected as part of this research study, the researcher utilized coding

to discover themes. The themes led to researcher interpretations that the researcher presented

sans personal bias. The data was analyzed using triangulation to add reliability and validity to the

research study. This occurred by utilizing interviews of 15 participants to oversaturate the research and make it robust.

Reliability and Validity

The researcher has ensured the reliability and validity of the data collected. Reliability ensured the data is credible (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Validity utilized bracketing, triangulation, and saturation to ensure the data is appropriate and valid. The researcher has avoided incorporating personal bias by bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Interviews of 15 participants were conducted for saturation.

Reliability

Reliability was applied to this research study to provide credibility. Reliability applies to both qualitative and quantitative research as a means of confirming the data to be credible (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Reliability is the process of ensuring data accuracy (Spiers et al., 2018). The concept of reliability is that the research should be repeatable and still yield the same results (Cypress, 2017). This ensures that the research is dependable and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher ensured reliability of the research by providing clarity of the methods and tools used to conduct the interviews so that the research can be repeated. Transparency provides the ability of this research to be imitated and allows testing the data again for increased dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that trustworthiness is the basis of reliability, and that trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the research findings. Credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, or member checking. This study utilized

member checking, triangulation, and persistent observation as methods of providing credibility. Transferability exhibits that the research findings are applicable in other contexts and may include thick description to achieve external validity by describing a phenomenon in great detail to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions are transferable to other situations or phenomenon. Thick descriptions may better apply to ethnography and therefore may not be suitable for this research study. The researcher attempted to provide a thick description, even though the research utilized multiple case studies, to provide information that can be transferable to other situations and to provide data that is useful in future times and situations. Dependability exhibits that the research findings are consistent and can be repeated. Dependability may include inquiry audits. An external audit may be performed by an unrelated researcher to ensure confirmability of the research findings but pose problems such as interpretations issues. Confirmability is the degree of neutrality of the research findings. For multiple case studies, this refers to research findings that are based on participant responses and not researcher bias, motivation, nor interest. Methods of ensuring confirmability are confirmability audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study utilized triangulation to ensure confirmability.

Validity

The validity of a research study relates to the appropriateness of the data which makes the data accurate (Spiers et al., 2018). The researcher provided an accurate account of the participants' experiences within the context of the study (Spiers et al., 2018). The codes created from the interviews can be tested for validity. According to Creswell and Poth (2017) and Cypress (2017), a valid research study must encompass meaningful, true, and unbiased data. Bracketing will be utilized by avoiding implementation of any personal biases that the researcher

may have (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher has provided robust data from the results of the interviews in order to create saturation on the topic adding to the validity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher also has interviewed 15 participants to oversaturate the data increasing validity. Triangulation was implemented by utilizing member checking and follow-up interviews when appropriate.

Bracketing

Yin (2018) stated that researchers must use caution not to allow their theory to guide their research. This is a challenge of the case study design. During the data analysis process, the researcher has removed any personal bias to avoid tainting the data (Yin, 2018). One way to do this is to analyze the data including the views of possible rival explanations (Yin, 2018). The researcher has kept a journal of personal biases regarding the research study and referred to that journal periodically to recall what personal biases exist in order to keep them out of the research study. Anticipated themes that have been discovered during a review of the literature will be known but excluded from influencing the data collected.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

The researcher used various methods to ensure the accuracy of the research. Reliability and validity were incorporated in this research study to ensure accuracy and appropriateness of the collected data. Saturation has been used by incorporating both interview and survey data. The researcher has tracked personal bias and excluded it from this study to implement bracketing.

Summary of Section 2 and Transition

In summary, Section 2 comprises a description of the role of the researcher which was defined stating what actions the researcher has taken to conduct this study. A discussion of bracketing to avoid personal bias was included. The research methodology was presented. The

appropriateness of the flexible design and chosen method has been explained. The appropriateness of the chosen method for triangulation for the research study has also been presented. The participants have been described along with an explanation of who is eligible to be included and why they are eligible. Included in this section is the population and sampling. A discussion of the population has been included along with why they are appropriate for the research study and what makes them eligible participants. The size of the population was also presented along with the sampling method, sample frame, and discussion of the sample size. The data collection and analysis has been presented. The data collection plan includes the plan of data collection and how the researcher planned to collect the data. A discussion of why this is an appropriate plan for the research project was also included. Any member checking and follow up interviews that were performed have also been included in this section. Instruments used to collect data, including interview guides, surveys, and a discussion of each of these has been included in this section. This section includes an explanation of how data is organized and gathered. A discussion of why the data organization plan is appropriate for the research project is included. A data analysis presents any emergent ideas, coding themes, interpretations, data representation, reliability, bracketing, and validity.

The following section will include a presentation of the findings. This section includes supporting material to the findings, the application to professional practice, and recommendations for further study. A reflection of personal and professional growth is presented along with a Biblical perspective.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section serves to present the findings of the study in depth and provide visual representations of the data that was collected, coded, and analyzed. This section is an exhaustive

account of the findings and how they relate to the research questions. An application to professional practice is included along with implications for organizational change. Additionally, this section was reserved to provide recommendations for further research.

Overview of the Study

This section provides and overview of the study and the findings. An application to professional practice is outlined within this section and includes how this study improves general business practice along with potential application strategies. These strategies include telework as a new normal, management training, technology availability, and uncertainty planning. Recommendations for further study are also provided within this overview. Researcher reflections are provided in this section. A Biblical perspective is provided along with a statement on personal and professional growth of the researcher.

Presentation of the Findings

This section presents the data the researcher compiled during this study. Fifteen participants were included in this study which is a suitable population size to compile significant data (Creswell, 2014). Three themes were identified with the use of coding. Organizational benefits, managing teleworkers, and new normal were the three themes that the codes developed into. Numerous codes or sub-themes were identified within a review of the data and are presented in this section. The following interprets the interviews of the 15 participants, provides a connection to the literature review, and examines whether the research questions were answered through this research. The participants were given pseudonyms in lieu of numbers for readability and confidentiality.

Themes Discovered

Numerous themes were discovered during the data analysis phase of the research. These themes echoed concepts discovered during a review of the literature. The themes are presented below and presented along with which interview participants presented the code or sub-theme leading to the theme. An interpretation of each theme will follow.

Organizational Benefits. One theme that was discovered during the data analysis phase was organizational benefits. The interview participants revealed that several outcomes of their telework during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in benefits for their organization. Some benefits include increased productivity, intensified work, extended working hours, and reciprocal work stemming from an unspoken social contract between manager and employee. Additionally, telework attracts talent, and eliminates commute which reduces intention to quit among teleworkers. Finally, when managers exhibit a growth mindset, employees are motivated, impacting the organization.

These findings echoed the literature review. Telework was found to boost productivity, performance, employee satisfaction, reciprocation between employee and employer, motivation, and work-life balance as well as reduce turnover (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Reducing office space can reduce organizational overhead costs or eliminate it completely (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020). Teleworkers often accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). The findings suggested that workplace grievances can reduce with teleworkers which is similar to the literature review stating telework reduces sexual harassment and office politics (Klopotek, 2017; Picu & Dinu, 2016). One area that differed from the literature review was the ability to work from home fostering autonomy and self-leadership (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

The findings did not explicitly indicate self-leadership and autonomy. Another difference is the ability to outsource talent which was mentioned in the literature review but excluded from the findings (Park & Cho, 2020).

      Organizational Benefits. "Gray" found that there were benefits to the organization in addition to the employees when telework was in place. "I noticed that while people are working from home, we don't have that many grievances," stated "Gray." Coworker issues are less frequent when employees work remotely. This was similar to the literature review which found that telework reduces sexual harassment and office politics (Klopotek, 2017; Picu & Dinu, 2016). She also found that "the workload has went up just for the fact that people are not wasting time going from desk to desk talking to people." Because of these reasons, she found telework to be very effective "because people are working," according to "Gray." She did not believe that any company would return to full staff following what appeared to be a successful transition to telework. "Teleworking is working for everybody," stated "Gray."

      "Pardo" also found that organizations must be saving money while employees telework. After listing some employee benefits, she stated "and you save the company some money so there you go." The researcher interprets saving the company money as an organizational benefit. Employees not physically being in an office can range from saving on renting a building to utility costs.

      Attract Talent. "Bella" stated that "I really look, if I were to look for another position, I think one the benefits would have to be, yes, telecommuting and working remotely once in a while." The researcher interprets this as the participant has looked for remote positions and is attracted to an organization that offers a remote position. This is also noted in the literature

which found that organizations often provide telework as way to attract talent (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020).

Growth Mindset. "Pelo" stated that there was a shift in the mindset of the managers within her organization in that they had to "look at it now going forward what is the best way to incorporate different styles and also the employees work-life balance." Organizational mindset during uncertain times impacts the outcomes of decisions made (Michalski et al., 2020). Having a growth mindset is most suitable for uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020).

Productivity. "White" identified a lag in response time when the shift to telework occurred. "White" stated that there "definitely was a lag in time where you need to figure out different methods of communication and how to be productive." This meant that there was some 'on the fly' action in order to maintain, or attempt to maintain, productivity. When asked if she felt telework was effective in her organization, "White" stated that there was a struggle at the beginning of the transition for administrative roles and that it overall was "really effective if not more effective" than working in the office. Telework increases productivity (Choi, 2020; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016).

"Girard" believed that her organization transitioned "pretty well" and that she was already doing paperwork for her job at home prior to COVID-19. She admitted that printing was an issue, however, because she "didn't like having to print her own stuff. But other than that, the paperwork was still easy to do from home." "Girard" said that telework was "very doable" and that she was "able to do the same roles and things virtually." Due to the paperwork, some records were stored at the office which was the only reason she would need to go into the office.

"Girard" felt as though she was occasionally unproductive when working in the office and was able to watch YouTube videos in her downtime. She felt that managers assume she is

slacking off at home but stated "I do that here and you pay me because I'm physically in the building." She feels that management should focus on productivity as opposed to unrealistic expectations of "you need to be working every single moment of the day" as if one was "an assembly line," according to "Girard."

"Franklin" felt that business disruptions did occur within her organization stating that there were some things that could not be done at home. She had a split schedule working some days at home and some in the office. The payments that she processes for her job could not be done remotely and she had to go into the office to process them but "everything else I can still do," stated "Franklin." The productivity, otherwise, remained the same as she "was still doing what I normally do just in a different setting," according to "Franklin."

Productivity was high at the beauty/cosmetics organization "Pelo" works for. Sales were high and "everybody got on board", "everybody did their jobs just fine" despite the office being empty at one point during the pandemic, according to "Pelo." For "Kingston," her organization was disrupted because business processes slowed down, but things had to continue because she works in the government industry. "Kingston" said "they had to do this on the fly to make it work." "Milo" was impressed by the swift shift to telework and the ability to maintain productivity. "I think things were done that no one ever in a million years could have imagined you could do," stated "Milo." She stated that "it was extraordinary" and that "so much was learned from it that it will never go back to 100% in person" again. "Rey" found that productivity increased within his organization and now that organizations know what they are doing, "corporations now have a good playbook and everybody's better at what they do."

For "Pardo," who started with her current organization during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult to identify the effectiveness of telework. She was unable to answer some of the

questions with confidence and full knowledge of how the organization ran. She did find that the training for her new position was difficult during telework. "Pardo" stated that, "it's been difficult trying to get trained and be able to be even in the same room as someone else because of COVID." She described this difficulty getting trained as a business disruption.

"Bella" felt that her organization was unprepared for the transition to telework. As a higher education institution, they had to downsize employees. This required more productivity out of the remaining employees, according to "Bella." She stated that "our department was downsized a lot, so we needed to be responsible for a lot more than we had before." She noted that more time was spent actually working. "You don't waste time on unnecessary things, you know preparing for work and all these other things. You can just focus on work and get it done," stated "Bella."

"Green" felt like initially, the transition caused business disruptions within her organization. She admitted "I did absolutely nothing for like months." Other roles within her government organization had to continue but for her role, which was reliant on paper, she was unable to work. "We were supposed to be digital, but we weren't, so we were still really reliant on paper," stated "Green." She stated, "we couldn't go into the office and do the paperwork so we couldn't do anything." Her organization was unprepared for the transition to telework for her administrative role in her opinion. There were no meetings for the administrative staff. After a while, "Green" worked on as much as she could via computer and felt her productivity was equal to when she worked in the office. "I think I didn't work any less than I do in the office. I think in the office we kind of like hang out at each other's desks," stated "Green." She said, "you sit, and you eat your lunch, so I don't think that productivity really went down for me."

Intensified Work. Juggling was mentioned by more than one participant which the researcher interprets as intensified work. "Ferret" stated that "often times we had to juggle things to be able to see the patient or do the evaluations which we needed to do" as she works in the healthcare industry in an administrative role. The administration assistants handle the schedules of numerous people which may have led to the shift to therapists handling their own scheduling to alleviate the stress on the clerks, according to "Ferret." Intensified work leads to employee fatigue and poor work-life balance (Palumbo, 2020).

"Bella" and "Ruby" both reported juggling multiple roles. For "Bella," it was due to downsizing within her organization. She was forced to take on multiple roles. For "Ruby," it was due to her reporting to more than one supervisor. She was hired for multiple roles which made her feel like she was often trying not to get "lost in the sauce" deciphering between emails.

Extended Working Hours. "Girard" found that there was no lunch break. Managers contacted her whenever they needed to. She stated that this was "frustrating because business hours seemed like they didn't exist." Working odd hours negatively impacted employees with families diminishing their work-life balance (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). "Kingston" stated that she worked longer hours since her personal cell phone received work emails and received the emails any time of the day. Because she did not have to travel for work, that time was spent working. "I find myself working longer hours because it was just convenient to just continue to work whenever I'm- whenever I get a notification, I would just work not even looking at the clock." She stated that she knows this may not be the case for everyone, but she chose to just continue working. "Bella" mentioned working after hours and work spilling over into her personal time. This was less likely when working at the office.

Social Contract and Reciprocity. "Milo" found that working under a trusting manager motivated her to work harder and longer, ultimately benefitting the organization. "I think in the long run, it benefitted them, and it benefitted us and the division as a whole because more work- they got more work out of us actually," stated "Milo." When employees perceive managerial support for their general welfare, they reciprocate with positive work attitudes (Choi, 2020) and voluntary intensified work (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Commute and Intention to Quit. "Kingston" mentioned commuting during the interview. "I save on gas," she stated, "you save on transportation, driving the car, polluting the air, all those things that affect the environment." "Milo" has approximately an hour commute and finds it stressful. Since returning to the office, she feels the stress of commuting. "You know the rushing around, the traffic, I think it makes people, again this isn't even an opinion it's just me, someone in my situation, it makes you a better person," stated "Milo" referring to teleworking and avoiding a commute. Teleworking can improve productivity and lessen costs and stress related to commuting within teleworkers (Beno, 2018; Choi, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016).

Managing Teleworkers. Another theme discovered during the data analysis phase was the management of teleworkers. Data revealed a high demand of managerial trust, communication, support, flexibility, and work-life balance. Boundaries and personal roles should be respected of teleworkers and managers should avoid stress and job burnout. While telework is not suitable for all job types, it was successful for the clerical employees, and they prefer to maintain telework as an option. Technology was instrumental in successful telework implementation. Managers should beware of technostress and social isolation that might decrease productivity.

These findings mirrored the literature. Decreased productivity is a fear of managers of teleworkers (Kaplan et al., 2018). Telework improves when managers support the use of it (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). The social exchange theory fosters reciprocation between employee and employer that boosts productivity (Choi, 2020). Managers will require training on how to use new programs and communicate policy changes (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). These findings were specifically for telework under uncertain times so the choice to telework was not always available. The literature suggests that telework should be an employee option (Beno, 2018). While some participants found shifting management style successful, the findings were inconsistent. This differed from the literature. Managers should shift their managerial practices when managing teleworkers (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers of teleworkers must adjust from time- and activity-based management to results-driven management as they will not be measuring time but results (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999).

Job Type. "White" stated that the preparation for the shift to telework from office-based work was non-existent for administrative roles. "Pelo" also stated that employees within the manufacturing department within her organization could not telework as well as those in operations. She compared those employees to essential workers stating that "they are our essential workers," according to "Pelo." "Ruby" stated that certain departments within her organization were not permitted to telework during COVID-19. As a state employee, she thinks of the Corrections Officers who worked the entire time within the jail. This indicates that telework is not suitable for all job types. Jobs that typically exist in the office or in a technology field are more suitable for telework (Klopotek, 2017).

Communication. Communication was mainly possible due to technology during the pandemic as expected by a review of the literature. Technology assisted in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Communication was affected by telework, according to "White." She stated that one had to "be more through in their communication because you couldn't as easily just pop by someone's desk when you were virtual" and that "it really just boiled down to communication." She also stated that one effective tactic to telework was to learn different styles of communication. "Just understanding different styles and whether or not certain people prefer to be reached out to via email or text message or phone calls," stated "White." She stated that she prefers to see coworkers' faces to read their faces and expressions.

"Ferret" stated that management provided constant communication via email and that the directives often changed as the pandemic continued. Management "became more communicative with emails. I mean we were bombarded with emails," stated "Ferret." She stated that, "one minute it would be this and another minute it would be- like most of the time they were just adding information to simplify the processes for everybody." She also stated that this communication was top-down but also bottom-up. "She conveyed it to us but she also asked us to tell her if this was working or what was working and what wasn't working," stated "Ferret." Communication within her organization was strict, hands-on, and high communication with regulations that were constantly communicated, according to "Ferret." This made her feel like she was not being "left in the dark" about the changes within her organization.

"Kingston" prefers a hands-on and constant communication as a manager of clerical staff. She "kept in constant contact with everyone continuously throughout the day" as her personal cellular phone receives work emails. For her, when an email was sent to her, she received it

immediately on her personal phone and began working on a response. This was the opposite experience for "Green" who was not invited to meetings and felt there was a lack of support. "We had no idea what was happening," according to "Green" with the exception of emailed directives. Her organization sent emails with the changes that occurred during the pandemic.

"Brick" felt that the weekly check-in meetings were a form of effective communication. She also found learning to be a more effective communicator was a successful tactic to telework. "Just make sure that you're communicating and also just trying to build that relationship with your team whether you're a manager or a subordinate," according to "Brick." Effective communication means engaging and listening to others, according to "Brick."

"Gray" felt her director did an amazing job with the transition to telework from office-based work. "My director, she was on top of it so she really spoke to us about everything that was going on," stated "Gray." "Gray" stated that she was informed about the new directive to telework, "she even called me in the office to let me know about teleworking." There were meetings to keep employees abreast of what was going on within the organization. "Gray" was able to email her director with questions she had which also maintained constant communication with her supervisor.

"Milo" found the communication within her organization to be very effective. "They did a really good job," she said, "we were always having conversations, always talking." She commended her two managers for keeping employees informed on the new directives from upper management and the process of teleworking. Her organization utilized Microsoft Teams to have meetings. "Pardo" also felt that "just having that rapport between the employees and management" was a form of effective communication. "Distance and non-communication effects the whole demographic of working on a team," stated "Pardo." "Communication is key"

according to "Pardo." She found communication to be an effective tactic to telework, specifically email and meetings.

"Ruby" reflected on the constant emails that her supervisor sent her regarding the several changes that occurred. "Communication was the key," according to "Ruby." With constantly changing directives, emails were sent to employees to keep them informed. "Rey" felt that communication was successful during telework and got better as time went on. "I think we're a better team," stated "Rey."

Trust. "White" believes that managers "had to become more trusting and allow their direct reports to kind of go do their thing in a way that they do it." She stated that her current company's motto is to be *unbossed*. The researcher observed positive body language and a smile which gave the impression that this approach is successful. She stated managers had to "trust that you're going to run with the work. You're going to get it done before it's due even if your working hours are a bit different because people have kids at home." This participant does not have children but has a small dog which she stated can be an annoyance while she is working at home. "White" stated that managers should be "trusting what your employees are doing what they need to do to get the work done in a different climate." Managers of teleworkers should implement a project-based style of supervision rather than a time-based management style because teleworkers respond well to schedule flexibility and felt trust from their supervisors (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

"Girard" found management style frustrating because there was a lack of managerial trust. "What was really frustrating was them being like you need to prove that you're doing work from home." She found that "there was this added layer of oh keep a spreadsheet to keep track of everything that you're doing" and stated, "you know what I'm doing like why can't you just trust

that I'm doing it?" "Girard" suggested a results-driven approach to managing stating that "obviously it's getting done. You see the results." She found "the lack of trust was really frustrating" and that physical presence does not ensure productivity. "When you're in the building, you have a lot of down time but there's just this trust that you're working all day," stated "Girard." She continues to state that there have been days in the office that she was very unproductive and actually was watching YouTube but because she was physically there, she seemed productive. Since working from home, managers assume she is "YouTubing and Netflixing all day" and don't trust that she is working from home.

Trust is more effective than micro-managing, according to "Brick." "If you cultivate a relationship with your coworkers and you both have understanding like hey these are the priorities and this is what we need to work on you don't necessarily as a manager you don't necessarily have to check in so often to make sure the job is getting done," according to "Brick." She felt as though weekly check-in meetings would suffice rather than hourly interruptions.

"I think you have to trust in your employees," stated "Milo." She found there was a lot of micro-managing due to managers not trusting what employees are doing at home. "There's no trust as to what people are doing at home," stated "Milo." This refers to her current job, however, "Milo" changed jobs during the pandemic and previously worked for a trusting manager. "Where I was most of the time during COVID-19, just trusting that everyone's going to do their job," stated "Milo." She stated that she worked harder and longer under a trusting manager. "I think in by doing that, we more productive and worked harder and longer for that reason," stated "Milo." She stated that "because we weren't being monitored so closely and having them make us feel as though they couldn't trust us or that we weren't going to do the job that we were doing."

Technology. "Girard" stated that her organization did not provide her with work phones which meant being contacted on her personal cellular device. "Ferret" stated that her organization provided employees with a computer. For "Kingston," a smooth business transition from the office to telework was a job for the Information Technology (IT) department. The "IT department had to step it up" to provide a smooth transition for the government employees, according to "Kingston." "Brick" required a new screen and laptop from her organization. There were technological kinks at her organization just trying to identify the best tool to utilize. "We do have a lot of elderly people within our department and showing them, you know even myself sometimes" was an issue, stated "Brick." "Ruby" was provided with a laptop and office supplies. Blending technology with high performance work practices has a positive effect on employee performance (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015).

"Gray" found that planning ahead assisted with any work requiring to her to print. If she knew she would work in the office, for example, she could plan to print anything that needed to be printed on the days she went into the office. Her company also supplied office equipment to teleworking employees. "Milo" was provided a work laptop and later added her own office equipment to make herself more comfortable working from home. She stated that being provided with laptops allowed her fellow employees to go home, log in, and not "miss a beat." "Vader" felt as though his organization had effective communication tools in place which help with the smooth transition to telework whereas "Green" thought if her organization was more digital, they would have had a smoother transition.

"Pelo" had a positive experience with the transition to telework as her organization already permitted telework on an occasional basis for most employees prior to the pandemic. She works in the beauty and cosmetics industry and all employees besides the manufacturing staff

were allowed to telework at least one day per week prior to COVID-19. Since she already was

supplied a work laptop and familiar with the process, "Pelo" had a positive transition. "Pelo"

stated that her organization "offered at-home office equipment" to further assist with the

transition during COVID-19. Her organization attempted to make the transition as easy as

possible through technology and stated that IT was a big factor in the success of the transition.

"Gray" found technology to be a useful aspect of telework. When it came to working at

home without paperwork in front of her, she found a second monitor assisted her in viewing her

work. "I needed to make sure I was on point," she stated, "I prepared for it and then also I did

finally just decide you need to get that monitor, you need to use it with this laptop." "Gray"

found that the second screen "really helped out a lot because I was able to have a big monitor. I

was able to have like two documents up there so that also helped."

"Bella" found there were a lot of technical issues when it came transitioning to telework

from office-based work. She attempted to use her personal computer but was unsuccessful due to

the different platforms. "We tried using my laptop, it was really difficult because I'm more Mac-

based IOS and they're more Word so we had some issues there," stated "Bella." She encountered

connection issues as well. Her organization also saw a shift in which platform to communicate

through during the pandemic. They transitioned from Skype to Teams to be "able to connect to

one another, my department to another department, more quickly," according to "Bella."

Flexibility. Three participants mentioned the term *flexibility*. "Rey" and "Vader" declared

that flexibility was necessary for managers of teleworkers. "Rey" indicated that management

"became more flexible with each individual accordingly" and they had to be "open-minded."

"Vader" stated that managers "had to adapt to the new, flexible schedule" regarding employees

with families especially. "Bella" found telework allowed her to juggle more giving her more

flexibility. Flexibility is essential for successful telework execution (Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016).

Technostress. Two participants mentioned their organizations contacting them on their personal cellular phones after normal working hours. "Girard" and "Kingston" used personal cellular phones for work which meant constant contact with the organizations they worked for. This made them feel obligated to be in constant contact with their coworkers and supervisors. "Girard" is a clerical employee while "Kingston" is a manager of clerical staff. Technology related stress can be felt by those who are less comfortable with digital tools and is less likely felt by younger generations who grew up with technology (Bentata, 2020).

Work/Life Balance and Boundaries. When asked about management style, "Girard" stated that managers began calling whenever they wanted on her personal cell phone. She felt as though managers called whenever they needed which seemed like "a clear lack of boundaries when it came to management." "The expectations were still the same," according to "Girard."

For "Kingston," she permitted one of her clerical employees to have more freedom since she had a challenging lifestyle. "One particular staff member, she has three children- one of which is autistic- and that affected her lifestyle. So we made the adjustment to accommodate her situation allowing her the extra time that she needed," according to "Kingston." In regard to work-life balance, she also stated that she was able to paint a room in her house during the pandemic. The researcher interprets this as personal chores or tasks were able to be executed while teleworking.

"Milo" highly enjoyed her time teleworking and found it to be a positive experience. "It definitely was life-changing for me," she stated. As a single mother, "Milo" was able to save time on commuting and have dinner with her teenage daughter at five o'clock instead of seven

o'clock. "It makes you calmer," she stated, "it makes you a better person." The teleworking experience relieved stress for "Milo" who stated that since returning to the office already feels the stress returning. Teleworking employees report less stress (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020).

"Bella" found it difficult to find boundaries between work and home roles. She stated, "it was really difficult because you wanted to keep going and keep going and you went into your personal time and it affected your personal life and your routine with your family and the structure that you had at home." This was the only downside she listed for telework. The work-life balance was off, and work felt endless, according to "Bella." She found telework allowed her to juggle more giving her more flexibility.

Personal Roles. A single mom of two elementary children, "Girard" relied on organization to be successful with parenting and working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Girard" felt like "there wasn't much of a difference between working from home and working at work." She also stated that she honestly felt that while working from home, she "ended up working harder than I do here sometimes." At the time of this interview, she was located in the office. Teleworking parents face challenges retaining boundaries between work and home roles (Delanoeije et al., 2019).

Although "Brick" does not have children, she understands that personal roles impact employees during telework. She stated that her organization was aware of the "readjusting" that parents had to do helping their children attend school virtually while teleworking. "A lot of mothers had to take care of their kids and a lot of their kids were also attending school, so they also had to help them readjust," according to "Brick." She referred to this as "humane" and said, "they were very conscientious of people's situation." She sympathizes with parents having to take care of a family while their manager micro-manages their work. "It think that kind of

aggression, it works in the office, but now that has to kind of re-shift in a way or kind of do it differently," stated "Brick."

"Milo" is a single mother of a teenager who found teleworking to reduce her stress and improve her work-life balance. "Me being a single mom and having a high school daughter, the amount of stress it took off me, even now that I'm back to work, I feel it coming back," stated "Milo." "Pardo" does not have children but understands how telework benefits families with children. "You're able to do more for your family while you're at home. Especially those who are looking for or having trouble with daycare or children I think why not be able to stay home," stated "Pardo."

"Bella" mentioned wearing a headpiece was helpful to block household distractions while working at home. "The headpiece always helps so that all the background noise from the kids, you know, it doesn't interfere with the connection you're building with that student on the phone at that moment," stated "Bella" regarding her higher education clientele. She found creating routines increased her productivity within the home setting.

As a single mother of an elementary aged child, "Green" found telework "helpful for work-life balance." She stated that if her job was more digital, she could have been even more productive while assisting her child with virtual school. "Under normal circumstances, I think we would've been better prepared," stated "Green."

Managing Teleworkers. When it comes to managing teleworkers, the participants had very varied opinions. "White" and "Girard" felt that trust was essential while "Franklin" felt that a hands-on approach was necessary for managers to "be aware of where everyone is and what everyone's doing so everyone can be in one accord." "Pelo" found that managers within her organization went into a "crisis mode" with several meetings per week as opposed to the once

per month they met prior to the pandemic. She stated that the managers changed the way the

work in general and just how they do business overall. She described this as a forward-looking

mindset.

"Kingston" is an office manager who had to manage half of a staff that worked remotely

and half of a staff that worked out on the field within the government sector. Management style

remained the same for "Kingston" and she was "able to manage from home" as needed. "I had to

go into the office at least once or twice per week when COVID started," stated "Kingston." She

stated that her hands-on management style remained the same for her teleworking employees

who had to occasionally go into the office. Exceptions were made for select employees who had

a difficult time adjusting to the new schedule. Special accommodations were made for one

clerical worker who had multiple children at home, including one with autism.

"Brick" stated that micro-managing was not effective. "It may work for some people but

not everyone," she said. She stated that "the whole micro-managing, being aggressive to make

sure people are actually working, I mean, it's not effective." "Brick" found trusting employees to

be the answer.

"Bella" found that being hands-on and having weekly meetings was effective

management during the pandemic. She found this as a way to connect and feel supported. "It was

nice for us all to feel connected to be honest, it was really daunting at the very beginning, you

know, to be separated from one another," stated "Bella." She found it "nice for the managers to

bring us together, just show their support." Diversity management and supportive leadership aid

in successful telework implementation (Bae et al., 2019).

"Ruby" stated that managers likely "had to figure out a new style or how to be able to

stay in contact with their workers" since the shift to telework occurred. She mentioned that some

mangers likely had to gain some new skills. For office-based managers transitioning to telework or managing teleworkers, "I'm sure managers had a hard time trying to adjust to that," stated "Ruby." They would need to "learn communication skills to learn how to better talk to their workers, learn how to do meetings by Zoom, and other things to keep their hands in the mix," according to "Ruby."

"Rey" and "Vader" both agreed that managers had to become flexible with their employees. "Rey" stated that management "became more flexible with each individual accordingly" and they had to be "open-minded." "Vader" suggested that managers "had to adapt to the new, flexible schedule" regarding employees with families specifically. "Vader" describes the new management style as both flexible and strict, however. Flexibility in terms of understanding personal roles but "strict with timelines," according to "Vader".

Stress and Job Burnout. The unit that "Ferret" works for in the healthcare industry saw a high turnover. In two years during the pandemic, there were several different clerical staff due to two promotions, retiring, and "just disappearing and not returning to work," according to "Ferret." Her organization also had a mass hiring of roles that were not clerical to help with the transition to telework. The researcher interprets employees disappearing and not returning to work because of job burnout. During uncertain times, employees may experience heightened stress leading to job burnout, higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019).

Telework as an Employee Option. "Pelo" stated that her organization has now moved to a "hybrid way of working." Employees can work in the office or at home and attend a meeting in whatever way they wish, according to "Pelo." "Nothing is really in person mandatory unless otherwise instructed with advance notice," according to "Pelo." "Ruby" also supports the option

to telework but on an "individual circumstance situation" to access who really needs it versus who will take advantage of it. "I'm thinking people are taking a little bit of advantage of it," stated "Ruby."

"Gray" was given the option to telework at the beginning of the pandemic. She stated, "she even called me in office to let me know about teleworking. She gave me the option." "Gray" stated that she sits back and laughs about her initial decision to continue working within the office at the beginning of the pandemic. "I'll come in every day. Ain't no big deal," "Gray" told her director. "I sit back and I look on this this and I laugh. I'm like girl you were silly," stated "Gray." Her director allowed her to rethink her decision. "I'm going to give you until two o'clock to decide. I don't want to rush you with an answer," reflected "Gray." When the time came, "Gray" decided to telework. Teleworkers have increased stress under the unexpected pandemic and abrupt, forceful shift into working from home (Colley et al., 2020).

Social Isolation. "Kingston" stated that although she supports teleworking, she does believe that some face-to-face interaction is necessary. "I think that people should get together and get to know the people and the face-to-face, day-to-day contact in necessary, but they can always scale back and still accomplish their tasks," stated "Kingston." She felt as though allowing telework 50% of the time would be effective. Teleworkers may encounter social isolation when working remotely (Choi, 2020).

"Brick" missed the socialization working in the office brought. She stated that working virtually, she no longer could physically interact with and build relationships with new coworkers. "Bella" also mentioned the connection working within the office provides. "It was really daunting at the very beginning, you know, to be separated from one another," stated

"Bella." She also mentioned feeling "secluded" and that managerial support helped alleviate this negative feeling and provided a feeling of connection.

Support. "Brick" commended her organization on being supportive of the employees during the uncertainty that COVID-19 provided. She also mentioned the social justice issues that became paramount during the pandemic and stated that her organization was also supportive regarding those issues. "We had to have conversations to understand that it was not only the pandemic that was happening and also people were also suffering and going through that at well," according to "Brick." She missed socializing within the office and building a rapport with coworkers stating that it was difficult to meet new employees within her organization virtually.

"Milo" found her organization was supportive. They would check in "just making sure we were all ok," she stated. "Bella" also found her organization to be supportive. She commended her managers' support. "Their support, that was very, very, important. Just to feel that you weren't so secluded even though being in your house and just being far from one another. It was good to have that connection still," stated "Bella." Leadership support and commitment to telework programs are vital for successful telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

New Normal. Telework was supported by the participants when it was successfully implemented. All 15 of the participants support telework under normal circumstances if effective telework tactics are in place. Multiple participants believed that businesses would never return to fully office-based staff since telework was successful during the COVID-19 pandemic and since having a roadmap for successful telework implementation.

The sheer uncertainty that was presented in the findings was mimicked in the literature review (Crowley et al., 2020). The feeling that telework was going to last beyond the pandemic

was mentioned in both the findings and the literature (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Technology was a pillar for successful telework in both the findings and the literature (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). The results differed from the literature in that surveillance was not mentioned. The literature mentioned surveillance of teleworking employees (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020). A poor work-life balance while teleworking was mentioned during the interviews which mimics the literature review (Palumbo, 2020). The literature presented the idea of masks and teleworking hours becoming an issue (Hoey et al., 2020). This was not explicitly mentioned in the findings.

"Ruby" stated that she felt as though telework was going to be the new normal. She felt that work would never return to 100% office-based. "I think that once people realize this is how it's going to be for a while, I think more people are open minded because it's a hard adjustment," stated "Ruby." "Milo" also stated that work would likely never return to completely office-based. The literature also found that telework during the pandemic would have lasting effects on business long after the pandemic (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

Interpretation of the Themes

This section contains an exhaustive interpretation of the themes presented in the findings. The interpretation of the themes connects the various concepts derived from the data and why they are significant to the themes discovered during the data analysis phase. This section further expands on the codes from the data as well as connecting the themes to the literature when appropriate.

Organizational Benefits. The organization benefits from telework when working in the office is not an option. Participants listed numerous ways in which their organizations benefitted from general benefits to specific productivity increases. The following is a detailed list of ways

organizations benefit from telework. Just as the literature suggests, telework was found to enhance productivity, performance, employee satisfaction, reciprocation between employee and employer, motivation, and work-life balance as well as reduce turnover (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016;). Participants found that they worked harder at home which is similar to the literature which suggested intensified work in exchange for telework (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Not presented by the findings, other organizational benefits could include autonomy (Müller & Niessen, 2019) and the ability to outsource (Park & Cho, 2020).

The researcher interprets two of the participants' responses to indicate that the organization in which they work for benefitted from them working remotely during COVID-19. "Gray" found that there were less employee grievances and increased workload since people were unable to chat at each other's desks. She noted the workplace socialization was wasted time and people were actually working when working from home, according to "Gray." Organizations must be saving money while employees telework, according to "Pardo." The researcher interprets saving the company money as an organizational benefit. Employees not physically being in an office can range from saving on renting a building to utility costs. Organizations can reduce overhead costs by reducing or eliminating office space (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020). Permitting telework eliminates the cost of energy, rent, and supplies for an office (Choi, 2020). Teleworkers can use less paid time off ensuring more days spent working (Park & Cho, 2020).

Intensified Work. Three interview participants mentioned what the researcher interprets as intensified work. One participant, "Ferret," mentioned "juggling" things whereas two participants, "Bella" and "Ruby" mentioned executing multiple roles. The researcher interprets

juggling work tasks or work roles as intensified work since it occurred due to the transition to telework. For "Ferret," her organization made a shift to attempt to alleviate her workload by having therapists update their own appointment schedules. For "Bella," her organization put more work upon her by giving her the work of downsized roles. "Ruby" was hired to fill multiple roles. Connecting these results to the literature, teleworking employees are likely to accept an intensified workload in hopes for a flexible work arrangement, usually as part of an unspoken social contract or a negotiated exchange (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Palumbo, 2020). Intensified work often accompanied unusual working hours, extended working hours, and unpaid overtime (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). When intensified work is identified as voluntary, the social exchange contract fosters the intensified work as part of the ability to telework (Choi, 2020). Intensified work may impair teleworkers' ability to maintain boundaries between home life and work roles (Bolisani et al., 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020). This relates to "Bella" as she mentioned working into her personal time and having difficulty preventing work from permeating her personal life.

Extended Working Hours. Three interviews revealed extended working hours were common during COVID-19. One indicated working through lunch time, another indicated returning work emails all hours of the day, and the other mentioned working during the time she would otherwise be commuting to work. "Bella" mentioned work spilling over into her personal time which the researcher interprets as extended working hours. By working remotely, these three participants found themselves working an extended workday compared to what they would have worked if they worked within the office. Teleworkers frequently work extended hours due to an unspoken social contract between employer and employee in exchange for the flexible working arrangement (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

Productivity. Ten participants mentioned productivity during their interviews. "White" mentioned that the issues her organization met where handled "on the fly" and effectively. Overall, the transition to telework was "really effective if not more effective" than working in the office. "Girard" said that telework was "very doable" and that she was "able to do the same roles and things virtually." She mentioned how she often felt unproductive within the office setting. The researcher interprets this as wasted time being physically present in the office opposed to working, often long hours, teleworking. The productivity, otherwise, remained the same as she "was still doing what I normally do just in a different setting," according to "Franklin." Productivity was high according to "Rey" and "Pelo." Productivity suffered initially but had to be maintained according to "Kingston" and "Milo." For "Green," "Bella," and "Pardo," productivity was equivalent to working within the office. The researcher interprets the ten responses as telework being equal to or more productive than being within the office over time.

Telework increases productivity (Choi, 2020; Koslowski et al., 2019; Palumbo, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016), promotes work-life balance, motivation, and job satisfaction (Jeon & Kwon, 2020), and promotes worker engagement work-related absorption, vigor, and dedication (Palumbo, 2020).

Attract Talent. One participant mentioned seeking telework positions when job searching. "Bella" stated that "I really look, if I were to look for another position, I think one of the benefits would have to be, yes, telecommuting and working remotely once in a while." The researcher interprets this as the participant has looked for remote positions and is attracted to an organization that offers a remote position. Providing telework as an option can retain and motivate skilled new-generation employees (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Telework is viewed as facilitating work-life balance. An increase in nontraditional families, including single parents and

dual-income households, created childcare challenges which can be remedied by telework (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

Growth Mindset. One participant mentioned what the researcher interprets as a form of a growth mindset within her organization. "Pelo" stated that there was a shift in the mindset of the managers within her organization in that they had to "look at it now going forward what is the best way to incorporate different styles and also the employees work-life balance." Mindset during uncertain times impacts the outcomes of decisions made (Michalski et al., 2020). A growth mindset is most suitable for uncertain times (Michalski et al., 2020). For "Pelo," her organization exhibited what the researcher believes to be either strategic resilience or organizational resilience. Sustainability and resilience play a crucial role during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020). Organizational resilience can be either operational or strategic. Organizational resilience is passive and focused on overcoming the crisis and returning to status quo by interpreting the situation and adapting to it. Strategic resilience is active and turns a crisis into an opportunity swiftly (Geciene, 2020).

Commute and Intention to Quit. Two participants mentioned commute in their interview responses. "Kingston" stated that reduced commuting is better for the environment and saves employees money on gasoline. "Milo" stated that not commuting reduces stress and improves well-being. Teleworking can boost productivity and alleviate costs and stress associated with commuting within teleworkers (Beno, 2018; Choi, 2020; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Having to commute long distances between work and home negatively impacts work-life boundaries and affective commitment in addition to increasing intention to quit (Elfering et al., 2020). An employee's commute is not considered part of the working hours nor is it compensated. Studies show that a longer the commute relates to increased intention to quit. Commuting influences

physical symptoms that can negatively impact work performance (high blood pressure, tiredness). Commuting negatively impacts work-life balance which affects performance and employee satisfaction (Elfering et al., 2020).

Social Contract and Reciprocity. Only one participant mentioned the social contract/reciprocity that accompanies managerial trust. "Milo" found that working under a trusting manager motivated her to work harder and longer, ultimately benefitting the organization. "I think in the long run, it benefitted them, and it benefitted us and the division as a whole because more work- they got more work out of us actually," stated "Milo." Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee that facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, productivity and autonomy (Choi, 2020). Although this was verbally indicated by one participant, other participants mentioned the outcomes of the social contract, such as increased productivity and flexibility.

Managing Teleworkers. Ten participants mentioned management styles during their interviews. The researcher notes that this was likely due to the research questions that were asked. Two research questions mentioned the term *management style*. Four participants asked the researcher to explain or explain the term *management style*. The participants had very varied opinions. "White", "Brick," and "Girard" felt that trust was essential while "Franklin" felt that a hands-on approach was necessary for managers to "be aware of where everyone is and what everyone's doing so everyone can be in one accord." "Brick" stated that micro-managing was not effective. "Girard" specified that the results are the proof that employees are working remotely. Managers of teleworkers must shift from time- and activity-based management to results-driven management as they will not be measuring time but results (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). This differed from the literature which

suggested that management style must shift when shifting from office-based management to managing teleworkers. Similar to the findings, telework progresses when managers support the use of it (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). The social exchange theory promotes reciprocation between employee and employer as it boosts productivity (Choi, 2020). Managers will need training on how to use new programs and communicate policy changes (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020).

"Pelo" found that managers within her organization went into a "crisis mode" with several meetings per week as opposed to the once per month they met prior to the pandemic. She stated that the managers changed the way they work in general and just how they do business overall. She described this as a forward-looking mindset. The researcher interprets this forward-looking mindset as a growth mindset and notes this was received positively.

"Bella" found that being hands-on and having weekly meetings was effective management during the pandemic. She found this as a means to connect and support employees. An office manager who had to manage half of a staff that worked remotely and half of a staff that worked out on the field within the government sector, "Kingston" maintained her office-based management style throughout teleworking. Exceptions were made for select employees who had a difficult time adjusting to the new schedule due to personal roles. Special accommodations were made for one clerical worker who had multiple children at home, including one on the autism spectrum. Managers should change their managerial practices when managing teleworkers (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Park & Cho, 2020). As an office manager, "Kingston" claimed maintaining the same style was effective. The researcher suggests that interviewing her subordinates to see if they found her consistent approach effective would benefit future research. Her exceptions to the rule for an employee with a special circumstance is

positive for that employee. Managers should encourage work-life balance of teleworkers to avoid fatigue and job burnout (Lautsch et al., 2009).

"Ruby" stated that managers likely "had to figure out a new style or how to be able to stay in contact with their workers" during the pandemic. She indicated that teleworking required new communication skills of managers who never managed teleworkers. Managers would need to "learn communication skills to learn how to better talk to their workers, learn how to do meetings by Zoom, and other things to keep their hands in the mix," according to "Ruby."

"Rey" and "Vader" declared that flexibility was necessary for managers of teleworkers. "Rey" indicated that management "became more flexible with each individual accordingly" and they had to be "open-minded." "Vader" stated that managers "had to adapt to the new, flexible schedule" regarding employees with families especially. Managers should encourage work-life balance of teleworkers to avoid fatigue and job burnout (Lautsch et al., 2009).

Communication. Ten participants mentioned that communication was increased and effective while teleworking. According to "White," "it really just boiled down to communication." She also stated that one effective tactic to telework was to learn different styles of communication. "Just understanding different styles and whether or not certain people prefer to be reached out to via email or text message or phone calls," stated "White." She indicated that she prefers to see coworkers' faces to read their faces and expressions. "Communication is key" according to "Pardo." She found communication to be an effective tactic to telework, specifically email and meetings. "Communication was the key," according to "Ruby."

"Brick" felt that the weekly check-in meetings were a form of effective communication. She also found learning to be a more effective communicator was a successful tactic to telework. "Ferret" stated that management provided constant communication via email and that the

directives often changed as the pandemic sustained. Communication within her organization was strict, hands-on, and filled with regulations that were constantly communicated, according to "Ferret." This made her feel like she was not being "left in the dark" about the changes within her organization.

Managers fear telework may cause a decrease in communication between them and their employees (Kaplan et al., 2018). This was the case for office manager, "Kingston." "Kingston" prefers a hands-on and constant communication as a manager of clerical staff. She "kept in constant contact with everyone continuously throughout the day" as her personal cellular phone receives work emails. For her, when an email was sent to her, she received it immediately on her personal phone and began working on a response. This was the opposite experience for "Green" who was not invited to meetings and felt there was a lack of support. "We had no idea what was happening," according to "Green" with the exception of emailed directives. Her organization sent emails with the changes that occurred during the pandemic. Clear expectations between employees and employers are beneficial to telework success (Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Jeon & Kwon, 2020). This was missing for "Green."

"Milo" found the communication within her organization to be very effective. "They did a really good job," she said, "we were always having conversations, always talking." "Gray" felt her director did an amazing job with the transition to telework from office-based work. "My director, she was on top of it so she really spoke to us about everything that was going on," stated "Gray." "Ruby" reflected on the constant emails that her supervisor sent her regarding the several changes that occurred. With constantly changing directives, emails were sent to employees to keep them informed. "Rey" felt that communication was successful during telework and got better as time went on. "I think we're a better team," stated "Rey." A

supportive workplace adds to the unspoken communication that telework is acceptable (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

Flexibility. Three interview participants mentioned flexibility playing a role while teleworking. "Rey" and "Vader" stated that flexibility was necessary for managers of teleworkers. "Rey" indicated that management "became more flexible with each individual accordingly" and they had to be "open-minded." "Vader" indicated that managers "had to adapt to the new, flexible schedule" regarding employees with families especially. "Bella" discovered telework allowed her to juggle more giving her more flexibility. Managers should encourage work-life balance of teleworkers to avoid fatigue and job burnout (Lautsch et al., 2009). Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility within their work roles are prone to have better work-life balance (Choi, 2020). Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee which facilitates reduced turnover, flexibility, productivity and autonomy (Choi, 2020). The researcher notes that flexibility was mentioned as both a managerial tool for managers of teleworkers and as a beneficial outcome of teleworking for teleworkers.

Social Isolation. Three participants mentioned socializing as necessary during telework. "Kingston" stated that face-to-face interaction is necessary. "I think that people should get together and get to know the people and the face-to-face, day-to-day contact in necessary, but they can always scale back and still accomplish their tasks," stated "Kingston." "Brick" missed the socialization of working in the office. She stated that since working virtually, she no longer could physically interact with and build relationships with new coworkers. "Bella" also mentioned the connection working within the office provides. "It was really daunting at the very beginning, you know, to be separated from one another," stated "Bella." She also mentioned feeling "secluded," and that managerial support helped alleviate this negative feeling and provide

a feeling of connection. Telework requires adjustment to both work habits and socialization (Klopotek, 2017). Teleworkers may experience social isolation when working remotely (Choi, 2020).

Technology. Thirteen interview participants mentioned some form of technology in their interview responses. "Girard" stated that her organization did not provide her with work phones which resulted in her using her personal cellular device. "Ferret" stated that her organization provided employees with a computer. For "Kingston," a smooth business transition from the office to telework was successful because of the IT department. "Brick" required a new screen and laptop from her organization. Her organization also had to provide training on how to use new communication tools as did the organizations of "White" and "Pelo." "Ruby" was provided with a laptop and office supplies. For "Gray," her company supplied office equipment to teleworking employees. "Milo" was provided a work laptop and later added her own office equipment to make herself more comfortable working from home. She stated that being provided with laptops allowed her fellow employees to go home, log in, and not "miss a beat." "Vader" felt as though his organization had effective communication tools in place which helped with the smooth transition to telework whereas "Green" thought if her organization was more digital, they would have had a smoother transition.

"Pelo" had a positive experience with the transition to telework as her organization previously permitted telework on an occasional basis for most employees prior to the pandemic. She works in the beauty and cosmetics industry where employees, with the exception of manufacturing staff, were allowed to telework at least one day per week prior to COVID-19. "Pelo" was supplied a work laptop and familiar with the telework process prior to the pandemic. Her organization "offered at-home office equipment" to further assist with the transition during

COVID-19. Her organization attempted to make the transition as easy as possible through technology and she stated that IT was a big factor in the success of the transition.

"Gray" found technology to be an essential aspect of telework. When it came to working at home without paperwork in front of her, she discovered a second monitor aided her in viewing her work. "Gray" found that the second screen "really helped out a lot because I was able to have a big monitor. I was able to have like two documents up there so that also helped." "Bella" encountered a lot of technical issues while transitioning to telework from office-based work. She attempted to use her personal computer but was unsuccessful due to the different platforms. "We tried using my laptop, it was really difficult because I'm more Mac-based IOS and they're more Word so we had some issues there," stated "Bella." She encountered connection issues as well. Her organization also saw a shift in which platform to communicate through during the pandemic. They transitioned from Skype to Teams to be "able to connect to one another, my department to another department, more quickly," according to "Bella."

The researcher notes that with this large number of participants mentioning technology during their interviews, this is a significant aspect to observe. Best practices can be created from these responses. Managers must ensure that teleworkers are trained on using technology properly to ensure teleworkers can be productive (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015). Managing projects remotely requires technology for virtual teams to work effectively together (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Solomon, 2001). The reliance on technology during COVID-19 is part of a technological or digital revolution that will lead to increased innovation (Berghout, 2020). The researcher observes that within organizations that had perceived preparedness, IT was able to transition employees smoothly. Participants that reported missteps during the transition mention missteps with technical aspects of the transition. The researcher interprets this as an organization that is

technologically prepared for telework will be more likely to have a smooth transition when the need to transition to telework arises.

Technostress. Two participants mentioned their organizations contacting them on their personal cellular phones after normal working hours. "Girard" and "Kingston" used personal cellular phones for work which meant constant contact with the organizations they worked for. This made them feel obligated to be in constant contact with their coworkers and supervisors. "Girard" is a clerical employee while "Kingston" is a manager of clerical staff. Technology related stress can transfer from the office to an employee's home (Benlian, 2020). Benlian (2020) recommended that employees who work in technology-saturated fields are more likely to experience technology related stress, or technostress, and bring that stress home. The researcher notes that whereas "Girard" had a negative experience with using her personal cellular phone for work after working hours, "Kingston" willingly did this. Therefore, "Kingston" may not have had a negative impact from using her personal cellular phone for work after working hours. This creates a dispute against the existence of technostress for "Kingston."

Job Type. Three participants mentioned job types during their interviews. "White" stated that the preparation for the shift to telework from office-based work was non-existent for administrative roles within her pharmaceutical organization. "Pelo" stated that employees within the manufacturing department within her beauty/cosmetics organization could not telework as well as those in operations. She compared those employees to essential workers stating that "they are our essential workers," according to "Pelo." "Ruby" stated that certain departments within her government organization were not permitted to telework during COVID-19. As a state employee, she considers the Corrections Officers who worked the entire pandemic within the jail. This indicates that telework is not suitable for all job types.

Not all job types are suitable for telework (Cascio, 2000; Schur et al., 2020). Jobs that typically exist in the office or in a technology field are more suitable for telework (Klopotek, 2017). Telework is suitable for accounting, finance, and legal services but not for social work, retail, or manufacturing industries (Klopotek, 2017; Schur et al., 2020). Most jobs that can be performed over the phone, via computer, or in person can be telework positions (Cascio, 2000). This indicates that the focus of this study, clerical staff and managers of clerical staff, would fit the criteria of being able to telework despite any pushback from allowing clerical staff to telework prior to COVID-19.

Work/Life Balance and Boundaries. Four participants reported that their work-life balance was affected due to teleworking during COVID-19. "Girard," "Kingston," and "Bella" all reported a lack of boundaries when it came to work invading personal time. For the clerical participants, this was viewed as a negative impact. For the managerial participant, the lack of boundaries was her choice and she still made time to "paint her room" despite answering work emails whenever they came into her personal cell phone. One participant, "Milo," reported enjoying the work-life balance that telework provided her. She took advantage of not having a commute and found time to eat dinner with her daughter. This was a stark contrast to "Bella" who found herself working past the time she was supposed to, interfering with her family routine. The researcher interprets this as a possible difference in individual circumstances or individual personalities. Teleworkers report better work-life balance (Müller & Niessen, 2019) and less stress (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020).

Teleworking parents who are permitted flexibility within their work roles are prone to have better work-life balance (Choi, 2020). The difference in the responses lies in the differences of familial status and ability to adjust. Teleworkers may face difficulty maintaining boundaries

between work and home (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Koslowski et al., 2019) in part by working outside usual business hours (Jostell & Hemlin, 2018). Teleworkers may face difficulty unplugging from work technology causing work to intrude on home life (Koslowski et al., 2019). This can include checking work emails or returning work calls outside of work hours (Koslowski et al., 2019). Work may be disrupted to handle domestic tasks while at home the same way domestic tasks cannot be completed while at the office furthering a difficulty to balance work and home life (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Certain moderators exist that can vary work-life balance between employees including personality traits, home responsibilities, and work demand. Boundary theory indicates employees transition roles between work and home to manage this balance (Delanoeije et al., 2019). Managers should promote work-life balance of teleworkers (Lautsch et al., 2009).

  Personal Roles. A single mom of two elementary school-aged children, "Girard" relied on organization skills to be successful with parenting and working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Girard" felt like she "ended up working harder than I do here sometimes." A single mother of a high school-aged child, "Milo" mentioned her personal role being impacted by telework. She enjoyed being present at home in lieu of the one-hour commute to her job. A widowed, mother of four college-aged children, including a child with autism, "Bella" noted that telework disturbed her work-life balance and that creating routines increased her productivity within the home setting. A married, father of two elementary school-aged children, "Vader" mentioned the need for flexibility in schedule regarding telework. A married, mother of one elementary school-aged child and one toddler, "Green" sated that telework increased work-life balance.

The researcher notes that not all participants that had caregiver roles mentioned them during their interview. A caregiver to an elderly parent, "Franklin" did not mention personal roles during her interview. A mother of two elementary school-aged children, "Pelo" did not mention her role as a parent nor her role as a wife during her interview. A single mother of an adult daughter, "Ruby" did not mention her personal role during the interview.

Caregiver to an elderly parent, "Brick" does not have children, but she understands that personal roles impact employees during telework. She mentioned that her organization was aware of the "readjusting" that parents had to do helping their children attend school virtually while teleworking. "A lot of mothers had to take care of their kids and a lot of their kids were also attending school, so they also had to help them readjust," according to "Brick." She described to this as "humane" and said, "they were very conscientious of people's situation." She sympathizes with parents having to take care of a family while their manager micro-manages their work. While "Pardo" does not have children, she understands how telework benefits families with children. "You're able to do more for your family while you're at home. Especially those who are looking for or having trouble with daycare or children I think why not be able to stay home," acknowledged "Pardo."

Telework disrupts work-life balance for caregivers when boundaries are unable to be maintained between roles (Palumbo, 2020). Of the six participants who mentioned their personal roles during their interviews, only one mentioned not being able to balance their work and personal life roles. The researcher interprets this as that one participant, "Bella" not being able to maintain the boundaries between those two separate roles. This had a negative impact on her personal life as she worked longer hours, allowing work to encroach into her role of a mother of four, including a child on the autism spectrum. Teleworking parents face challenges maintaining

boundaries between work and home (Delanoeije et al., 2019). "Franklin" is an example of successful boundary setting. She utilized organizational skills to work remotely along with assisting two young children with virtual school as a single parent.

Support. Perceived organizational support was mentioned by three participants. "Brick" applauded her organization on being supportive of the employees during the uncertainty that COVID-19 provided. She also mentioned the social justice issues that became paramount during the pandemic and acknowledged that her organization was also supportive regarding that. "We had to have conversations to understand that it was not only the pandemic that was happening and also people were also suffering and going through that at well," stated "Brick." She missed socializing within the office and building a rapport with coworkers stating that it was difficult to meet new employees within her organization virtually.

"Milo" found her organization was supportive. They would check in "just making sure we were all ok," she said. "Bella" also found her organization to be supportive. She commended her managers' support stating "their support, that was very, very, important. Just to feel that you weren't so secluded even though being in your house and just being far from one another. It was good to have that connection still." The willingness of an organization to provide the option to telework has a positive effect on telework success (Choi, 2020). Leadership support and commitment to telework programs are essential for successful telework programs (Jeon & Kwon, 2020).

Trust. Four of the fifteen participants mentioned the word *trust.* This word was used consistently in reference to how managers should trust their staff during telework. "White" found that trust was a successful approach for managers of teleworkers as it is successful at her organization. Her organization is a pharmaceutical company with the motto of being *unbossed*.

"Girard" found management style frustrating because there was a lack of trust. "What was really frustrating was them being like you need to prove that you're doing work from home." She suggested a results-driven approach to managing, stating that "obviously it's getting done. You see the results." A lack of managerial trust negatively impacts the social contract exchange (Kaplan et al., 2018).

Trust is more effective than micro-managing, according to "Brick." Manager support leads to improved job performance (Beno, 2018). "If you cultivate a relationship with your coworkers and you both have understanding like hey these are the priorities and this is what we need to work on you don't necessarily as a manager you don't necessarily have to check in so often to make sure the job is getting done," according to "Brick." "I think you have to trust in your employees," expressed "Milo." She found there was a lot of micro-managing due to managers not trusting what employees are doing at home. She stated that she worked harder and longer under a trusting manager. "I think in by doing that, we're more productive and worked harder and longer for that reason," stated "Milo." She stated that "because we weren't being monitored so closely and having them make us feel as though they couldn't trust us or that we weren't going to do the job that we were doing." Managers often suspect employees will not work if left unsupervised (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers often presume teleworkers will not perform well if not in their presence (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers should reduce opposition to telework and trust employees to work from home with a level of autonomy (Kaplan et al., 2018).

Stress and Job Burnout. The researcher made note of the amount of negative vocabulary one interview participant used. "Ruby" used the words "angry" and "irritated" when referring to her experience. The researcher interprets this to be related to stress and job burnout. She stated

that she was angry in the beginning of the transition to telework, and that the day of the interview was not an easy day at work. She mentioned trying to keep her "sanity." "Ruby" stated that things have better adjusted now than in the beginning. She reports to more than one manager and feels like work is a "juggling game." Workplace stress stemming from abusive supervisors can add strain on workers leading to negative organizational outcomes (Wu et al., 2019). Uncertainty can include role ambiguity, role overload, and/or economic hardship which can add to employee stress (Wu et al., 2019).

The healthcare organization "Ferret" works for saw a high turnover during the past two years during the pandemic. They went through several different clerical staff due to two promotions, retiring, and "just disappearing and not returning to work," according to "Ferret." Her organization also had a mass hiring of roles that were not clerical to help with the transition to telework. The researcher interprets employees disappearing and not returning to work as a result of job burnout. During uncertain times, employees may face increased stress leading to job burnout, higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased turnover (Wu et al., 2019).

Telework as an Employee Option. Three participants mentioned telework as an option in three different ways. "Pelo" stated that her organization has now moved to a "hybrid way of working." Employees can work in the office or at home and attend a meeting in whatever way they wish, according to "Pelo." "Nothing is really in person mandatory unless otherwise instructed with advance notice," according to "Pelo." "Ruby" mentioned that she supports the option to telework but on an "individual circumstance situation" to access who really needs it versus who will take advantage of it. "I'm thinking people are taking a little bit of advantage of it," stated "Ruby." "Gray" was given the option to telework at the beginning of the pandemic. She stated, "she even called me in office to let me know about teleworking. She gave me the

option." "Gray" recalls this option in a positive tone. When the time came, "Gray" decided to telework. Ideally, telework should be offered to employees as an option but not forced upon them as occurred during the pandemic (Colley et al., 2020). Teleworkers have increased stress under the unforeseen pandemic and sudden, forceful shift into working from home (Colley et al., 2020).

New Normal. Two participants mentioned believing that organizations would never return to 100% in the office. "Ruby" stated that she felt as though telework was going to be the new normal. "I think that once people realize this is how it's going to be for a while, I think more people are open minded because it's a hard adjustment," stated "Ruby." "Milo" also stated that work would likely never return to completely office-based. The shift to working at home for so many businesses due to COVID-19 may have a lasting impact on the way work is conducted (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Technology has aided in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). At the time of the interviews, both "Milo" and "Ruby" returned to working within the office on a part time basis. The findings along with the literature stated that the adjustments made during COVID-19 would be here to stay long after the pandemic (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Technology was also crucial in both the findings and the literature (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Not in the findings, the literature mentions surveillance as an issue for employees (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020).

Representation and Visualization of the Data

This section serves to provide a visualization and representation of the data from the findings. This researcher has compiled the data into charts for readability and reference. The charts are explained in detail below.

Table 1

Participant Interview Responses

		Interview Question						
Participant	Pseudonym	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	White	Yes	No	Yes	Trust	Communication	Yes	Yes
2	Girard	No	Yes	Yes	Trust	Organization	Yes	Yes
3	Franklin	Yes	No	No	Hands-on	No	Yes	Yes
4	Ferret	Yes	No	Yes	Communication	Schedule Shifts and Change in Duties	Yes	Yes
5	Pelo	No	Yes	Yes	Growth Mindset	Technology	Yes	Yes
6	Kingston	Yes	Yes and No	No	Hands-on	Longer Hours Working	Yes	Yes
7	Brick	No	No	Yes	Trust and Support	Communication	Not Initially	Yes
8	Gray	No	Yes	No-Good Support	Communication	Planning Ahead	Yes	Yes
9	Milo	No	No	Yes	Trust	Home Office Space	Yes	Yes
10	Pardo	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Communication	Communication	No Difference	Yes
11	Ruby	Yes	No	No	Communication	Juggling Roles and Checking Emails Frequently	Yes	Yes
12	Bella	Yes	No	No	Communication	Communication and Routine	Yes	Yes
13	Rey	Yes	No	Yes	Flexibility	Punctuality and Keeps Track of Coworkers	Yes	Yes
14	Vader	No	Yes	Yes	Flexibility and Strict Timelines	No	Yes	Yes
15	Green	Yes	No	No	Communication	Checking Emails Regularly	Yes	Yes

Table 1 represents the participant interview responses. These responses correspond to the interview guide provided in the Appendix. This chart demonstrates the unanimous positive response to question seven which asks *Do you support permitting telework under normal circumstances, since experiencing it during a time of uncertainty such as the COVID-19 pandemic, if effective telework tactics were in place?* All participants support working remotely.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Demographics										
Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	Married	Children at Home	Elder Caregiver	Second Job	Age	Remote	Commute >30 minutes	Manager	State
1	White	Female	No	0	No	Yes	40-50	Yes	No	No	NJ
2	Girard	Female	No	2	No	Yes	30-40	Yes	No	No	NJ
3	Franklin	Female	No	0	Yes	No	40-50	Yes	No	No	NJ
4	Ferret	Female	No	0	No	No	60-70	Yes	No	Yes	NJ
5	Pelo	Female	Yes	2	No	Yes	40-50	Yes	Yes	No	NY
6	Kingston	Female	No	0	No	Yes	60-70	Yes	No	Yes	NJ
7	Brick	Female	No	0	Yes	No	30-40	Yes	No	No	NY
8	Gray	Female	No	0	No	No	50-60	Yes	No	No	CT
9	Milo	Female	No	1	No	No	50-60	Yes	Yes	No	NJ
10	Pardo	Female	No	0	No	No	30-40	Yes	No	No	CT
11	Ruby	Female	No	1	No	Yes	50-60	Yes	No	No	CT
12	Bella	Female	No	4	No	No	50-60	Yes	No	No	NJ
13	Rey	Male	No	0	No	Yes	30-40	Yes	No	No	NJ
14	Vader	Male	Yes	2	No	Yes	40-50	Yes	No	No	NJ
15	Green	Female	Yes	2	No	No	30-40	Yes	No	No	NJ

Table 2 represents the participants' demographic makeup. Participants were mainly female, mainly clerical, and mainly unmarried. Many of the participants were located in New Jersey with others located in New York and Connecticut. Most participants normally had a commute that was less than 30 minutes from their office. Most participants did not care for an elderly family member, but many did have children to care for. Participant age ranged from 30 to 70 years old. Many participants had a second job during the pandemic. All participants were permitted to telework at some point during the pandemic.

Relationship of the Findings

This section describes the relationship between the findings and how they relate to key areas of the research proposal. This section is a detailed account of the findings' relationship to the research questions, the conceptual framework, anticipated themes, the literature, and the problem statement. A summary of the findings will follow.

The Research Questions. This section serves to provide detail on how the findings relate to the research questions. Each research question is presented again in this section and followed by a narrative on how the participant responses answered each question. Each section is an exhaustive description of the connection between the data and the questions this research is centered on.

RQ1. How can organizations prepare management for future unexpected business disruptions? A participant revealed that management would require new skills during the transition from working in the office to managing teleworkers. It was mentioned that new communication skills would be necessary for managers to be trained on. They would require training on new communication tools and technology as well, according to a participant. Another participant suggested that managers of teleworkers should be focused on the results of telework rather than focusing on work schedule. If the work is getting done within a set deadline, managers may need to be lenient on the working hours given the personal roles employees hold within the household when using the household for both personal and work roles (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999).

Managers should learn the effects of their management styles on the productivity of their staff during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify best practices for a future, unpredicted, similar situation. Multiple participants stated that being micro-managed was counter-intuitive and non-motivating. The office manager participant who stated a hands-on approach is her style for

office-based workers along with teleworkers could benefit from discovering if those teleworkers'

productivity increased or decreased during the pandemic as a result of her management style. If

organizations provided managers with training for uncertain times, this could ensure that

business continues without disruptions when uncertain times arise (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park &

Cho, 2020).

Organizations should train managers on providing support and leadership during

uncertain times. Mandatory telework during uncertain times requires support for employee well-

being. Stress and job burnout play a role that negatively affects productivity, and management

can be supportive to combat that negativity. One participant mentioned that the support she felt

from work combated the social isolation of the pandemic. Managers can be trained on utilizing a

growth mindset to further lead and support employees during uncertain times (Geciene, 2020).

RQ1a. How can times of uncertainty leading to a shift from working in the office to

telecommuting impact management styles? The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a digital

transformation as the world relied on the Internet more than ever and many employees

transitioned to telecommuting (Susskind et al., 2020). For employees who were previously not

permitted to telework, but did during the pandemic, businesses may struggle to justify returning

those positions to the office only. Managers must learn that providing telecommuting as an

employee option attracts talent (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). One participant stated that she looks for

remote positions now that she has been working from home. Managers should understand how

productive their staff was during the pandemic to fully understand whether or not productivity

increased, decreased, or remained the same in their organization. Managers should understand

that work may have intensified for teleworkers who did not spend time commuting, socializing,

or taking breaks (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Multiple participants mentioned that they spent

more time working or worked longer hours while telecommuting. They may need training on respecting personal roles among their teleworkers.

RQ1b How can management styles adapt during a shift to telecommuting caused by times of certainty? Communication was mentioned by numerous participants during interviews. Various communication tools were used while teleworking. Some organizations tried more than one web-based application. Various telecommunication applications have been utilized to allow for managers to communicate with employees during times of uncertainty (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Organizations should look to streamline this process for managers so that they can be prepared for and trained on the communication tool that will be used in times of uncertainty. This will ensure a smooth transition and decrease chances of business disruptions. Certain methods of communication are slower than others; a formal email may have a delayed response compared to a video chat (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Managers should be consistent and considerate of employees working at home. Teleworking is more effective when employees experience positive work-life balance. The participants who found their managers contacted them inappropriately experienced negative work-life balance during telework since they felt their managers lacked boundaries. Managers should learn to trust employees to experience the benefits of the social contract of reciprocity trust provides.

RQ2. How can office managers manage administrative staff work effectively when a sudden shift forces staff to telecommute? Trust plays a major role in managers permitting employees to work from home (Kaplan et al., 2018). Several participants suggested that managers should trust that their employees were working while remote. One participant stated that micro-managing may work in the office for some, but it does not work for teleworkers. One participant stated that the work is clearly getting done so their manager should not be so worried

about their whereabouts while not physically in the office. Many participants mentioned their personal roles within the home or the personal roles of their coworkers. Understanding that telework does require employees tend to their home or family during work hours should not suggest that the employee is not working. This is possible due to the participant responses of working extended working hours and intensified work.

Despite previous beliefs of a decreased worker-supervisor relationship, achieving work-life balance, and effective management style, the role of the manager could be viewed as positive in telecommuting (Park & Cho, 2020). Managers can take on the role of a supporter since employees may need encouragement during times of uncertainty (Park & Cho, 2020). Multiple participants mentioned feeling support of their manager during the pandemic which alleviated stress or social isolation and strengthened communication, support, and social contract. Managers of teleworkers should be trained on the social contract to better understand that trusting teleworkers is a method of inspiring productivity from teleworkers. Managers play a role in successful execution of telework programs because employees need to feel their support and trust.

RQ3. How does having a telecommute option impact the need to work in the office during normal times? If a job can be performed remotely during times of uncertainty, employees may question the need to return to the workplace. Multiple participants revealed that they did not believe companies would return to 100% office-based following the fully telework schedule. The shift to telecommuting may linger longer than the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). Multiple participants supported telework at least 50% of the time while the rest support telework as an option in general. While clerical staff was previously not commonly permitted to telework, since mandatory telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations may have to justify the need

to return to the office when productivity was high. For multiple participants, productivity

increased within their organization during telework.

      The Conceptual Framework. This section provides detailed explanations of how the

findings relate to each of the elements in the research framework. The conceptual framework of

this flexible design multiple case study is based on three main concepts. The concepts are

managerial style shift, uncertainty planning and implementation, and permitting telework. The

findings illustrate how the themes discovered among the research data relates to all three

concepts. New normal was an existing theory and related to all of the concepts as telework as

demonstrated in Figure 1 above. Managing teleworkers is a theme of the research findings and

Figure 2 illustrates how this relates to the other concepts within this research. Organizational

benefits are the third theme of the research findings and Figure 2 demonstrates the relationship

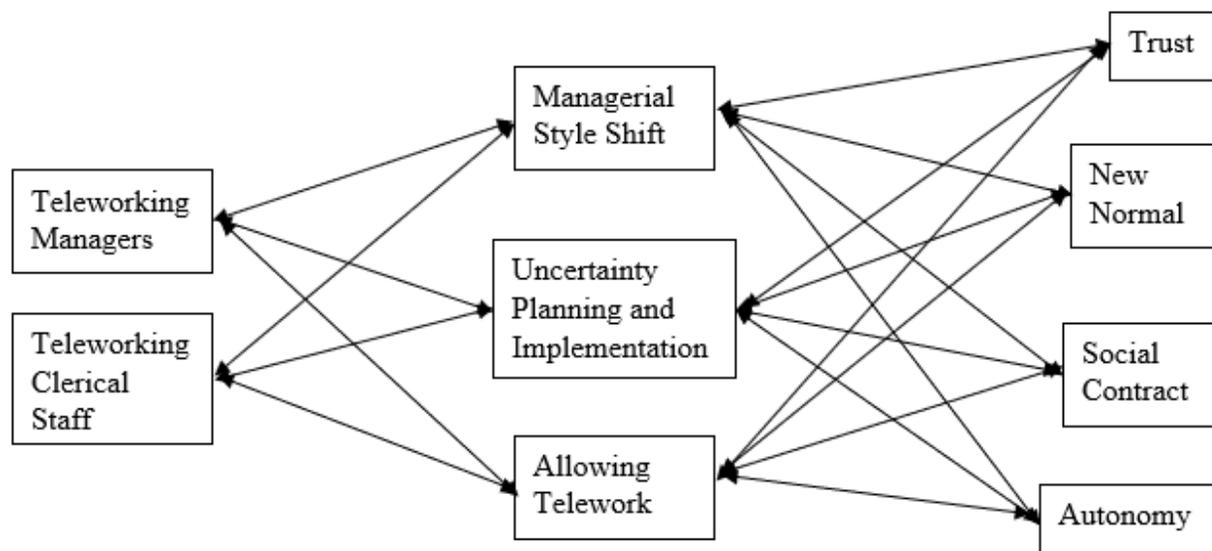between them and the research concepts.
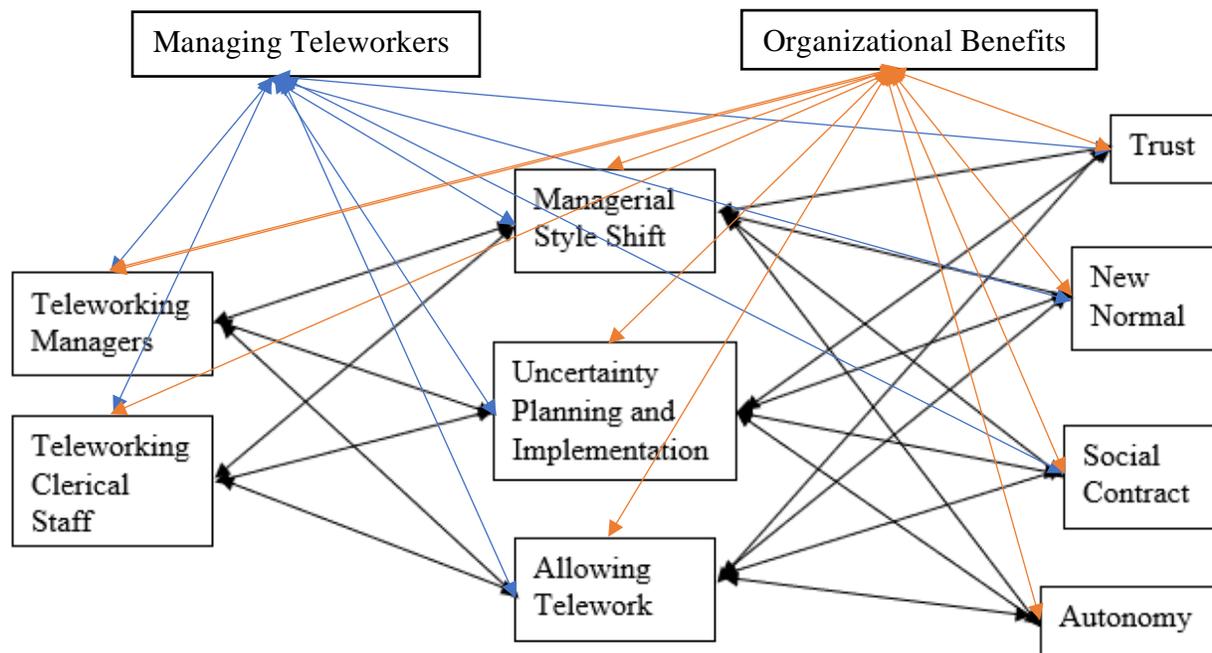
Figure 2

Conceptual Framework

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework with Findings

Discussion of Uncertainty Requiring Management Style Shift. Many organizations were

forced to shift from conducting business in the office to telecommuting due to the COVID-19

pandemic causing a need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Multiple

participants mentioned managers needed to become more trusting while they were teleworking.

Teleworking during uncertain times led to a feeling of social isolation for multiple participants

and managers should become a source of support for their staff to ensure that productivity is not

decreased. A time of uncertainty such as this led to employee vulnerability which forced

employers to adapt to occupational transitions (Susskind et al., 2020). Kaplan et al. (2018)

believed trust plays a major role in managers permitting employees to telecommute.

Management styles will shift during a shift from the office environment to telecommuting

(Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Managers can utilize various telecommunication applications to

communicate with employees during times of uncertainty (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Multiple

participants required technology from their organizations such as computers and monitors. A clerical participant who was required to use her personal phone was displeased with the expectation of her to be in constant contact. An office manager participant who willingly used her personal phone was willingly in constant contact. Managers should beware of overstepping boundaries with teleworkers to avoid counterintuitive stress, job burnout, lack of work-life balance, or intension to quit.

Discussion of Uncertainty Planning and Implementation. The next concept is the need to provide a framework for how organizations can prepare for future organizational shifts due to unforeseen business disruptions. This concept relates to the research findings because managing teleworkers and organizational benefits should be considered when organizations conduct uncertainty planning along with the consideration to allow telework as a new normal. Multiple participants mentioned some form of what was and was not successful during the transition to telework during COVID-19. Organizations should take the feedback into consideration when implementing and planning for uncertain times (Attar et al., 2016). This is a form of bottom-up feedback that can benefit the managers of clerical staff along with the organization.

Discussion of Allowing More Positions to Telecommute. Another item to consider is if telework was successful during COVID-19 for clerical staff, is it necessary for clerical staff to return to the office 100%? At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, telecommuting became a norm even in sectors in which it was previously discouraged (Susskind et al., 2020). Multiple participants believed that organizations would never return to 100% back in the office because it was so successful during the pandemic. Now that companies have a playbook, they stand a better chance for future events that lead to a sudden need for adjustments, according to one participant.

Discussion of Relationship Between Concepts. The three concepts relate to the themes of the findings. Managing teleworkers directly relates to trust, social contract, and autonomy as aspects that managers of teleworkers should adapt to. Accepting telework is connected to managing teleworkers as telework is more effective if managers accept and permit it (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Shifting managerial style to fit telework benefits the organization along with allowing telework (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Park & Cho, 2020) and uncertainty management and implantation (Attar et al., 2016). New normal relates to the existing theory that telework will be a new normal. Several participants believed telework would become a new normal.

Theories. The theories presented in Figure 1 are related to the themes of the research findings. Figure 2 illustrates how the findings relate to the theories. Managerial trust, telework as a new normal, social contract, and autonomy are the theories. New normal, organizational benefits, and managing teleworkers are the themes within the findings.

Trust. Supervisor trust and felt trust impact employees during uncertain times (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Several participants found that their managers should trust their employees who are working remotely. Participants resented being micro-managed. Multiple participants stated that managers should be hands-on while others believed they should see the work is getting completed. Managers of teleworkers may need to implement a more project-based style of supervision rather than a time-based management style because teleworkers respond well to flexibility with schedule and perceived trust from their supervisors (Skiba & Wildman, 2019).

New Normal. COVID-19 led to uncertainty in businesses globally (Crowley et al., 2020). Multiple participants believed that telework would linger within organizations since it was successful. Now that companies have playbook and the tools, permitting telework may be expected more and for more positions. Multiple participants noted that telework is not suitable

for all job types, but clerical positions were able to successfully telework despite previously not being permitted to telework.

Social Contract and Reciprocity. Social exchange theory leads to a reciprocity between the agency and the employee which enables reduced turnover, flexibility, and autonomy (Choi, 2020). Multiple participants found that their managers should trust that they would get the work done regardless of the work hours. Teleworkers often accept an intensified workload in return for a flexible work arrangement as part of a negotiated exchange or unspoken social contract (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Multiple participants found they worked harder during the pandemic or worked longer hours. One participant suggested that her manager could see the work getting done and that they should trust her more. Managers should shift to managing projects rather than managing employee time (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020).

Autonomy and Self-leadership. Autonomy and self-leadership are beneficial for successful telework execution (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Although autonomy was not explicitly mentioned during the interviews, participants did work remotely and were unsupervised while productivity increased. This relates to the organizational benefit that accompanies autonomy of teleworkers.

Discussion of Relationship Between Theories. During uncertain times, as demonstrated by the participants, teleworkers require a shift in managerial style from their superiors (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Managers should trust their employees more in terms of working remotely since studies show teleworkers are productive and autonomous when trusted (Kaplan et al., 2018; Park & Cho, 2020). Multiple participants mentioned desiring more managerial trust. This trust plays a role in the social contract and reciprocity that inspires teleworkers to increase

productivity. Working remotely requires a lack of direct supervision and inspires autonomy. Multiple participants predicted that a continuance of telework for clerical staff would be beneficial and possibly a new normal.

Actors. Participants within this study have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research specifically examines the effect of the pandemic on the clerical employees and the work they produce from both the managerial perspective and the clerical perspective. The research also examines the effect the pandemic had on the managers themselves and their ability to effectively manage. The participants were mostly clerical staff with the exception of two office manager participants. These groups were chosen as they are excluded from current literature (Colley et al., 2020).

Teleworking Managers. The teleworking manager is described as an employee in a supervisory role that manages employees that telework. This study is specifically including managers of clerical or administrative staff who teleworked during COVID-19. This research includes two participants that hold an office manager title. One participant works within the government industry while the other works in the healthcare industry. The research does disclose that the remainder of the perspectives are from the clerical perspective of their managers as a bottom-up view of management. This study aims to examine managerial styles and any shift in managerial styles during the shift to telework during COVID-19 (Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Collins et al., 2016; Park & Cho, 2020).

Teleworking Clerical Staff. Teleworking clerical workers are defined as part of this study as clerical or administrative staff that shifted from working in an office environment to working remotely during COVID-19. According to Colley et al. (2020), lower-level employees have seen resistance from managers to work from home prior to the pandemic. The research does

disclose that most of the participants are clerical staff with the exception of two office managers. The clerical participants are collected from various industries.

>>>*Discussion of the Relationship Between the Actors.*<<< Managerial trust was suggested by multiple participants. Teleworkers must trust that their managers support them (Park & Cho, 2020). Mutual trust between manager and teleworker is ideal (Beno, 2018). Participants were both managers of clerical workers and clerical staff that was permitted to telework at some point during the pandemic. No participants indicated that they were not permitted to telework during COVID-19. This may have eliminated the perspective of perceived fairness from this research. Two participants indicated that they were an office manager which leaves 13 participants who are clerical employees.

>>>*Summary of the Conceptual Framework*<<<. In summary, the conceptual framework of this qualitative research is based on three main concepts that arise from a review of the literature and are related to the themes within the research findings. These concepts all derive from experiences that occur during a time of uncertainty and how to plan for future uncertainty to ensure organizational workflow. The participants provided insight into the efficacy of managing teleworkers along with their expectation of a new normal and the benefits to the organization. Management styles should be assessed during the time of uncertainty to provide best practices to incorporate in uncertainty planning (Hoey et al., 2020). The availability of telecommuting should be provided for all possible positions to ensure continuous workflow during a time of uncertainty that causes offices to close their brick-and-mortar doors. Managers and clerical workers foster a social contract exchange which results in productivity for the agency (Choi, 2020). Trust (Beno, 2018), reciprocity (Choi, 2020), and autonomy (Müller & Niessen, 2019) all lead to productivity

and successful teleworking which may pave the way for a new normal for businesses (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

Anticipated Themes

This section serves to demonstrate how the findings relate to the anticipated themes with a focus on any differences, unanticipated themes, or missing themes. The researcher anticipated certain themes to emerge during this study. A successful transition from office-based work to telework among clerical workers is anticipated with the help of technology (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Additionally, it was anticipated that a new normal will emerge and positions that were previously discouraged to telework, but were forced to due to COVID-19, will remain telework positions (Susskind et al., 2020).

Successful Transition. The researcher anticipated that managers were able to successfully shift clerical work from the office to allow clerical staff to work from home (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Technology has aided in ensuring constant communication among teleworkers. Video conference calls facilitate personal communication among virtual teams (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). The researcher found that this was often true for the participants but not unanimous. Supporting telework may be another indicator that telework had an overall successful transition. Technology aided the transition to telework as evident in the responses. Organizations that had technology in place for clerical workers fared better than those that did not. The first two research questions identified this issue and the answers varied among the participants.

New Normal. The researcher anticipated that job tasks that were previously seen as only capable of being conducted in the office (filing, meetings, and forms) were transitioned so that they could be completed via a computer. Additionally, the researcher anticipated that managers

of clerical workers will be more likely to allow telework post-COVID-19. The shift to working at home for so many businesses due to COVID-19 may have a lasting impact on the way work is conducted (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). The research discovered that manager participants did support continuing telework under normal circumstances and that clerical workers were able to work remotely and maintain productivity.

Discovered Themes. The researcher discovered that managerial styles and organizational benefits were revealed in a review of the findings. Participants listed numerous benefits that telework brought to the organization including intensified work, productivity, attract talent, growth mindset, reciprocity, intension to quit, and extended working hours. Successful management styles were also identified, such as trust, employee option to telework, support, technology, flexibility, stress, personal roles, technostress, job type, social isolation, communication, and boundaries. Perceived fairness was missing from the findings which may be a result of the lack of clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during the pandemic. A review of the literature revealed that employees working in the office may perceive an unfairness towards teleworkers (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Ramsey, 1997).

The Literature

The literature is compared to the findings to reveal similarities and differences. Autonomy was a major aspect of the literature but was not present in the findings. The literature found that autonomy is beneficial for successful telework execution (Aguilera et al., 2016; Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Bogdanski & Setliff, 2001; Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019). Organizational disadvantages were also listed in the literature review but were not identified in the findings. The literature suggests that telework may lead to abuse of privileges (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Perceived fairness was an issue of

telework (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Ramsey, 1997) according to the literature, however, this research did not include clerical workers who were excluded from telework during COVID-19 which may have impacted this topic. Surveillance (Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020) and reward (Jeon & Kwon, 2020) were also excluded from the findings despite being included in the literature. Finally, employee satisfaction and reduced turnover were not highlighted in this study although being included in the literature (Müller & Niessen, 2019).

The findings had 22 concepts that echoed the literature. The similar concepts were organizational benefits, attract talent, growth mindset, productivity, intensified work, extended working hours, social contract and reciprocity, commute and intension to quit, new normal, managing teleworkers, work-life balance and boundaries, telework and as employee option, trust, communication, support, technology, flexibility, personal roles, stress and job burnout, technostress, social isolation, and job type. These concepts were grouped into three themes: organizational benefits, managing teleworkers, and new normal. These themes matched the themes from the literature with the exception of autonomy.

The Problem

The general problem to be addressed is the immediate shift in management styles that occurs in times of uncertainty, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the allowance for telecommuting in circumstances that normally would not permit it, resulting in business disruption to positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions. According to the findings of this research, many participants believed that management did have to adjust their styles or should have adjusted their styles to meet teleworkers' needs. Multiple participants did not believe their managers styles changed at all and they found productivity to remain the same. One office manager participant did not change her management style, which is

hands-on and highly communicative, and did not see a decrease in productivity. One participant that found business to be disrupted found that lack of communication and lack of preparation with technology was to blame. Lack of communication, in this instance, was the fault of management in her opinion.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many organizations to shift to telecommuting from an office environment causing the need to adjust management styles (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). One participant noted that managers should learn new communication styles and skills to manage teleworkers. Another participant mentioned that managerial support was essential during the pandemic because of the uncertainty of COVID-19 and other social justice issues that arose also causing uncertainty during the pandemic. She saw this support as a positive thing.

Telecommuting in sectors in which it was previously discouraged became the norm during the pandemic and changes made during times of crisis will have long-lasting effects (Susskind et al., 2020). Clerical workers were less likely to be permitted to telework prior to the pandemic and it became mandatory for most at some point. One participant mentioned that her organization did previously permit her to telework one day per quarter prior to COVID-19 and she had a smooth transition to telework because the tools were already in place. The remaining participants were not accustomed to telework. Most participants required laptops or monitors in order to work remotely. Most participants stated that they supported telework under normal circumstances with the proper tools.

The specific problem to be addressed is the immediate shift in management styles that occurs in times of uncertainty, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the allowance for telecommuting among clerical staff and administrative staff in the Northeast region of the United States of America, resulting in potential business disruption to those clerical

positions that are not easily transferred to telecommuting positions. This study refers to the United States of America Northeast region as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island. This was confirmed by many of the participants who felt that managers should exhibit trust of teleworkers, communicate any changes, provide support, and respect boundaries. Many participants suggested that managers support clerical work-life balance while teleworking. Many participants found that personal roles should be considered while teleworking and that since it was successful during the pandemic, it may become a new normal.

Summary of the Findings

The research findings uncover some similarities and differences from the literature. The researcher notes that the participants may have influenced the lack of perceived fairness since all participants were permitted to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research questions were all answered from the findings and the researcher notes that every participant supports clerical roles teleworking under normal circumstances. The findings reveal how management styles were impacted for some participants while others felt that they should have been but were not shifted. Participants revealed what management styles they felt would be best suited for teleworkers. The need for support during uncertain times was revealed by the findings. Participants found ways that organizations can develop tools and tactics from this experience to utilize in future uncertain times. They also revealed how organizations benefit from clerical teleworkers and showed support for telework during normal circumstances. The organizational benefits were similar to the literature review which noted telework increases productivity, performance, employee satisfaction, reciprocation between employee and employer, motivation,

and work-life balance as well as reduce turnover (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016;).

Application to Professional Practice

The results of this study can be applied to professional practice. The results presented within this study can improve general business practice. The findings present opportunities for organizations to build effective tactics. The findings can also provide potential application strategies for organizations. These strategies should be implemented in an uncertainty management plan.

Improving General Business Practice

This study can improve general business practices by providing a guide to managing teleworkers during uncertain times. In using the results of this study, businesses can reveal what was effective during the shift from office-based work to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic and integrate those effective tactics into uncertainty management planning. Likewise, any ineffective processes can be avoided when planning for uncertainty. Businesses can create a guidebook using the information provided in this study to ensure smooth business operations during a future, unexpected event. Uncertainty planning can occur more effectively if it includes the entire staff.

This study focuses on clerical staff and managers of clerical staff which were missing in large from the literature. Clerical staff has been found to be somewhat of a backbone of organizations and require careful planning to guarantee smooth business continuity. Many clerical participants juggle multiple roles within their organization. Careful leading and managing of clerical staff is essential to business continuity, especially during uncertain times. Uncertain times create an added layer of stress and disruption to the workday and require careful

planning and execution. This study can aid in the planning of uncertainty management and execution.

The results of this study uncovered how vital technology was to employees transitioning to telework. Acceptance of telework prior to the pandemic also proved to make the transition to telework successful. Participants that were equipped with laptops or had remote practices in place prior to the pandemic fared better than participants that did not. This study demonstrates that providing a plan to rapidly provide clerical staff with laptops, move away from paper and towards digital filing, and training employees on new video conferencing applications can provide for better business continuity if the need to shift from office-based work to telework arises again.

One thing to consider is the need to be in the office at all since all participants support telework during normal circumstances. Businesses can decide if permitting clerical staff to telework during normal times maintains productivity as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations should review the advantages that telework had during the pandemic. Organizational advantages include happier staff that is more productive and less likely to quit (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020), saving money on overhead costs of a brick-and-mortar office building (Aguilera et al., 2016; Choi, 2020; Parker, 2020), intensified work, reciprocated social contract, extended working hours (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019), and reduced workplace grievances.

This study revealed how managerial support played an essential role during uncertain times. One participant reported that the uncertainty extended beyond COVID-19 and included social justice issues that took place during the pandemic also leaving them feeling stressed. One participant mentioned feeling isolated and stated that her manager's support alleviated the stress

of that feeling. Businesses can benefit from this study by discovering how managers play a role in managing the stress of their employees during uncertain times as this ultimately impacts their effectiveness and productivity (Park & Cho, 2020). Managerial support lends to work-life balance as well. Many participants noted their work-life balance during their interview. Some thrived through telework while others struggled. Managerial support should include acceptance and allowance of telework programs, respect of employees' boundaries, and constant communication (Park & Cho, 2020). Organizations can learn from this and provide managers with training on how to manage teleworkers and how to manage teleworkers during uncertain times.

Communication was another concept that was repeated in the interview responses. With the numerous changes that took place as COVID-19 unfolded, changes in policies and directives required rolling out to entire organizations. Managers needed to keep in constant contact with staff to keep them abreast of the changes (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Businesses can utilize the successful means of communication and learn from the communication fails to create a blueprint for future uncertainty management communication (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020).

Potential Application Strategies

These findings of this study should be applied to organizations to increase productivity, attract talent, train management, and implement uncertainty management. These findings can apply to organizations now to prevent future business disruptions. Another application is to allow telework under normal circumstances to prevent business disruptions as were experienced during a shift from office-based work to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Uncertainty Planning. To leverage the findings of this study, organizations can utilize strategies of application. Businesses can include this study in their uncertainty management

planning. Effective tactics should be identified along with ineffective tactics. Uncertainty

planning should be incorporated into all businesses to avoid business disruptions like what

occurred at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Colley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy,

2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Within this planning, organizations should be sure

to consider the clerical staff and how they can continue their daily tasks.

Since the focus of this study is clerical staff and managers of clerical staff, the results

pertain to clerical staff in particular. Clerical teleworkers were missing in large from the

literature. The research demonstrates that clerical staff members tend to juggle multiple roles and

therefore should be considered during uncertainty planning. If the administrative staff continues

their work, this lends to overall business continuity for offices. Since uncertain times create

stress, organizations should prepare for this stress during uncertainty planning (Colley et al.,

2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Palumbo, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020).

Availability of Technology. Many participants were not provided with laptops nor other

office equipment for at-home use prior to COVID-19. In these cases, a business disruption

occurred until the proper technology was provided. For participants who were provided laptops

or other office equipment prior to COVID-19, the transition from office-based work to telework

was effortless. This indicates that technology played an essential role in the transition to telework

(Bayo-Moriones et al., 2015; Bentata, 2020; Berghout, 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020;

Solomon, 2001). One strategy that organizations can apply from the results of this study is to

provide all office employees with laptops, work cell phones, or other office equipment that is

portable or small in size for use at home. This equipment can be supplied upon hiring and

retrieved upon termination or stored in the office until the need arises. One participant stated that

her organization stopped using desktop computers years ago so the shift to telework meant just

collecting one's laptop from their work desk and bringing it home. This is another strategy that saves costs on paying for twice the technology. Organizations should also decide how digital they can be or if they must remain reliant on paper. Digital information is more easily accessible than paper which may be located only in the office.

Management Training. One potential application strategy relates to management training. Managers should be trained on the new communications applications that the organization will utilize (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Managers should also provide training for their staff to utilize the communications applications for video conferencing, meetings, and messaging (Jeon & Kwon, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020). Management training should also include project-based versus time-based management, respecting boundaries, and providing work-life balance for employees (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999).

Managers should learn of the effectiveness of telework. This study shows that teleworkers are productive and do not require micro-management to maintain efficiency. Managers should be trained on trusting that employees are working and learn how to base work on completed tasks and projects rather than managing employee time (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). Strict deadlines can be set and adhered to, as participants mentioned.

Managers should be trained on how to be supportive and communicative to their staff (Cascio, 2000; Grensing-Pophal, 1999; Parker, 2020; Tapsell, 1999). Feeling supported was a repeated concept of the interview responses. Managerial communication was also a repeated concept. Employees who feel support and receive communication from their managers will be less stressed, more productive, and reciprocate with an increased workload and low intention to

quit. Employees may extend their working hours, but managers should avoid making extended working hours seem mandatory. Telework as an employee option is beneficial to telework success.

New Normal. One potential business application this study lends to is the need for clerical staff to work in the office at all. Teleworking clerical staff proved to increase productivity overall. The participants unanimously supported telework during normal circumstances. Organizations should consider if there is a need to have clerical staff work in the office after the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). Many participants stated that telework even part of the time would be effective. Businesses should consider these findings when reviewing office grievances, overhead costs to operate an office, and time wasted on *water cooler talk* (Colley et al., 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Telework eliminates or alleviates these issues (Michalak & Rysavy, 2020). Since technology aided in the transition to telework from office-based work, businesses should consider continuing to use technology during normal circumstances and in the event of another unpredicted event (Colley et al., 2020; Michalak & Rysavy, 2020; Susskind et al., 2020). Organizational benefits to providing telework as an option include attracting talent, increased productivity, employee retention, intensified work, extended working hours, and improved employee satisfaction.

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study should be applied to professional practice. The results presented within this study will improve general business practice. The findings provide opportunities for businesses to form effective tactics. The concept of a new normal should be considered when the pandemic is over. The findings also present potential application strategies

for organizations. These strategies should be implemented in an uncertainty management plan to ensure a future unexpected event does not disrupt business continuity.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher recommends that this study be repeated to include a more diverse participant pool. This study focused on several states within the United States of America which limited the study results. This research can be conducted on a different region, different country, or different area to discover what similarities or differences might occur.

This study can be conducted exclusively on office managers, clerical workers who teleworked during COVID-19, or clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during COVID-19. Dividing the participants into groups may yield different results. This study unintentionally excluded clerical workers who were not permitted to telework during COVID-19 since none agreed to be included in this study. Researching this participant pool would add to the overall research on clerical teleworkers and may match the literature which presented the concept of perceived fairness. Perceived fairness was not present in this study since all of the clerical participants were permitted to telework during the pandemic. Employees who were not permitted to telework may exhibit perceived unfairness (Choi, 2020; Park & Cho, 2020; Ramsey, 1997).

Another area to explore in relation to this study pertains to specific management styles. This study aimed to identify which management style is preferable for telework. Many participants questioned what *management styles* were. This study can be repeated with a focus on various management styles listing them out for participants. Explicitly listing different management styles may yield different results. This study revealed that conflicting styles worked

for teleworkers and managers. A hands-on and highly communicative style worked for some participants while a laissez-faire and highly trusting style worked for others.

The research can be divided into demographic groups as well. This study noted participant gender, marital status, parental status, caregiver status, and age. This is one area for further research. Segmenting these groups to discover if these demographic groups played a role in successful telework or work-life balance while teleworking would add to the literature. Investigating a specific industry would also add to the literature. These aspects were not included within this study.

Reflections

In reflecting on the study conducted, the researcher considers the time spent and how the study impacted personal and professional growth. The researcher also considers how Biblical implications are related to this study. This section serves to reflect on both the researcher's growth and a Biblical perspective.

Personal & Professional Growth

The researcher discovered that much personal and professional growth has been gained during the course of this research study. During the course of this study, the researcher has had several life changes. This created a challenge to juggle multiple roles both professionally and personally. The researcher was dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic just as the participants were. This type of uncertainty motivated the researcher to resolve any issues the pandemic created. This study had an overall pragmatism paradigm which seeks to find solutions to problems. During a search for participants, the researcher found that many people were struggling during this uncertain time and were eager to help find solutions as well.

The researcher relied on networking skills to contact many of the participants. The researcher found networking to be a useful skill both personally and professionally. A peer who is also conducting research within a graduate program was a source of strength and inspiration during this study. The researcher found the doctoral program to be a challenging one that requires support as it can be isolating and daunting at times.

The researcher professionally experienced a transition during this study. As the end of the graduate program nears, the researcher will transition career paths. Conducting a study such as this is a pivotal action for the researcher professionally. Contributing to the body of academic literature is necessary for the researcher to complete the graduate program and transition into a career as a higher education professor.

Additionally, researching telework during a time of a global digital transformation creates a sense of expertise on the subject matter. The researcher found it difficult to find any research identical to this study as it was unique in nature and new in necessity. This study not only adds to the personal and professional growth of the researcher but adds to the general business practices of organizations around the world.

Biblical Perspective

A Biblical perspective can apply to this study. Based on the themes of the literature and the research findings, the researcher integrates a Christian worldview into the study. Uncertainty is a prevalent theme of both the literature and the findings. The Bible mentions uncertainty as well. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, James 1:2-4). The Bible calls for perseverance to thrive during trials and tribulations. The

uncertain times that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic have been unprecedented. The ability for humankind to persevere is truly magnificent. The workforce adjusted time and time again as new directives were released, laws were created and revised, and work transitioned from an office to a room within the home.

Uncertainty management is a recurring theme of this study. The Bible makes note of planning for unforeseen events. "The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty." (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 22:3). Since organizations have the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the findings within this study, organizations can create a plan of action to avoid a repeat or similar event. Organizations should do their due diligence to be better prepared for the future. "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty." (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 21:5). Planning is beneficial. Organizations who do not implement uncertainty planning risk financial loss.

The Bible states, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, John 16:33). The COVID-19 pandemic and any future unforeseen events will cause difficulty, but the Bible challenges people to have peace and be resilient. This pertains to everyone as young children were also attending school virtually while parents worked nearby. Working parents had the added responsibility of caring for young children during these uncertain times. Caregivers for the elderly or sick also shared that added responsibility. Managers must take heed to not overwhelm caregivers and parents alike. The participants of this study who thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic truly did overcome the trouble the Bible mentioned.

The findings suggest that clerical staff and mangers of clerical staff may have to adjust work/home boundaries when teleworking while caretaking. On caretaking, the Bible states,

"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, 1 Timothy 5:8). This study suggests managers adapt to a project-based management versus a time-based management as teleworkers must split their time at home.

Employees without caretaking responsibilities who felt social isolation are not forgotten as they faced a different stress. Adjusting management styles to meet the needs of employees who are facing uncertainty and isolation is the kind of leadership the Bible calls for. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, 1 Peter 5:2). Managers can be supportive by showing a general concern for their employees and showing support for them and understanding of their personal roles as well. Similarly, the Bible notes, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your her" (*Holy Bible NIV*, 2011, Proverbs 27:23).

Summary of Reflections

In summary, the researcher grew both personally and professionally during the course of this study. The personal growth was evident in juggling several life changes. Networking was a newly utilized skill. Professional growth occurred as the study will have a vital role in the professional development of the researcher. A Biblical perspective was added to provide a Christian worldview of the study.

Summary of Section 3

In summary, Section 3 comprises an overview of the study, presentation of the findings, an application to professional practice, recommendations for further studies, and reflections. A detailed description of the study was provided along with an interpretation of the data and

visualization of the data. The significance of the study along with the implications the findings have on general business practices were listed within this section. Personal and professional growth of the researcher are found within this section. A Biblical perspective was provided within Section 3. This section includes researcher recommendations for further study as well. The findings have beneficial implications for businesses to prevent future business disruptions due to unforeseen events. The findings also suggest that organizations should consider providing telework for clerical roles under normal circumstances since they were effective during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uncertainty planning would benefit from considering clerical roles and their need for remote technology. The findings provide additional suggestions for organizations to realize benefits from telework.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic spread globally during 2020 and lasted longer than organizations anticipated (Crowley et al., 2020). The effects of the digital transformation that occurred as a result of workers adjusting to telework may linger long after the pandemic (Susskind et al., 2020). This study aimed to examine the productivity of clerical staff while working remotely and to discover if management style required an adjustment during the digital transformation. Since clerical staff were less likely to be permitted prior to COVID-19, this study sought to discover if clerical staff could be more productive remotely after the pandemic and during normal circumstances. The researcher attempted to identify best practices for managing clerical teleworkers.

This study has found that there are organizational benefits to teleworking clerical staff. It was found that there were less workplace grievances, employee satisfaction increased, productivity increased, work intensified, work hours extended, intention to quit diminished, and

talent was attracted to the telework option. Managing teleworkers is not for all job types but is suitable for clerical staff. Communicating is essential to managing teleworkers but managers of teleworkers should decide which style works best for their staff. Management trust plays a role in making teleworkers feel supported and impacts productivity (Skiba & Wildman, 2019). Technology was essential to telework and this study proves that having a plan in place for providing computers to staff aides in a smooth transition to telework from office-based work. Flexibility aided in the successful implementation of telework (Choi, 2020; Delanoeije et al., 2019; Jostell & Hemlin, 2018; Müller & Niessen, 2019; Picu & Dinu, 2016). Managers can reduce employee stress by respecting work-life balance and the personal roles employees play at home while teleworking. Social isolation can also lead to stress which may impact productivity (Choi, 2020). Managerial support can alleviate some issues associated with telework (Jeon & Kwon, 2020). Many participants believed that working from home would become a normal practice since it was so effective during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

At the time this interview is conducted, it is understood that the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) approves the research being conducted and that you, the participant, consent to participate in this interview. Continuation with this interview serves as a form of oral consent in addition to any written consent you may have provided. Any personal information will remain anonymous and will not be included within this study.

1. Did you find that your organization encountered business disruptions during a shift from the office to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Did your organization seem prepared for this shift from office-based work to telework?

3. Did management seem to require a shift in management styles during this shift to telework? If so, how did the management style change?

4. What management style would you say is effective for teleworkers since the shift to telework occurred?

5. Did you discover effective tactics to telework? If so, what were they?

6. Do you feel that telework was effective in your organization during the COVID-19 pandemic?

7. Do you support permitting telework under normal circumstances, since experiencing it during a time of uncertainty such as the COVID-19 pandemic, if effective telework tactics were in place?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Once again, any personal information will remain anonymous. If any answers you have provided are unclear during the data analysis phase,

you may be contacted to further clarify the information you have provided in this interview. This now concludes our interview.

Follow up questions for the interview guide:

1. Can you describe what disruptions occurred?

2. What processes were in place that benefitted your organization during COVID-19?

3. How would you describe the management styles within your organization? How did those styles impact teleworkers during COVID-19?

4. Were any processes utilized during the telework shift discovered as very effective?

5. Would you say that working from home allowed employees within your organization to be unproductive, the same amount of productive, or more productive than when they worked in the office?

6. Are you in support of allowing staff to work remotely? Why?