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The Impact of Telecommuting on Workers adaptability: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Remote work alters our relationship with the traditional work environment regarding time, place, and action, raising questions about the behavioral impacts on organizations. How can employee engagement be fostered in remote work settings? This empirical study explores the impact of remote work on workers adaptability in Morocco. The ultimate goal is to identify the factors that promote the adaptability of remote employees. Using a diverse sampling approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees and managers with various remote work experiences.

Qualitative investigation indicates that a number of critical aspects, including technological proficiency, cognitive flexibility, time management and organization, emotional adaptation, social support, and teamwork, all have an impact on an individual's capacity to adjust to working remotely. The findings emphasize the value of time management techniques, the need for cognitive flexibility in the face of unforeseen obstacles, and the significance of technology skills for a seamless transition to remote work. Additionally essential to wellbeing and productivity in remote work are social support networks and emotional flexibility.

These findings underscore the importance for organizations to develop policies that reinforce these aspects of adaptability, including technological training, promoting cognitive flexibility, effective time management, emotional support, and facilitating collaboration, in order to support remote workers and optimize their well-being.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In many companies worldwide, telecommuting, once perceived as a marginal work option, has become an unavoidable reality. Technological advancements and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have played a major role in this transformation [1]. By popularizing telecommuting, professional dynamics have been

profoundly altered, and traditional work structures have been reassessed. In this new professional environment, individuals; ability to adapt has become a crucial advantage. Adaptability can be defined as the ability to effectively and flexibly adjust to constantly changing situations [2].

In the context of telecommuting, where employees face challenges such as balancing work and personal life, social isolation, and the need to manage their tasks and time autonomously, adaptability becomes a critical factor for success in their careers and personal well-being [3].

The objective of this study is to analyze in detail the influence of telecommuting on individuals adaptability. Specifically, it will focus on the following aspects:

- Identifying the factors that impact employees adaptability in a remote work environment.
- Studying the particular obstacles faced by remote workers regarding their adaptation.
- Examining various effective strategies and practices that can be implemented to enhance individuals; adaptability in a remote work environment.

It is crucial for businesses and decision-makers to grasp the challenges and opportunities associated with telecommuting and individuals adaptability. The findings of this study can offer valuable insights to assist companies in developing more effective telecommuting policies and practices, as well as supporting employees in their transition to this new professional reality. Furthermore, this research will help fill gaps in existing literature by examining in detail the complex relationships between telecommuting and individual adaptability.

2. Literature Review:

2.1. Introduction and Assessment of Adaptability

In an ever-changing context, adaptability becomes an essential skill to successfully navigate. However, it is necessary to explore the fascinating world of concepts and theories of adaptability, examining the complex mechanisms that enable individuals and systems to adapt and thrive in the midst of the constant changes of our rapidly changing world.

2.1.1. The Concept of Adaptation:

As a multidimensional concept, adaptability extends beyond mere reactive adjustment to environmental changes. Instead, it encompasses a variety of complex mental and behavioral processes that enable individuals to successfully navigate diverse and often unexpected situations in their work environment.

This ability to adapt effectively requires not only visible external modifications in behaviors and strategies but also internal changes at cognitive, emotional, and perceptual levels. Firstly, from a cognitive perspective, adaptability requires mental flexibility that enables individuals to challenge their thought patterns, broaden their perspective, and adopt new approaches in the face of challenges.

This includes the ability to quickly recognize and interpret signals of change in the professional environment, evaluate various options, and make informed decisions accordingly [4]. Subsequently, from an emotional standpoint, adaptability requires the ability to effectively cope with uncertainty, stress, and emotional ambiguity. This necessitates the capacity to maintain emotional stability, accept ambiguity, and demonstrate emotional flexibility to adapt to the evolving demands of the work environment [5].

Finally, from a behavioral perspective, adaptability manifests as tangible changes in individuals, actions and interactions in their work environment. This includes acquiring new skills, modifying work methods, engaging in continuous learning behaviors, and the ability to quickly adjust to new technologies or work methods [6].

In this way, adaptability goes far beyond the simple ability to adapt to external circumstances; it demonstrates great flexibility and integration at all levels of human experience, thereby providing individuals with the opportunity to thrive and succeed in an ever-changing professional environment.

2.1.2. Factors Influencing Employee Adaptability in the Context of Telecommuting

As telecommuting becomes more widespread, it is crucial to understand the factors that impact workers, adaptability in this ever-evolving context. The criteria for evaluating employee adaptability in telecommuting environments are varied and can be classified into several main categories, such as:

- Employee technological skills play a crucial role in their ability to adapt to telecommuting. This involves knowledge of online communication tools, collaboration software, and project management platforms. According to [7], research has highlighted the importance of technological skills for success in telecommuting.
- Cognitive flexibility refers to individuals ability to adapt their thinking based on new requirements and circumstances. Employees who can quickly adjust their tasks, priorities, or work methods are more likely to succeed in telecommuting. Recent studies such as that conducted by [8] have examined the links between cognitive flexibility and adaptability during telecommuting.

- **Time Management and Organization:** Effectively managing time and organization is crucial to maintaining productivity and efficiency while working remotely. Employees' ability to plan tasks, set realistic goals, and manage interruptions is essential in remote work settings. Research such as that conducted by [9] has examined the time management methods employed by telecommuting employees.
- **The ability of individuals to control their emotions and adapt to the changing emotional demands of their work** is referred to as emotional adaptability. It is important for employees to be able to manage stress, isolation, and emotional disturbances while working remotely. According to studies such as that conducted by D [10], the links between emotional adaptability and success in telecommuting have been examined.
- **Social support and collaboration with colleagues and supervisors** play a crucial role in promoting adaptability in telecommuting. Employees require emotional support, feedback, and opportunities for virtual collaboration to maintain their engagement and motivation. Research such as that conducted by [11] has studied the influence of social support on employees' adaptation to telecommuting.

In summary, the adaptability of telecommuting workers is assessed based on several factors, including technological skills, cognitive flexibility, time management and organization, emotional adaptability, and social support. It is crucial to grasp these variables in order to develop effective interventions to strengthen employees' adaptability in an ever-changing telecommuting environment.

2.2. Theories of Adaptability

In the study of adaptability, various theories provide a conceptual framework for understanding the underlying mechanisms that enable individuals to adjust to changes and challenges in their professional environment. Among these, one can mention the Conservation of Resources Theory, the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) Theory, and the Organizational Adaptability Theory.

2.2.1. Conservation of Resources Theory

The robust conceptual framework provided by the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) enables us to understand the relationship between individual resources and adaptation to change. According to this theory, individuals are motivated to preserve and build their personal resources, whether they are material, psychological, social, or professional [12]. These resources are essential for individuals, providing them with the ability to cope with challenges and stress in daily life, including changes in the professional environment. According to COR theory, individuals who have a greater number and variety of resources are better prepared to adapt to changes. According to [13], a person with a diverse skill set, a strong social network, and high emotional resilience will be more likely to cope with unexpected challenges and adapt their strategies accordingly.

Furthermore, the COR theory emphasizes the crucial importance of recognizing resources in the adaptation process. Stress and anxiety in the face of change are more common in individuals who perceive their resources as limited or threatened, which can hinder their ability to adapt effectively [14].

To recapitulate, the Conservation of Resources theory provides valuable insights into the impact of personal resources on individuals' adaptation to change. By understanding the mechanisms of this relationship, businesses and managers can provide more effective support to employees during transitions and promote a work environment conducive to adaptation.

2.2.2 Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) Theory

According to [15], the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals confront changes and challenges throughout their lives. According to this theory, individuals adopt adaptive approaches to maintain optimal levels of functioning, even in the face of constraints and limitations imposed by aging, illness, or other stressors.

Selection is the first component of the SOC theory, which involves individuals setting specific goals and choosing activities and commitments most appropriate for achieving them. During times of transition, individuals may face a reevaluation of their priorities and focus on the aspects of life that are most essential to them.

The second part is optimization, which involves making selective investments in available resources to optimize desired outcomes. Individuals have the opportunity to strategically manage their time, energy, and social resources to achieve their goals, focusing on areas where they can gain the most benefit.

Finally, the third element of the SOC theory is compensation. When individuals face constraints or deficiencies in certain resources, they can compensate by developing other skills, seeking social support, or using workaround strategies to overcome these obstacles and maintain their optimal functioning.

In short, the SOC theory emphasizes the importance of strategic decisions and adjustments to maintain optimal functioning in the face of life's changes. By understanding the processes of selection, optimization,

and compensation, individuals can enhance their management of transitions and challenges throughout their lives, optimizing their resources and mitigating the negative consequences of change.

2.2.3 Organizational Adaptability Theory

According to [16], Organizational Adaptability Theory emphasizes the importance for organizations to proactively adjust to their ever-changing environment in order to preserve their competitiveness and longterm viability. According to this theory, businesses must have the ability to modify their structure, processes, and strategies to cope with external pressures and emerging opportunities.

Organizations must be able to quickly spot signals of change in their environment and respond flexibly and effectively. This may require modifications in the organization's structure, such as team reorganization, redefinition of roles and responsibilities, or even changes in business models.

Furthermore, Organizational Adaptability Theory highlights the need to reconcile individual and organizational adaptability. In other words, companies must promote a work environment that fosters and encourages the individual adaptability of their employees. This entails fostering a corporate culture focused on learning and innovation, as well as providing resources and training aimed at enhancing employees' adaptive capabilities.

By considering both individual and organizational adaptability, companies are better prepared to successfully navigate a constantly changing business environment. Organizations can anticipate shifts, adapt quickly, and seize new opportunities to maintain their flexibility and competitiveness in the market.

2.3. Previous Research on the Relationship between Telecommuting and Adaptability

In recent years, telecommuting has become an increasingly common practice, particularly due to technological advancements and shifts in employee and employer expectations. In this context, it is crucial to analyze recent research in detail on the link between telecommuting and individual adaptability.

2.3.1. Flexibility and Autonomy:

Remote work allows individuals to better manage their schedules and tasks [17]. With this increased flexibility, employees can better adapt to the evolving demands of their work environment [18]. A remote worker has the ability to adjust their work hours to accommodate urgent needs or unforeseen circumstances, thereby enhancing their capacity to adapt flexibly to constantly changing professional requirements.

2.3.2. Stress Management and Work-Life Balance:

Telecommuting can also facilitate a reduction in professional stress by allowing individuals to have better control over their work environment [19]. By eliminating the need to commute to a physical workplace and enabling flexible task planning, telecommuting enables employees to better reconcile their professional and personal responsibilities. According to [20], improved stress management can encourage increased resilience and enhanced capacity to cope with professional challenges.

2.3.3. Virtual Communication and Collaboration:

Despite the numerous benefits of telecommuting, it also presents challenges regarding virtual communication and collaboration [21]. According to [22], the lack of physical contact and restricted interactions can diminish the effectiveness of communication and hinder collaboration within teams. To maintain strong professional relationships and adapt to the demands of remote work, it is essential to make adjustments in communication methods and acquire new skills.

2.3.4. Learning and Professional Development:

In conclusion, telecommuting can influence the acquisition of knowledge and professional development of individuals [23]. While remote work can open up new opportunities for acquiring technological skills and self-directed learning, it can also pose challenges to learning, such as the lack of social interactions and professional isolation [24]. Therefore, employees must acquire adaptation skills to adjust to this environment and continue their professional development despite the obstacles.

In summary, remote work has both benefits and challenges concerning individuals' adaptability. It is crucial to grasp these nuances to develop effective telecommuting policies and practices that encourage employee adaptation and well-being in an ever-evolving professional environment.

2.4. Key Factors Influencing Adaptability in Telecommuting Contexts

In summary, remote work presents both benefits and challenges regarding individual's, adaptability. It is crucial to understand these nuances to develop effective telecommuting policies and practices that foster employee adaptation and well-being in an ever-evolving professional environment.

2.4.1. Technologies and Infrastructure:

According to [25], the availability and effectiveness of technological tools and communication infrastructures play a crucial role in the adaptability of telecommuting workers. It is essential to have fast and reliable internet connection, efficient online collaboration software, and suitable ergonomic devices to facilitate remote professional exchanges and enhance individual's, adaptability.

2.4.2. Organizational Support:

Providing organizational support is crucial to enhancing the adaptability of telecommuting employees [17]. Company policies and practices regarding telecommuting, such as flexible scheduling, technical support, and recognition of remote results, can significantly influence employees' perception of their ability to adapt to the evolving demands of their work environment.

2.4.3. Skills and Autonomy:

Personal skills and employees' independence play a crucial role in their ability to adapt to telecommuting [26]. It is essential to have technical skills, self-management abilities, and problem-solving skills autonomously to adapt to the variable requirements and challenges of telecommuting.

2.4.4. Social Support and Interactions:

Adaptability in telecommuting is fostered by social interactions and support from colleagues and supervisors [21]. Regular maintenance of contacts, online collaboration, and sharing professional experiences with other remote workers help reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen the sense of belonging to the team, thereby promoting individual's, adaptability.

2.4.5. Organizational Flexibility:

According to [27], organizational flexibility in managing work schedules and professional expectations also plays a crucial role in promoting adaptability in telecommuting. Companies that offer flexible choices in telecommuting and swiftly adapt their policies based on evolving employee needs are more inclined to promote adaptability and resilience in an online work environment.

In summary, a range of technological, organizational, individual, social, and structural variables impact employees' adaptation in remote work environments. By understanding these elements and implementing appropriate strategies, companies can foster a remote work framework conducive to individuals' adaptation and professional success.

3. Method:

This empirical section bridges the gap between theory and practice. We have dedicated the literature review to analyzing scientific literature on the two main themes of our research: telecommuting and employees' adaptability. To facilitate our field analysis, we have organized the data systematically and developed a comprehensive interview guide covering all aspects of remote work and employee adaptability.

In order to answer this problematic and from the epistemological point of view, we opt for the interpretativist paradigm through which we have the possibility to study the interpretations given by actors who work remotely. Methodologically, we chose to follow the qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with 324 remote workers.

We found that these workers expressed great interest in the subject and stated their determination to support us in our investigation. Similarly, throughout these interviews, we tried to consult more people who work remotely.

Table 1 : Synthesis and objectives of the method employed

	Qualitative approche : Semi-directive interviews
General objective	Respond to the main question: the impact of telework on staff adaptability
Description of method	Question in depth a number of people who work remotely about the factors that allow them to adapt in their work
Means of work	Documents, observations and semi-structured interviews with 324 remote workers in companies in Morocco.
Steps	

3.1. Sampling:

Our research question explores how despatialization influences worker adaptability. We have investigated concrete measures that managers in companies can take to integrate management practices that promote worker adaptability in the context of telecommuting.

To respond comprehensively to our research question, our sample needs to be diverse. The target population for this interview would consist of workers with telecommuting experience, whether occasional, regular, or permanent. These workers may come from various sectors and have varying levels of experience with telecommuting. It would also be beneficial to include workers from different hierarchical levels (employees, managers, executives) to obtain a diverse perspective on the factors influencing adaptability in telecommuting contexts.

It is also important to ensure that participants have adequate access to the necessary technology to conduct the remote interview since the theme addressed concerns telecommuting. Participant selection can be based on criteria such as telecommuting frequency, duration of telecommuting experience, industry sector, level of autonomy in remote work, etc.

The following table shows the distribution of interview participants according to their role within companies. This distribution allows a balanced representation of the different perspectives and experiences within the surveyed sample. The analysis of these data will highlight trends and differences of opinion according to the positions held by the participants.

Table 2. The distribution of employees interviewed by function

Function	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
employee	180	55,55
Middle manager	90	27,78
Senior executive	54	16,67
Total	324	100

In summary, the target population would include workers from various industries and hierarchical levels, with diverse telecommuting experience, and possessing the means necessary to participate in a remote interview.

3.2. Data Collection Method:

To conduct our research in depth, we chose a qualitative approach. This method provides an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions of the impact of telework on their adaptability. Qualitative analysis will help us to understand the complexity of the subject and highlight the nuances and key factors that influence the adaptability of employees in a remote work context.

Starting from December, I began the search for companies adopting telecommuting in the Moroccan territory through the internet, social networks, networks of accounting firms and consulting firms, and direct contacts with certain officials through our relational network. I sent requests to around ten companies and hundreds of individuals; I received a good number of no responses, and I had few people who agreed to answer my questions. This was one of the difficulties encountered during this research. For scientific research, we will first establish an interview guide, which will help us conduct our individual semi-structured interviews effectively. However, the semi-structured interview constitutes the main source of data for our practical investigation. To illustrate the importance of this data source [28] specify that the semi-structured or semi-directed interview is certainly the most used in social research. It is semi-directed in the sense that it is neither entirely open nor channeled by a large number of specific questions.

Generally, the researcher has a series of open-ended guide questions about which it is imperative that they receive information from the interviewee. However, the researcher does not necessarily ask all the questions

in the order they were noted and in the planned formulation. As much as possible, they will “let it come” to the interviewee so that they can speak openly, in their own words, and in the order that suits them. The researcher will simply strive to refocus the interview on the objectives each time it deviates and to ask the questions that the interviewee does not address for themselves, at the most appropriate time and in as natural a manner as possible. A series of meetings with managers and employees of Moroccan companies that have adopted telecommuting formed the core of our empirical base. In this initial exploratory phase, we conducted semi-structured interviews with managers, executives, and employees of companies operating in Morocco and adopting telecommuting. However, semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research method used to study social relationships and organizational processes. They involve the use of a set of predefined open-ended questions that are posed to participants but also allow for a more free exploration of participants ideas and experiences.

When it comes to understanding the link between telecommuting and worker adaptability, semi-structured interviews can be particularly useful because they allow researchers to gather detailed information on participants perceptions and experiences regarding leadership and organizational culture. Semi-structured questions can be adapted to explore various facets of telecommuting companies, such as employee autonomy, adaptability and agility, worker engagement, work-life balance, and meeting employee needs.

By using this research method, researchers can obtain rich and contextualized qualitative data that can be analyzed to identify emerging themes and patterns, as well as to understand the nuances and complexities of social relationships and organizational practices.

4. Resultat and discussion

4.1. Interview Results:

The results of the interviews have been grouped into a table. We have listed the categories of questions we addressed with our interviewees. The objective is to compare their responses and highlight similarities. As our research question was to understand the impact of telecommuting on worker adaptability, it seemed obvious that my questions revolved around three domains: telecommuting experience, organizational support, skills and autonomy, social support and interactions, and organizational flexibility.

We initiated the interview with an introduction of the interviewee. Then, we explored various topics, starting with understanding the adaptability experienced by some workers. We then addressed technological skills, cognitive flexibility, time and organization management, emotional adaptability, and social support and collaboration with colleagues and supervisors.

4.2. Interview Analysis

The analysis of the collected data will allow us to identify the commonalities between participants' responses on different themes related to adaptability in telework. This first step in categorizing similarities will highlight trends and experiences shared by employees, regardless of their role or company. By grouping together similar responses, we will be able to identify patterns and recurring themes that will serve as a basis for a more in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the adaptability of employees in telework.

4.2.1. Technological Skills:

The results emphasized the importance of technological proficiency for success in a remote work setting. Many participants highlighted the importance of having knowledge of the tools and technological platforms used during their telecommuting work. The transition is generally easier for those who already have acquired technological skills before starting remote work, while others had to develop new skills or strengthen their existing ones to adapt to the requirements of telecommuting.

Technical issues and the need to quickly resolve problems related to the use of remote software and applications were among the most frequently mentioned challenges. Some participants also expressed difficulties in adjusting to new communication and collaboration platforms, highlighting the importance of additional training to effectively use these tools.

However, despite these challenges, technological skills were considered an important advantage for facilitating collaboration and communication remotely. Participants emphasized the importance of being able to use technological tools such as video conferencing, instant messaging, and document sharing platforms to maintain effective communication with their colleagues and superiors.

4.3.2. Cognitive Flexibility:

Participants shared various experiences regarding cognitive flexibility during telecommuting. Some highlighted the importance of revising their usual methods in response to new problems or unexpected changes in their remote work environment. For example, one participant reported being forced to adopt a different approach to resolve communication difficulties due to the physical distance from colleagues. It appears that this cognitive flexibility is an essential element for effectively adapting to the challenges of telecommuting.

4.2.3. Time and Organization Management:

For many participants, time and organization management have become major challenges. Many people highlighted the challenge of maintaining organization and discipline during their workday at home, especially in the absence of the usual structure provided by a professional work environment. Effective ways to overcome these difficulties were mentioned, such as setting up detailed schedules, defining precise working and resting hours, as well as managing interruptions and distractions.

4.2.4. Emotional Adaptability:

Emotional adaptability was recognized as a key element of adaptability to remote work. Participants shared their experiences regarding managing stress, anxiety, and emotional pressures associated with telecommuting. Resilience in the face of emotional challenges and the ability to maintain a positive mindset are essential skills to ensure well-being and productivity in a remote work environment.

4.2.5. Social Support and Collaboration:

Social support and collaboration with colleagues and supervisors were emphasized as essential elements for fostering adaptation to telecommuting. Participants highlighted the importance of frequent interactions with their peers to maintain a sense of connection and mutual support. Furthermore, it was recognized that effective communication and remote collaboration are indispensable skills for adjusting to the new work conditions. In summary, these results underscore the importance of various elements in fostering employee adaptation in the context of telecommuting. It is essential for individuals to have cognitive flexibility, time and organization management skills, emotional adaptability, as well as effective social support and collaboration to address the challenges of remote work. These findings also highlight the importance for companies to implement policies and practices that encourage these various aspects of adaptability to support the well-being and performance of employees in an ever-changing work environment.

Furthermore, the results underscore the critical importance of technological skills in employees' adaptation to telecommuting. Individuals with strong technological skills are better equipped to face the challenges of telecommuting and capitalize on its potential benefits. It is therefore paramount for companies to provide their employees with the training and support needed to develop and strengthen their technological skills, facilitating a successful transition to telecommuting and optimizing their performance in this context.

In summary, analyzing remote work is complex due to the variety of personal experiences involved. To deepen understanding, it is essential to examine various aspects of telecommuting, such as prior experience, frequency, and duration of telework. These elements contribute to a better understanding of the effects of telecommuting on employee adaptability.

5. Conclusion:

Remote work has become an essential element of contemporary discourse, amplified by the current public health situation. However, its complexity and diversity hinder a comprehensive understanding of its consequences. The development of tailored tools and theories is crucial to better comprehend this new reality of work. Traditional concepts of place, time, and ways of working are disrupted by telecommuting, which impacts behaviors and professional relationships. It is essential to grasp its impact on employee adaptability and performance. This study offers new perspectives and tools that could guide management decisions and human resources policies in remote work management, which poses a major challenge for businesses.

Therefore, the conclusions of this study highlight the necessity for Moroccan organizations to develop policies and training programs that strengthen these dimensions of adaptability. Specifically, emphasis should be placed on enhancing technological skills, promoting cognitive flexibility, and establishing support mechanisms to facilitate emotional and social adjustment to telecommuting. These initiatives can help maximize the benefits of remote work while minimizing its challenges, thereby enabling a smoother and more productive transition to flexible work modes.

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