Chapter 8
Managing the Remote Workforce in the New Normal

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to determine how to manage the remote workforce in a period that covers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic called the new normal. According to this purpose, the content is as follows: the concept of new normal, remote working and hybrid work as a remote working model, advantages and disadvantages of remote working, managing the remote work and workforce. In this context, the author aimed to show remote working from all sides in the new normal and give an idea for researchers and practitioners about how to successfully manage the new normalization period post the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

After understanding that Covid 19 is a pandemic, several regulations were made by governments or decision-makers. Several industry sectors started functioning partially, some of them completely closed for some time. In this process, while companies had to continue their economic activities, they also had to keep the employees healthy and safe. At the same time, the necessity of sustaining economic activities and ensuring the health and safety of employees has made working remotely the best solution. Because of Covid-19, many people have to change many habits related to both their work and daily life routines approximately in 3 months.

Although remote working is seen as the best solution for companies, the most important problem is for companies and employees to be caught unprepared for remote working processes. Lack of supportive infrastructure for large-scale work, mixed emotions and feelings about remote working, lack of experiences for the remote working process, are some of the problems.

In the traditional management approach, cooperation, teamwork, large offices were seen as important values. Remote or flexible working was only preferred to maintain the work-life balance of the employees. However, with Covid 19, issues such as where, how, with whom and, when we work, were

constructed from the beginning. On the other hand, remote and flexible working, required simultaneous adaptation to the work and personal lives of employees, rather than balancing between them (Patil & Gopalakrishnan, 2020).

This process, which covers the period of Covid-19 and "new normals", has been the focus of many researchers and practitioners to monitor the current situation and make the necessary improvements. Therefore so many researches published about the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on companies, employees, effective management alternatives, etc. In these processes, workplace isolation, social distances, work-life balance, remote working, multiple roles for employees (Prasad & Mangipudi, 2020), burnout, remote working topics are the popular subjects for business management.

In this section, the author aimed that determine remote working with all sides in the new normal and give an idea for researchers and practitioners about how to manage the new normalization period with successfully post Covid-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

When the literature is determined, it is possible to come across many studies about remote work or the economic world on the Covid-19 and the pandemic process (Hamblin, 1995; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Kırpık, 2020; Koirala & Acharya, 2020; Petzer, 2020; Ting et al., 2020). Among these researches, besides academic publications, it is possible to find articles published in popular journals, reports published by various human resource management companies (Entrust, 2021; Levenson, 2020; Phillips, 2020; Prasad & Mangipudi, 2020; PwC, 2021; Zeegen et al., 2020). Although these studies are important for the formation of a general judgment on the subject in the literature, it can be stated that this area is still in the discovery phase. In other words, it is seen that there is no consensus about managing the remote working and workforce in the literature. Therefore, it is thought that new studies in this field will be important in terms of the cumulative progress of the process and gaining new perspectives.

Buheji and Buheji's research (2020) is about employability competency in post- the COVID-19 pandemic. According to research results, employability competencies are called, "proactiveness", "preparedness", "pulling-together", "problem-solving", "publishing and publicizing". These competencies may help employees to overcome the challenges in the new normal.

Koirala and Acharya (2020) stated in their study that the Covid-19 pandemic is a turning point for the workplace concept. It has been mentioned that this transformation, will force human resources management units to change their policies and strategies. The concept of "social distance" draws attention as an important concept in this transformation process. While remote working is seen as a more suitable working method for the service sector, it is not seen as a suitable working method for many production sectors.

Bonacini and others (2020) conducted a study on Italian employees. In this study, the authors explored the potential results in the employee income distribution related to a long-lasting increase in remote work. The results showed that in remote working, an increase in the income of the employees will not be evenly distributed among the employees. It is stated that this increase mostly supports male, elderly, highly paid and, highly educated workers.

According to the results of the research conducted by Deloitte (2020), it is revealed that remote working is preferred by both employees and employers. While motivation and the factors related to motivation are effective factors in the preference of employees to work remotely; financial gains are effective in employers who prefer to work remotely. It is stated that the variables that may be effective

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