



School of Health, Care and Social Welfare

Stress and coping strategies among distance working employees during covid-19

ANGELICA THEODORY KOKUTENSA

Main Area: Work Life Science
Level: Cycle Level
Credits: 30
Programme: Work Life Studies
Course Name: Master Thesis in Work Life
Course Code: PSA 315

Supervisor: Wanja Astvik
Examiner: Ulrica Schwarz
Seminar date: [2021-09-10]
Grade date: [2021-09-10]

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to understand stressful situations and stress coping strategies among employees who were working from home during the covid-19 pandemic. In attempt to bridge this knowledge gap, a critical incident approach was employed. Twelve (12) participants who were working from home were obtained purposively to participate in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through zoom to collect data. Critical Incident Technique was used during interviews and thematic analysis were used to analyse data. The study revealed stressors which are lack of enough resources, extra work, lack of autonomy, work future uncertainty, stress due to covid-19, lack of help when needed, difficulties to reach colleagues, job inefficient and presence of telework unsuitable jobs. Coping strategies revealed were positive mindset, seeking social support, physical exercises, self-efforts to find solution of telework challenges, working extra hours and not answering calls or emails on purpose. It was recommended that organizations should determine suitable jobs for telework, providing required resources, granting employees working autonomy, as well as establishing a channel which can be used as a means of communication among employees as well as to be used as an inspiration and encouragement channel through proving motivational adds to help employees to relive their stressful situations.

Keywords, Stress, Coping strategies, Teleworking, Covid-19 pandemic, Critical Incident

CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTIONERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
- 1.1 Background 1
- 1.2 Aim and research question..... 3
- 1.3 Recent Research around Covid-19..... 3
- 1.4 Reviewing Teleworking 8
- 1.5 Stress and stressors related to work10
 - 1.5.1 Reviewing stress..... 10
 - 1.5.2 Stressors related to work 11
- 1.6 Stress coping strategies12
 - 1.6.1 Definition of coping 12
 - 1.6.2 Coping strategies 14
 - 1.6.3 Social support..... 15
 - 1.6.4 Effective and less effective coping strategies 17
- 2 RESEARCH METHOD18
 - 2.1 Design18
 - 2.2 Sample and participants18
 - 2.3 Material and data collection.....19
 - 2.4 Data processing and Analysis.....20
 - 2.5 Ethical considerations20
- 3 RESULT21
 - 3.1 Summary on themes of the study21
 - 3.2 Stress Associated with teleworking.....22
 - 3.2.1 Inadquate of resources required to accomplish task.....22
 - 3.2.2 Lack of immediate help when needed.....22
 - 3.2.3 Difficult to reach Colleagues23
 - 3.2.4 Teleworking requires extra work to fulfill it.....23
 - 3.2.5 Differences in Working Autonomy24

3.2.6	<i>Dissatisfaction with work output</i>	24
3.2.7	<i>Work future uncertainty</i>	25
3.2.8	<i>Telework unsuitable jobs</i>	26
3.2.9	<i>Stress due to Covid-19</i>	27
3.2.9.1	<i>Lack of Social Interaction</i>	27
3.2.9.2	<i>Anxiousness of self and others</i>	27
3.2.9.3	<i>Inability to provide social support to the victims of Covid-19</i>	28
3.3	Stress coping strategies	29
3.3.1	<i>Positive Mindset</i>	29
3.3.2	<i>Seeking Social Support</i>	29
3.3.3	<i>Physical Exercises</i>	30
3.3.4	<i>Self-efforts of finding solution of Teleworking Challenges</i>	31
3.3.5	<i>Working extra hours</i>	33
3.3.6	<i>Not Answering calls on purpose</i>	33
4	DISCUSSION	34
4.1	Result Discussion	34
4.2	Methodological discussion	36
4.2.1	<i>Weakness and Strength of critical Incident Technique</i>	36
4.2.2	<i>Validity and trustworthness of methods</i>	37
4.2.3	<i>Reflexivity</i>	39
4.3	Conclusion	39
	REFERENCE LIST	41
	APPENDIX A	46
	APPENDIX B	47

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The effects of Covid-19 have been vivid throughout the globe affecting every aspect of life including social interaction and the way people work. Corona virus (covid-19) are the viruses which affect the respiratory system of human beings and making difficulties in breathing. The pandemic originated in Wuhan China from December 2019 and has rapidly spread throughout the globe killing and affecting thousands of people. According to WHO, as of September 2 2021, there were 218,205,951 confirmed cases of covid-19 including 4,526,583 deaths globally; and in Sweden, there were 1,127,917 cases and 14,692 deaths.

Experts advised ways through which damage resulting from covid-19 could be reduced, various measures which includes washing hands (hygiene), applying sanitizer, staying at home, mandatory lockdowns as well as social distancing. The idea of social distance has been emphasized as a social approach of trying to protect oneself and others from being affected with coronavirus.

Giddens and Sutton (2013) define social distance basing on personal space of an individual by which every person has his or her space claimed as theirs as they interact towards one another. This personal space during interaction can be longer or shorter depending on the relationship of those who are interacting. For example, intimate space involves interaction of close people such as lovers, and parents and children where the distance can be up to 1.5 feet; personal distance for people who are not closely related takes up to 4 feet; social distance among people in public spaces takes from 4 feet to 12 feet, and space beyond 12 feet involves political leaders speaking to their audiences (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Due to coronavirus, it is advised that social distance must be maintained at least 1 meter in order to protect oneself and to protect others (WHO, 2020). Moreover, during these days of covid-19, unnecessary travelling has been discouraged as people have been encouraged to stay home, while those who must go to public spaces have to maintain social distance and use other protective measures such as wearing a mask.

Due to this, distance work or telework has been a necessity as people can no longer work physically together as it was before but it can only be done through virtual cooperation using information technologies. Distance work or telework is a phenomenon of people working away from their permanent office (Brodsky, 2020). The practice of telework is not new as it is argued to be originated from the era of oil crisis of 1970s. (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Since then, both public and private organizations have been practicing telework due to its various perceived benefits such as balance of work and family care, avoiding long commuting, perceived increased job satisfaction and perceived increased job performance (De Vries et al., 2019; Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

However (Kwon & Jeon 2018) argue that to determine eligibility of telework; there are important conditions to be considered such as nature of the job, resources required to

accomplish the task such as technological support required, and performance criteria. Nature of the job includes jobs like customer care where someone can easily respond to clients at home through teleworking. Moreover, an example of the performance criteria includes what is expected by the supervisor to be accomplished by the worker such as serving a certain number of customers per day. Moreover, Bailey and Kurland (2002) enlighten that various studies have been conducted to research jobs which are suitable for telework. According to them, jobs which do not need daily face to face interactions such as knowledge workers, information workers, and sales and marketing personnel people are more suitable for telework. Additionally, it's argued that some employees do not want to telework simply because they think that their job cannot be well performed while they work outside their office (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Not only that but also according to the same source, some managers have no interest in teleworking because they think that there is no need of telework and that managing such telework programs is difficult.

Unfortunately, despite such eligible conditions of telework, as well as lack of interest of teleworking among managers and employees, telework has continued to be a necessity because employees cannot go to work in their offices due to coronavirus. It means that the decisions of telework in this period of coronavirus is not done according to the wishes of either employees themselves or managers, but it is done in order to take protective measures against coronavirus (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). This means also that there was no assessment of suitability of tasks which are suitable for telework something which can lead to role ambiguity among employees hence leading to stress.

Colquitt et al. (2010) define stress as a psychological response to demands for which there is something at stake and where coping with those demands taxes or exceeds a person's capacity or resources. Stressors are demands causing people to experience stress. There are different stressors at workplace which include role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and daily hassles (Colquitt et al., 2010). According Colquitt et al. there are also stressors which can be categorized as challenges such as time pressure, work complexity, and work responsibility. A study conducted by Gilboa et al. (2008) found that role ambiguity, role conflicts, as well as role overload also affect individual performances of both managers and employees. Moreover, according to Theorell et al. (2015), job insecurity, low decision latitude, job strain and bullying, makes employees experience depression symptoms after a certain period of time.

Apart from stressors related to work, today telework is done while the world is under the tragedy of covid-19. According to Weinberg (2015), when people are exposed to a tragedy might expose changes in their psychological state including negative effects such as distress, anger, nervousness and fear. During the covid-19 crisis, the world community being attacked by covid-19 viruses and all over the media and social media there is news of new cases and death tolls whereby all of these might affect psychological well-being of employees being under telework.

According to McKimmie et al. (2019), social support is very important in coping with stress. Social support is a process of interpersonal interactions that involves the provision or exchange of social resources that persons perceive to be available or are provided by others (Davis et al., 2017). However, being in the middle of the covid-19 crisis, social support is

limited to virtual social relations using technology such as social media and zooming, meaning that there is a limitation of how people can receive social support during the covid-19 crisis.

The aim of this study was thus to identify stressors faced by employees who were working from home during covid-19 and to investigate coping strategies employed by them in order to overcome stressful situations.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

This study is aimed at investigating how employees, involved in telework during the covid-19 crisis, experience, and cope with stress. The core research questions which were addressed are:

- What kind of stressors are perceived among distance working employees associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis?
- How do employees cope with stress associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis?

1.3 Recent Research around Covid-19 and distance working

As Covid-19 has been a global pandemic and most countries used same measures to prevent the spread of disease where employees had to experience working from home which was a policy for most governments. Various studies have been conducted in order to understand the experiences of employees who are working at home due to the effects of covid-19.

A study conducted in Hong Kong on the impact of working from home during Covid-19 found out that there was lack of policies to conducting effective home working and there were limited resource to enhance working from home. However, employees also preferred working from home due to the reason that they were able to balance both work and their family duties. (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020)

Furthermore, Xiao et al. (2021), found that overall physical and mental well-being were decreased while employees were working from home compared to when there were working in offices. Among participants 64.8% reported new physical health issues and 73.6% of the participants reported new mental health issues arising since the beginning of the teleworking. Factors associated with increased numbers of new physical or mental health issues were generally recorded as having a lower salary among women, physical activities, health food intake, and living with children or dependent people as it was found that living with an infant was associated with reporting one new mental health issue while working from home.

Moreover, while working at home during the pandemic, there were increased work expectations and distractions while communication with co-workers was decreased. It was reported that 73.4% of the participants had adjusted their work hours and 37.4% of participants reported scheduling their work hours around others while only 33.0% had a dedicated room for their work at home.

A longitudinal study which was conducted in Australia to examine the health and well-being experiences of the teleworkers. This study found a deteriorating mental well-being among employees. Since the study was longitudinal, each time survey scores showed a consistent decrease of the mean score of mental well-being. Factors associated with declining mental health as identified by the study includes the quality of sleep, frequency of physical activity, extent of work life satisfaction, and the perceived work engagement. (Pirzadeh & Lingard, 2021).

Pizardeh and Lingard (2021) also found that there are both positive and negative experiences of teleworking during covid-19. Positive experiences include flexibility and working autonomy. Negative experiences include the challenges to manage the boundary between work and non-work activities. Moreover, life work satisfaction was also being affected during the pandemic as factors affecting it includes having a high amount of correspondence at irregular times, having too many online meetings, additional work pressure and difficulties in coordinating onsite work while working at home.

Furthermore, Pizardeh and Lingard (2021) found that employees were having anxiety not only from work itself but due to covid-19. This was due to factors such as over information on the negative views of covid-19 and the concern on their job security.

Another study regarding the challenges of teleworking during the pandemic, was focusing on South-East European countries. This study found that more than 70% of the participants were worrying about the impact of the pandemic on themselves and their organizations. Their worry was concerned with the decline of their organizations which could lead to their loss of jobs. This fear of participants was also argued to be due to the influence of the media talking about the danger of the pandemic on individuals and economies (Vasic, 2020). It was further found that 78% of the participants' fear concerned the future of their organizations. It is argued that workers dedicated their life to the organisations, and they were worrying that if the organisations would fall, so would the workers. It means that workers were even loyal and dedicated to work for the better of their organisations.

Apart from workers' loyalty towards their organizations, it was not easy for them to work effectively to contribute to their organisations as it was found that more than 60% of the participants found it was difficult to work at home as it was found that 37.35% of respondents arguing that working at home during the pandemic was unprepared in terms of skills and resources required to do their work something which caused stress among the employees (Vasic, 2020).

Moreover, according to Vasic (2020), there were also other challenges facing employees such as overworking, distractions, physical inactivity, stress, work related disorder, inadequate measuring of work performance and social isolation.

Furthermore, in terms of availability of resources at home, 55% of employees were having right resources from the company while 28.71% of the employees had problems with internet connectivity while 28.3% were affected by the physical workplace. Moreover, 27.5 had no tools or information required by them to work at home. Additionally, 41% of respondents had no teleworking program while 33% of the respondents have had a hard communication with core workers (Vasic, 2020). Moreover, 40% of the respondents felt that they didn't have adequate skills and they lacked experience of teleworking.

Furthermore, there was another study conducted by Buomprisco et al. (2021), which found that health hazards are linked to teleworking. Teleworking employees need telecommunication system which is personal computers, tables or smartphones and these visual displays may lead to back and neck pain, and visual discomfort. Further, employees were facing sleeping disorder and work-related stress such as excessive workloads and lack of decisional autonomy as well as lack of support from superior and colleagues and related psychosocial problems (Buomprisco et al., 2021)

Palumbo (2020) conducted a study investigating the side effects of working from home. It was found that teleworking was affecting negatively work-life balance of employees as employees suffered from increased work-to-life and life-to-work conflicts. Moreover, teleworking triggered greater work-related fatigue, which worsened the perceived work-life balance while work engagement positively mediated the negative effects of working from home on work-life balance.

Hallman, et al. (2021), conducted a study in Sweden in order to determine the extent to which the 24-hour allocation of time to different physical behaviours changes between days working at the office and days working at home during the pandemic. It was found that working from home was associated with more time spent sleeping relative to awake as there was an increased 34 minutes in sleep time which occurred at the expense of a reduction in work and leisure time by 26 min and 7 min, respectively. Moreover, it was found that sedentary, standing and moving behaviours did not change significantly comparing when working at home and working in office. Their findings led to the conclusion that working at home was a health beneficial.

Nguyen and Armoogum (2021) did a study in Vietnam to investigate gender differences on the perception of teleworking during the pandemic. It was found that 56% of female teleworkers compared to 45% of male counterparts had a positive perception of teleworking during the pandemic and 63% of the women desired to telework more in comparison with 39% of men after covid-19. Men's perceptions were due to work related factors while the perception of women was being influenced by family-related factors. Moreover, the perception of female employees towards telework was being influenced by age and children in the household.

According to Bérastégui (2021) who published an article on teleworking in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, argued that within a year after covid-19, the percentage of employees working from home rose from 11 to 48 per cent. While this was happening, the author argues that the implementation of a teleworking system requires that employers take a number of precautions to avoid negative outcomes, especially in terms of occupational health and safety. However, considering the increasing of number of employees who were working from home without even the organizations could have a proper preparation meant that workers and employers alike were, facing new challenges in dealing with the sudden shift to telework. The author argues that there is a growing consensus that telework is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels after the pandemic is behind us but is expected rather to become established.

Additionally, Bérastégui (2021) argue that the successful implementation of telework requires that four categories of factors be met including firstly, individual differences in

workers' ability and desire to adapt to teleworking, mainly explained by degree of self-discipline, personality traits and motivation to engage in remote work. Secondly, feasibility and effectiveness of telework is determined by the type of job. It is estimated that in Europe, only 37 per cent of jobs can be efficiently carried out remotely (Bérastégui, 2021) citing from (Joint Research Centre 2020). These are either jobs with a very low level of autonomy and easy to control remotely or conversely, jobs with high autonomy and discretionary features that allow some form of self-management. The third factor concerns the household including a wide range of considerations, such as the availability of physical space, the absence of distractions, or the presence of young children (Bérastégui, 2021)

Additionally, according to Bérastégui (2021), a critical determinant of successful teleworking is the organisation itself on whether it has a supportive culture, appropriate systems and a trust-based work environment. In sum, teleworking is not a quick fix or a one-size fits all solution, but requires that many factors be aligned, some of them with little room for maneuver.

Vrchota et al. (2020) conducted a study about teleworking in small and medium enterprises before the onset of coronavirus crisis in the Czech Republic. The research was carried out in 1,018 small enterprises' in the Czech Republic, of which 605 (60%) enterprises used teleworking with the average length of seven years. While comparing teleworking with other countries, it meant that before the pandemic, teleworking was used rarely in the Czech Republic compared to other countries such as the USA, where the number of enterprises using it amounts to 70%. Moreover, they found that mode and median values are five years in both cases, with the standard deviation of 5.3 and the variance of 28.1 years. Half of the enterprises have been using teleworking in the range between 3 and 10 years, with both values being, simultaneously, time boundaries of the lower and upper quartiles (Vrchota et al., 2020).

Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés (2020) did their study on teleworking in the context of the Covid-19. They found that the companies which were practicing telework were large or multinational companies, the situation agreeing with the previous literature that stated that large companies have more facilities in the introduction of teleworking (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). According to the authors, previous literature has shown that large companies implement teleworking to a higher degree than small and medium companies. It is argued that small and medium companies have not done so due to a lack of technological innovation. For example, 61% of European small companies had incorporated a website by 2004, whereas 90% of large companies had already had it by then. However, the authors argue that a large number of small companies have implemented teleworking practices during the current crisis while lacking contingency plans because they have adopted teleworking forced by the circumstances. As teleworking has been implemented because of security reasons, all companies introduced teleworking in a massive way, to all employees or more than 1000 employees.

Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi (2020) who did a research on the impact of covid-19 on the conventional work setting, found that when they asked sentiments of participants regarding conventional preCOVID-19 working conditions they found people arguing that eight to nine hours working day is too long and that the typical working week is too much. They also

thought that conventional working hours can be minimized and that most of their meetings could easily be converted to email.

Moreover, when participants were asked to compare the efficiency of working from the office preCOVID-19 to their current situation of working from home, they found that a majority of respondents felt that they are more productive at home than at the workplace, as well as being able to concentrate more at home than in the office. According to the authors, this can be explained by being more comfortable in a home setting and having less distractions in way of work demands. Moreover, there was almost an even split in when it came to getting their work done in less time at home, as 51% reported in agreement and 49% said they were unable to. (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020). According to the authors, this can be explained as to the nature of working from home, in that employees can chose their own working hours which can span throughout the day. Most respondents reported being able to find a comfortable place at home to get the job done, while the majority found themselves less resourceful at home. Authors argue that this could be explained by the lack of communication between colleagues who can serve as an information source or the disruption to face-to-face interaction which are needed for pending issues (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

Furthermore, when participants were asked how they felt in general about their current remote working conditions, it was found that respondents agreed that they enjoyed the flexibility of setting their own working hours, as well as being more productive due to the flexible hours. When they were asked to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the different elements of their work expectations, it was reported that their ability to conduct meeting effectively is the same or better. According to the authors, this can be explained by the need for more documentation prior to virtual meetings making them more efficient as the objectives are clear. Also, the less opportunity for small talk and other interruptions may explain this as well. Moreover, the ability to meet deadlines seems to be the most affected positively, as this can be explained by employees having the luxury of deciding their own hours when they feel most productive. Also, the ability to make decisions was more or less the same or affected positively, as reported by 67% of respondents (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

According to Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi (2020), when participants were asked about how their company reacted to COVID-19 and what they thought about it, it was found that 70% of all respondents agreed to most statements as they were satisfied with their company's immediate response to the COVID-19 remote working conditions. However, 60% of the respondents reported that their company did not have a standard contingency plan in place for an emergency situation.

When participants were asked how much of their workload they feel can be accomplished if their company decides to conduct all their work virtually postCOVID-19 pandemic, it was found that 70% of employees currently working from home reported that they can accomplish at least 60–70% of the expected workload. When they were asked how much of their workload they feel can be accomplished if their company decided to work partly virtually and partly onsite, it was found that more than half of the respondents indicated that they can achieve at least 80–90% of the currently expected workload. When they were asked

about the changes they are expecting regarding their workplace/working conditions postCOVID-19 pandemic, it was found that 36% are expecting things to go back to normal while less supported the notion of giving employees an option to completely work from home (Diab-Bahman & Al-Enzi, 2020).

On the other side, Deantonio et al. (2020) published an article concerning on how they implemented smart working or working from home to mitigate the infection of covid-19 at radiation oncology clinic at the Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland. To mitigate covid-19 infections, they implemented remote access to treatment, planning workstations and medical records, and radiation oncologists stayed at home one to two days per week in remote working. Moreover, phone and skype consultations were used to reduce the number of onsite patient visits. In addition, the daily staff meeting was converted to a teleconference meeting to discuss upcoming patients and radiotherapy strategy, implementing hypo fractionation if clinically indicated, and procedure update. Moreover, the new communication setting worked positive to share problems and the stressful situation in such a difficult period. Furthermore, the teleconference room system, which was already available for weekly multidisciplinary tumour board consultations, was broadly encouraged. Thanks to adequate technology which supported their remote working allowing both patient care and adequate precautions to reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission (Deantonio et al., 2020).

Kundu et al. (2020) investigated associated factors of household food security and household dietary diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. They found that the overall mean scores of house food security and house dietary diversity were 31.86 (SD 2.52) and 6.22 (SD 5.49), respectively. They argue that being a rural resident, having no formal education, occupation of household head other than Government job, and low monthly income were potential determinants of lower house food security and house dietary diversity. It was approximated that 45% and 61% of Bangladeshi households did not get the same quantity and same type of food, respectively, as they got before the pandemic. Moreover, 10% of respondents reported that they lost their job or had to close their businesses, and income reduction was reported by 70% of household income earners during the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn affected negatively house food security and house dietary diversity (Kundu et al., 2020).

1.4 Reviewing Teleworking

The definition of telework depends on the situation and context in which telework is implemented as there are different situations and forms involving it such home based telework, telework in satellite offices, telecentres, mobile telework, distance working enterprises and informal or mixed telework (Kwon & Jeon, 2018). However, it can be generally defined as a situation whereby people work away from their office (Kwon & Jeon, 2018). The concept of telework has also been used in this study as distance work or virtual work as applied by Brodssky (2020), since it mainly involves the use of technology to accomplish the task or to communicate with supervisors, colleagues or customers while being away from the office.

The phenomenon of teleworking is not new as literatures identify its existence originating from the oil crisis of 1970s where some employees were obliged to work out of office so that

organizations could reduce operating cost (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Since then, both public and private organizations have been practicing telework as employees have been meeting clients out of the office, some being in other remote stations outside the main office, and others working from home for a certain hours or few days while trying to balance work and family life (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020)

There are various factors which can determine who can telework as identified by studies. According to Bailey and Kurland (2002), job suitability, manager's willingness, as well as personal and household attributes are the important factors for telework. Regarding job suitability, it is argued that those jobs which do not require daily face to face meetings such as knowledge and information workers are more suitable telework. Additionally, willingness of managers to telework is important, although it is not always that they have the interest in telework since some of them think that there is no need for telework and that to organize telework programs is difficult. Personal and household attributes involves issues such as personal discipline, presence of distractions, family orientations and preference of an employee to work with teams (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). It means that when the organization approves telework, an individual can decide to volunteer for it considering that there is a possibility of accomplishing what is expected by supervisor while being away from the office.

However, teleworking during the covid-19 crisis could be stressful because employees have to work from home even if the nature of the work itself does not require teleworking. As it is argued by Kwon and Jeon (2018), teleworking can be successful done when there are some conditions met such as nature of the work itself, technology required to accomplish that work, as well as performance criteria agreed between the employee and the supervisor. While literature identifies various advantages of teleworking such as time and location flexibility, and better balance between family and work (Kwon & Jeon, 2018), but on the other side Valenduc and Vendramin (2001) point out that advantages or disadvantages of flexible teleworking time depends on the balance of power relations between employers and employees. Depending on power relations, exploitation, autonomy, trade-off, or privilege among the employees becomes apparent (Valenduc & Vendramin, 2001).

Furthermore, there is a challenge regarding the choice of technology to communicate to clients. It is argued that due to difficulties associated with covid 19, there is a challenge on the choice of technology in which employees use to communicate to their clients. Usually, smiling, or authentic face expression is important in interacting with colleagues, supervisors and clients. However, it is difficult for employees to smile while communicating to their clients through video due to the stress of covid-19. One study conducted in Vietnam recently, has shown that inauthentic face expression through video communication, has led to negative reactions from the clients (Brodsky, 2020).

Nonetheless, studies identify both positive and negative views of telework basing on the perspective of employees. Starting with positive perspectives, employees who are skilled with technology, are found to be more interested in teleworking (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Furthermore, women are found to be interested in teleworking simply because it gives them time to balance work and caring for their children (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Studies also shows that employees who are in telework reported that both their job satisfaction and productivity increased as a result of working out of the office (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Contrary to the positive views, studies have also found negative views of employees when it comes to teleworking. First, some employees do not want to telework simply because they think that their work cannot be accomplished accordingly when they do it outside their office. Additionally, according to the review paper of Bailey and Kurland (2002) some employees lost their medical benefits and full-time status after they converted to telework.

1.5 Stress and stressors related to work

This part reviews literature on stress and stressors related to work which are the important concepts in this study.

1.5.1 Reviewing Stress

Krohne (2002) argue that the term stress was firstly being used in physics to analyze the problem of how man-made structures have to be designed to carry heavy loads and resist deformation by external forces. However, the meaning of the term has been changed as used in the behavioural sciences. According to McKimmie et al. (2019), stress is an emotional state which occurs when an individual perceives the demand of a given situation to be beyond his or her ability to manage. Moreover, the term stress has been used to point to experiences in which a pre-stress state of well-being is threatened, harmed, or lost, and in which coping is used as efforts to restore the status quo (Conrada, 2011).

According to Folkman (2010), stress and coping theory is a framework for studying psychological stress. The theory holds that stress is contextual, meaning that it involves a transaction between the person and the environment, and it is a process, meaning that it changes over time. Folkman (2010) defines stress as a situation that is appraised by the individual as personally significant and as having demands that exceed the person's resources for coping. The perceived demand or something causing stress is known as stressor, while the negative effects caused by stress are known as strains (Colquitt et al., 2010).

There are various approaches to understand stress. However, Krohne (2002) argues that stress theories being used and widely accepted are the approaches to psychological stress developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman as these two are considered as the founders of stress and coping research (Mitrousi et al., 2013). To understand how it feels to be stressed there are processes of demand appraisal known as primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is a process through which a person tries to think whether the demand causes them to feel stressed as a person tries to think what will occur in terms of personal goals and overall well-being (Colquitt et al., 2010).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) there are three major potential outcomes of primary appraisal as they can be appraised as *irrelevant* to his or her personal well-being if the situation does not concern the person's needs or goals; they can be appraised as *benign or positive* if the situation is appraised as preserving or enhancing the person's well-being or they can be appraised as *stressful* if the person's needs or goals are concerned in the situation in a way that taxes or exceeds the person's resources (Smith & Kirby, 2010). It is argued that the situation appraised as stressful is the one leading to psychological stress and it requires analysis of resources or ability to handle the situation or coping with it (Smith & Kirby, 2010).

Lazarus and Folkman identify three subtypes of the stressful situation in the primary appraisal, namely harm or loss, threat, and challenge. A stressful situation is categorized as harm or loss when a person has already sustained of damage such as injury, illness, and setback to ones goals among others. Moreover, a stressful situation can be categorized as a threat when it likely to cause harm or loss in the future and finally the stressful situation can be categorized as a challenge when the situation has a potential for gain or growth in the future (Smith & Kirby 2010).

Secondary appraisal is a process through which a person tries to evaluate the possibility of overcoming a stressful situation, the situation expressed by Richard Lazarus and Suzan Folkman as “What if anything can be done about it? (Smith & Kirby, 2010). When there is no possibility of overcoming the situation, strains become vivid as a result of stress such as depression and burnout (Smith & Kirby, 2010).

1.5.2 Stressors Related to Work

Colquitt et al., (2010), identify two types of stressors occurring at workplace known as hindrance stressors and challenge stressors. Hindrance stressors are defined as those stressors which hinders personal wellbeing or accomplishment of personal goals. It includes role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and daily hassles. *Role conflicts* occur when an employee face challenges in his or her role to meet what is expected of him or her. For example, an employee can face challenges to listen carefully and serve all the clients while he or she is expected to serve many clients within a day. *Role ambiguity* is when an employee has no clear information of what to be done; *Role overload* is when an employee must accomplish a lot of things in such a way it becomes difficult to accomplish it all; and *daily hassles* is about things which gets in the way and prevents employees to accomplish what they are supposed to accomplish (Colquitt et al., 2010).

Moreover, time pressure, work complexity and work responsibility are identified as challenge stressors. *Time pressure* is when an employee has not enough time to accomplish what he or she has to do; *work complexity* is a situation whereby an employee has no required knowledge, skills or capability to finish a certain task; and *work responsibility* is about nature of responsibility an employee has to others, for example managers have to ensure an organization profits (Colquitt et al., 2010).

Furthermore, literature identifies additional stressors related to work. Silvia et al. (2020), identified client aggression as one of the stressors among employees at workplace as their analysis confirmed a relationship between patients’ aggression and nurses’ burnout. According to them, this kind of aggression could be from patients or patients’ relatives. Similarly, in organizations dealing with different kinds of clients, there are always those customers who are difficult to handle. All of these become as a source of stress at workplace.

Furthermore, Brodsky (2020) identifies difficulties of dealing with clients in these days of hardship due to covid-19 crisis. According to this author, working from home nowadays requires an appropriate choice of technology where his research shows that employees who fail to show authentic face expression as they have difficulties due to corona virus, have been experiencing negative reaction from their clients. Moreover, Ybema et al. (2020), identified job demands including physical and higher workload as a source of stress among the

employees. Their research confirmed a relationship between job demands and workers exhaustion. This is a fact because the completion of a certain task requires resources such as technology and time required to accomplish it. Moreover, the heavy workload also causes stress especially when time resource or means of accomplishing the tasks are limited. Adding to their research Yuanbo et al. (2020) identified interpersonal conflicts as a cause of stress among employees. This could be between an employee and his or her supervisor, colleague, or client.

According to Yan et al. (2020), job insecurity is one potential stressor among employees. Job insecurity is a situation when the individual is unsure about the future of his or her job. This has been a problem recently especially due to corona virus where several businesses in the world and Sweden have shut down. This situation might contribute to fear among the employees concerning the future of their job.

Overwhelming corona virus cases and death tolls is one stressor among the employees working from home. The number of covid-19 cases has been increasing in the world and many people have lost their lives. People have lost their parents, their sons, their daughters, their grandparents, their relatives, their colleagues and their neighbours. At the same time life must go on and they have to work at home as nothing has been happening. Therefore, the fear of covid-19 is one among the stressors among the employees, considering the context in which they do their work during covid-19.

1.6 Stress Coping strategies

This part reviews literature on stress coping strategies to identify coping strategies which are also likely to be found during the data collection among the employees who are teleworking during the time of coronavirus crisis.

1.6.1 Definition of Coping

According to Folkman (2010) coping refers to the thoughts and behaviours people use to manage the internal and external demands of stressful events. According to Folkman (1984), an important feature within the definition of coping is that coping is denned independently of its outcome. That is, coping refers to efforts to manage demands, regardless of the success of those efforts. The effectiveness of any given coping strategy is not inherent in the strategy. According to Folkman (1984), this approach differs from psychodynamic conceptualizations in which certain intrapsychic defence processes, such as denial, are considered inherently poorer than others, such as suppression, or in which a strategy is labelled coping only if it satisfies certain criteria, such as adhering to reality. Folkman (1984) also argues that this definition also differs from popular conceptualizations of coping in which coping implies managing or succeeding, whereas not coping implies failure (Folkman, 1984).

According to Folkman and Lazarus (1985), coping is viewed as having two major functions, namely regulation of distressing emotions (emotion-focused coping) and doing something to change for the better the problem causing the distress (problem-focused coping). Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found that both functions of coping were represented in over 98% of the more than 1,300 stressful encounters that were reported by 100 middle aged men and women over the course of a year. Problem-focused coping was used more

frequently in encounters that were appraised by the person as changeable than in those appraised as unchangeable. In contrast, emotion- focused coping was used more frequently in encounters that were appraised as unchangeable than in those appraised as changeable. In subsequent analyses, several types of emotion-focused coping have been identified, including minimizing threat, seeking emotional support, wishful thinking, and self-blame. (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

According to Folkman and Moskowitz (2000), Coping has multiple functions, including but not limited to the regulation of distress and the management of problems causing the distress. It is argued that coping is influenced by the appraised characteristics of the stressful context, including its controllability. It is also argued that coping is influenced by personality dispositions including optimism and that coping is influenced by social resources (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

Folkman and Moskowitz (2000), describe coping that generates positive affect namely positive reappraisal, goal-directed problem-focused coping and the infusion of ordinary events with positive meaning. Positive reappraisal refers to cognitive strategies for reframing a situation to see it in a positive light (seeing a glass half full as opposed to half empty). It is akin to the concepts of benefit reminding and downward social comparisons both of which refer to cognitive coping strategies that enable the individual to appraise a difficult situation more positively. Problem-focused coping refers to efforts directed at solving or managing the problem that is causing distress. It includes strategies for gathering information, making decisions, planning, and resolving conflicts; it includes efforts directed at acquiring resources (e.g., skills, tools, and knowledge) to help deal with the underlying problem; and it includes instrumental, situation-specific, task-oriented actions. When a negative event occurs, the individual creates a positive event or interprets an otherwise ordinary event as positive as a way of offsetting the negative affective consequences of the negative event. It is argued that people are keyed to respond to the adverse sequelae of loss by turning their attention to their resources and looking for positive aspects of their lives. It is argued that some evidence suggests that under stressful conditions, individuals may be more likely to bring about, note, or remember ordinary positive events (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

Apart from what was identified earlier on the two kinds of coping there is a third kind of coping namely meaning-focused coping, which regulates positive emotions. Meaning-focused coping was introduced into the model prompted by findings that positive emotions occur alongside negative emotions throughout intensely stressful periods. Meaning-focused coping strategies differ qualitatively from emotion-focused coping strategies, such as distancing, that regulate negative emotions. Meaning-focused coping draws on deeply held values and beliefs in the form of strategies such as goal revision, focusing on strengths gained from life experience, and reordering priorities. The various types of coping often work in tandem, such that the regulation of anxiety (emotion-focused coping) will allow the person to concentrate on making a decision (problem-focused coping), which in turn is informed by a review of underlying values and goals (meaning-focused coping).

According to Folkman (2010) there is a relationship between coping and hope. Folkman (2010) provides definitions of hope found in literatures. In the psychology literature, for example, hope is defined as yearning for amelioration of a dreaded outcome, a theological

virtue along with faith and charity, and as a positive goal-related motivational state. Hope has also been characterized in the nursing literature as having a being dimension, something that is deep inside oneself that remains positive whatever happens; a doing dimension, a pragmatic, goal-setting entity in response to situations; and a becoming dimension, anticipating future possibilities, positive results. In the medical literature, maintaining and restoring hope is seen as an important function of the physician. Hope and psychological stress share many formal characteristics. Hope, like stress, is appraisal-based, it waxes and wanes, is contextual, and is complex. Hope has a cognitive base that contains information and goals; it generates an energy, often described as 'will', that has a motivational quality; it has both negative and positive emotional tones due to the possibility that what is hoped for might not come to pass; and for many people hope has a basis in religion or spirituality whereby it is equivalent to faith (Folkman, 2010). According to Folkman (2010), the revival of hope in intensely stressful situations depends at least in part on cognitive coping processes. In turn, the person's capacity to sustain coping with intensely stressful situations over time depends at least in part on having hope with respect to the desired outcome.

1.6.2 Coping strategies

Stress coping strategies are the means undertaken by an individual in order to enhance mental stability and to go along with the stressing situation. According to Smith and Kirby (2010), coping strategies are categorized into three modes; the first one is *primary-control engagement coping* which represents efforts to change the situation, and includes such strategies as problem solving, and efforts at emotion regulation (Smith & Kirby, 2010). For example, through this mode, a person might decide to work extra hours if the stressful situation is the high workload. Moreover, a person might control his or her emotion through listening to music and engaging in physical activity. The second mode is *secondary-control engagement coping* which represents efforts to change aspects of oneself to accommodate to the situation, and includes such strategies as positive thinking, cognitive restructuring, and acceptance (Smith & Kirby, 2010). Through this coping mode, a person tends to have a positive thinking that things are as they are and one day it will come to an end. Praying and going to church could be an example of acceptance that all the troubles happening are under the will of God, and God himself will take control. The third mode of coping is *disengagement coping*, which represents efforts to avoid or distance oneself from the source of stress, and includes such strategies as denial, avoidance, and wishful thinking (Smith & Kirby, 2010). For example, a person can avoid watching news or surfing information related to coronavirus.

Additionally, Colquitt et al. (2010), categorize coping into two dimensions, the first being methods of coping which involves behavioural versus cognitive methods, and the second dimension is the one involving the focus of coping which includes problem solving versus emotion regulation. Behavioural coping is the one which involves physical activities in order to cope with the stressful situation such as to work faster in order to finish the work load. Cognitive coping involves thinking to find alternative ways of coping with the situation. Problem focused coping involves behaviour and cognitive thinking to solve the problem itself,

while emotion focused coping is the one in which a person tries to manage his or her own emotional reactions to a stressful situation (Colquitt et al., 2010).

American Psychological Association conducted a survey in 2014, which describes different means of coping with stress. The first one is *listening to music*. Listening to music help those under stressful situation to feel relived and thus improving mental stability. The other strategy is *physical activity*. Through walking or doing some exercise, stressed people can be relived. *Reading* has also been identified as a means to overcome stress. When an employee has been busy accomplishing his or task, can take a break of reading something which helps to improve mental stability. *Meditation* has been argued being useful in clearing worries and negative thoughts hence useful in stress coping. *Praying or going to church* has also been identified as a means to cope with stress. Through praying, people surrender their worries and difficulties to God. Through praying therefore, people get relived from a stressful situation. According to Contrada (2011) religion has been ignored in the stress-coping field despite its obvious, nearly universal importance to people facing stress, can be embedded in all forms of coping and, at times, forms a distinct focus of coping activity. *Yoga* involves relaxation breathing, physical activity and meditation. *Massage* has also been identified in the mentioned survey as being useful in coping with stress. *Reaching out or spending time in natural green environments* is also being useful as a stress coping strategy.

1.6.3 Social support and coping

Researchers have established the importance of social support when it comes to coping with stress. For example Pettit et al. (2011) as well as Travers et al. (2020), have shown through their studies how social support is important to individuals when it comes to crises and stress. Moreover, according to McKimmie et al. (2019), social support is one resource through which stress can be overcome.

Davis et al (2017) define social support as a process of interpersonal interactions that involves the provision or exchange of social resources that persons perceive to be available or are provided by others. It is argued that social support occurs because of integration into a social network, which operates as a vital resource for well-being (Davis et al., 2017). Social support is very important in coping with stress because through which various forms of help are offered to an individual by their members of social circle when experiencing stress (McKimmie et al., 2019). McKimmie et al. (2019), even argue further that given the importance of social support, even stress research today have shifted from focusing on individual reactions to stress, to investigating the role of social factors such as social support and group identification in the stress coping strategies. Group identification has been one of social support helping to improve the well-being of those who are under stress. It involves a feeling and belonging of an individual into a certain group where he or she can receive support which can help an individual to recover when he or she is stressed.

Empirical studies disclose that social support is a protecting aspect against the harmful effects of stress. There was a study conducted concerning the emerging adulthood period especially for those between the age of 18-25 years, and according to this study, young people in this stage with greater perceived social support reported fewer depressive symptoms

(Pettit et al., 2011; Travers et al., 2020). Moreover, a study on mental health among the Lesbian, Gays and Bisexual students in Ireland, revealed that LGB students have been faced with mental health problems such as trauma. However, such problems are being mediated through social support (Pettit et al., 2020). Furthermore, there was a study which established client aggression and employee burnout, the problem which was reduced through supervisor's support (Silvia et al., 2020). Sources of social support are also identified as family, friends and romantic partners and a sense of connectedness in a certain community (Pettit et al., 2020).

Social support is composed by individual members within the network of relationship of a person (Walker et al., 2013). In order to identify the composition of the social network consisting social support, an individual can be asked to name people he or she goes for help or for the sake of discussing important matters in the time of need. (Walker et al., 2013). Moreover, Walker et al. (2013), continue that it is important also to know the relationship among the members of the social network of an individual as it might be a friend, or family member. While a person can have informal conversation with many people, the focus of social support has been only in those active ties of an individual where there is sociability, contact, supportiveness and feelings of connectedness (Walker et al., 2013). However, it is advised that analysis of social support must focus on both supportive and non-supportive ties as non-supportive ties have also a role to play.

Dunkel-Schetter et al. (1987) discuss factors influencing support receipt which include characteristics of recipients, of providers, of stressors, and of environments.

Characteristics of recipients that have been noted in the literature as influencing support are sociodemographic variables such as sex, age, and race (Riley & Eckenrode, 1986) and such personality predispositions as affiliation and autonomy needs, self-esteem, sociability, locus of control, and interpersonal skills

Characteristics of providers of interest might include perceptiveness, motivation, and support skills. Characteristics of stressors can be categorized in many ways, such as intensity, duration, or ambiguity of the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the life domain in which stress occurs, or, in phenomenological terms, as appraisal of the degree of threat or type of personal stakes or vulnerabilities involved. Finally, characteristics of environments include those pertaining to the physical environment, to the organizational structure of environments, and to social networks. It is also argued that social network properties influence perceptions of support.

One additional factor that may be a significant predictor of support received is the coping behaviour of the stressed person. It is argued that coping style as a characteristic of the recipient that may be an important factor in whether one receives social support. However, coping has been shown to vary substantially across situations for a given individual suggesting that it is best conceptualized not as a stable property of persons but as a process that depends on characteristics of both the person and the situation. Because coping does capture both person predispositions and situational requirements and because coping behaviour is usually manifested socially, it has potentially greater power than the other factors mentioned here for determining the support that a person receives.

Dunkel-Schetter et al. (1987) found that coping was a much stronger correlate of support receipt. It was particularly strongly associated with the receipt of informational support, although some coping patterns were also associated with the other two types of support. Of the eight forms of coping, problem solving, seeking support, and positive reappraisal were most consistently associated with receipt of the three types of support.

Dunkel-Schetter et al. (1987) also found that coping through problem solving and support seeking may act as a strong elicitor of all types of support, whereas confronting the problem may be a signal that information, not emotional support or aid, is desired. Distancing oneself from the problem is also selective; it may signal that the person does not want information or advice.

It is argued that coping strategies adopted by people in times of stress may not only communicate that support is needed and the types that are appropriate, but they also make it easy or difficult in subtle ways for others to provide support. For example, positive reappraisal, which involves seeing the situation in a favourable light (e.g., looking on the bright side) is a coping technique that makes it easier for family and friends to extend help. In general, it is considerably less threatening to offer help to someone who does not seem too distressed or who appears to be coping well. A related interpersonal function of coping may be actively to invite or drive away support. With cancer patients, for example, it has been argued that a positive attitude can be a conscious strategy used to elicit support; confrontive coping (which is characterized by angry, impulsive actions), on the other hand, might deter others from providing help. (Dunkel-Schetter et al., 1987).

1.6.4 Effective and Less effective Coping Strategies

According to the American Psychological Association survey (2014), Receiving social support, listening to music, physical activity, reading, meditation, praying or going to church, yoga and getting a massage were rated as effective strategies by more than a half of the population who responded to the survey. Apart from these rated effective strategies, there are also those strategies which seem not to work effectively when it comes to coping. These strategies include screening time such as watching movies, watching TV and surfing net, eating junk food and having a drink. Some of these strategies are not only less effective in coping with stress but could also be harmful to health. According to Folkman and Lazarus (1986) coping consist of the thoughts and behaviours a person uses to manage the demands of particular person environment transaction that has relevance to his or her well-being. Coping strategies differ from one individual to the other depending on what is at stake on both primary and secondary appraisal. Sometimes when self-esteem is at stake people use self-control, avoidance and sometimes they accept more responsibilities than when self-esteem is not at stake (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986). Among the effective strategies used by most of the people on coping with distress are distancing themselves from problems, self-control, seeking social support and positive reappraisal.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Design

This study was conducted with participants living in Stockholm capital city of Sweden. This area was suitable for the study because this city is among the cities in Sweden and the world at large which has been affected by covid-19; and therefore, it was possible to obtain data regarding the current study.

The current study involved a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is the one in which researcher is interested in subjectivity of the participants as through which stories, emotions, and experiences of the studied phenomenon is obtained. As there are many qualitative research designs, the one specific design which was used on this study was critical incident technique. Weatherbee (2012) argues that critical incident method is the one used to explore events or incidents perceived as critical, meaning that unusual, unique or significant events and situations that are interested by the researcher. On this method participants are asked to recall and describe a time when behaviour, action or occurrence which impacted them positively or negatively in specified outcome or situation. As the aim of this study was to investigate stressors associated with distant working during the time of covid-19, critical incident technique was thus one of the appropriate methods to accomplish that. Through this method, participants were asked to tell their critical incidents related to stress in their distant working situation and how they coped with stress.

2.2 Sample and Participants

This study involved 12 participants both men and women who were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. According to Saunders and Townsend (2019) Convenience sampling is a sampling in which the researcher chooses participants because they are readily available or convenient to access. This kind of sampling was applied as researcher contacted various employees who were free to decide whether they would participate into the study. Through convenience sampling, nine respondents willing to participate in the study were obtained. During the interview researcher asked respondents if they knew anyone who was working from home and would be accessible for interview and hence three more respondents were recruited through snowball sampling. According to Saunders and Townsend (2019), snowball sampling is the one which relies on existing participants to identify further potential participants, and it is useful when potential participants are difficult to either physically locate or identify.

The final study sample involved twelve participants who are employees of various sectors united by their common feature of being working at home due to Covid-19. Six female and six male participants in ages ranges from 26 to 63. Three participants had previous experience in teleworking while other three participants reported having a little experience. The rest six participants, teleworking during the pandemic was their first time. Background details on participants are found in table 1.

Table 1: Profiles of the Participants

Id#	Gender	Age	Marital status	Profession	Employment contract	Previous experience in telework
1	F	28	Single	Teacher	Permanent	Yes
2	F	28	Single	Advisor	Temporary	No
3	F	43	Married	Manager	Permanent	Little experience
4	M	44	Married	Manager	Permanent	Little experience
5	M	63	Married	IT Technician	Permanent	Yes
6	M	40	In relation	Systems specialist	Permanent	No
7	M	32	Married	Personal Assistant	Permanent	No
8	F	27	Engaged	Human Resource	Temporary	No
9	M	28	Single	Engineer	Permanent	Little Experience
10	F	50	Single	Occupational Health	Temporary	Yes
11	F	26	Single	Social Worker	Permanent	No
12	M	36	Engaged	Logistician	Permanent	No

2.3 Material and data collection

According to Weatherbee (2012), data collection using critical incident technique, involves collecting data concerning actions and inaction of participants regarding the phenomenon being studied. The critical issue in this study was to understand stressors among employees who were working from home during covid-19; and therefore data collection was in the form of self-report of the participants who were recalling their incidences and experiences of their distant working situation (Borgen et al., 2012).

This data from the participants was collected through semi-structured interview guide (see appendix) which contain questions geared at understanding stressing situations of distant working employees and how they coped with stress. Examples of questions were; do you remember any stressful situation while working at home during covid-19? Can you tell me more about this situation? Which means did you use to overcome this situation? Do you remember any other stressful situation?

The interviews were conducted through zoom in which semi-structured or similar questions were asked to participants. Moreover, semi-structured interviewing allowed flexibility as researcher was able to ask for additional questions when it became necessary to do so in order to acquire complete and detailed information. Apart from questions regarding stressors and coping strategies, researcher also asked about background information of participants including age, gender, work life experience at the current job, and previous experience of teleworking. This background information was important because it helps the

researcher to understand situations perceived as stressor by the employees. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, with an average of 35 minutes.

Since data were collected in the middle of covid-19 pandemic, zoom interviews were conducted and the conversations were audio recorded verbatim. Moreover, the recorded conversations were later transcribed. The transcribed material varied between 7 and 10 pages for the different interviews. The number of pages for the total material was 86 Pages.

2.4 Data processing and analysis

Critical Incident Technique (CIT) as well as thematic analysis were used to analyse data, to come out with themes that answer the research questions of this study. Critical Incident Techniques was applied through making summary of each participant regarding stressors experienced by them and coping strategies employed related to identified stressor. After this process, thematic analysis followed.

According to Braun and Clarke (2008), thematic analysis is the method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. Five thematic analysis phases were followed. The first phase involves transcription of the interviews into written form, in which the researcher was able to familiarise herself with data through and conduct a cross check with the audio during the transcription process. In the next step initial list of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about them was identified and produced initial codes from the data which means meaningful information from each participant was identified separately as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2008), data were also organized into meaningful groups, notes were written on the text using coloured pen to indicate the potential patterns. Potential themes were generated from the initial codes where codes with similar meaning were put together and collated all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The candidate themes were then reviewed, their relationship with one another and relationship with data was determined. Themes that did not have enough materials to support them were removed and others collapsed into each other. Internal homogeneity was ensured through reviewing the codes within the pattern to make sure there is a similarity while each theme was checked its relationship with another theme as well as with the whole data to ensure external heterogeneity. On the final phase the researcher was able to name the themes with the meaningful names.

Identified themes, were then checked on how they answer research questions as the study had two main research questions; the first one was what kind of stressors are perceived among distance working employees associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis?; and the second question was how do employees cope with stress associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis?

2.5 Ethical considerations

The current study observes all ethical principles of Swedish Research council, 2011. Participant were contacted and informed about the purpose of the study by email with the information letters were attached. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary. Their participation was confidential as no names or information given by them would not be traced back to them as stated in the Swedish Research Council, (2011) that all

personal information should be kept in a such a way that it is not possible for outsiders to identify the participants. All the information were repeated at the beginning of the interview and the respondents were informed that the interview was recorded, and they had right not to answer questions that they felt uncomfortable to answer, they could also withdraw from the study anytime they wanted without giving a reason for their action. They were also informed how their information were used and that the data collected were only used for research purpose and that data is deleted after the study was examined and approved.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Summary on themes of the Study

Themes of the study are categorized into categories of stress associated with telework, positive side of the telework, stress due to Covid-19 and stress coping strategies. Moreover, Summary of these themes is well presented in Table 2, followed by description of each theme with embedded quotes of participants identified by their identification number assigned during the analysis ranging from 1-12.

Table 2. Summary of the resulting themes of the analysis

Research question	Theme	Subtheme
Stressors among distance working employees associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis	Inadequate recourses Lack of immediate help when needed Difficulties to reach colleagues Extra work Differences in work autonomy Job inefficient Work future uncertainty Telework unsuitable jobs Stress due to Covid-19	Lack of social interactions Anxiousness of self and others Inability to provide social support to the victims of Covid-19
Coping strategies used by employees to cope with stress associated with their work situation during the covid-19 crisis?	Positive mindset Seeking social support Physical exercises Self-efforts to finding solution of telework challenges Working extra hours Not answering calls or emails on purpose	

3.2 Stress Associated with Teleworking

3.2.1 Inadequate resources to accomplish tasks

Participants described the importance of resources required in accomplishing their tasks. However, it became clear that while working at home during the pandemic, resources were inadequate compared to working in offices. It became clear that offices are well equipped with all resources which can help employees to do what they are supposed to do compared to working at home.

Furthermore, doing telework requires a reliable internet because there are no physical contacts; and contacting supervisors as well as contacting other colleagues requires a reliable internet connection through computers or mobile phones. However, while working at home, it became clear that internet was not as reliable it is in offices. Unreliable internet connectivity as well as lack of other resources became a problem as employees felt stressed as they could not meet their needs.

“During the early days of the pandemic, we had a lot of orders and my internet connection at home was not great so I couldn’t finish work on time” (ID#12)

3.2.2 Lack of immediate help when needed

The participants describe that physical social interaction is one of the major benefits of working in the office. This interaction included getting and given help to co-workers. It was specifically described that while working in offices, workers help one another especially when the co-worker is facing working challenges which require help from colleagues. As the study involved participants from different professions such as advisers, social workers and people dealing with IT, it became clear that professions that deal with human beings such as advisers and social workers, need more physical interaction so that they can help one another in dealing with clients as problems facing clients are dynamic which requires multiple experiences from different employees .

Moreover, physical interaction among the employees which is happening in offices, is important due to mutual leaning among the employees, the situation which leads due to sharing experiences and expertise in dealing with clients because employees can be grouped as junior or senior employees, hence physical interaction is especially important among the junior employees and those who are not well experienced with the organization.

However, it became obvious that while working at home, employees came into a situation in which they needed the help of other employees, which could not be attained immediately. It was happening that when employees needed help, they had to contact colleagues through phones, Skype, zoom or even emails something which is different when they are in offices as they can quickly get the help of the co-worker who is around them. Therefore, participants showed their appreciation of working in office compared to working at home due to availability of other employees around who could help in case of a need.

“Just being you and the job but not having anyone to ask stupid questions, you know those simple questions, it caused a lot of stress in the beginning of my work” (ID#8)

3.2.3 Difficulties to reach colleagues

The previous described theme shows the importance of physical interaction in helping co-workers when they are in need, and it also goes further on how lack of immediate help became a stressor while working at home. The current theme relates to the previous described as it helps to explain why employees were stressed with lack of immediate help as it reveals that the reason was difficulties to reach colleagues.

It has been revealed that during the pandemic, there was a difficult in reaching colleague as some employees were not answering calls on purpose as a way of handling their stress. However, while some employees were not answering calls due to their stress, in turn they were causing stress to other employees who were trying hard to reach them.

“If there is someone I can’t reach, I will try at the right time and retry and retry and retry which in turn can be stressful but it’s okay I keep retrying” (ID#5)

Moreover, apart from phone calls, there is emails communication which helps not only to communicate, but also to share documents related to work. However, among the teleworkers it became apparent that employees were not replying emails on time and thus communicating through emails became less efficient and stressful among those who needed a quick response from their colleagues.

“Email is not good, so you can use Skype. Don’t use email” (ID#5)

Furthermore, as it was explained in previous themes that there was a problem of inadequate resources at home in order to accomplish tasks such as reliable internet connection, explains also why there was a difficulty to reach colleagues due to the fact that most communications such as emails, Skype, and zoom required internet connection and therefore, when there is unreliable internet connectivity at home, leads to problems in communication. Therefore, difficulties to reach colleagues were interfering with what had to be accomplished by workers and thus led to stress among them.

3.2.4 Teleworking requires extra work to fulfill it

Doing telework was accompanied with additional tasks apart from what was acquired to be done while employees were working in offices. These additional tasks can be categorized as those required to be done first in order to complement what was originally supposed to be done, and those additional tasks which do not directly related to the tasks of employees.

Starting with the first category, there were those additional tasks which had to be done to complement their tasks. This extra work depended on the type of work done by employees as for example among teachers as they had to learn on how to use zoom, to teach their students on how to use it, and scanning books so that students could get access to soft copies.

The second category of additional tasks involves those which do not directly relate to what was required to be done by employees. This happened due to lack of physical contacts where employees could directly ask help from one another when they run into problems. However,

as everyone was working from home, it happened that employees had to contact one another through phone calls, and emails. The rate of responding to co-workers was high among some employees as they had also to establish a certain kind of connection which could help to respond to their questions.

The following quotation shows how extra work was experienced among the employees working from home during covid-19.

“I tried to go through different platforms, first we tried Skype, it wasn’t good, we tried another platform we have at school called E-learning but students didn’t like it and the last resort was zoomso I went on zoom, I tried to figure it out myself. Then I taught it to students, we practiced to master it before we could start lessons.” (ID#1)

Moreover, this theme has also a relationship with other previous themes especially difficulties to reach colleagues. As it was described, it was difficult to reach colleagues as some were not picking calls while others were not replying to emails on time, now one of the reasons to explain this is high rate of contacts among some employees. This happens because when all employees have something they need to accomplish within a specific period of time then it is difficult for some to spend all day to respond to the questions of other employees. In turn, additional tasks became stressful among employees who were doing teleworking during the pandemic.

3.2.5 Differences in working autonomy

Working autonomy was also a determinant factor of stress among the employees. There were employees who had autonomy meaning that they were not restricted on the time of working and the amount of output and those who were controlled. Those with autonomy were able to enjoy the flexibility of working from home while being able to promise what they could accomplish to their supervisors. On the other side, those who had no autonomy were being controlled the working time such as exact time of logging on the systems as well the amount of output to be produced.

The employees who had autonomy were less stressed compared to those employees whose schedule and output had to be decided and administered from their office. Employees who had no autonomy were also faced with challenges to finish their task on time due to high work load allocated and in turn it became stressful. The following is a quotation from the participant concerning lack of work autonomy which leads to job stress.

“Sometimes you don’t get enough time to do all your administration job because our job is administered from top office in the whole country. So, you have to log in and log out in time and I have a schedule in the system”. (ID#7)

3.2.6 Dissatisfaction with work output

It became apparent across the participants that telework was not efficient in job performance compared to productivity while working in office. The dissatisfaction of work output was vivid across various professions who were working at home during covid-19. Among the teachers, the difficulties to make students concentrate was revealed, a challenge which was

sometimes beyond the control of the teachers considering lack of conducive environment of study among the students as some of them had no quiet place which could help them to concentrate through zoom sessions.

“A lot of students do not have access to laptops and it has been hard when they try to come through their phone and a lot of them do not have somewhere calm to study” (ID#1)

Apart from work dissatisfaction among the teacher, other professions had a similar stressor as they were also dissatisfied with their work. Among advisers, it became apparent that there was a difficulty in providing the best service to their clients while working at home. This difficulty was due to the nature of telework itself as everyone was working from their home without physical contacts with colleagues who could respond to questions required to help the client. The dissatisfaction happened because when clients asked something that a particular worker did not understand, then they needed to hang up and call colleagues asking for answers or hanging up and searching answers by themselves. The situation of hanging up clients' calls without helping them meant a dissatisfaction of one's working output.

“In office there are people whom you can ask a question but working at home, you are alone, so when you run into a problem, you have to tell your client that I will call you back. Hanging up was not so helpful because I felt like I was not giving the best service.” (ID#2)

Furthermore, this theme also appeared itself when it comes to the quality of online meetings as they have been conducted during the pandemic. While online meetings especially through zoom substituted physical meetings, it became apparent that zoom meetings are not as efficient as physical meetings. In turn this leads to inefficient work output.

“The positive side is not it is not the end of the world because when you have a meeting, what you get from it is different, as it is not as what you get in physical meeting.” (ID#4)

In addition, inefficient work output which appeared especially during the early days of the pandemic was failure to meet the required work output. This happened due to perceived limitation of time and internet resources compared to high workload among the employees. As a result, employees thought that they were not satisfied with what they were producing while working at home during the pandemic

3.2.7 Work future uncertainty

One of the factors for the health mindset among the employees is being sure about their place in the future within their organizations as it gives them a sense of security and focus on what they are supposed to do. However, working at home during the pandemic was characterized with future uncertainty; uncertainty on the normal working days, uncertainty about their job security, uncertainty about the future design of their organizations and uncertainty about their new roles they will have to take due to organizational changes.

Uncertainty about normal working days was common among the employees as they were wondering when the pandemic would be over so that they would they start living and going to offices normally just as they used to do.

Moreover, lockdowns impacted negatively on economic life such production, demands and distribution of goods. This in turn affected the productivity of the organizations and their ability to accommodate the same number of employees. The loss of job was among the stressful situations among the employees who were working at home during the pandemic. Participants revealed either within their organization or at least someone they know lost their job due to negative impacts of the covid-19.

“At our organization 150 people have to leave the company and we are also at a huge organizational change.” (ID#3)

Although the loss of job was not affecting the respondents directly, they were concerned because once someone in the organization has lost a job, job insecurity spreads among the other employees. Moreover, several respondents also experienced stress related to friends and/or family members losing their jobs.

Furthermore, job future uncertainty was also related to organizational changes which were happening during the pandemic. Due to the impact of the pandemic, organizations had to undergo organizational changes and adopt new designs in order to cope with the situation. Organizational changes were causing anxiousness among the employees as they didn't know how their organizations would look like and what role would they play in the future.

“Covid-19 itself is stressful because we don't know where we are heading and when we are going to work in office again; and in our particular case we are under reorganization which means we don't know really how our organization set up will look like and our individual role in the new set up will look like” (ID#4)

Therefore, future job uncertainty involving being unsure about normal working days, job insecurity, organizational change as well as not being sure about their new role in the future was among the stressors facing employees during the pandemic.

3.2.8 Telework unsuitable jobs

Due to lockdowns and mandatory telework during the pandemic, organizations were forced to adopt teleworking without considering what kind of jobs would be suitable for it. The consequence of this became vivid as it affected the well-being of employees such as advisers, social workers as well as occupational health and safety professions who could not work efficiently while being at home. It happened that some professions required employees to visit working sites for checking and evaluations as it is required by their job something they could not do while working at homes. As a result, it became stressful among those employees whose nature of work could not allow them to work properly from home.

“With my type of job, it is difficult to work at home because I need to be at site to do checks and evaluations. It is stressful to work at home” (ID#10)

3.2.9 Stress due to covid-19

Apart from stress due to teleworking, employees were also experiencing stress due to the pandemic. Mental health of teleworkers was affected due to the lack of social interaction, anxiousness on the safety of self and others, loss of jobs and inability to extend social support to the victims of covid-19.

3.2.9.1 Lack of social interaction

Human beings are social animals whose existences depend on one another for fulfilling different needs including material and moral support. As people must work for the purpose of meeting their basic needs and developing their communities and nations, they also need a leisure time for rejuvenation. Leisure time usually involves socialization activities such as clubbing, parting, visiting friends and relatives, and holiday trips. However, due to lockdowns people not only started to work from home as a mandatory, but also they were not allowed for social interactions.

While interviewing teleworkers, the need for social interaction was vivid among them as they were tired of lockdowns since they were no longer able to visit friends and families as well as inability to attend social occasions such as parties and dinner. Participants acknowledge that before the pandemic, social interactions were taken for granted without realizing its importance. However, after lockdowns, loneliness was common among them as they were missing friends, colleagues, family members and social occasions. Moreover, participants thought that it was boring only working and sleeping without having social interactions.

“I think I didn’t realize how social I was and in general I think how much we see people and how much the difference you make to give someone a hug, to say hi, to have coffee together, to see each other at work, to interact with human beings, I think we underestimate it. Not spending time with beloved ones, not seeing them, I think that was stressful” (ID#1)

3.2.9.2 Anxiousness of self and others

Teleworkers were faced with uncertainty on the future on what would happen to them while hearing the news on covid-19. While hearing the spread and increasing cases of covid-19, teleworkers were scared and stressed. The fear of covid-19 was common among the employees who thought that they were in the risk group as news on the pandemic were usually being accompanied with warnings on who should be more protected depending on the statistics of people who were already victims of the pandemic.

“At the beginning everyone was saying that diabetics are on the risk group and that was stressful but after the few weeks it was known that diabetics who are type two are on the risk group but not type one as I am; so then the stress ran off” (ID#5)

Apart from stress due to the fear of the pandemic, teleworkers were also stressed due to anxiousness on what would happen to close people such as family members, children, friends and the public at large. Anxiousness on safety of others was common among teleworkers something which was affecting their mental health. It was revealed that parents were concerned with their children who were also scared of covid-19, not knowing what would happen to them. It was stressful for parents to see their children anxious and unhappy. One participant expressed how stressful it was when she was asked about whether she had any stressful situation while working at home during the pandemic. While this respondent admitted that she was not stressed by work as she was already experienced in zooming at their organization, she admitted that the pandemic itself was a stressor. This respondent reported that being unaware on when things would be back to normal, not visiting parents and friends as well as seeing her daughter anxious due to covid-19 was so stressful.

“It is stressful because we don’t know when things will be back to normal. Due to the pandemic, I have not been able to visit my father and my daughter was worried afraid; all these were stressful. I also got tired not seeing friends. I really miss friends and having dinners and parties. Due to the pandemic, we don’t do it and I get tired” (ID#3)

It also became apparent that a few respondents were living far away from where their parents were living. The parents were old, or sick and were living alone. This caused stress among the teleworkers as they worried about the safety of their parents.

Moreover, participants experienced anxiousness due to their sympathy towards other people. Although it was commonly known that gatherings were not allowed due to the pandemic, there were certain places in which people were gathering carelessly such as places for getting basic needs such as food stores. This type of behaviour caused stress among some participants who were concerned with the safety of the public.

“It is also stressful to see gatherings of people in shopping malls. People do not think about what they are doing” (ID#5)

3.2.9.3 Inability to provide social support to the victims of covid-19

Social support has been important to both the provider and receiver. It helps receivers to heal from their stress or grieving situation and it is a moral responsibility; a sense of commitment and love to the social support provider towards the one who needs it. Family members, friends, colleagues, and other close people are the ones who can help one another during the time of the need.

During the time of the pandemic, there were victims such as relatives of the deceased, those who were suffering from corona virus, as well as those who lost their jobs due to the negative impact of the pandemic. During normal situations, social support towards the victims of similar problems is visited, spending time with them and giving them certain kind of hope or material needs required. However, during the pandemic, there were various victims of it in which participants had a close relationship with them, but they could not do a

thing apart from calling them. It was painful among the participants that their relatives or friends had a problem, but they could not visit them given the situations of lockdowns and the nature of the pandemic itself. Therefore, it was stressful among the participants when they could not provide full social support as they thought it was supposed to be done.

“Not being with family and friends during the pandemic was really stressful; and my friend lost the job but I couldn’t be with her apart from communicating only through video calls.” (ID#10)

3.3 Stress Coping Strategies

Apart from the stressful situations among the employees who were working at home during the pandemic of Covid-19, the study also explored stress coping strategies employed by them to improve their mental health. Revealed stress coping strategies include positive mindset, social support, physical exercises, self-efforts to finding solution of telework challenges, working extra hours, and not answering calls on purpose.

3.3.1 Positive mindset

To cope with stress, positive mindset was one of the strategies employed by the participants. Positive mindset involves positive thinking while avoiding such negative thoughts which are likely to increase stress. Participants identified enhancing positive mindset which includes thinking of the pandemic as a world problem, but not an individual one. Participants also acknowledged that having a negative thought and overthinking about the pandemic was not helpful rather than increasing stressful situation.

“I tried to see the positive things. That positive things will come out of the pandemic as well. I tried to focus on positive things rather than negative things” (ID#3)

The other aspect of positive mindset was revealed by participants through avoiding over thinking about the problem and taking it easy. The participant reported that stress can happen when you over think about the problem.

“Taking easy is helpful in dealing with stress...I think we overthink sometimes. Just to be able to relax, speaking to loved ones, eating right, sleeping right and avoiding over thinking is helpful in dealing with/avoiding stressful situations” (ID#1)

Moreover, participants were coping with the pandemic by seeing it as a world pandemic rather than an individual problem.

“Thinking about the pandemic as a world pandemic was helpful instead of thinking of it as an individual problem. Thinking much about the problem is not helpful” (ID#11)

3.3.2 Seeking social Support

Seeking social support was among the strategies which appeared to be widely used among the participants. Although the pandemic limited the power of social support in terms of physical

meeting with the one who needs support, social support was working in the form of virtual interaction through video calling.

Employees who were having difficulties while doing their work were asking help from their superiors, and co-workers. The kind of help which was being received from supervisors was providing advice on what to do in order to accomplish work at home. Furthermore, co-workers were helpful in various ways such as helping those who were not able to work properly due to internet problems, those who were having high workload, and those who didn't have correct answers while providing services to their clients.

“When I had a problem on how to choose the best platform to teach, I talked to the principal and she said I have to choose what works best for me and that would help students to learn. I also spoke to other teachers in order to know what works best for them” (ID#1)

Apart from social support involving job problems, participants also received social support from close family members such as siblings and from intimate partners in relation to stress due to covid-19. Participants acknowledge to call family members such as sisters or fiancés and telling them their worries about the pandemic and thus receiving a certain kind of hope while listening to their advice.

It was also revealed that living with intimate partners during the pandemic was both helpful and not helpful. As data shows there were those who were benefiting from social support because they were living together and there were those who were living together but they could not help one another to cope with the pandemic; and instead, they were calling other people such as family members for help.

Apart from receiving social support, participants also provided social support to their friends and family members through video calling to talk to them to know if they were doing okay.

“I'm concerned for my parents; my father is getting old; he is in risk group, and he is alone, so it makes me concerned; but I just talk to him to know if he is doing okay”. (ID#6)

However, social support during the pandemic was limited to phone calling, video calling and emailing or just virtual communication something which was not very effective to help those who were in need.

3.3.3 Physical exercises

Physical exercises were also used as a means to cope with stress as well as getting fresh air before or after hours of indoor teleworking. Respondents reported that to arrange a specific time for physical exercising including such strategies like walking, running, and working out. Physical exercise was said to be effective in coping with stress as well as being useful in finding the solution of the problems as a participant argued that when you have a problem, the solution can be attained while exercising.

“What you feel physically has a link on how you feel mentally; so I go to run and exercise and I can find solution of the problem”(ID#4)

Another respondent also revealed her physical exercising plan she was using as a stress coping strategy. Contrary to the above quotation in which respondent reported physical exercising as a way of finding solution to the problems, the other respondent reported that exercising was also used as a way to enjoy fresh air outside home. As it is revealed in other themes of this study that participants were tired being at home due to several reasons such as not having fresh air, as well as concentrating with work without meeting friends and family, physical exercising was thus an opportunity to make them forget their home sickness I can say.

“I tried to walk in every morning in order to have a feeling like I’m not always at home” (ID#8)

Additionally, this participant reported that she was working out apart from morning walks. She admitted that walking in mornings as well as working out was so helpful to cope with stress as before she started exercising, it was very stressful to her.

“I work out in addition to morning walks, and all these brought a positive outcome because at first before exercising I was very stressful” (ID#8)

Physical exercising was thus effective way to deal with both work stress as well as stress due to covid-19. While some employees were exercising in order to find solutions of problems as well as finding a way of refreshing through being away from home for a while, others were using exercises as a way to forget or heal from their work problems. Even the participants who were unsatisfied and stressed with teleworking and the pandemic perceived physical exercises to be relaxing.

“Not being with family and friends during the pandemic was really stressful; and my friend lost the job but I couldn’t be with her apart from communicating only through video calls. In order to deal with this, I walked” (ID#10)

3.3.4 Self-efforts of finding solution of Telework Challenges

Self-efforts of finding solution was a coping strategy in which participants had to find out what was ought to be done and doing it in order to solve problems perceived by them being stressful. While stressors faced distant workers have been well described, the interesting question here is what employees do as self-efforts in order to solve their stressful situations. The answer to this question of course depends on the job of the participant, nature of the problem and its underlying circumstances. There are four aspects underlying this theme, including self-study to find answers, self-learning on how to handle challenges as well as going to the office for the internet service.

Self-study to find answers to the questions was prevalent among the employees who were doing such kind of works like advising and social workers. As indicated while describing

themes that when these employees were providing services to their clients, it happened that sometimes clients were asking questions which were beyond the ability of employees to provide answers, at least they were unable to respond to them immediately. While a situation like that is not new according to participants, but it could be easy if they were working in the office because the office is surrounded by co-workers who are always available and ready to help when the colleague is having a problem; and easing efficient delivery of service to the client.

However being alone at home and the customer being on the phone, employees had to apologize regarding the questions they could not answer and promise to get back to them as soon as they could. They tried contacting their co-workers with no success which made them lack immediate help.

The described underlying circumstances forced employees to search for answers for themselves through various means before they could call back or email their clients.

While it seems the effort was a triumph for them to find answers, this triumph was not satisfying employees. When they were asked whether their efforts were effective in coping with stress, they reported that it was not helpful; explaining that when employees hang up the call of their clients, the clients could find another way of finding solution of their questions, by either deciding to search on the internet, reading a book or asking another adviser; and when they are called back or emailed, clients are already having what they wanted. Therefore, this method was not so effective in coping with stress among the distant workers.

Apart from self-study to find answers to the questions asked by their clients, participants were also self-learning in order to find out how to solve challenges hampering their work. It is vital considering that most participants had no experience with telework and they were less experienced with appropriate platforms to be used to accomplish their work. While platforms such as Skype was familiar as being mentioned by the participants, they also argued that they had no experience in using other platforms which could be more effective in their work. Due to this, some employees such as teachers had to identify zoom and learning how to use it. After learning themselves, teachers had also to teach their students for them to understand as well. Self-learning on to use zoom was reported effective because enabled participants to fulfil their duties.

“I had to learn how to use zoom before I taught students how to use it. After students mastered the system, we then continued with the lesson” (ID#1)

Going to the office for the internet services was also another effort employed by the participants. Themes on stressors among the distant workers during the pandemic revealed inadequate resources such as internet services. In order to cope with such a problem, employees had to go to the office for internet services. Participants did so when they thought it was necessary as the kind of the work they were doing required internet connectivity. Going to the office was effective because employees were able to solve their work-related problem

and therefore, helped to cope with stress related situations due to inadequate of resources at home.

“It was helpful that colleagues took some of my work and sometimes I went to office for internet”. (ID#12)

3.3.5 Working extra hours

High workload was among the stressors which affected distant workers. Due to this, participants were sometimes forced to work for extra hours to finish tasks allocated to them. It is worth recognizing that distant working employees can be categorized into two groups, first those who enjoyed working autonomy and secondly, those who had tight schedules on what to do, how much to do and when to do it. The later were supposed to adhere to strict working schedules such as logging in and out of the system on time. Moreover, high workload was prevalent among them especially on the early days of the pandemic.

While employees tried to use other means of coping such as seeking support as they asked help from their colleges, such help was not healing stressful situation as they reported that they felt bad when they always asked for help because it seemed like asking other people to do your work while they have their own tasks to be accomplished as well.

The solution to all these challenges was to work for extra hours after the official time of logging out of the system. Participants also reported to work during the weekend in order to accomplish what they were supposed to do during the working days. This coping strategy was reported to be effective because it helped them to accomplish tasks allocated to them by their supervisors.

“You have to log in and log out in time and I have a schedule in our system; sometimes I need extra time but as long as I’m working from home, I can take extra time and continue to work and my time is also registered in the system” (ID#7)

3.3.6 Not answering calls or emails on purpose

Not answering calls or emails on purpose was among the stress coping strategies employed by distant workers. When employees saw their mobile phone calling, they were not picking pretending that they didn’t see it; and later at their convenient time informing the caller that they were not with their mobile phones when it was calling. The same challenge was happening when it comes to responding to emails as employees were not responding as if they haven’t seen them.

Going through described themes can help to understand why employees were not picking calls or responding emails on purpose. In one of described themes, participants complain that it was difficult to reach their colleagues. This is due to the fact that physical contact during the pandemic was not possible, and employees could rely on phone calls and emails in order to reach their co-workers. This situation led to high rate of phone calls to some employees as one participant reported that it there was a challenge of picking phone calls because everyone calls compared to when they were working in offices, where colleagues

could ask questions face to face. High number of calls could make employees tired and thus avoiding other calls.

Furthermore, work stress described in this study as well as stress related to covid-19, were the reason that some employees felt that they needed their own time without communicating to their colleagues. While these strategies were used as a means to cope with stress, it was reported that this means was not effective to cope their stressful situations rather than leading to stress among their colleagues who were initiating communication in order to get help.

“Sometimes I was not answering calls on purpose, but it’s not helpful” (ID#11)

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Results discussion

The study was conducted in order to understand stressful situations facing employees who were working at home during the Covid-19. Furthermore, coping strategies were also investigated to find out how employees were coping with stress in order to improve their well-being. The findings reveal that while telework was in one way seen as benefit due to its flexibility and ability to balance family and work life, it appeared to be stressful among many participants as they were faced with challenges due to lack of enough resources to do the work, requirement of extra work in order to enhance efficiency of the work, stress due to lack of autonomy which hinders work flexibility, difficulties to reach colleagues which leads to lack of immediate help when needed and work future uncertainty due to organization changes happening as a response to Covid-19. Furthermore, telework itself was mainly due to the response of the pandemic and for half of the respondents it was their first time to work at home, while only a quarter of the respondents had previous experience in telework, something which also led to stress among them. Considering the circumstances of the pandemic, apart from work itself, there was also stress due to the pandemic as participants seemed to worry about themselves and their loved ones. Moreover, there was a reduction of number of employees in organizations something which also led to stress due to fear of themselves losing jobs.

Various means of coping with stress were used which are positive mindset, social support, physical exercises, self-efforts to find solutions, working extra hours and not answering calls or emails on purpose.

In this part, results are also discussed in relation to the previous research. The findings are discussed firstly with a stance on general literature on teleworking and secondly with a stance on current literature regarding teleworking during the pandemic. The comparison then leads to the discussion on why the findings in this study differ or relate to the literature on teleworking.

Regardless the need of such considerations before organizations decide to engage their employees in teleworking, the situation during the pandemic did not allow such considerations as telework became as an emergency way of preventing the spread of the covid-19 virus while ensuring sustainability of organizations.

In this regard, findings in the current study differ from the normal teleworking where employees used to enjoy autonomy, satisfaction and flexibility; while during the pandemic employees have been experiencing stressors including lack of autonomy, work inefficiency, and shortage of resources such as unreliable internet connectivity. (De Vries et al., 2019)

Moreover, considering telework during Covid-19, there were no considerations on what type of work to be done at home as telework was a response due to the pandemic. Due to this, employees whose work does not fit teleworking were forced to work from home. In this study it was found that employees in occupational health and safety who require to visit fields, as well as social workers who are supposed to meet clients physically, have been working from home hence leading to difficulties to do their work properly and thus leading to stress instead of enjoying teleworking.

Moreover, normal teleworking differs from teleworking during the pandemic as in accordance to results presented in this study, is due to the situation of the pandemic itself. Findings in this study shows people were worrying about being infected with the virus, worrying about their close people to be infected as well as worrying about their jobs due to presence of people who were already losing their jobs during the pandemic. Moreover, during the pandemic social interaction and social support was not effective as everything depended on Skyping, Zooming, Emailing, and Calling instead of visiting, and hugging friends and relatives.

Furthermore, according to McKimmie, et al. (2019), social support is the most efficient strategy to cope with stress. However, findings in this study showed weakness of social support during the pandemic as it was not as helpful as required due to dependency on virtual socialization. Therefore, telework during the pandemic was different from the normal days and it was associated with stress among the employees.

The second aspect involves comparing the findings of this study and the findings of other studies which were conducted to understand telework during the pandemic. While there were various studies which involved understanding various aspects of teleworking during the pandemic, the findings of similar studies show similarity with the findings of this study. Pizardeh and Lingard (2021) found that there were both positive and negative experiences of teleworking during covid-19 similar to this study. In this study, it was found that respondents experienced work inefficiency, extra work as well as stress associated with nature of work, the findings which related to what was found by Pizardeh and Lingard (2021). Furthermore, Pizardeh and Lingard (2021) found that employees were having anxiety not only from work itself but due to covid-19, the findings which are similar to what was found and presented in this study.

Vasic, (2020) found that participants were worrying about the impact of the pandemic on themselves and their organizations and they also experienced difficulties working from home. These findings are similar to what was found in this study as it was found that job uncertainty was the stressors among the employees who were working at home during pandemic, the current study shows that employees had to do extra work such as learning on how to use zoom before they could use it to fulfil their duties. This means employees had no specific required skills and thus working at home was stressful. Moreover, this study found that employees had the problem of internet connectivity, the finding which also relate to what was

found by Vasic (2020) in terms of unpreparedness to meet resources required for teleworking.

Additionally, this study found that employees were faced by the problem of not having an immediate help when needed as well as the problem of difficulties in reaching colleagues which also relate to, themes which are also relating to the findings of Vasic (2020). Therefore, findings of this study differ from the findings of teleworking in ordinary days, while assimilating to the findings of research on teleworking during the pandemic.

4.2 Methodological Discussion

This study employed qualitative approach to answer the two main research questions regarding stressful situations among distance working employees during the covid-19 pandemic as well as coping strategies employed by them to improve their health and well-being. Regarding to this research questions, qualitative methods were more appropriate as it allowed researcher to collect subjective data to underpin personal experiences while working at home. Qualitative methods were more appropriate because it enabled researcher to have a detailed conversation and detailed data collected to understand stressors and coping strategies.

The usefulness of qualitative method when it comes to teleworking in general during the pandemic is evident as many studies either used mixed method or quantitative, for example Xiao et al. (2021), Vasic (2020), Nguyen and Armoogum (2021), Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi (2020) as well as Kundu et. al. (2020). While quantitative methods allow collection of objective and quantified data, and mixed methods allowing collection of both objective and subjective information, the study conducted employing qualitative methods only has an opportunity to provide a detailed description of participants experiences hence the methodological usefulness of this study.

4.2.1 Weakness and Strength of Critical Incident Technique

In addition to the suitability of the qualitative approach in this study, specifically the qualitative technique employed known as Critical Incident Technique was effective and appropriate to answer research questions. According to Coetzer et al. (2012) the Critical Incident Technique is a method involving qualitative interview procedures which facilitate the investigation of significant occurrences such as events, incidents, processes or issues as identified by the participants and the way the occurrences are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. This definition reveals and validates interviewing techniques employed in this study as participants were asked to identify their stressful situations, describing those situations, and how did they cope with those situations.

According to Coetzer et al. (2012), the founder of this important and interesting technique Flanagan, in 1954 suggested the use of both direct observations and retrospective self-reporting while using CIT. In this regard, researcher in this study used retrospective self-reporting in order to capture detailed information on how participants experienced working from home and how they dealt with it.

Furthermore, it is of great importance to point out the weakness or limitations of CIT method as appointed in the literature. Flick (2011) argues that Flanagan's method is in

general more restricted to a specific fragment of experience predominantly problematic events which is justified in the research in which it is applied. This means that there are only specific situations in which the approach can be applied. While this seem to be the weakness of CIT, this weakness does not apply to this study as it is consistent to the application of the method itself as the study was aimed at understanding stressful situations during the pandemic. Hence the method itself is relating to the problem which is a covid-19 pandemic. The second issue regarding CIT concerns generalizability of the findings. Weatherbee (2012) argue that while theoretical propositions, relationships, or processes may be postulated as a result of the analysis of case material using this approach, the researcher must be careful not to offer ecological generalizability. Weatherbee (2012) continue that as a function of the nature of the objects of study, a critical event or incident, the very specific methodological approach in combination with the unique nature of factors antecedent to these events or incidents means that critical incident method based cases should be considered only analytically generalizable, that is, the results of the study may provide an analytical or propositional framework within which to analyse other similar, events or incidents (Weatherbee, 2012). The arguments of Weatherbee (2012) means that findings of the current study when it comes to considering generalizability, it is possible only to generalize findings to other similar context in which same problems were happening, meaning that the findings can be generalized to other countries in which telework was being used as a remedy during the pandemic. Furthermore, the arguments from Weatherbee (2012) also means that the findings of this study can be applied in analysing the findings of other studies which applied the same method regarding stressful situations and coping strategies during the pandemic.

Moreover, memory bias is one of the weakness of CIT as it relies on what participants remember regarding their experienced situations. Researcher in this study asked respondents about stressful situations they remember, it means that not all stressful situations were obtained as there are those situations which are forgotten by participants and thus failing to provide enough details among them.

Lastly, it is important to underpin strength of CIT method. According to Flick (2011), strength of CIT includes its principle of non-direction of participants during interviews. It means that participants are not directed what to respond to interview questions, but they are asked to provide detailed of the events or situations they remember (Flick, 2011). Moreover, the strength is based on relying on observable or real events or situations which actually happened rather than opinions of the participants. In this study participants were asked about the situations they experienced themselves while doing telework.

4.2.2 Validity and Trustworthiness of the methods

Significance and validity of the methods employed used relies on semi-structured interview guide in which every participant was asked similar questions but with additional probing when additional information was required. In this way, semi-structured interview guide did not only ensure focused interviewing, but also allowed collection of satisfactory subjective self-reported experiences required. The practicality of data collection was somehow affected by the pandemic because the research was conducted during the pandemic hence both researcher and the respondents were affected as it was not possible to meet the respondents

in person instead the zoom interviews were conducted. However, zoom interviewing did not affect the quality and process of data collection as internet connectivity was great and participants were able to provide their time responding to interview questions.

Furthermore, the study was able to reduce biases by following the six phases of thematic data analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2008) . According to these authors, a theme is something important which can help to answer research questions. While some studies try to show prevalence of a theme, Braun and Clarke (2008) argue that trying to show how much or many a theme occurred is not necessary as it is argued to be only a convincing way to the reader. However, detailed themes are suggested in order to ensure readers understand what is reported. This is what was done by researcher in this study is detailed themes have been presented.

Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2008) argue that a theme presented should be an accurate reflection of the data set; and to ensure this accuracy, six phases of data analysis have to be followed namely familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and renaming themes and finally producing the report. These procedures are further argued to be divided into two, either data driven, or theory driven. In this study, reported themes were obtained through inductive data analysis as themes were emerging themselves, of course through analytic work from the transcribed data as participants were responding to interview questions asked through CIT technique.

Familiarization of data happened through the processes of conducting interviews, transcription of recorded interviews as well as reading, and re-reading transcribed data. Through this process of familiarization, codes related to research questions were becoming apparent and ready to be coded.

Codes were considered as important information conveyed from the transcriptions. Researcher was able to read information obtained from each participant separately in order to identify codes, which were then listed. Similar codes from each participant were grouped together and in this stage, categories were developed which means groups of codes which convey similar information. During the process of developing codes, CIT was also applied to ensure telework experiences and means of dealing with such experiences is well captured from every single participant.

The categories developed, then became as candidate themes where now researcher was able to review each group separated to assess whether each group is coherent in terms of meaning of data, and whether each group is providing enough information to be considered as a theme. This process of reviewing themes was done first at the level of coded data in which coherent of each code was assessed to see of each code does fit into the theme. During this stage, some codes which appeared incoherent within themes were removed to form new themes. Secondly, level two of reviewing themes involved assessing themes against the data set in order to be sure whether themes reflect its actual content of the data set. During this stage, new information which seemed relevant from the data set was added into or formed new themes and the process was finalized when no more relevant information regarding research questions were apparent from the data set.

The next stage after reviewing themes and its content was paraphrasing them, while considering their essence and why were they of interest regarding to the research questions.

Important stories of each theme were identified in this stage, and the relationship between individual theme and other themes. During this stage, sub themes were also identified for example anxiousness due to covid-19 appeared to have several sub themes while other themes appeared to stand alone but with a significant relationship between one another as one theme appeared to be an explanation of the other theme for example inefficient work output as appeared to be stressing distant workers could be explained by other themes such as the problem of internet connectivity as well as difficulties to get help when needed due to the difficulties of reaching colleagues who were not responding to email or phone calls on purpose as a way of coping their stressful situations.

The final step of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2008) is to write the report. During this important stage, the credibility of this study was guaranteed by using quotations from the transcriptions of interviews of the present study as were used to strengthen the assumption made in the result (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Moreover ensure transferability, deep description of the method result and discussion were provided. The main aim of this was to provide readers with deep understanding of the study that help them to decide whether the data are transferrable to another context (Graineheim & Lundman 2004).

With this detailed representation and discussion of the methods applied in this study, the researcher is confident that knowledge which is acquired and shared to the reader is valid and worth to be considered for practice and further studies in this area as the pandemic and telework are still out there.

4.2.3 Reflexivity

When it comes to interpreting the interpretations of this study, there are various factors worth admitting to the reader. It is vital acknowledging that the study was conducted during the pandemic, and the researcher is a human being who was studying and doing research at home during the pandemic. This means that researcher participated in providing knowledge in this study while being conscious or unconscious as she already experienced on how anxious it is when you work at home while your neighbours, friends, or colleagues have been affected by the pandemic.

Secondly, literature review affected the interpretation of the findings in this study as pre-understanding of teleworking lead to description, interpretation and discussion of the findings. Apart from the mentioned, researcher is aware that no any other factor which has influenced the interpretation of the findings in this study.

4.3 Conclusions

The study aimed at understanding stressful situations and coping strategies among the employees working at home during the Covid-19. Stressful situations revealed were job inefficiency, lack of facilities required, extra work, lack of immediate help when needed, difficulties to reach colleagues, differences in work autonomy, work future uncertainty, and inappropriate nature of jobs to fit teleworking. These themes relate to one another and help to describe the occurrence of stress among employees while working at home.

Job inefficiency was thus a stressful situation as it prevented committed employees not to realize their goals of helping their organizations to sustain. The relationship between themes

such as lack of facilities required, lack of immediate help when needed, difficulties to reach colleagues as well as inappropriate nature of telework can help to link the reason of job inefficiency among the teleworkers during the pandemic.

Apart from job inefficiency, employees were stressed also by extra work which they had to do to realize their required task. Extra work among employees varied depending on the profession and skills on telework programs such as knowledge on how to use zoom before the pandemic. All these determined extra work an employee had to do during the telework.

Furthermore, difference in working autonomy was also a determinant of stress as those who had autonomy to decide their work output and working schedule, were not stressed compared to those employees who were controlled from their organizations.

There were stressful situations due to Covid-19 which are lack of social interaction, anxiousness on the safety of self and others, loss of jobs, and inability to provide social support to the victims of covid-19. Therefore, additionally to work stress, employees were being stressed by covid-19 itself.

Employees used various strategies including positive mindset, social support, physical exercises, self-efforts to finding solution of telework challenges, working extra hours and not answering calls on purpose as a way of improving their mental health.

In conclusion, working at home during the pandemic was stressful among the employees in two aspects, first stress due to the work itself and the need to do better while having inappropriate work environment, and secondly stress due to covid-19. While employees employed measures to cope with stress, such measures could still not be helpful to all employees as some of them were more affected because they could not work effectively while being at home.

Regarding implications for practice the results highlights the necessity to explore the support of organizations in helping their employees who are working from home during the time of covid-19. This is due to the fact that there was a variation in autonomy and flexibility of employees who were working at home, as some were having a full autonomy while others were being controlled as a result leading to stress. Understanding that would help to know how organizations should support their employees who are working at home during the time of emergency. Moreover, in light of the current study, organizations have to utilize available research findings in telework in order to decide what kind of work should be done at home and how to support those employees. Since telework involves working using telecommunications, organizations could also design means to relieve stress of their employees through adds or commercial callers of recognition and encouragement as well as establishing efficient means through which colleagues can reach one another and strengthen the arenas for collegial support.

REFERENCE LIST

- American Psychological Association (2014). *Stress Coping Strategies*, APA, USA.
- Bailey, D. E., & Kurland, N. B. (2002). A review of Telework Research: Findings, New Directions, and Lessons for the Study of Modern work. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(4), 383–400. DOI: 10.1002/job.144
- Belzunegui-Eraso, A., & Erro-Garcés, A. (2020). Teleworking in the Context of the Covid-19 Crisis. *Sustainability*, 12(9), 3662. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12093662>
- Bérestégui, P. (2021). Teleworking in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic: enabling conditions for a successful transition, *European Economic, Employment and Social Policy* 2021.05.
- Ben-Zuri, H., & Michael, K. (2020). Positivity and Growth Following Stressful Life Events: Associations with Psychosocial, Health, and Economic Resources. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 27(2), 126-134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/stro000142>
- Borgen, W.A., Amundson, N. E., & Butterfield, L. D. (2012). Critical Incident Technique, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, SAGE Publications, Inc. [Access Date: May 24, 2021]
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2008). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qpo630a>
- Brodsky, A. (2020). Virtual Surface Acting in Work place Interactions: Choosing the Best Technology to Fit the Task. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ap10000805>
- Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R & De sio, S. (2021). Health and telework: New Challenges after COVID-19Pandemic. *European journal of Environment and public health*, 5(2), em0073. <http://doi.org/10.21601/ejeph/9705>
- Coetzer, A.J., Redmond, J. L., & Sharafizad, J. (2012). Decision making regarding access training to training and development in medium-sized enterprises: an exploratory study using critical incident technique. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(4) 426-447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090591211220348>
- Colquitt, J. A., LePine, J. A., & Wesson, J. M. (2010). *Organizational Behaviour: Essentials for Improving Performance and Commitment* McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Contrada, R. (2011). Book Review: *The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping*. Edited by Susan Folkman, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. DOI: 10.1002/pon.1966.
- Davis, P.C., Doherty, E.E., Veeh, C., & Drym, C. (2017). Criminal Justice and Behavior. *International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology*, 44(10), 1317-1339.
- Deantonio, L., Bosetti, D., Cima, S., Martucci, F., Borgonovo, G., Bella, D. G., Pesce, A. G., Valli, M., Richetti, A., & Onkologie, U. S. (2020). #Stayathome: Smart working for radiation oncologists during the corona pandemic, *Strahlenther Onkol* (2020) (196),1094–1095. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00066-020-01683-z>

- DeLongis, A., Folman, S., & Lazarus, R. (1988). The impact of daily stress on health and mood: psychological and social resources as mediators. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(3), 486-495. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.54.3.486>
- De Vries, H., Tummers, L., & Bekkers, V. (2019). The Benefits of Teleworking in the Public Sector: Reality or Rhetoric? *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 39(4), 570–593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X18760124>
- Diab-Bahman, R; & Al-Enzi, A. (2020).The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on conventional work settings. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 40, 909-927
- Dunkel-Schetter, C., Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R,S. (1987). Correlates of social support receipt. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(1), 71-80. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.53.1.71>
- Flick, U. (2011). *Episodic Interview: Qualitative Research with text, Image and sound*, London: Sage Publications Ltd. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209731>
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Gruen, R. J., & DeLongis, A. (1986). Appraisal, Coping, Health Status and Psychological Symptoms. *The American Psychological Association*. 50(3), 571-579. <https://doi.org/10.1037//00223514.50.3.571>
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. (2000). Positive Affect and the Other Side of Coping, *The American Psychological Association*, Vol. 55, No. 6, 647-654 DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.6.647.
- Folkman, S. (2010). Stress, coping, and hope, Wiley Online Library. DOI: 10.1002/pon.1836
- Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R. S. (1985). If It Changes It Must Be a Process: Study of Emotion and Coping During Three Stages of a College Examination, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(1), 150-170. <http://doi.org//10.1037//0022-3514.48.1.150>
- Giddens, A., & Sutton, P.W. (2013). *Sociology* (7th ed.). Polity Press.
- Gilboa, S., Fried, Y., & Cooper, C. (2008). A Meta-Analysis of Work Demand Stressors and Job Performance: Examining Main and Moderating Effects. *Personnel Psychology*, 61(2), 227–271. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00113.x>
- Golden, T. D. (2006). Avoiding depletion in virtual work: Telework and the intervening impact of work exhaustion on commitment and turnover intentions. *Journal of vocational Behavior*, (69), 176-187. Doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2006.02.003
- Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse education today*, 24(2), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001>
- Hallman, D., & Januario, B. L., Mathiassen, E. S., & Heiden, M., & Svensson, S., & Bergström, G. (2021). Working from home during the covid-19 outbreak in Sweden: effects on 24-h time use in office workers. *BMC Public Health*, 21, 528 (2021). <https://10.1186/s12889-021-10582-6>
- Hedström, M. (2016). Stress-Related Sick Leave: An Individual Project: A hermeneutic study investigating the social support given to, and responsibility demanded by the individual, Malardalen University of Sweden.
- Holloway, E. L., & Schwartz, H. L. (2014). Critical Incident Technique: Exploring Meaningful Interactions between Students and Professors, *In SAGE Research Methods Cases*. <https://www-doi-org.ep.bib.mdh.se/10.4135/978144627305014533929>

- Krohne, H.W. (2002). Stress and Coping Theories, *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Science*, (22). Dio: 10.1016.B0-08-043076-7/03817-1
- Kundu, S., Banna, M., Sayee, A., Sultan, M., Brazendale, K., Harris, J., Mandal, M., Jahan, I., Tazrian, M., & Khan, M. (2021). Determinants of household food security and dietary diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, *Public Health Nutrition*, 24(5), 1079-1087. DOI: 10.1017/S1368980020005042
- Kwon, M., & Jeon, S. H. (2020). Do Leadership Commitment and Performance-Oriented Culture Matter for Federal Telework Satisfaction With Telework Programs? *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 40(1), 36-55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X18776049>
- Lazarus, R. (2000). Toward Better Research on Stress and Coping. *American Psychologist*, 55(6) 665-673 DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.6.665
- Mahdavian, F., Platt, S., Wiens, M., Klein, M., & Schultmann, F. (2020). Communication blackouts in power outages: Findings from scenario exercises in Germany and France. *International Journal of disaster risk reduction*, (46) 10162. Dio: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101628
- McKimmie, B. M., Butler, T., Chan E., Rogers, A., & Jimmieson, N. L. (2019). Reducing stress: Social support and group identification. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 23(2), 241-261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218818733>
- Mitrousi, S., Travlos, A., Koukia, E., & Zyga, S. (2013). Theoretical Approaches to Coping. *International Journal of Caring Sciences*, 6(2), 131-137
- Nguyen, M. H., & Amoogum, J. (2021). Perception and Preference for Home-Based Telework in the COVID-19 Era: A Gender-Based Analysis in Hanoi, Vietnam. *Sustainability*, 13(6) 3179. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063179>
- Ntoumanis, N; Edmunds, J; Duda, J. L. (2009). Understanding the coping process from a self-determination theory perspective. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, (14), 249-260). DOI:10.1348/135910708X349352
- Palumbo., R. (2020). Let me go to the office! An investigation into the side effects of working from home on work-life balance. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 33(6-7). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-06-2020-0150>
- Pettit, J. W., Roberts, R. E., Lewinsohn, P. M., Seeley, J. R., & Yaroslavsky, I. (2011). Developmental relations between perceived social support and depressive symptoms through emerging adulthood: blood is thicker than water. *Journal of family psychology : JFP : journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)*, 25(1), 127-136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022320>
- Pirzadeh, P., & Lingard, H. (2021). Working from Home during thr COVID-19 Pandemic: Health and well being of Project based construction workers. *American society of civil Engineers*, 147(6) 04021048. DIO: 10.1061/(Asce)CO:1943
- Riley, D., & Eckenrode, J. (1986). Social ties: subgroup differences in costs and benefits. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 51(4), 770-778. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.51.4.770>

- Saunders, M.N.K., & Townsend, K. (2019). Choosing Participants: *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods: History and Traditions*, 480-492. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526430212>
- Silvia, G., Chiara, G., Daniela, C., Roberta, F., & Sara, V. (2020). Third Party Agression and Emotion Work among Nurses: Testing a Moderated Mediation Model. *Intenational Journal of Stress Management*, 27(2), 146-159. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000136>
- Smith, C. A., & Kirby, D. L. (2010). The Role of Appraisal and Emotion in Coping and Adaptation, *The handbook of stress Science: Biology, Psychology, and Health* Contrada_14717_R2_CH15_06-18-10_1-14.
- Swedish Research Council. (2011). *Good research practice*. Swedish Research Council's report series 1:200
- Theorell, T., Hammarström, A., Aronsson, G., Träskman Bendz, L., Grape, T., Hogstedt, C., Marteinsdottir, I., Skoog, I., & Hall, C. (2015). A systematic review including meta-analysis of work environment and depressive symptoms. *BMC Public Health* (15)738. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1954-4>
- Travers, Á., Armour, C., Hansen, M., Cunningham, T., Lagdon, S., Hyland, P., Vallières, F., McCarthy, A., & Walshe, C. (2020). Lesbian, gay or bisexual identity as a risk factor for trauma and mental health problems in Northern Irish students and the protective role of social support. *European journal of psychotraumatology*, 11(1), 1708144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2019.1708144>
- Usher, K., Jackson, D. (2017). *Phenomenology: Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*, Sage publications inc.
- Vasic, M. (2020). Challenges of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic, *The Annals of the Faculty of Economics in Subotica*, Vol. 56, No. 44, pp. 063-079. DOI: 10.5937/AnEkSub2044063
- Valenduc, G., & Vendramin, P. (2001). Telework: from distance working to new forms of flexible work organisation. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 7(2), 244–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/102425890100700208>
- Vrchota, J., Maříková, M., & Řehoř, P. (2020). Teleworking in Small and Medium Enterprises (Smes) Before the Onset Of Coronavirus Crisis in The Czech Republic, *Management*, Vol. 25, 2020, No. 2, pp. 151-164. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30924/mjcmi.25.2.8>
- Vyas, I & Butakhiero, N. (2021). The Impact of working from home during COVID-19 on work and life domains: an exploratory study on Hong Kong. *Policy design and Practice*, 4(1), 59-76. [Htpps://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.20201863560](https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.20201863560)
- Walker, E. M., Wasserman, S., & Wellman, B. (2013). *Advances in Social Network Analysis: Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: Statistical Models for Social Support Networks*, SAGE Publications.
- Weatherbee, T.G. (2012). *Critical Incident Case Study: Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Weinberg, M. (2017). Trauma and social support: The association between informal social support, formal social support, and psychological well-being among terror attack

World Health Organization Updates 23th May 2021 [covid19.who.int/region]

- Xiao., Yijing, Becerik-Gerber., Burcin, Lucas., G& Roll, C. S. (2021). Impacts of working from home during COVID_19 Pandemicon Physical and mental well being of office Work station Users. *American College occupational Environmental medicine*, 63(3), 181-189
- Yan, T., Lirong, L., Hai-Jiang, W., Liyn, J. (2020). To Prevent or to Promote: HowRegulatory Focus Moderates the Differentaited Effects of Quantitative versus Qualiatative Job Insecurity on Employees Stress and Motivation. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 27(2), 135-145.
- Ybema, F. J., Koopman, A., & Peteers, M. (2020). Working in Sheltered Employment, A Weekly Diary Study. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 27(2), 160-171. <https://doi.org/10.1037/stro000141>
- Yuanbo, G., Yuqun, Y., & Ruimei, W. (2020). Job Demands and Emotional Labour as Antecedents of Female Preschool Teachers Work-to-Family Conflict: The Moderating

APPENDENCES

Information Letter

My name is Angelica Theodory Kokutensa, I am writing a thesis on Work life studies at Mälardalen University. My Thesis Topic is stress and coping strategies among distance working employees during Covid-19. The aim of this study is to investigate how employees involved in telework during the covid-19 crisis and how they cope with stress. The expectation of this study is to offer understanding of the phenomenon which will help giving advice to build a better future to both employees Employers. For that reason I am looking forward to Interview people who are currently working from home as the result of Covid-19. If you feel comfortable participating in this study I welcoming you to attend a Zoom interview which will be 30-45 minutes as we should keep social distance as advised by the government. The interview will be transcribed and the material will be only used for research purpose. I am gladly to inform you that your participation in this study is voluntary you can withdraw anytime you want, it is also voluntary not to answer any of the interview questions that you will feel uncomfortable to answer. The participation will be confidential; your personal information will be stored in way that it is impossible for outsiders to identify you. The results of the study will be published as a master's thesis at MDH.

If you would like to participate in the interview or you want to know more about this study please do not hesitate to contact me by mail or phone.

Name: Angelica Theodory Kokutensa

Email: theodoryangelica@gmail.com.

Phone: 0769117631

APPENDIX B

GUIDING SEMI-STRUCTURED INTEVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Background Information

1. Age in years of the participant
2. Sex of the participant
3. Marital status of the participant
4. Profession of the participant
5. Tenure status of the employment
6. Type of work done by the participant
7. Previous experience in teleworking
8. Differences from the ordinary work situation and during covid-19

Section B: Critical Incidence Technique Exploring Research Questions

1. Can you remember a stressful work situation during covid-19?
2. Can you tell me about this situation? (*Researcher identifying the stressor*)
3. How did you deal with this stressful situation? Did you ask or get help from anyone to deal with this situation? (*Social support*) Who were those people?
4. Which means of dealing with your situation were more helpful? Are there any strategies which were less helpful?
5. Can you remember any other stressful situation?