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Original Article

### Remote Working Adoption Strategies and Employee Performance during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of MTN Uganda Limited

Innocent Begumisa<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Regis Zombeire Kamaduuka, PhD<sup>2</sup> Mubiru Pontious<sup>1</sup> & Dr. James Kizza, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Kisubi, P. O. Box 182 Entebbe Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> Kyambogo University, P. O. Box 1, Kyambogo, Kampala – Uganda.

\* Correspondence Email: [saraeliakim84@gmail.com](mailto:saraeliakim84@gmail.com)

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**Keywords:**

*Remote Working,  
Flexible Work Schedules,  
Technology Accessibility,  
Remote Worker  
Motivation,  
Employee  
Performance*

This study examined the effect of remote working adoption strategies on employee performance at MTN (U) Ltd during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the study analyses the effect of flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation on employee performance in remote working at MTN Uganda. The study adopted a descriptive research design, employing quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Quantitative data was collected from a sample of 89 respondents using questionnaires, and qualitative data was collected from 5 key informants using interviews. Data was analysed using Pearson's correlation and regression analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS version 25). The study finds a significant positive relationship between flexible working schedules and employee performance ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); technology accessibility and employee performance ( $r = 0.616$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); and remote worker motivation and employee performance ( $r = 0.273$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). The explanatory variables jointly explain 57.3% of the variations in employee performance in remote working at MTN (U) ( $R^2 = 0.573$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). It is recommended that MTN (U) Ltd and other telecom companies improve the flexibility of their work as one way to enable employees to adopt remote working during periods of crisis such as pandemics and epidemics. This is to enable continuous workflow. There is a need to invest in technology and make it accessible to all employees, and create motivation packages such as fringe benefits that seek to motivate employees working remotely to enable them to embrace remote working and improve their performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea of remote working, also known as telecommuting, can be traced back to 1973 when workers started moving to workers than workers moving to work. The idea was to reduce problems related to traffic and save time that would be spent in traffic jams (Avery & Zabel, 2001). The evolution and growth of telecommuting is also linked to technological advancements and changes in the economy. Since the introduction of personal computers in the 1980s and laptops and cell phones in the 1990s (Kizza, 2013), technology is now making it easier to work anywhere in the world, as long as one is connected to the Internet (Blitchok, 2023). Huws (2020) stresses that technological advances have led to traditional methods of flexible working practices being less widely used as companies embrace new methods of working that would take advantage of these technological opportunities. Research has shown that remote working is gaining momentum in many countries worldwide, with the number of remote workers increasing yearly and expected to double yearly (Ramage, 2017).

However, remote working was not a common practice before the COVID-19 pandemic and was a privilege for the few (Kossek & Lautsch, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed this, inadvertently requiring the adoption and acceptance of remote working for employees worldwide, thus turning the world into a global lab of remote working (Kniffin et al., 2020). The idea

of remote working has, thus, escalated with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had dramatic effects on work culture all around the world (Wiik, 2020). The pandemic forced organisations to test how remote working works if it is carried out daily for a long time. It required adapting to the situation quickly since organisations still had to operate in order to survive financially (Jackson, 2020). This forced organisations to design and continuously implement better practices and policies for remote working to make it as efficient and convenient as possible, which can be considered a positive consequence during challenging times (Wiik, 2020). For example, according to Alyssa (2020), the number of people working from home in the United States doubled in the first three weeks of social distancing requirements, and 63 per cent of US employees reported working from home during the pandemic.

In Africa, remote working can be traced to the 1980s when telecommuting became a way of helping employees manage and balance work and family responsibilities. Over the years, telecommuting grew in Africa as technology advanced and economic systems evolved (Arkenberg, 2022). However, before Covid-19, remote working was not a common practice in Africa. For example, reports in South Africa indicate that 21% of professionals worked from home before the pandemic. However, the number increased to 79% during the pandemic (McCarthy, 2021). In Uganda, the increase in

technological advancement led to remote working; however, the trend has been slow due to low technological infrastructure (Chepken, 2012).

Nevertheless, the outbreak of COVID-19 increased the need for remote working in Uganda, with companies such as MTN adopting remote working on a large scale (Jackson, 2020). As the lockdowns or stay-at-home measures entered into force, a large proportion of the workforce was instructed to stay home and continue to work remotely if their functions made it possible. Organisations that were previously familiar with teleworking and organisations that had not experimented with teleworking before were sending their employees home, creating the conditions for the most extensive mass teleworking experiment in history ((WHO, 2020a).

Employee performance is said to be affected by remote working. The relevant literature has shown that working remotely, on behalf of both the employee and the employer, has several positive and negative consequences. The positive consequences are demonstrated as improvement in employee performance, reduction in home-work-home travel costs, and saving in time and organisational resources (Molino et al., 2020). Higher employee engagement is also revealed to be associated with working remotely (Prasad et al., 2020). A more recent study by Delanoëije and Verbruggen (2020) found that telework can reduce turnover rates and increase employees' productivity, job engagement, and job performance.

Similarly, e-working can increase productivity, flexibility, and job satisfaction, reducing work-life conflict and commuting (Grant et al. 2019). A similar view is echoed by Purwanto et al. (2020), who argue that working from home could support employees in terms of flexible time to complete the work and save money for commuting. On the other hand, remote work negatively affects individual and organisational performance by reducing employee interaction, information sharing, and team collaboration (Allen et al., 2015). Eddleston and Mulki (2017) reveal that

working from home relates to the inability of remote workers to disengage from work, which affects their performance.

The available studies indicate contradictory findings on the effect of remote working on employee performance, as some indicate a positive and others negative effect. In addition, most of the available studies do not address the influence of remote working adoption strategies on employee performance during a pandemic such as COVID-19. This study examined the effect of remote working adoption strategies and employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, with reference to MTN Uganda Limited as a case study. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, MTN had already adopted the WFH (Work-From-Home) model by positioning some call centre staff in a different location outside their work premises. When the pandemic emerged, MTN seamlessly adopted the WFH model primarily to protect the staff from infection exposure and comply with the government of Uganda's guidance and directives. On average, 70% of staff worked from home during COVID-19 pandemic (Gitta, 2021 October 13). The effectiveness of the WFH adopted by MTN is not documented; hence, it is a gap that this current study attempted to fill. Specifically, this study established the effect of flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation on employee performance in remote working at MTN Uganda.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

The self – efficacy theory developed by Albert Bandura in 1977, underpinned the study. The theory of self-efficacy lays emphasis on the ability of a person to achieve set goals based on his/her own self-confidence and motivation. There is therefore no need for over supervision of such an employee. During Covid-19 pandemic, many organizations adopted remote working implying that the attainment of organizational goals was majorly left in the hands of employees' self-motivation to attain set goals. The success of remote working is largely based on the

employee's belief in his/her abilities to perform with limited supervision, which resonates well with the self-efficacy theory. For remote working to succeed, it must have the support of the immediate supervisors and the employers in their employees' capacity to deliver with minimum supervision. Research conducted by several scholars indicate the existence of a positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance (Stajkovic and Luthans, (2018); Judge & Bono, 2011).

## **Empirical Review**

### ***Flexible Work Schedules and Employee Performance in Remote Working***

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2016), flexible working has been introduced into organisations as a way for employees and employers to have flexibility within their job roles, allowing them to suit their personal needs. Working from home is known as a form of flexible working because it provides employees with an opportunity to work flexibly in order to carry out their job roles within their working environment. This type of flexible working can be defined as mobile working, allowing employees and employers to work elsewhere outside of the office for either all or part of their working week. Lupu (2017) asserts that flexible scheduling gives employees a certain autonomy in planning their daily lives, including employee and family activities according to their needs, such as taking their children to school or going to the doctor. Moreover, Wienclaw (2019) lists the benefits of flexible scheduling options as follows: being free to sleep in and work late, starting and ending early, working forty hours in four days instead of five or six days a week, scheduling personal appointments (e.g., physician, dentist, hairdresser) during office.

A study by Michael & Smith (2015) revealed that employees might appreciate the flexibilities that remote working offers. For example, employees with small children or work part-time can benefit from having more autonomy in organising their schedules. The increased job satisfaction may

help organisations retain their employees for a longer time, which benefits both parties. Additionally, employees who work from different locations tend to have fewer conflicts with their colleagues (Johnson, 2019). On the contrary, Guantario (2020) argues that some employees can lack space at home, and if they have kids at home, it may be challenging to find a quiet and suitable workspace for working parents. Consistent with this, Kuehner-Hebert (2019) revealed that remote employees face distractions at home, establishing strong relationships with colleagues and feelings of loneliness, technological issues and managing different time zones.

According to Timsal and Awais (2016), there are various benefits that working from home has for employees. This includes flexibility in working hours and work-life balance and may suggest higher levels of performance. This resonates with McCartney and Evans (2015), who contend that work-life balance is key to having a successful organisation and will allow higher levels of competitiveness to run through the business. However, there is no indication as to whether working from home allows employees to have a positive work/life balance. In addition to this, Anderson and Kelliher (2009) conclude that working from home increases the commitment levels of employees to the organisation and, in turn, provides higher levels of job satisfaction.

Turcotte (2010) believes that working from home allows employees to have freedom in their working hours and removes commuting times, leaving employees free to either use this time to fulfil more work tasks or alternatively utilise the time for personal activities. While Barton (2017) believes that various researchers have concluded that working from home increases happiness levels. Bloom (2014) also outlines that happiness levels can be linked to employees being less likely to resign from the organisation as they are more satisfied with their job roles. To slightly differ from this, McCartney and Evans (2015) aver that the implementation of flexible working policies may not be suited to the needs and wants of the organisation, and in turn, this may negatively impact customer demands, have an impact on the

performance levels and the quality of work presented by employees. This form of flexible working may also be costly for this particular organisation.

According to Quicke (2019), remote working possibility offers more flexibility in daily work life if the employees want to reschedule their days or if external factors prohibit people from going outside and practising social distancing, such as the global pandemic. In extreme situations such as during a pandemic, it is a significant benefit for an organisation if it can provide remote work possibilities for its workers. In that way, organisations can continue their operations through difficult times and avoid dramatic financial losses that a total suspension of the operations could cause (Quicke, 2019). On the other hand, working from different locations and communicating with colleagues only online may decrease employees' feelings of belongingness and make them feel isolated. Employees might also consider their possibilities to grow inside the organisation and advance their careers as smaller (Mullen, 2017).

Although remote working saves employees time since they do not have to travel between their homes and offices to work, Graziano (2016) contends that the given flexibility might not directly have a positive impact on their performance. Research has shown that remote workers and workers who have more flexible working hours do not receive as much training and mentoring as their colleagues. Additionally, suppose there are colleagues in the same company that work at the office. In that case, remote workers might easily be left out of their social activities and knowledge shared among on-site workers. It might also differentiate employees into different groups, create inequality and decrease the feeling of togetherness, thus negatively affecting employee performance (Graziano, 2016).

### ***Technology Accessibility and Employee Performance in Remote Working***

World Health Organization (2015) revealed that an influx in ICT adoption by organisations has changed the way work is performed in modern days. Moreover, Ayyagari (2011) extends the same view and asserts that ICT usage has increased the demand for employees to perform faster and better than it has never been before. The available information has increased, and workers are expected to deal with it more than before or even faster (Tarafdar et al., 2010). ICT innovation has created an environment where workers can be connected day and night thus, are expected to deliver better performance than ever (Ayyagari, 2011). Suffice it to say, Shockley (2014) purports that telecommuting has been seen to play a vital part in lowering the number of distractions in conventional office surroundings, hence allowing a high concentration and focus on crucial tasks.

In contrast, telecommuting can also produce unfavourable impacts on individuals. These negative impacts include increased levels of overworking, personal life invasion, confidentiality issues and even lack of adequate feedback linked with work performance. On top of this, social isolation may present itself from the telecommuters, an issue that is highly cited in telecommuting (Noonan & Glass, 2012).

Timsal and Awais (2016) opine that working from home is made possible due to new technologies being readily available. However, Cole (2016) asserts that however much the use of newer technologies has allowed for flexibility surrounding space/time off work, these newer technologies may have a negative impact on psychological detachment for employees working from home. For example, Arun Pathak et al. (2015) established that employees' communication levels are moderately higher when working in an office environment, as they can collaborate more effectively at a higher positive level. On the contrary, Miles (2016) believes that advancements in technology have led to an increase in remote working, where a good number of employees are now working from home, which has never been the case before. This view was extended by Cousins and Robey (2015), who argued that technological innovations such as

mobile phones/laptops have implored organisations to allow employees to work from anywhere, not necessarily offices, which has enabled some organisations to cut office costs. Thus, It is imperative to note that technology has revolutionised how organisations operate in modern times, affecting their overall performance.

Golden (2016) contends that telecommuting essentially relies on the processing and manipulating information, not to mention that it depends on information transformation. As a result, Information Technology remains one of the main constituents of telecommuting since it can enable employees to constantly communicate with their colleagues. Full access to the internet, constant communication via email and other preferred platforms, and access to databases allow employees and employers to communicate and access all the necessary information. Companies establish the method of communication that works best for everyone and agree on how regularly remote or flexible workers should check in to stay accountable to their deadlines.

### ***Remote Worker Motivation and Employee Performance in Remote Working***

Timsal and Awais (2016) believe that organisations are currently finding different ways to develop and retain their employees and that potential candidates are attracted to organisations that have flexibility throughout the workplace. James (2016) contends that this way of working provides employees with freedom, which can be a huge benefit as it allows employees to carry out their daily work and build in other personal tasks they may need to complete throughout the day. Canonico (2016) revealed that working from home can negatively affect organisational performance, which in turn may impact the overall culture within the organisation.

Miles (2016) posits that employers who can ensure fairness among the employees and have policies that govern remote working can avoid risks associated with remote working. This should include supporting remote workers with the

necessary facilities to work well, putting health and safety measures in place and ensuring that remote workers are well motivated. Taking into consideration such factors would ensure that employees perform better, thus resulting in an improvement in the overall organisational performance. However, it is important to note that remote working can only be possible if the nature of the business favours a flexible mode of operation. Weatherly and Otter (2011) argue that in situations where the nature of work cannot permit remote working for such reasons as affecting the level of customer service, remote working may be undesirable. The manager can thus reject such proposals to work from home. Timsal and Awais (2016) argue that working from home may not favour every organisation, as the nature of work in some organisations requires the physical presence of employees. James (2016) also concludes that many challenges may be associated with remote working, citing examples of difficulty in motivating remote workers, failure to self-restraint by employees working remotely and losing control over the employees due to the complex work environment.

Bailey (2012) avers that a remote way of working is more gainful than a conventional one. However, the findings of Morganson et al. (2010) revealed that the location in which an employee works may affect their performance. Lewis and Humbert (2010) elaborate that companies should focus on developing remote working policies and pay attention to the real practice of this new form of working. Jizba and Kleiner (2010) revealed that working from home/mobile limits the employees' opportunities to develop themselves and their skills, which is likely to put a hold on their career growth. This may include the fact that employees have fewer opportunities in terms of training, communication, interaction, and interpersonal skills with their colleagues. There may also be a lack of development because if the employee is comfortable completing the same tasks while working from home, there will likely be less variation within their job role. Furthermore, not being located in the office environment may lead to remote employees being left out of key

meetings, which leads to key decisions. Also, ad hoc meetings are more difficult to organise with employees who work remotely, which could lead to them not being included routinely.

Bloom (2014) posits that allowing employees to work from home will increase performance. However, this study was carried out based on employees who worked in a call centre, and it was easier to measure their performance levels. There is, however, another extremely interesting report by Barton (2017) that focused on Ian Wright, who had previously always worked in an office environment and who started working from home as a business owner, which allowed him to spend time with his newborn baby whilst continuing to work full time. However, Ian concluded extremely quickly that he could not concentrate on work, as the demands placed on him by the new-born baby were too great, resulting in him not being so focused.

The Literature surveyed indicate that several researchers have researched about remote working and employee performance in sectors such as oil and gas, banking sector and so on. Most of the studies in this area have been conducted in the developed countries. From the reviewed literature, there is a sense of uncertainty regarding the impact of remote working on staff working remotely in terms of their motivation and performance levels. We did not come across a study handling the aspect of remote working in the telecommunications industry, more so in the context of Covid-19 pandemic. This study attempts to close this literature gap.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design with a mixed research approach to enable the researcher to get more detailed information about the subject of the study without limiting the respondents. The target population was the entire 210 staff of MTN Uganda Headquarters consisting of management and operational staff (MTN Uganda, 2019). Yamane's formula of sample size determination was used to arrive at the targeted sample of 140; though only 94 could

be accessed. Quantitative data using a self-administered questionnaire was collected from a sample of 89 respondents that were randomly selected from the operational staff, while qualitative data using interviews was collected from 5 staff in management positions purposively selected. The administered questionnaire was anchored on a five-type Likert scale ranging from 5 for strongly agree to 1 for strongly disagree. The questionnaire had two sections: section A for demographic information that included questions on gender, age, education level and work experience, and section B with items for each of the variables under observation. Content validity and reliability were considered for data quality control. The content validity index of 0.885 was above the threshold of 0.7. Thus, items were considered valid. Reliability of the items was done using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.79 that was above the acceptable 0.7 thus, considered reliable for the study as put forth by Odiya (2009).

Data was analysed at univariate, bivariate and multivariate levels with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 25. In univariate analysis, item means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data on respondents' opinions about remote working adoption strategies and employee performance. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse demographic data. Univariate analysis was done because it provides descriptions of single variables that the researcher is interested in using in more advanced tests and helps narrow down exactly what types of bivariate and multivariate analyses should be carried out (Lacke & Christopher, 2010). At the bivariate level, the relationship between two variables, the dependent variable and each independent variable, was analysed using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Pearson correlation coefficient helped to show the existence of a linear relationship between the two study variables. At the multivariate level, a linear regression model was applied to show the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The Multiple linear regression model that was

used in this study hypothesises that employee performance in remote working is a function of flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation and the remaining factors are represented by the error term ( $\epsilon$ ). Thus, a multivariate regression model that was used to link the independent variables to the dependent variable follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 \dots \dots + \epsilon$$

Where  $Y$  = Dependent variable (Employee Performance),  $X_1$  = Flexible work schedules,  $X_2$  = Technology accessibility,  $X_3$  = Remote worker motivation,  $\beta_0$  = This is a Constant term,  $\beta_1, \beta_2$  &  $\beta_3$  = coefficient of the predictor variables,  $\epsilon$  = Error term which captures the unexplained variations in the model.

## STUDY RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Out of the 89 respondents who participated in the study, 61.8% were males and 38.2% were females. 53.9% had a bachelor's degree level of education, 19.1% were diploma holders, 11.2 had secondary level of education, 9% had master's degrees, and 6.7% had other qualifications such as ACCA and postgraduate diploma. 43.8% had worked with the company for a period between 6 – 10 years, 32.6% for a period between 1 – 5 years, 13.5% for a period less than 1 year and 10.2% for a period between 11 – 15 years.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were presented using Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). The Mean shows the incidence of a response, and the Standard Deviation shows the extent to which scores deviate from the Mean. The standard deviation ( $SD < 1$  is interpreted to mean low deviation, and  $SD > 1$  is interpreted to mean high deviation). The overall means of the study constructs revealed respondents' agreement with the various items under each construct. These were flexible working schedules ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=0.685$ ); Technology accessibility ( $M=3.92$ ,  $SD=0.662$ ); remote worker motivation ( $M=3.87$ ,

$SD=0.520$ ); and employee performance ( $M=4.209$ ,  $SD=0.626$ ). This implies that, on average, respondents agree that flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation as integral components of remote working adoption strategies improved employee performance of remote workers at MTNN (U) Ltd during COVID-19 pandemic.

Qualitative findings indicate that remote working has enabled employees to work from anywhere, not necessarily on-site offices, and still deliver good results. During COVID-19, MTN introduced the MTN WakaNet, a service that gives users fast internet access to facilitate working from home. Therefore, access to the internet and social media platforms enabled employees to constantly communicate with their co-workers while executing their duties remotely. From the interviews, it was revealed that MTN supported its staff to work remotely through services such as WakaNet

*“...during Covid – 19, MTN introduced the MTN WakaNet which is a service that gives users fast internet access to facilitate working from home”.*

The working from home was not without challenges as expressed by some employees. During Covid -19, some employees developed feelings of isolation since they had no physical interaction with co-workers. It was further revealed that however much remote working allows for flexibility, it sometimes becomes hard for employees working from home to balance time for work with family. This was emphasized by one employee who opined that

*“.....however much remote working allows for flexibility, it at times becomes hard for employees working from home to balance time for work with family. For example, parents with young children can be disrupted by their children while working from home which negatively affects their performance”.*

### Inferential Statistics

The following steps were followed for inferential statistics. The researcher checked for linearity,



Multicollinearity and normality of the data using the Shapiro Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests.

**Linearity of the Data**

The linearity test is used to test whether all linear regression models between a dependent and independent variable are related to a straight line to the right or bottom right (Salehi, 2018). To establish whether the data was linear, a scatter plot was drawn with a line of best fit to capture this data format. The R-square was 0.573, implying that the model explains 57.3% of the fitted data in the regression model. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 50% and above is high and suggests a better fit for the model (Armstrong, 2019). The scatter plot, thus, revealed that the relationship between remote working adoption strategies and employee performance is linear. Therefore, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was suitable to use for this data since it tests the degree of linear correlation between two variables without examining whether a degree of curvature may be present (Armstrong, 2019).

**Multicollinearity**

A multicollinearity test was done to determine whether there are independent variables that have

similarities in the model. Similarities between independent variables result in a very strong correlation. The collinearity test yielded a VIF of 1.123 and 1.005, which are less than 10, indicating no multicollinearity (Surwajeni, 2015).

**Normality Test**

The normality test aims to test whether, in the regression model, both the dependent and independent variables follow a normal distribution or not (Surwajeni, 2015). Test of normality was done using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and the Shapiro-Wilk Test. It was established that both tests gave a significance value that was greater than 0.05, indicating that the data was normally distributed. The normal Q-Q plot was also drawn to further establish the normality of the data. The dots broadly follow the trend line, further proving that the distribution was normally distributed.

**Correlation Results**

Pearson's correlation test was performed to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

**Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship among the study variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Flexible Work Schedules	1			
2. Technology Accessibility	.433**	1		
3. Remote Worker Motivation	-0.005	0.06	1	
4. Employee Performance	.594**	.616**	.273**	1

\*\* significant at 5%

Findings from *Table 1* show the existence of a significant positive relationship between flexible work schedules and employee performance (r = 0.594, p < 0.05); technology accessibility and employee performance (r =0.616, p < 0.05); remote worker motivation and performance of employees in remote working (r=0.273, p < 0.05). This implies that all the predictor variables have a significant positive relationship with employee performance in remote working. The correlation coefficient implies that any improvement made in

each independent variable would lead to improved employee performance.

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple Regression analysis was employed to assess the degree to which Remote working adoption strategies (Flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation) affected employee performance in remote working at MTN during Covid-19 pandemic. Regression analysis was further used to ascertain the effect of each independent variable

on the dependent variable. The results are shown in *Table 2*.

**Table 2: Regression Coefficients**

	Unstandardised Coeff		Standardised Coeff	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Intercept	1.353	0.338		4.004	0
Flexible work schedules	0.229	0.044	0.412	5.242	0
Technology accessibility	0.252	0.047	0.422	5.36	0
Remote worker motivation	0.242	0.069	0.25	3.515	0.001

From the regression findings in *Table 2*, the estimated model is  $Y = 1.353 + 0.229X_1 + 0.252X_2 + 0.242X_3$

This implies that a unit change in any independent variable leads to a unit change in the dependent variable. Flexible work schedules significantly contribute to employee performance by 41.2% (beta = 0.412, p-value = 0.000); technology accessibility significantly contributes to employee

performance by 42.2% (beta = 0.422, p-value = 0.000); and remote worker motivation significantly contributes to employee performance by 25% (beta = 0.250, p-value = 0.001). The results further show that technology accessibility is the biggest contributor to employee performance in remote working, followed by flexible work schedules and remote worker motivation, respectively.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	2.459	3	0.82	38.018	0
Residual	1.832	85	0.022		
Total	4.291	88			
R-Squared	0.573		Adj R-Squared		0.558
Root MSE	0.14682				

*Table 3* shows that the independent variables combined explain 55.8% of the variations in employee performance in remote working at MTN (U) Ltd during Covid-19.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between flexible work schedules as an integral component of remote work adoption strategies and employee performance in remote working at MTN (U) Ltd during COVID-19 pandemic. This may be attributed to the fact that with flexible work schedules, employees can have some form of autonomy in planning their daily lives, work, and family activities according to their needs, which motivates them and improves their performance. The finding directly agrees with Joseph et al. (2020), who found a strong positive association between flexi-time and employee performance of financial institutions

within Kericho County in Kenya. If organisations have flexible work schedules, employees can adopt remote working, have autonomy to plan their work, have work-life balance and improve their performance. This agrees with the Self-efficacy theory related to self-control and the ability to modulate your behaviour to reach your goals (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

During remote working, employees are given the flexibility to work from anywhere on their own, which requires self-control and the ability to believe in their abilities to deliver organisational goals. Remote working gives employees flexibility in deciding when and how to work; thus, self-efficacy theory provides a sense of self-control by employees working remotely to enable them to use their abilities to deliver organisational goals. Contrary to the finding is the works of Graziano (2016), who contends that flexibility in remote working might not directly have a positive

impact on employee performance. This is because remote workers may be left out of social activities and knowledge shared among on-site workers. It might also create inequality among remote and on-site workers and decrease the feeling of togetherness, thus negatively affecting employee performance.

Findings on technology accessibility indicated a significant positive relationship between technology accessibility and employee performance in remote working at MTN (U) Ltd during COVID-19 pandemic. The finding resonates with the works of Miles (2016), who found that advancements in technology have led to an increase in remote working where a good number of employees are now working from home than has ever been the case before. Cousins and Robey (2015) associate technology innovations with cost reductions in organisations where the ability of employees to work from anywhere lowers office costs. On the contrary, Cole (2016) associates technology innovations with a negative impact on the psychological detachment of employees working from home, which negatively affects their performance.

The findings further revealed the existence of a significant positive relationship between remote worker motivation and employee performance in remote working at MTN (U) Ltd during COVID-19 pandemic. This is in agreement with Mason (2020), who argues that working from home positively affects the work and lifestyle of some people. This implies the need to incentivise remote workers as an essential component to improve their performance. Such incentives could include an enabling secure and healthy work environment. James (2016) cautions on the challenges associated with remote working, citing such as the difficulty in motivating remote workers, failure to self-restraint by employees working remotely and loss of control over the employees due to the complex work environment. Along the same line, Morganson et al. (2010) argue the need to consider the location where an employee works as this may adversely affect the employee's performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We thus conclude that flexible work schedules, technology accessibility and remote worker motivation significantly affected employees' performance in remote working at MTN (U) Ltd during the COVID-19 pandemic. The implication drawn from the study findings is that providing flexible working schedules, technology accessibility and motivating remote workers are significant factors that improve employee performance of remote workers. It is **recommended that** MTN (U) Ltd and other telecom companies in Uganda adopt flexible work schedules for their employees to enable them to adopt remote working, especially during periods of crisis such as pandemics and epidemics. It is imperative that MTN Uganda Ltd and other telecom companies prioritise investment in technology and make it readily accessible to all employees as well as orient employees to the realities of remote working in a rapidly changing work environment. This, of course, should be accompanied by the necessary incentives and support to compensate for the challenges of remote working, such as the feelings of social isolation. This study provides opportunities to examine remote working and the performance of employees in organisations, especially during times of crisis such as pandemics and epidemics. The contribution of this study is that it has provided new information on this subject matter, especially in the study area where no known studies on the same subject do exist.

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