

Impact of COVID-19-Driven Virtual Working on Perceived Employee Performance: The Case of The Kenyan Banking Sector

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant digitalization transitions was the adoption of virtual working as a new business model especially during and after the spread of COVID-19. Employee performance changed as a result of this transition, either positively or negatively and workplace behaviors like communication, virtual teaming, and working hours were affected. The study's overall objective was to establish the impact of virtual working on perceived employee performance using the case of the Kenyan banking sector. The study used structured questionnaires as the main instrument for collecting primary data from respondents. Primary data was collected through questionnaires from employees working for banking companies in Kenya. The collected data was edited, formatted, organized, coded analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version 26) software. Correlation analysis was used to obtain inferential statistics. The type and significance of the relationship that existed between the dependent variable and the independent variable was determined using correlation analysis. The analyzed data was presented using tables and charts for easier and quick interpretation. From the findings, it was established that virtual working significantly influenced perceived employee performance in the Kenyan Banking Sector. The study also established that there were some factors which might have hindered perceived employee performance. These included inadequate resources and infrastructure to support virtual working models, lack of top management support for virtual work and lack of a clear support structure. The study recommends the adoption and implementation of measures that enhance virtual working not only in the banking sector but also other sectors.

Keywords: COVID-19, Virtual Working, Kenya

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Introduction

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11. Since then, the pandemic evolved into a global healthcare and financial disaster, with catastrophic consequences for the world's \$90 trillion economy (Jackson et al., 2021). It triggered the 2020 worldwide recession, causing large socioeconomic changes, the failure of certain enterprises, and a significant decline in global GDP (Al-Mansour & Al-Ajmi, 2020; Brodeur et al., 2021; Ozili & Arun, 2020). Because of the magnitude of the disruption, society was compelled to think outside the box in order to prosper in the face of a pandemic (Wakchaure, 2022). Governments around the world adopted social distancing as one of the main policies aimed at containing the spread of the virus (OECD, 2020). All non-essential activities stopped in a number of countries as a result, forcing organizations, businesses, schools, and cities to close (Hale et al., 2020). Many organizations were plunged into unfamiliar waters forcing them to establish both long term and short-term effective responses, in order to remain relevant in the corporate climate (Atoko, 2021; Wakchaure, 2022). As a result, internet platforms saw a significant surge in digital activities among many organizations (Ratten, 2020). Videoconferencing, cloud computing, and virtual private networks, replaced physical meetings (OECD, 2020). In Canada, for example, the employees working from home significantly increased from 4% to 32% 2021 (Hackney et al., 2022). Virtual work rates in Japan, climbed significantly from 10% in December 2019 to nearly 28% in May 2020 (OECD,

2021). 85% of the surveyed enterprises in Africa, according to the International Labour Organization, (2022), stated that at least some of their staff participated in virtual working during the pandemic. By the end of 2020, about 50% of Kenyan businesses with five or more employees had started using digital platforms (World Bank, 2021). The safety of the staff and customers of financial institutions just like in other sectors became more crucial as the virus spread. This gave the banking industry the impetus it needed, to go digital in order to lower client health risks and support virtual working. Banking institutions adopted digital banking channels in order to give their staff a secure environment for working virtually. They purchased dynamic VPN success protocols to ensure secure remote access to banking systems while staff worked remotely (Central Bank of Kenya, 2021). The Co-operative Bank of Kenya for example, encouraged remote working by digitizing internal procedures and engagement platforms to create contactless capabilities for both customers and staff (Co-operative Bank of Kenya, 2020). However, due to virtual working, both employees and enterprises face a number of issues and difficulties. It is debatable how this new working style has affected employee productivity, performance, and morale (Lund et al., 2020).

Virtual working

Virtual working is a work technique that allows an employee to conduct job-related tasks from any location rather than being physically present at an employer's site (Onyemaechi et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Virtual workplaces are developed because of individuals' and enterprises' digital interconnection (Larson & DeChurch, 2020). Digital technology makes this feasible, which allows employees to engage in real time and across time zones (Raghuram et al., 2019). The virtual workplace is different from the conventional workplace in a variety of aspects, including where employees are located, how and where work is accomplished, and the basis for relationships between employees and enterprises (Choudhury et al., 2021; Wiefferink, 2021). Working virtually increases organizational freedom, reduces stress, reduces commuting to work, elevates flexibility in work routines, and increases efficiency (Ipsen et al., 2021). Virtual work arrangements might also have negative consequences on an individual which include; work insecurity, isolation and poor communication (Stich, 2020). It is clear that a wide range of factors, both advantageous and disadvantageous, could affect how virtual working takes place.

Perceived employee performance

Performance refers to the goal-oriented process of making sure that every organizational procedure is in place to maximize the efficiency of employees, teams, and the business itself (Asbari et al., 2021; Clear, 2018). It is the result of working hard and acting professionally to fulfill the assignments and duties allocated within a set amount of time (Sutrisno, 2022). Therefore, employee performance refers to an employee's behavior while fulfilling a certain task set by the employer. It relates with each employee's accomplishments in compliance with the many regulations, or standards of the employer (Asbari et al., 2021; Fuertes et al., 2020). It also denotes an individual's efficiency level as well as productivity, which leads to organizational goal accomplishment as a result of their valuable impact, which eventually results in the organization's overall performance (Tamunomiebi & Oyibo, 2020).

Employee performance incorporates all of the efforts that employees make in the course of accomplishing organizational goals. This is crucial because employee performance is not always seen as the final product. According to some scholars, employee performance is based on how well and efficiently they carry out their daily jobs and activities. It also affects how much they contribute to the organization (Masa'deh et al., 2018). According to Jiang et al., (2020), the nature of employee performance reflects the abilities and capabilities of each individual employee in an organization. Perceived performance is a subjective indicator of performance that considers an evaluation of a worker's actual conduct. This indicates that the employees' perceptions of their own performance are based on their beliefs (Baquero, 2022). It represents the general belief of the employee about his behavior and contributions to the success of the organization (Mosry & Raju, 2020).

Statement of the problem

One of the most significant digitalization transitions in the recent past was the adoption of virtual working as a new business model to contain the spread of COVID-19 (Galanti et al., 2021). Since this development, there has been major debate on the net impact of this shift on employee productivity and performance. Different studies came to conflicting conclusion. For instance, some scholars claimed that virtual working could have a negative impact on employee performance because it reduces the amount of in-person interactions, which harms managerial oversight, information flows, and communication (Espinoza & Reznikova, 2020). In contrast, Beckmann, (2016) found higher performance among employees working virtually and Beckmann et al., (2017) established that there was more intensive worker effort through virtual working. Monteiro et al., (2019) found that effects on productivity differ greatly across firms but are generally positive for firms undertaking research and development. This study therefore sought to contribute to this important discourse by investigating the impact of virtual working on perceived employee performance in the Kenyan Banking Industry.

General objective of the study

The study sought to establish the impact of COVID-19-driven virtual working on perceived employee performance using the case of the Kenyan Banking Sector.

Specific objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- i. To find out the different processes and activities performed virtually by Kenyan Banks during COVID-19.
- ii. To determine the level of perceived employee performance in Kenyan Banks during COVID-19.
- iii. To determine the relationship between covid-driven virtual working and perceived employee performance in the Kenyan banking sector.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework, according to Ravitch and Riggan (2017), is a set of broad ideas and theories that supports a researcher in defining the problem, formulating their queries, and locating relevant material. It is a brief statement followed with a graphical or visual representation of the study's main subjects as well as potential correlations and links (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The conceptual framework (figure 1), shows the different variables of the study and graphically captures the relationships that formed the subject focus of the study.

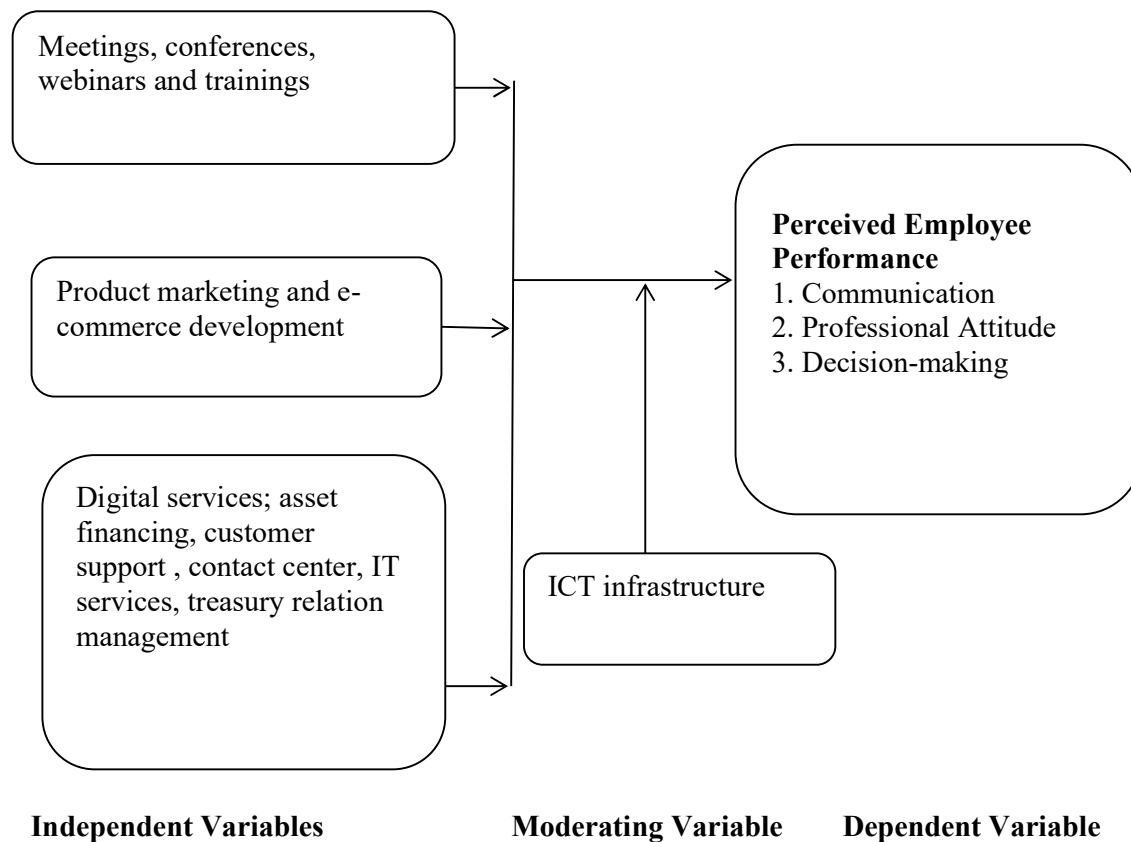


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source; Author, 2023

METHODOLOGY

The study followed an explanatory survey design that allows the use of inferential statistics to determine the relationship between the variables in the model (Black & Babin, 2019). The target population was all employees working for banking institutions in Kenya from where a sample was selected. The study used structured questionnaires as the main instrument for collecting primary data from respondents. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. The collected data was edited, formatted, organized, coded analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version 26) software. Correlation analysis was used to obtain inferential statistics. The type and significance of the relationship that existed between the dependent variable

and the independent variable was determined using correlation analysis. The analyzed data was presented using tables and charts for easier and quick interpretation.

RESULTS FROM ANALYSIS

The study's main goal was to establish the impact of COVID-19-driven virtual working on perceived employee performance using the case of the Kenyan Banking Sector.

Demographic Information

Distribution of the respondents by departments they work in

The study aimed to determine the department in which the respondents worked at their respective banks. The results are presented in Table 1;

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by departments they work in

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Finance	6	11.3	11.3
Marketing and Communication	3	5.7	17.0
Operations	21	39.6	56.6
Customer Service	9	17.0	73.6
ICT	4	7.5	81.1
Human Resource	2	3.8	84.9
Corporate Banking	4	7.5	92.5
Legal and Compliance	1	1.9	94.3
Product Development	3	5.7	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Table 1, show that 11.3% of the respondents were working in finance department. 5.7% were working in Marketing and Communication department. A majority (39.6%) were in Operations department, 17.0% were in Customer Service, 7.5% were in ICT, 3.8% were in Human Resource, 7.5% were in Corporate Banking, 1.9% were in Legal and Compliance, and 5.7% were in Product Development. This means that this study accommodated views and opinions across various departments and divisions.

Age Bracket of the Respondents

The study aimed to determine the age bracket of the respondents. The findings are presented in Figure 2 below.

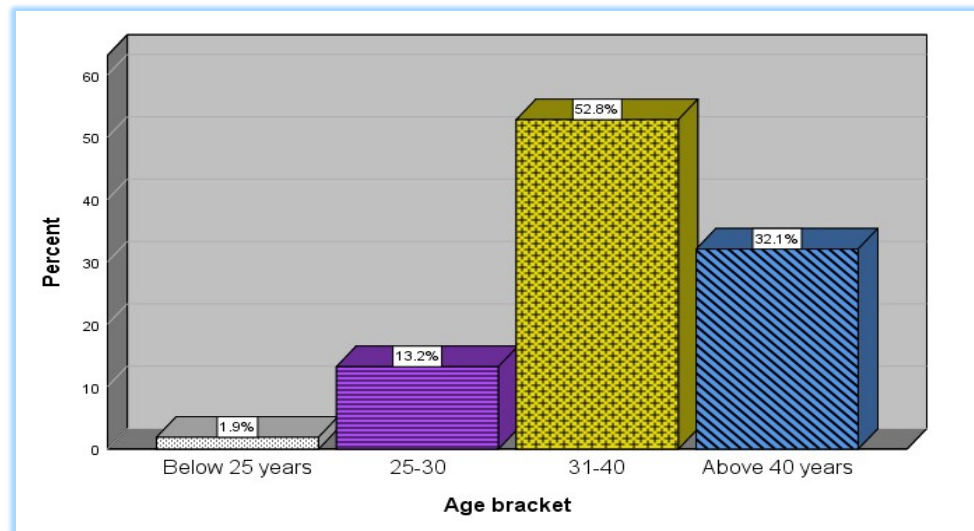


Figure 2: *Age Bracket of the Respondents*

Source; Authors.

From the findings presented in Figure 2, majority (52.8%) of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, 32.1% were above 40 years old, 13.2% were between 25 and 30 years old, while 1.9% were below 25 years. This shows that all working age groups were sufficiently represented, allowing for generalization of the findings.

Highest Level of Education

The study sought to find out the highest level of education of the respondents. The study's findings are presented in Figure 3 below.

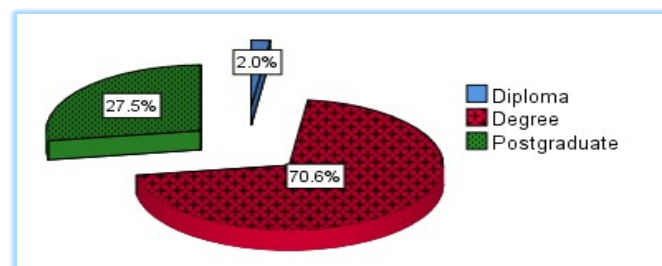


Figure 3: *Highest Level of Education*

Source; Authors.

From Figure 3, the study found that a majority (70.6%) had a bachelor's degree level of education, 27.5% had a postgraduate level of education while 2.0% had a diploma level. This indicates that the respondents were able to understand the constructs required by the study and therefore furnished the study with appropriate and adequate requisite information.

Number of years working in the banking sector in Kenya

The study asked the respondents the number of years they had been working in the banking sector in Kenya. The results are presented in Figure 4.

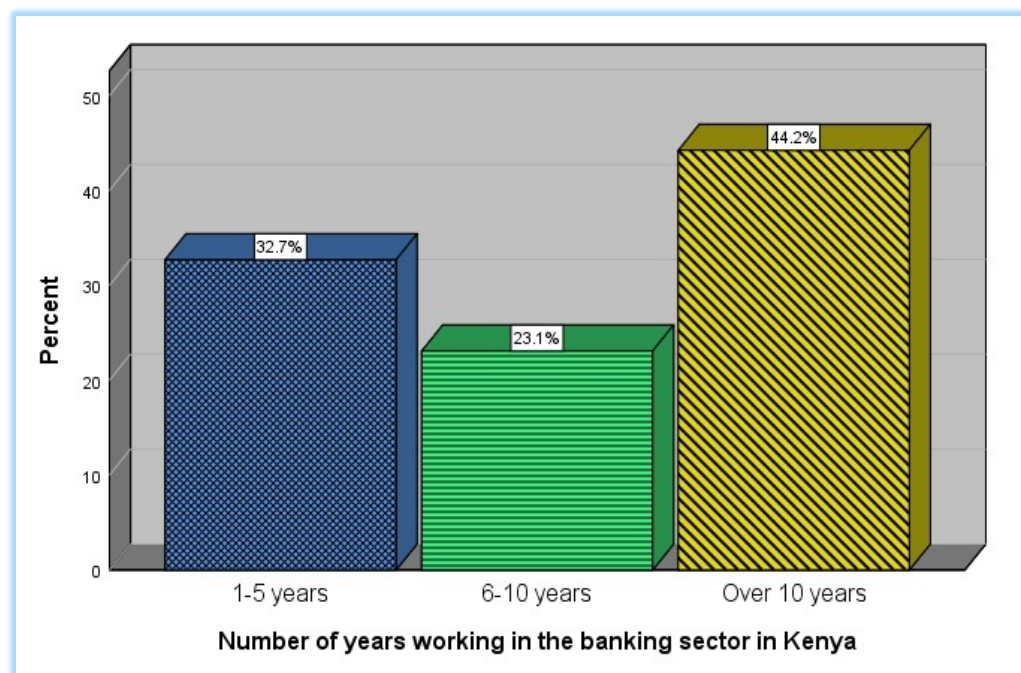


Figure 4: Number of years working in the banking sector in Kenya

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Figure 4 show that a majority (44.2%) of the respondents had worked in the banking sector in Kenya for over 10 years, 23.1% for between 6 and 10 years, and 32.7% for 1 to 5 years. This indicates that the respondents had acquired the necessary experiences and therefore provided the study with adequate requisite information from an informed perspective.

Level of Service in the Bank

The respondents were required to state their current level of service in the bank. The study's findings are summarized in Figure 5.

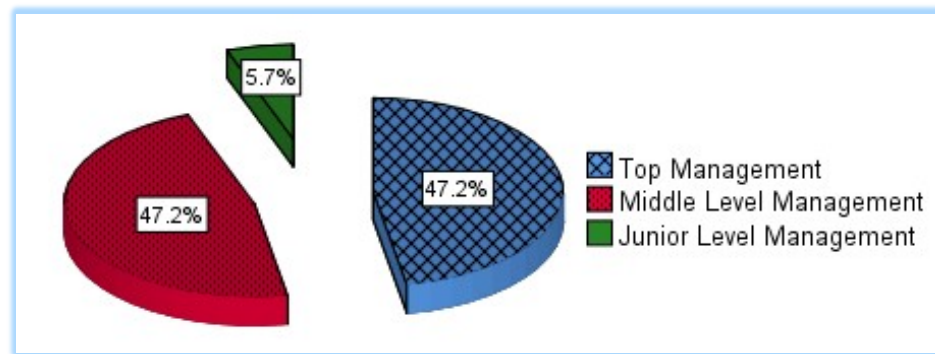


Figure 5: *Level of Service in the Bank*

Source; Authors.

From Figure 5, the study established a majority of the respondents were serving at top-level management and at middle level of management each at 47.2%, while 5.7% were serving at junior level management. Therefore, the study was able to get information from people at different levels of decision making in the banks.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics was employed to establish if the banks in Kenya adopted online working model and what Functions and Processes were performed virtually by Kenyan Banks.

Whether the banks adopted a digital working model

The study sought to find out whether the Kenyan banks adopted a digital working model especially during and post COVID-19. The findings are presented in Figure 6.

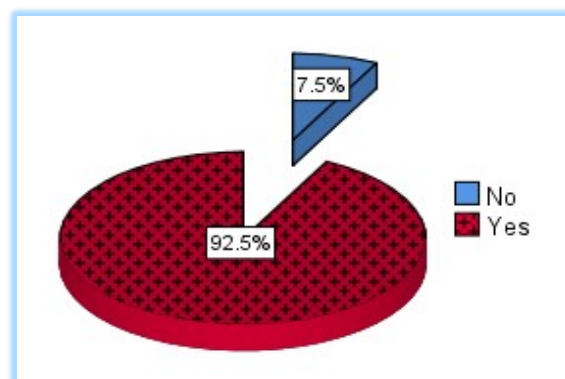


Figure 6: *Whether the Kenyan banks adopted a digital working model with the outbreak of COVID-19*

Source; Authors.

From Figure 6, a majority (92.5%) of the respondents affirmed that the banks adopted a digital working model while 7.5% said they did not adopt a digital working model. These findings provide a valuable context for the

research topic. The high adoption rate of digital working models suggests a fundamental shift in the industry's mode of operation hence the need to dive into the impacts of this shift.

The different processes and activities performed virtually by Kenyan banks during COVID-19

The study asked the respondents to state what different processes and activities were performed virtually by Kenyan banks during and post COVID-19. The findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: The different processes and activities performed virtually

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Meetings	10	18.9	18.9
Treasury management	9	17.0	35.8
Webinars and training	6	11.3	47.2
Product Marketing	2	3.8	50.9
IT services	7	13.2	64.2
Customer support experience	2	3.8	67.9
Asset financing	6	11.3	79.2
Contact center	7	13.2	92.5
Bank transactions e.g. deposits and withdrawals, loan applications /processing	4	7.5	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Table 2 show that 18.9% of the respondents identified meetings, 17.0% said treasury management, 11.3% said webinars and training, 3.8% identified product marketing, 13.2% said IT services, 3.8% said customer support, 11.3% said asset financing, 13.2% said contact center, and 7.5% identified bank transactions e.g. deposits and withdrawals, loan applications/processing. These findings suggest that various aspects of work within the Kenyan banks experienced changes as a result of COVID-19.

Extent to which the Bank Adopted Virtual Working Models

The study aimed to determine the extent to which the bank adopted virtual working models. The responses were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. The findings of the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Extent to which the bank adopted virtual working models

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree					
	disagree		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		agree			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The bank allowed employees to work from home	32	60.4	14	26.4	5	9.4	0	0.0	2	3.8		
The bank allowed employees to choose flexible working hours	15	28.3	15	28.3	7	13.2	12	22.6	4	7.5		
The bank allowed employees to work online	32	60.4	16	30.2	3	5.7	1	1.9	1	1.9		

Source; Authors.

From the findings presented in Table 3, a majority (60.4%) strongly disagreed that the bank allowed employees to work from home, 56.6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the bank allowed employees to choose flexible working hours, and 60.4% strongly disagreed that the bank allowed employees to work online. These findings suggest that the adoption of virtual working models in Kenyan banks might have been relatively limited. A considerable proportion of employees reported a lack of opportunities to work from home, limited flexibility in working hours, and minimal support for online work.

Number of days the Respondents Worked Full-Time from Home

The study aimed to determine the average number of days per week the respondents worked full-time from home. The findings are summarized in Figure 7.

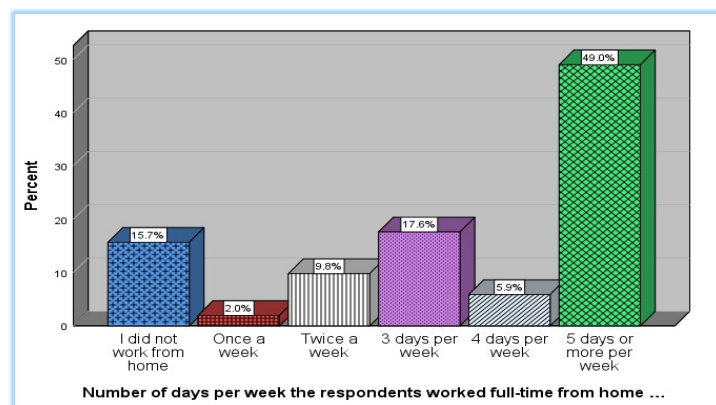


Figure 7: Number of days the respondents worked full-time from home during COVID-19

Source; Authors.

From Figure 7, 15.7% said they did not work from home, 2.0% said once a week, 9.8% said twice a week, 17.6% said 3 days per week, 5.9% said 4 days per week, and a majority (49.0%) said 5 days or more per week. These findings highlight the varying degrees of adoption of virtual work practices. A considerable proportion of employees transitioned to remote work on a more frequent basis, with a majority working remotely full-time. The emergence of hybrid work models is evident as well, with employees evenly distributed across the spectrum of working remotely once a week to working from home almost every day.

Work Practices and Policies Whilst Working Remotely

The study asked the respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding work practices and policies whilst working remotely. Their responses were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Work Practices and Policies Whilst Working Remotely

	Strongly disagree				Uncertain				Strongly agree			
	disagree		Disagree		Agree		Agree		agree		agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Whether the respondent was provided with the right equipment and tools to work at home (laptop, phone, etc.)	2	3.8	4	7.5	3	5.7	10	18.9	34	64.2		
Your organization supported you with home working setup-related expenses (internet expenses, mobile phone cost, teleconferencing software)	9	17.0	8	15.1	14	26.4	9	17.0	13	24.5		
You were regularly contacted and supported by your employer	3	5.7	2	3.8	8	15.1	21	39.6	19	35.8		
You were provided with appropriate control and flexibility on how to do your work	3	5.7	2	3.8	12	22.6	17	32.1	19	35.8		
You were available during working hours and maintained regular and timely communication with your line manager and colleagues	0	0.0	1	1.9	3	5.7	17	32.1	32	60.4		

Source; Authors.

From the results summarized in Table 4, the majority (64.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were provided with the right equipment and tools to work at home (laptop, phone, etc.). 26.4% were uncertain whether their organization supported them with home working setup-related expenses (internet expenses, mobile phone cost, teleconferencing software). 39.6% agreed that they were regularly contacted and supported by their employer. 35.8% strongly agreed that they were provided with appropriate control and flexibility on how to do their work, and 60.4% strongly agreed that they were available during working hours and maintained regular and timely communication with their line manager and colleagues. The findings suggest that many employees in Kenyan Banks perceived positive work practices and policies, which could potentially affect their overall performance.

The Conditions of Remote Working

The study sought to find out the extent to which the respondents agreed with the statements regarding the conditions of remote working. The respondents were asked to rate their responses on scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The responses are tabulated as in Table 5.

Table 5: The Conditions of Remote Working

	Strongly disagree				Disagree				Uncertain				Agree				Strongly agree			
	F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
There were distractions while working from home	8	15.1	18	34.0	11	20.8	7	13.2	9	17.0										
There was reliable internet connectivity at home	18	34.0	16	30.2	11	20.8	5	9.4	3	5.7										
I felt stressed working from home	2	3.8	5	9.4	10	18.9	15	28.3	21	39.6										
I was able to hand out quality work on a timely basis	25	47.2	16	30.2	7	13.2	4	7.5	1	1.9										

Source; Authors.

From Table 5, a majority (34.0%) disagreed that there were distractions while working from home, 34.0% strongly disagreed that there was reliable internet connectivity at home, 39.6% strongly agreed that they felt stressed working from home, and 47.2% strongly disagreed that they were able to hand out quality work on a timely basis. These findings suggest a mixed perception among the employees regarding remote working.

While some employees perceived fewer distractions and stress, and better internet connectivity, a significant proportion expressed challenges in maintaining work quality and timeliness.

Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Employee Performance

Means of Communication that was the most effective in Remote Working

The study asked the respondents to state what means of communication was most effective in remote working. The findings of the study are presented in Figure 8.

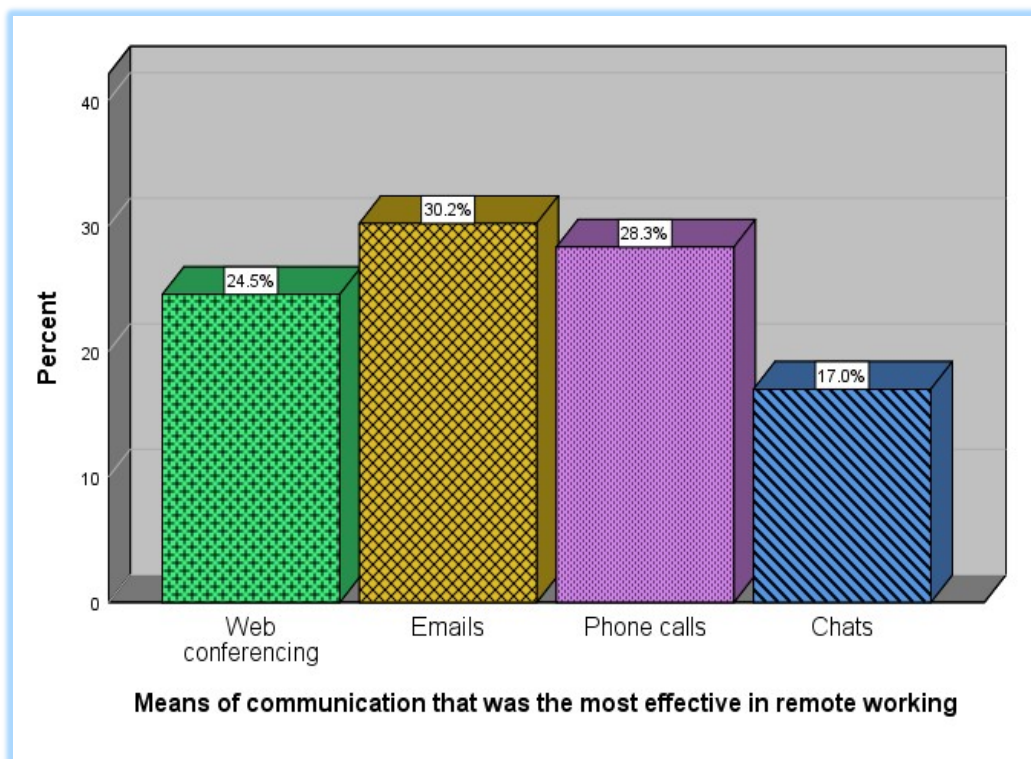


Figure 8: Means of Communication that was the most effective in Remote Working

Source; Authors.

From the findings presented in Figure 8, a majority of the respondents said email was the means of communication that was most effective in remote working, 28.3% said phone calls, 24.5% said web conferencing, and 17.0% said chats. These findings suggest that the banks adopted different communication modes to successfully implement remote work during the pandemic.

Frequency of Communication carried out in the Banks

The study sought to find out the frequency of communication carried out in the banks. The findings are summarized in Figure 9.

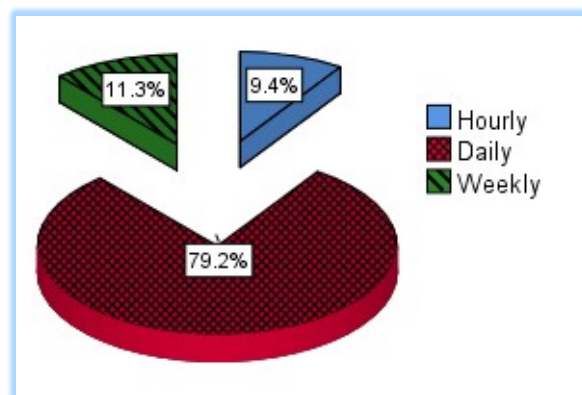


Figure 9: Frequency of Communication carried out in the Banks

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Figure 9 show that a majority (79.2%) of the respondents said that the communication that carried out in the banks was done daily, 11.3% said weekly, and 9.4% said it was done hourly. These findings suggest that daily communication was a common practice during virtual working arrangements as regular interaction bridges the physical gap between employees. Weekly communication indicates that some level of communication was maintained but at a less frequent interval. Hourly communication might indicate a subset of roles or tasks that demanded real-time collaboration and communication, possibly due to time-sensitive decisions or complex problem solving.

Type of Communication Network

The study sought to find out the type of communication network that was used. The findings are presented in Figure 10.

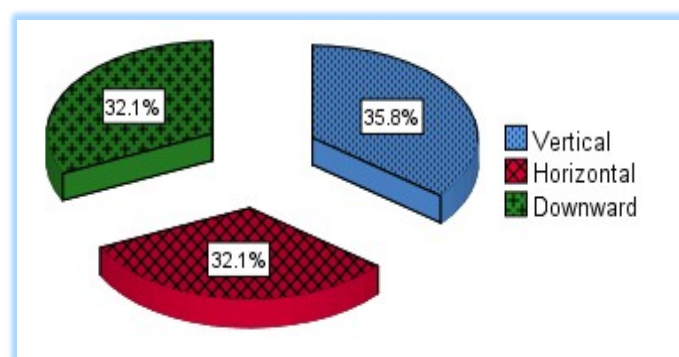


Figure 10: Type of Communication Network that was used

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Figure 10 shows that 35.8% used vertical type of communication network, characterized by a hierarchical flow of information from top to bottom. 32.1% used a downward communication network, emphasizing the dissemination of information from management to employees.

32.1% adopted a horizontal communication network, indicating a more collaborative and peer-to-peer information exchange approach. These findings suggest that organizations adopted diverse communication structures likely influenced by the unique challenges posed by remote and virtual work arrangements.

Challenges Encountered by the Respondents when Communicating with Colleagues The study sought to find out the challenges encountered by the respondents when communicating with colleagues. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Challenges encountered when communicating with colleagues

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of cooperation	18	34.0	34.0
Unclear communication channel	17	32.1	66.0
Inadequately trained personnel	4	7.5	73.6
Lack of resources e.g. internet, laptop	14	26.4	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Table 6 show that 34.0% identified lack of cooperation as a challenge encountered when communicating with colleagues, 32.1% identified unclear communication channel, 7.5% encountered inadequately trained personnel, while 26.4% encountered lack of resources e.g. internet, laptop as a challenge encountered when communicating with colleagues. These findings suggest that the challenges faced by employees when communicating with colleagues in a virtual work environment were multifaceted. These challenges include a perceived lack of cooperation, unclear communication channels, inadequately trained personnel, and insufficient resources.

Extent to which Communication influenced Perceived Employee Performance

The study sought to find out the extent to which communication influenced perceived employee performance in the bank. The findings are presented in Figure 11.

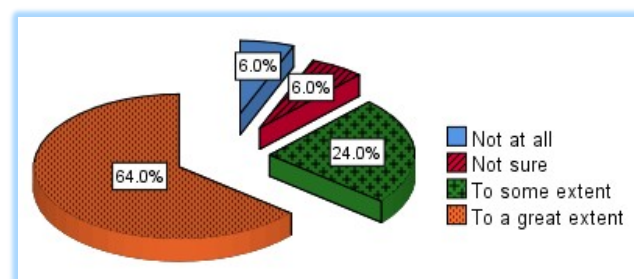


Figure 11: Extent to which Communication Influenced Perceived Employee Performance

Source; Authors.

The study findings presented in Figure 11 show that a majority (64.0%) were of the opinion that to a great extent communication influenced perceived employee performance in the bank, 24.0% said to some extent, while some respondents said they were not sure or not at all each with 6.0% of the representation. These findings suggest that a considerable portion of employees viewed communication as a crucial element affecting their performance, while others viewed it with varying degrees of significance. The varying responses highlight the diversity of perspectives among employees, ranging from those who strongly believed in the impact of communication to those who were more uncertain or skeptical about its influence.

Extent of Agreement with Statements in regard to COVID-19 Driven Virtual Working

The study aimed to determine the extent to which the respondents agreed with statements regarding COVID-19-driven virtual working. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: The extent to which the respondents agreed with statements in regard to COVID-19 driven virtual working

	Strongly disagree				Disagree				Uncertain				Agree				Strongly agree			
	F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Virtual work gave me a flexible schedule	26	49.1	14	26.4	11	20.8	0	0.0	2	3.8										
I preferred working in the office rather than virtually	9	17.0	7	13.2	13	24.5	8	15.1	16	30.2										
I felt emotionally drained from my work.	4	7.5	9	17.0	16	30.2	11	20.8	13	24.5										
I felt frustrated by my job	2	3.8	4	7.5	15	28.3	16	30.2	16	30.2										
I felt like I am working too hard on my job	7	13.2	11	20.8	21	39.6	5	9.4	9	17.0										

Source; Authors.

The study findings summarised in Table 7 show that a majority (49.1%) strongly disagreed that virtual work gave them a flexible schedule, 30.2% strongly agreed that they preferred working in the office rather than virtually, 30.2% were uncertain about whether they felt emotionally drained from their work, 60.4% either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt frustrated by their job, and 39.6% were uncertain about whether they felt like they were working too hard on their job. The findings suggest a mixed response among the employees regarding the impact virtual working on their perceived performance. While a considerable number of

employees expressed concerns about flexible scheduling, emotional drain, frustration, and feeling like they were working too hard, there were also respondents who had positive perceptions about virtual work. The preference for working in the office over virtual work was divided, indicating a varied range of preferences among employees.

Extent to which the Respondents agreed with the Statements Regarding Remote Working

The study aimed to determine the extent to which the respondents agreed with the statements regarding COVID-19-driven remote working. The findings of the study are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Extent to which the Respondents agreed with the Statements Regarding Remote Working

	Strongly disagree				Disagree				Uncertain				Agree				Strongly agree			
	F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I was more efficient working virtually than when in the office.	17	32.1	11	20.8	13	24.5	8	15.1	4	7.5										
I achieved more when working virtually than in the office.	18	34.0	11	20.8	13	24.5	6	11.3	5	9.4										
I was more able to resolve problems when working virtually than in the office	12	22.6	12	22.6	17	32.1	5	9.4	7	13.2										

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Table 8 show that a majority (32.1%) strongly disagreed that they were more efficient working virtually than when in the office, 34.0% also strongly disagreed that they achieved more when working virtually than in the office, and 45.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are more able to resolve problems when working virtually than in the office. These findings suggest a certain level of uncertainty among respondents regarding the positive impact of remote working on their perceived employee performance. A majority of respondents did not agree that virtual work made them more efficient, enabled them to achieve more, or improved their ability to resolve problems. The findings also highlight that a considerable proportion of respondents were uncertain about these statements.

Whether the respondents were actively involved in the decision-making in the bank

The study sought to find out whether the respondents were actively involved in the decision-making in the bank. The findings are summarized in Figure 12.

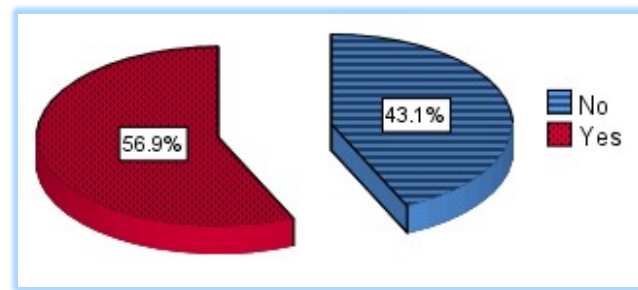


Figure 12: Whether the Respondents were Actively Involved in the Decision-Making in the Bank

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Figure 12 show that 56.9% affirmed that they were actively involved in the decision-making in the bank, while 43.1% said they were not actively involved in the decision making in the bank. These findings suggest that the level of active involvement in decision-making during covid driven virtual working varied among employees in the banks.

Factors that might have hindered the Decision-Making of the Bank

The respondents were asked to state some of the factors that might have hindered the decision- making of the bank. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Factors that might have hindered the decision-making of the bank

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of resources e.g. internet, laptop	24	45.3	45.3
Lack of top management support	19	35.8	81.1
Inadequate infrastructure	10	18.9	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Table 9 show that 45.3% of the respondents indicated that lack of resources e.g. internet, laptop might have hindered the decision-making of the bank, 35.8% indicated that lack of top management support might have hindered the decision-making of the bank, while 19.9% indicated that inadequate infrastructure that might have hindered the decision- making of the bank. These findings suggest that the shift to virtual working introduced several potential hindrances to decision-making in the banks such as lack of resources, lack of top management support, and inadequate infrastructure.

Perceived Performance during COVID Driven Virtual Working

The study asked the respondents to rate their perceived performance during COVID driven virtual working. The findings are presented in Figure 13.

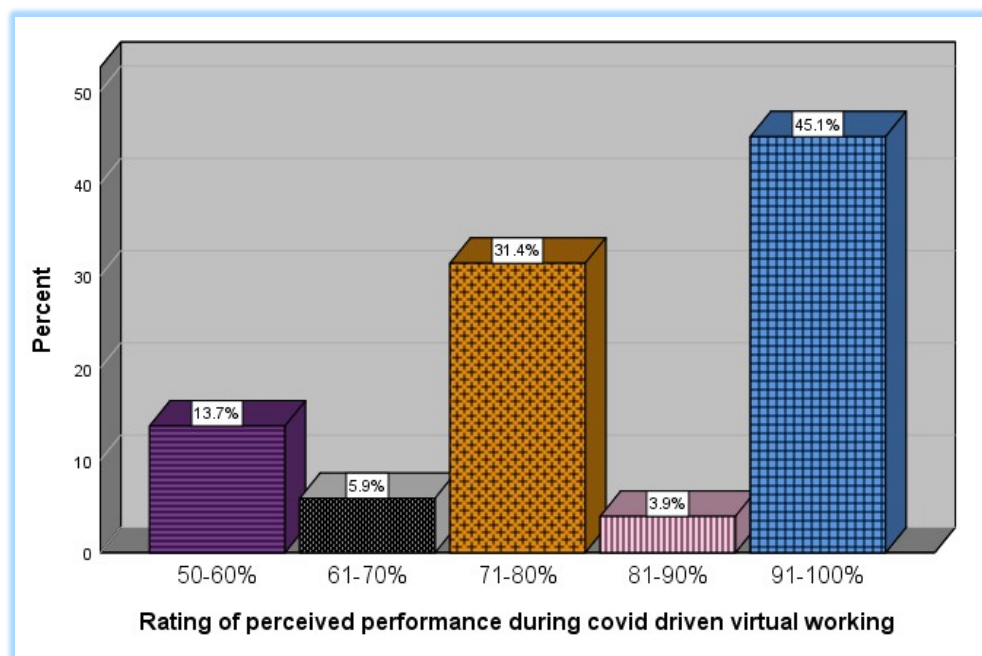


Figure 13: Rating of Perceived Performance during Covid Driven Virtual Working

Source; Authors.

Findings presented in Figure 13 show that the majority (45.1%) rated their perceived performance during COVID driven virtual working at 91% to 100%, 3.9% rated the performance at between 81% and 90%, 31.4% rated at 71% to 80%, 5.9% rated at 61% to 70%, while 13.7% rated their performance at 50% to 60%. Overall, the findings indicate that while a considerable portion of employees perceived their performance to be relatively high or moderately affected during the COVID-driven virtual working period, there were also notable percentages of employees who reported experiencing declines in their perceived performance. This suggests that the impact of virtual working on perceived performance was varied across individuals.

Factors that might have Hindered Perceived Employee Performance

The study sought to find out the factors that might have hindered perceived employee performance of the banking sector in Kenya. The results are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Factors that might have hindered perceived employee performance of the banking sector in Kenya

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor communication	15	28.3	28.3
Lack of resources	15	28.3	56.6
Lack of top management support for virtual work	15	28.3	84.9
Lack of a clear organizational structure	8	15.1	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

Source; Authors.

From the findings presented in Table 10, the respondents identified poor communication, lack of resources, lack of top management support for virtual work at 28.3% each, and lack of a clear organizational structure at 15.1%, as factors that might have hindered perceived employee performance of the banking sector in Kenya. These findings suggest that the perceived hindrances to employee performance in Kenyan banks' virtual work settings were largely tied to poor communication, lack of resources, lack of top management support for virtual work, and the absence of a clear organizational structure.

Frequency of Performance Evaluations Carried Out in the Banks

The study sought to find out how regularly performance evaluations were carried out in the banks. The findings are presented in Figure 14.

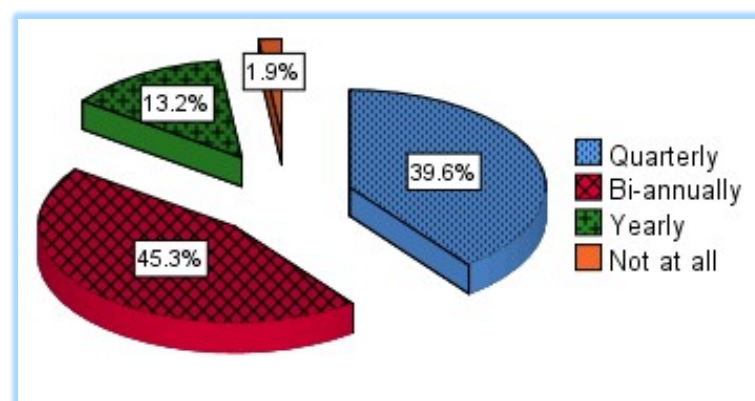


Figure 4.14: Frequency of carrying out performance evaluations in the banks

Source; Authors.

The findings presented in Figure 14 show that a majority (45.3%) of the respondents said performance evaluations were carried out bi-annually in their banks, 39.6% said they are carried out quarterly, 13.2% said they are carried out yearly, while 1.9% they are not carried out at all. These findings indicate that a substantial proportion of Kenyan banks performed performance evaluations bi-annually or quarterly.

Descriptive Statistics for ICT Infrastructure

Whether the respondents who worked from home, had an internet connection

The study sought to find out whether the respondents who worked from home, had internet connection. The findings are summarized in Figure 15.

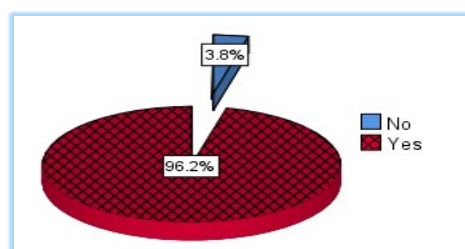


Figure 15: Whether the respondents who worked from home, had an internet connection

Source; Authors.

The study findings in Figure 15 show that 96.2% agreed that they had an internet connection at home, while 3.8% said they did not have. The findings highlight a high rate of internet connectivity among the employees who worked from home. This suggests that the employees were relatively well equipped technologically for remote work.

Whether the Internet Connection at Home was Reliable

The study asked the respondent who had an internet connection at home, whether it was reliable. The responses are summarized in Figure 16.

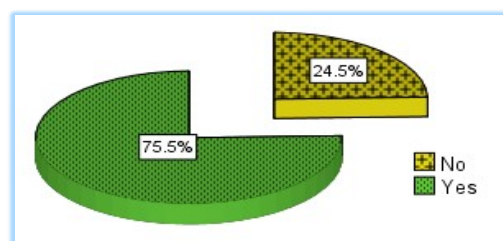


Figure 16: Whether the Internet Connection at Home was Reliable

Source; Authors.

From the results in Figure 16, a majority, 75.5% of the respondents affirmed that the internet connection at home was reliable while 24.5% said it was not. These findings suggest that a significant proportion of the

employees perceived their home internet connection as reliable, while a notable minority faced challenges with unreliable connections.

Whether the respondents had a Separate Working Space at Home

The study sought to establish whether the respondents had a separate working space at home. The responses are summarized in Figure 17.

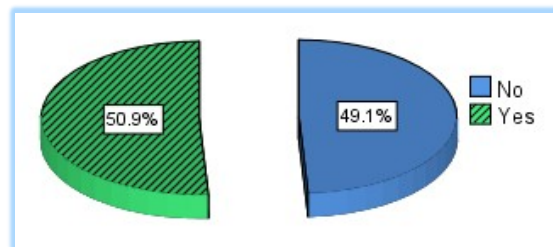


Figure 17: Whether the respondents had a separate working space at home

Source; Authors.

From the findings in Figure 17, 50.9% of the respondents affirmed that they had a separate working space at home, while 49.1% said they did not have. The findings indicate that the distribution of respondents who do or do not have a separate working space at home provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by virtual working arrangements in Kenyan Banks.

Reliability Analysis

The study carried out a reliability analysis using Likert scale sections in the questionnaire. The findings are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Reliability Test of the Questionnaire Items

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Virtual Working Models	.931	3
Work Practices and Policies whilst Working Remotely	.961	5
The Conditions of Remote Working	.956	4
Covid-19 Driven Virtual Working	.970	5
Covid-19 Driven Remote Working	.985	3

Source; Authors.

From the findings presented in Table 11, all the questionnaire sections that were tested were found to be reliable since they all had Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of above 0.7 threshold.

Correlation Analysis

The study carried out inter-item bi-variate correlation analysis using the SPSS software and the findings are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Bi-Variate Correlation Analysis

Correlations						
		Work Practices and Policies whilst Working				
		Remotely				
		Virtual Working	Remote Working	Virtual Working Models	The Conditions of Remote Working	
Virtual Working	Pearson	1	.942**	.967**	.943**	.978**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	53	53	53	53	53
Covid-19 Driven Remote Working	Pearson	.942**	1	.960**	.948**	.947**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	53	53	53	53	53
Virtual Working Models	Pearson	.967**	.960**	1	.981**	.969**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	53	53	53	53	53

Work Practices and Policies whilst Working Remotely	Pearson		.943**	.948**	.981**	1	.952**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000		.000
	N		53	53	53	53	53
The Conditions of Remote Working	Pearson		.978**	.947**	.969**	.952**	1
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N		53	53	53	53	53

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source; Authors.

Table 12 above shows that in the bi-variate correlation analysis, all the variables had a strong positive and statistically significant (i.e., p-values = 0.000) correlations. This implied that as one variable varies the variability of other variables positively varies in the direction of change of the first variable.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

From the study findings, it was established that the adoption of virtual working models among the Kenyan banks is relatively limited considering that 60.4% of respondents strongly disagreed that their banks allow or provide for virtual working model. Those that have virtual working models in place, the study found that meetings, treasury management, webinars and training, product marketing, IT services, customer support, contact center, and bank transactions e.g. deposits and withdrawals, loan applications/processing, were some of the processes and activities performed virtually especially during and post COVID-19. This conclusion is in line with that of Stalmachova et al., (2021) that examined how UniCredit Bank, changed its business strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and established that, the bank used chatbots to connect with potential clients. In a similar study by Wairimu, (2021) it was established that digital strategies implemented during COVID-19 included letting workers work from home, upgrading systems, boosting online banking services, enhancing aesthetics of digital platforms and upgrading security over systems and increasing allocation of resources. In the second objective, the study concluded that perceived employee performance was above 50%, which was above average. The study further concluded that poor communication, lack of adequate resources, lack of adequate top management support for virtual work and lack of a clear organizational structure were some of the factors that might hinder perceived employee performance of the banking sector in Kenya. In the third objective, the study concluded that virtual working had significant positive influence on perceived employee performance in the Kenyan Banking Sector.

Recommendations of the Study

The aim of this study was to find out the impact of virtual working on perceived employee performance, a case of the Kenyan Banking Sector. From the findings, it was established that virtual working significantly influenced perceived employee performance in the Kenyan Banking Sector. Therefore, this study recommends the adoption of measures and mechanism that enhance virtual working experience not only as a measure to deal with situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic but also as a strategic option to ensure efficiency and better performance. The study further established that there are other factors which might hinder perceived employee performance. These included poor communication, lack of resources, lack of adequate top management support for virtual work and lack of a clear organizational virtual support structure. As such, the study recommends that organizations that want to adopt virtual working look into these challenges and create the necessary policy interventions and other mitigation measures so as to optimize gains from virtual working framework.

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