

**CHALLENGES IN LEADING PEOPLE WITH WORK LIFE
BALANCE DURING WORK FROM HOME**



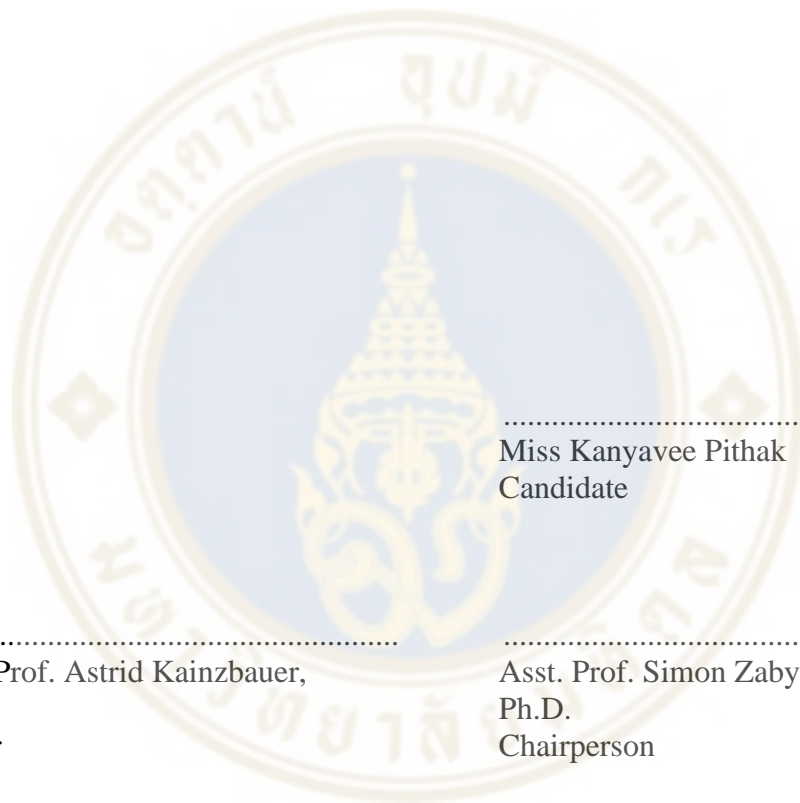
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entitled
**CHALLENGES IN LEADING PEOPLE WITH WORK LIFE
BALANCE DURING WORK FROM HOME**

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.....
Miss Kanyavee Pithak
Candidate

.....
Assoc. Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer,
Ph.D.
Advisor

.....
Asst. Prof. Simon Zaby,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

.....
Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

.....
Detlef Reis,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Kanyavee Pithak

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KANYAVEE PITHAK 6349082

M.M. (GENERAL MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. ASTRID KAINZBAUER, Ph.D., ASST. PROF. SIMON ZABY, Ph.D., DETLEF REIS, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find “What are the challenges of leaders during work from home? And also finding “What are their strategies to deal with people to get their jobs done during work from home?” The result of the research could create a guideline to see the way of improving in virtual leading for leaders.

This research used in-depth interviews with ten participations through online platform asking open-ended questions in order to gather their experiences.

In conclusion, this paper can be used as a guideline for dealing and managing people virtually while working from home.

KEY WORDS: Virtual / Challenges / Leading / Work from home

29 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Working from home has been used in some companies in recent years, but it was not popular. In contrast, technology has been developed and created innovations for the world, making it beneficial for people to have an easy life by using gadgets and technology. The purpose is to allow employees to work from home by managing their time and tasks themselves. It leads to the employees being able to deliver jobs effectively and being relaxed as they can spend time with family and themselves. We cannot deny that the traditional way of work is to spend working time at the office, however, is it really need for people to go to the office and communicate face-to-face to get the best result? Furthermore, how about work-life balance after work as they have to spend time mostly on traveling. People not only want to achieve the goal from working but also want to succeed in life. Is it really good for mental health, such as emotional, physiological, and well-being, as all are part of a successful life?

Most employees believe that they can deliver jobs as assigned wherever they are with technologies and internet connections. However, the old generation of the management team disagree as they insisted employees come to work at the office only because they do not realize that people can work everywhere and deliver effective results with efficiency. However, there has been a significant change after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 as people changed the way of working in the organization in many continents worldwide to keep social distances and reduce infections as there was a widespread pandemic all around the world. The pandemic has forced companies to work remotely to prevent spreading the virus, leading to leaders to manage work and lead their subordinates virtually.

Also, the transition of working from home needs to be adapted urgently. It is a significant change for the companies to allow employees to work-from-home by using technology in digitalization with a stable internet connection and with the security gate to work remotely from anywhere but leaders also need to manage their team

members in order to work efficiently. It is a resilient and challenging time for leaders to manage people during work from home because of many reasons, for example, the gap of generations, unfamiliar with technology, facilities at home do not work sufficiently, and some employees cannot concentrate on their job in the daytime because they have to take care of their children during the lockdown. So, they have to work until late at night to complete their assignments. We cannot deny that a leader is key to drive the completion of work, but which kind of successful leader that employees want to work with, what is the factor, and how do they motivate their teams. Therefore, it is a tough time and challenge for the company to find people who can manage their employees to the new normal lifestyle, adapt quickly, and be role models in the organization by using techniques and strategies to drive employees to meet performance levels.

The scope of this study is to focus on how people lead their concerned other parties and also subordinates during work-from-home and how they are able to deliver job's result effectively. The reason to select this topic is because this is what we have been going through and are still facing as being to lead others during work from home and notice that there are challenges in leading people effectively and still get the best results as colleagues will manage their work life balance while delivering their tasks.

This study aims to focus on people who have experience in leading others during work from home. The criteria of participations are from the people who have experience in leading others while working virtually from home. Sample selection of candidates will have at least a bachelor's degree and the interviewees are required to have at least 3 years' experience (middle management to top management positions) in any industries.

The author would like to focus on the following research questions;

1. "What are the challenges of leaders during work from home? (factors)
2. "What are their strategies to deal with people to get their jobs done during work from home?"

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand more about what are the challenges of companies to run their business smoothly during the COVID-19 pandemic relying on virtual leadership. This paper intends to investigate how leaders are able to keep operating their jobs and guide their teams virtually.

2.1 Work from Home

The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020) defines work from home 2020 as “Uniquely to home-base working teleworking as temporary, alternative working arrangement. It requires a shared responsibility and commitment by both employers and workers to ensure business continuity and employment”. In other words, it is to work from anywhere except the office by using the technological of telecommunicating. Work from home used to be an optional way of working for the corporate company that allows employees to work from home but still maintain productivity. In contrast, after COVID-19, work from home has been reshaped by a new normal living, which becomes an essential part of survival in the business world and that was needed to deliver products/services to customers as fast as possible.

2.1.1 Advantages of WFH

Working from home should allow people to be able to work at whatever time during the most productive time as long as the employees are able to access the company's system anywhere or take care of family members by managing their own time (Nakrosiene et al., 2019). So, the employee can plan and prioritize their tasks on their own, which they able to manage their time and allow to have time for relaxing rather than sitting at the office and pretending to be busy. However, does it really matter to the company as the employee can deliver their jobs.

2.1.2 Challenges of WFH (from the employee perspective)

During the global pandemic (COVID-19), working from home is needed, and many employees have to share the workspace with their partner or family members, and they also have to share household duties with others. In addition, there is an increasing number of people using remote working tools and e-platforms for conferencing and coordinating with colleagues, which is the new normal of interaction between people and gives opportunities to create a new business (Hancheng et al., 2021). However, people face some issues during working from home, which also has negative outcomes. For example, multitasking during Meetings, Factors Associated with Multitasking (distractions) make employees get more stress and work-life-imbalance.

2.2 Virtual Teams

A virtual team means the uniting of people in an organization that uses technology to transfer information and communicate by information technology to complete tasks and deliverable jobs (Maholta et al., 2007). Another virtual team definition is to “have members who potentially span different organizations, time zones, geographic locations, and cultures with technology enabling communication and coordination between members” (Johnson K., 2010).

Virtual leadership is the key to driving team members effectively by using technology-based communication tools and techniques to effectively lead teams in achieving organizational outcomes (Lilian, 2014). The virtual team leader needs to have strategies and effective ways to overcome communication challenges virtually. For example, assign jobs to subordinates, monitor the outcome and goal of each project, and the deadline target is needed to be informed.

2.3 Virtual Leadership

The meaning of virtual leadership is leading and managing a team via a remote working environment. Virtual leader is focusing on inspiring and supporting a team in order to achieve the goals. They must have the ability to inspire people and develop self-managing qualities to maintain the high-performance of the team.

Kniffin et al., 2021 stated that "Managers are often reluctant to implement WFH, mainly because of this fear of losing control of employees." However, leaders have task-oriented rather than relations-leadership (Madlock, 2012), and it is not really needed to show the power to force the employee to complete their work. However, people want trust from leaders and among the team. Therefore, the importance is how leaders create relations to make the team feel comfortable and willing to work towards the same vision and achieve the organization's objective. Madlock, 2012 founded that there was a higher emphasis on task-oriented work in the virtual workplace rather than traditional workplace. It was because distance leaders have to express more energy on interaction and communication while the traditional leaders have work setting which is easy to arrange informal interaction to teams. Literature also suggested that "Task oriented leadership style was a greater predictor of the communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, and commitment off telecommuters than it was with communication competence and relational oriented leadership". This means that the leaders who are perceived as an effective leader have to able to combine knowledge and skills together with the job and communicate task relevant information to the virtual followers.

A successful leader becomes a person who can balance monitoring work and make employees satisfied to manage themselves at home. In addition, it is more likely to run a team smoothly with a leader who can act as role models to support team members, build trust, be empathetic and be open-minded according to the team members' perspective, they look at their leaders as a person who can guide them and explore new ways of solving problems and achieve goals. (Anna Zeuge et al., 2020)

2.4 Challenges for Virtual Leaders

Many companies are dealing with the challenges of transferring to a new way of working due to COVID-19. A virtual team is selected to apply to the organization, allowing employees to work together even if they live on another side of the world. Otherwise, the employees and also leaders need to face the challenges as it is a new way of communicating of work through technology.

2.4.1 Communication Difficulties

Communication plays a major part in social interactions, and there has been a significant change of transitioning into virtual teams via online platforms instead of physical face to face meetings. The literature review found that there is lack of informal communication, for example, daily chats or updated personal issues conducted less often with interactions among the employees and this leads explicitly to a negative factor to team member interactions. It is the responsibility of the leaders to understand, respect, and create solidarity with the teams. In addition, leaders have to drive their team by improving, supporting and persuading them to deliver their jobs with commitment. The important thing is how to optimize virtual leadership to build relations among employees and make them most satisfied to run the business smoothly and provide the best result to the company. Before changing to virtual leading their relationship in the team has been built on face-to-face communication. However, some factors like immediately face to face interactions, body language and prompt feedback are essential to avoid miscommunicating and mistranslation (Daniel Scherling & Iván Camarero Lind, 2021).

The main important gearwheel in business comes from the employees. Thus, the key person to drive and engage the employees are leaders by leading teams, forming teams, building relationships, collaborating, and making them aware. The research (Lautsch et al., 2009) shows that the employees who work from home are not likely to follow the leader who is closely monitoring them and will give negative results. There is evidence that virtual work has already existed in a global business-leading company. There is a policy of the working time, working place by allowing employees to have flexible hours, flexible hiring, and virtual operations. For example, Microsoft, Google, Apple, etc. It also increases employee engagement levels and retention rate because it offers additional flexible time to do their responsibilities (Badrinarayanan & Arnett, 2012; Hunsaker, 2008).

2.4.2 Building Trust

Trust is the major challenge in virtual leading according to those use online platforms which leads to a lack of verbal and nonverbal communication as it is more

complicated to enhance trust and cooperation. (Daniel Scherling & Iván Camarero Lind, 2021)

Moreover, (Ford et al., 2016) stated that Teams who have a high level of trust in leaders “are more proactive, more focused on task output, have a more optimistic spirit, initiate more frequent interactions, and provide more substantive, productive feedback” The key to driving teamwork is the leadership of virtual teams on reaching the company's performance target (KPI) and successful goals by using a practical and straightforward strategy to manage people in a different working place.

2.4.3 Enabling more Interactions

According to COVID-19, the organization is constantly changing in a fast-paced environment because of agile leadership, competing challenges, so all organizations have to switch the way of working to work remotely from home. Indeed, the employees who work from home want to have their own time to manage their own tasks with the timeline agreed with the teams. Also, the virtual team leaders should create a flexible environment in order to provide opportunities, encourage team members to discuss and establish projects and to provide adequate technical support.

The other thing is to be empathetic, be open-minded (Anna Z et al., 2020) and sensitive to problems or something unusual and able to express personal interests and feedback to individual team members. During work from home, leaders can use technology such as video conference to hold personal interactions instead of face-to-face interactions. It is difficult to have frequent social interaction compared to working at the office where it is the great place to get to know other each other and build relationships. Also mentioned that the great way to keep team members aligned and stimulated on tasks as assigned should be considered for cooperation with communication such as daily meetings during the transition to virtual leading. (Daniel Scherling & Iván Camarero Lind, 2021)

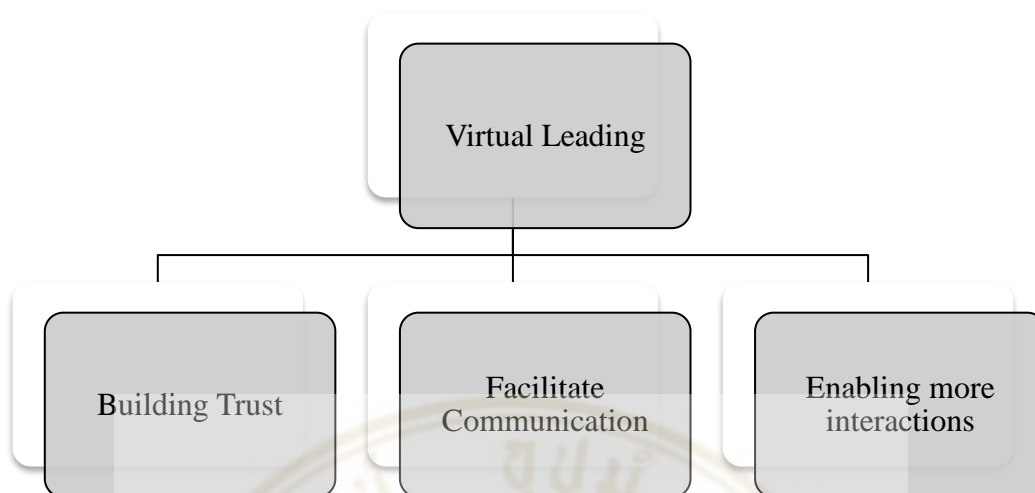


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Primary Data Collection Method

According to the analysis of literature review in chapter II which is related to virtual leadership. The qualitative research allows us to analyze and understand the information that gathering from the interviews referred to their experiences. The primary data will be collected from personally interviewing ten people who have experience in virtually leading others during working from home in order to achieve their job effectively. Sample selection of candidates will have at least a bachelor's degree to ensure a higher validity and reliability of this study.

In addition to the interview, the author will require the input of at least 3 years' experience (middle position) in any industries. The time of interview will be approximately 30-40 minutes with the total of twelve questions in the online interview instead of face-to-face interviews because of coronavirus pandemic.

3.2 Interview Method

The interview will be conducted in qualitative method for gathering in-dept information from open-ended questions in order to explore detail questions because we can understand the perspective of the interviewer on how to manage people virtually. The interview will be conducted by an online platform or a phone call instead of a face-to-face interview. Sampling selection of interviewees are not specific in managerial positions but also select people who have to lead others and all data will be collected from interviewees who currently work in Thailand in any industries.

Table 3.1 Interviewee lists

No	Industry Type	Position	Work experience (Years)	Team members	Gender	Age	Nationality
1	Power and Technology	Senior Engineer	12	6	Male	34	Thai
2	Business Consultancy	Director	42	105	Male	65	Thai
3	Food	Marketing Manager	12	11	Female	36	Thai
4	Engineering	Project Manager	12	6	Male	36	Thai
5	Construction	Senior Engineer	9	9	Female	31	Thai
6	Medical	Logistics Manager	15	6	Female	39	Thai
7	Chemical	Senior officers	10	8	Female	34	Thai
8	Telecommunication	Assistance HR Manager	6	5	Female	27	Thai
9	Business	Marketing Manager	23	18	Female	46	Thai
10	IT	Senior IT analyst	5	9	Female	27	Thai

3.2.1 Interview Questions

The qualitative research is using the open-ended questions which are a basic list of questions including background of the interviews. The interview session will start with basic information of the interviewees. The questions are designed with the intention to understand their attitude and the way to handle a job virtually.

General Questions

1. How many years of experience of working in this company?
2. How many people are in your team?
3. How long has the company allowed their employees to work from home for?

4. What are the most difficult things (during) about working from home?
5. What are your challenges in managing team members virtually? (Late response/ workflow/ delay delivery job/ miscommunication/ argument between 2 parties)

Open-ended Interview Questions

1. What is the difficulty while managing your team members simultaneously with your job during work from home? And how do you deal with it?
2. Refer to previous question, does it take a longer time than work at the office? (do you still have your work life balance?)
3. What kind of support do you help your team members with during work from home?
4. What is the key factor to help your team complete their jobs? (Motivation/ empathy/ embrace difference/ build team/ be a role model)
5. What advice do you give to your team members?
6. What aspect do you think that is the most challenging to control you team members virtually?
7. How do you manage your job responsibility if your team members are infected with COVID-19 or tend to resign during working from home?
8. If there is a new joiner in your team, how do you train new members during working from home?
9. What is your vision about working from home (do you think it is a good way to continue working from home onwards?) and why?
10. How can you manage your team members to get the job done? And do you think it works or not?
11. What is the difference between leading a team virtually and physically? (Face to face interaction/ voice tone)
12. Between face-to-face communication and virtual communication which way of communication do you prefer? And why?
13. Does working from home effect your teamwork? If yes/no, please explain or give an example.
14. What is the overall team efficiency between working from home vs working at the office? (Very good/ good/ fair/ not good)

15. Refer to Q11 if working from home effects to get lower efficiency than working at the office. How do you suggest solutions to improve performance for your team members?

3.3 Data Analysis

The author would like to explore on how to lead people and the factors that can contribute to the successful virtual leadership. The following chapter will summarize the data findings.



CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

This thematic paper is conducting qualitative research as the main tools based on the scope of the study in order to analyze and summarize overall data collected from ten interviewees.

Background information

All of the interviewees did not have experience with managing people virtually before the COVID-19 crisis when the government announced that every company needs to work-from-home. The total number of interviewees were 10, 7 out of 10 were female and 3 out of 10 were male. All of them work in difference industries, and they currently work in middle management position or top management level.

4.1 Challenges

The most important challenge of virtual leading is to integrate personal life with a virtual team. As the members are in different places which may be/ may be not proper for working from home. It could be problematic to balance work and personal matters.

4.1.1 Lack of Personal Connection

For the virtual leading team can have a lack of personalize face-to-face interaction, a lack of rapport among team members, gesture, body language, eye contact and other nonverbal communication because of long distance relationships in team members. They also face a loss of control with their subordinate as they do not keep in touch and monitor them all the time. So, some of the team members are not willing to follow the rules or are trying to ignore the order.

“It is normal to be judged to be right or wrong during any arguments. My team have a lot of arguments with colleagues and also myself during working from home

and it is getting harder because we cannot see each other face to face and do not have real interactions. The example case is, when we have a new joiner in our team, and he cannot get along with the team. He is stuck in the old thinking, or you can see he has a fixed mindset and tends to work in the same way that he is familiar with. He was wondering why he should do it why not others? I have to talk individually with the new joiner and team one by one. Finally, the route cause is miscommunication, and it was getting worst because if even we use online platforms for meeting but the voice tone that my team uses sounds not friendly even if they are not intending to be rude. I suggest them to think if they are in the same position as the new joiner is, how do you feel and are you happy to work here and why? I am trying to make my team be emphatic to others.” (Person #1)

The challenge that person 1 faced is a lack of face-to-face interaction among team members and a lack of leading team members who are the new joiner to the team. He does not take care of the new members and lets them feel isolated. The challenge he is facing is his team cannot get along with each other and it is very hard to group them to be the team.

“It is very hard to control my teams virtually and it is significantly changing the way of working compared to working at the office, my team did not inform me about the problem to me, but I knew from another department when it was too late. I would like to bring the team working together and have a same vision. I am trying to compromise and use the soft tone of voice when I talk to my teams, but it is really difficult to express what I was thinking and what I need them to do.” (Person #6)

The relevant with this quotation is about a lack in team relationship and communication especially during working from home as she had lead people virtually and they cannot follow up everything and she expects her team members to inform her. Comparing to the working at the office, it is easier because we can see each other and have an interaction

4.1.2 Unresolved Conflicts among teams and co-workers

It is normal that people always have an argument all the time because of work. Especially for the jobs which are needed to be done from many parties. The interviewees informed that their team members always debate while brainstorming in

the meeting room at the office but the situation in the room is most likely when we are in a war. Eventually after the meeting was done, everyone released their anger, ego and disappointment out in that room and was kind, nice and friendly as usual.

However, once it was moved to a virtual meeting, the arguments were still there but the stress, pressure and anger did not release at the end of the meeting.

After the end of the meeting, we can see each other's face and we can patch things up while see each other's face to face at the office compared to working from home, we are just sitting at the table on our own. I received complaints that there were disagreements and some awkwardness in the team if they cannot blow off steam. The reason is because Thai's nature is not familiar with talking directly to the person who makes you feel unsatisfied or a person who has more power than you.

“My team pointed out that there is one of our team members is trying to reject some of her duties for no reason while working from home and when the rest of the team ask for the reason, she cannot give the reasonable answer but replies shortly that she will not do this task anymore. It makes the rest of the team feel upset and talk to her with bad speech. After the meeting, nobody talked to her, and she felt unhappy and uncomfortable that I had to talk one-on-one to everyone in the team for making them calm down and use the concept of compromising.” (Person #10)

The most relevant with this quotation is there is an unpleasantness during working from home, as everyone needs to work on their own and be more responsible. This might be unfair of assigning tasks to each person in the team and there are some team members who are not satisfied. Also, Thai people prefer to have indirect communication rather than direct communication which leads to conflicts in the team.

4.1.3 Difficulties to Coordinate Collaboration Online

Another interesting factor that happens in traditional way of working for people who work and communicate face to face, team members also need the face-to-face interaction in order to perform brainstorming ideas or when need someone needs support, but once it was changed to work from home leaders have to be involved in communication and collaboration synchronously. However, we need to recheck that the person we need are available to support us at that time or not through the status and text the message that we need help and wait until they reply via online platforms. On the

other hand, compared to working at the office employees just walk to their table and get the answer.

“Relationship among our team is quite challenging because we are familiar with discussing directly across our desks, but once we moved to work from home which we did not have experience with. So, we need time to adjust ourselves. For example, at first when we need some help, we have to check the status on the online platform to see if he/she is available or not. Also, we are not sure that others are convenient to pick up a call or not which effects in spending more time to finish my work.” (Person #9)

“My team sometimes use more time to complete work during working from home compared to working at the office. I try to figure out what is the reason and I found that when she gets stuck at her work, she can ask across the desk to her teammates. However, once it was changed to working from home, she needs to worry that the concerning people are available or not and try to set the appoint time with them. It is so annoying for waiting and checking available time, and she tries to solve issues herself which is taking more time to complete.” (Person #10)

The challenge that Person#9 and 10 faced is about spending more time when they needed support from others as she can get the support immediately. Once it was changed to working from home. She needs to check that the person is available to help her at that time or not and waiting for the reply until asking for the support. Also, it will not reply in real-time.

“While working at the office, I can point out and brainstorm in the meeting with my team members and other concerned people, I can show presentation and write down on the board. On the other hand, once it was moved to online meeting, I feel that people did not give any attention to me. I have to use a lot of energy to control people’s attention.” (Person #8)

The relevance with this quotation is about people do not give attention to others during virtual meetings which leads to extra time for conclusion and find mutual agreement. It is a very tough time that everyone has pending tasks to do and have to spend extra time on what they need to explain it more than once.

4.2 Strategies

4.2.1 Team Building/ Improving Relationship of Team Members

We found that most of the interviewee's feedback said that their team members have good a relationship before they started working from home. They also defined that the culture in their organization is such a good place to work not only in their team but also to other concerned departments too. So, it was easy to group them and create team building while working from home. While some of the participants said that the feedback and the relationship among team members before and after virtual leading is totally different. After virtual leading, some of the team members are not willing to talk about other topics except work or some of them feel not close to each other at all. As there is a distance between team members. However, they try to group the team as it used to be.

In addition, there are some participants who shared that they have problems about taking too much time to create team building as they used to work individually, and they are not familiar to talk directly but they discuss via email only. So, the problem they found is about related information was not shared in the team, and they cannot promptly reply once somebody asks as he/she needs to recheck in the team before confirming or committing.

It is important to make relationships in your team because people feel isolated and lack of human touch during working from home. The interview result showed that relationships in a team significantly affects to employee satisfaction and team members are willing to help other's work. Also, it leads to time delays compared to working at the office. However, once teams have adapted themselves into new working context, everything is going smooth, and they can solve the problems effectively.

"We are a good team, always help each other when individuals need to get the job done. We can discuss and share opinions even if there was conflict with the normal practice in the company, but I am delighted to hear any both positive and negative feedback from my subordinates. From my perspective, we can share any ideas which might be helpful directly to our job, department, and the company. So, why won't we give people a chance?" (Person #3)

The strategy that quote from Person#3 is she/he has a good teamwork by building relationships in the team. Everyone is willing to help, support and give feedback both positive and negative. Collaborative works well for this team in order to complete assignments.

4.2.2 Building Trust and Believing in Team Members

Leaders in the interviews said that they need to create trust with team members, it is needed to be competent and honest. Team members tend to engage and be more productive during working from home because it gives them more flexibility and more work life balance. It is not necessary for the leader to track in detail how they work but every employee can work in the ways that they want, or they think it is more productive.

“I used to be the person who would follow up and monitor my team closely, but it does not work. I also notice from the performance of the team which is not as good as it was when we worked at the office. I invited all my team to investigate for the route cause and they gave feedback that one of the reasons is they feel stressed and have lots of pressure which led to they cannot focus properly as they have a lot of fear and annoyance to report me every steps of work. After I change to allowing them to work freely and inform me if they need my support, the job results improved” (Person #6)

“I do not care what people do during the day. For example, are they working or do something else during working time? I care only they can send the results of work as committed. I have experienced that people must be responsible, and plan to proceed their work as they please in order to complete it efficiently” (Person #2)

“I trust in my team members, and I can define them from the job results. We have an agreement that if their result is underqualified, I will set up a one-on-one meeting for investigating and we have a punishment if their delay effects to the overall team performance.” (Person #4)

The strategies that these quotations use is about trust and believe in team members, everyone has responsibility and commitment to complete their jobs. The participants allow their subordinates to work freely by not tracking along the process but focusing on the results. At the end, they found that it works to allow people to work on their own.

4.2.3 Understand Team Members' Feeling

The interesting finding is that people feel isolated when working from home as they are familiar to communicate directly to others at the office not only about works but also other issues including personal issues. So, leading people virtually during work from home is needed to be monitored and follow up team members. The intention of doing this is not for watching attentively for a mistake but it is to determine that team members who need or require support from their leaders for further involvement. So, leaders can swiftly support and respond. Also, help to investigate the problem.

Moreover, the working environment at home of some team members is not a proper place to work. There are interruptions from family members during the day. They receive feedback from team members that they always have arguments with their family and the relationship with colleagues is not as good as working at the office. So, leaders have to be open-minded and be empathetic to understand and be supportive to team members. Some of the participants handled these issues by giving them the deadline of work and allowing them to manage their time during working hours and team members are happier to work and have fewer arguments with the family. Also, it does not affect to the work result.

“At the beginning of the period of work from home, we were all quite relaxed as we do not have to spend time to travel to work. We can have more time for relaxing after working time. However, it is too long to work remotely and do not have something like human touch.” (Person #9)

Referring to this context, employees want interaction between people. At that time leaders can do only virtual group work with everyone through the online platform and ask them to open the camera during the meeting.

“I was setting up a morning talk meeting in my team for just only 15 minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in order to catch up with which work should we prioritize and what are the major issues and need my help or support. Also, we used the time together to catch up with what in life was going on? We took care of our team like a part of the family because we spend time at least one-third of the day at work. We should spend happy time with it.” (Person #5)

The strategies that this quotation use was setting up the quick talk meeting to catch up the work and also other topics including support from leaders or team members.

4.2.4 Setting Mutual Team Tasks

From the interview I found that, people usually working on an individual task depends on his/her duty or assignments. However, sometimes individual tasks might conflict or deviate from the team objective. That is the reason why leaders should set team mutual tasks in order to ensure and allow team members to have the same understanding while working from home.

“5 months ago, I have to lead a virtual “Factory Acceptance Test (FAT)” meeting with an operations team from the factory in Germany and customers from Thailand. The FAT in a normal situation is required inspection of the equipment at the factory. It is required participation from three parties which are my team (as project team), factory (as a manufacturer) and customer (as end user). However, due to the pandemic that we cannot travel out of the country, and we cannot postpone the FAT schedule. At that time, the best thing that we can do is to set up a virtual FAT meeting by online platform. It is challenging because we need to set our mutual tasks and assign job responsibilities to each team member in order to complete FAT and get acceptance from the customer. The difficult thing is about preparing ourselves (my team and the factory team).

We have to be well-prepared about the way to introduce our products and what will be shown on camera. We can request the technical team to join this online FAT meeting and we can promptly answer the questions from the customers. Also, before the FAT meeting, we have to setup the internal meeting to anticipate issues which might be happening during the upcoming FAT and find the alternative ways. I think that it quite important to work hard, focus on the same task and have a mutual objective of what we are doing and create an FAT plan in order to run the FAT meeting smoothly.”
(Person #4)

At the end, the way to work must be adapted in order to survive in this pandemic situation, but the most important is the way to approach team members to have a mutual objective by explaining each step, follow up each individual task and

monitor them. Even, it is virtual, but the key is to make everyone in the team see the same picture of the result.

4.3 Future Outlook - mindset about leading people during working from home

It is interesting that all of the interviewees are willing to continue of working-from-home if the company allows it, as they feel that they are having more work life balance rather than work at the office. They also agree that they are comfortable to control their team and comfortable for discussion in a big group via online platforms which are helping to save working time.

In overall they think that it is a good way to continue working from home as they found that their team efficiency is improving because team members can reduce travelling time and they can manage their work life balance better than working at the office. The reason behind this is they believe that the world changes every life and people need to adapt quickly. Moreover, one of my participants mentioned that “it will not only allow employees to work from home, but they will allow them to work from anywhere while remaining or improving of work productively”.

“My team tend to work quicker and better as they can focus on their own and they can concentrate on their work. Also, our team has short meetings every Wednesday to feedback about this week to find out what we can do good, do better and ways to improve. The meeting led to everyone in the meeting to express their opinion and help each other to achieve our goal.” (Person #1)

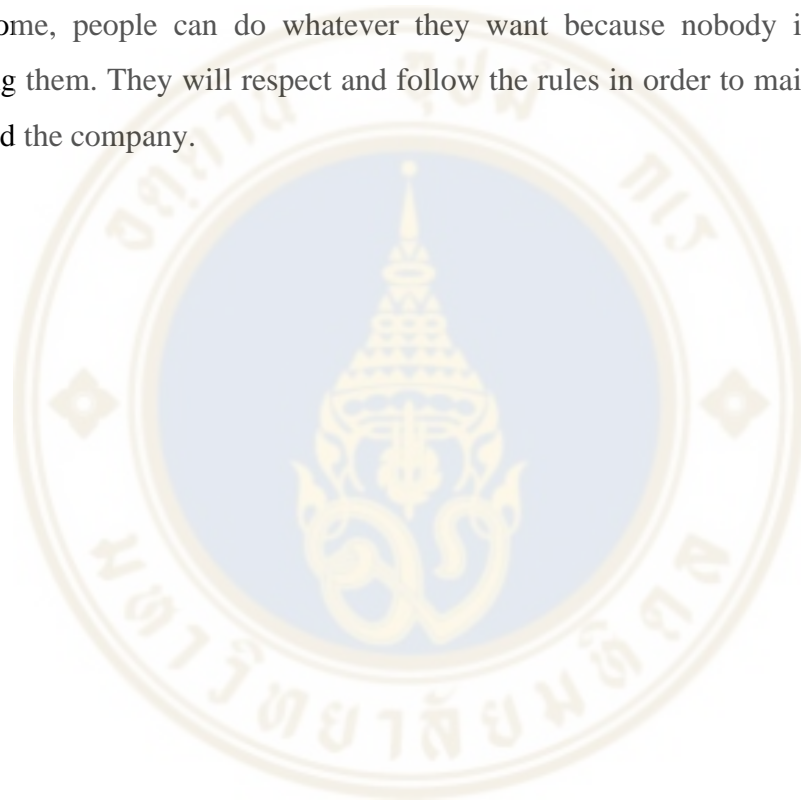
“My team members enjoy working from home because they can manage their time after work to go exercise and she told me that she can focus about work more than working at the office while she works harder as everyone needs to be ready for urgent meetings online. So, we all are so alert on every day of work”. (Person #4)

“I can let my subordinate work on his own, and I can see the result is really impressive.” (Person #10)

“I am allowing my teams who are inconvenience to work from home to come to the office when the situation is getting better if they want to. But we still use online platforms for communicating. The results after I announce, there are 50/50 of my team

who love to go to work at the office because their house is not the proper place to work due to their children are studying from home as well and grandparents will ask them to take care of their children.” (Person #2)

In terms of employee satisfaction, none of them informed that employees were unsatisfied with leading people virtually. They informed that everyone has a responsibility to complete their job as assigned. Their team members told leaders that trust is built on real relationships. So, when they commit to something that they are going to finish it, others are counting and waiting for you to deliver jobs. During work from home, people can do whatever they want because nobody is monitoring or watching them. They will respect and follow the rules in order to maintain trust to the team and the company.



CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the research question mentioned that “What are the challenges of leaders during working from home? and what are their strategies to deal with people to get their jobs done during working from home?”. After gathering information from in-depth interviews, found that in terms of comparison between qualitative research and literature review, it shows the finding as follows;

5.1.1 The Challenges of Leaders During Work from Home

The writer can summarise that many of the interviews have experienced lost in translation, miscommunication and they are needed to express on clearing clarification. Communication on virtual team is different from communicating face to face because of the people who lead virtual teams need the strong skill of virtual team communicating. In order to avoid misunderstanding and delays in transmitting information among teams. In case of face to face meetings, we are able to discuss directly. Also, team members tend to keep silent unless they were asked. In addition, people tend to keep silent while working from home which leads to the delay of transferring information and also, we cannot see their interactions and do they really understand.

Most of the challenges are from the people’s behavior which can be resolved. Leaders have informed that there is undoubtable stress during working from home, both are from team members’ consultancy about personal issues, and work-related issues. Leaders can be distracted easily by the environment or family members and team members also steal focuses while doing their jobs and control the team performance simultaneously. It could be the tough time for leaders to figure out and find the way to improve as managing people while working from home

However, collaboration in the team is very helpful for the team in order to balance workload into an incremental.

5.1.2 The Strategies to Deal With People to Get their Jobs Done during Work from Home

Every company has been facing with the same situation that people need to adapt in a fast-paced environment and change quickly. So, direction of leaders is important to give vision to the team, it does not matter how difficult of work effect to job result, it depends on building and maintaining relationships to improve employee satisfaction. Leaders could give praise or feedback to the team. The team members would like to show colleagues and their boss that their performance is still on track or beyond the goal target. It is interesting that people think that it is difficult to coordinate collaboration online.

It is not necessary for the leader to track in detail how they work but every employee can work in the ways that they want, or they think it is more productive. By the way, there are leaders who behave like fault detection people on watching light color status via online platforms such as Microsoft teams, Google meets and wondering about if my team members still work or not. It is useless because the key to build the team is to create trust with team members. They tend to engage and be more productive during working from home because it gives them more flexibility and more work life balance.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Effective Teamwork with Clear Communication

Based on previous chapters I found that leaders should try to change the way of coordinating towards their teams. Leaders can improve their cooperation and communication by setting the target and let their team members do and waiting for support from them (if any). Even if most of the employees tend to have less communication because they feel isolated and there is nothing to discuss. So, it is leaders' responsibility to be empathetic and understand people's feelings. They should

notice for the unusual behavior and find the way to increase communication in the team or individual members to ensure that everything is okay, and the problem will be solved.

5.2.2 Act as a Role Model

It is more likely to be successful in being a virtual leader if the leader can act as a role model and support the team members by both communicating and caring for any involvement.

We cannot deny that the direction of the leaders is the most important to lead people during working from home because people tend to believe and follow who are more intelligent than ourselves. Moreover, leaders who have more experiences can influence team members easier by sharing a vision and setting the target. Another reason is leaders can motivate team members as they manage their team directly and with confidence on making any decisions.

5.2.3 Keep Strong Relationship in Team

The company has to ensure that their employees are satisfied in remote working place's environment to make the most productive result. Leaders need to ensure that teams are working in the safe and comfortable working environment, and everyone is able to speak up and share about their concerned issues.

Also, leaders have to overcome team member's feelings of isolation in order to build team cohesion, establish normal collaboration and knowledge sharing in the team. We cannot deny that employees are the key to drive the company to go further and they are valuable resources. It could be helping the company to keep the valuable resources as people in the organization to avoid resignation and stay working in the company.

5.2.4 Give Appreciation to Team Members

Leaders should specifically give appreciation for what teams have done for a team or individual assignments. It helps team members feel a positive emotion even if it is the little things.

It is simple thing to say “Thank you” or any other words that your team desire to receive because it helps to inspire team members to maintain what they do good and improve what they can do better to achieve the great performance.

5.2.5 Resolve Any Kind of Conflicts Among Team

Leaders could create a healthy environment in a team when there is an abnormal situation among the team by setting a new culture and direction through team meetings. The objective of team meetings is to help team members speak out, give feedback, complaints, and recommendations for everyone, not only colleagues but also leaders. There will be no judgment during the meeting, and everyone can understand each other by listening and finding the solutions. For the leader part, they can provide any help and support to the team and lead team building and conflict management activities. In the end, a team can take action together to resolve the problem before it escalates.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Studying people from different industries through this research might give a different perspective on the challenges and strategies of leaders during working from home. The reason is that they operate and work differently in the normal situation. So, once they change to work-from-home. Therefore, focusing on one industry might help us gather aspects that can help leaders deal with the challenges and find the proper strategy. Moreover, the number of interviews and age range might be affected because there are different opinions, mindsets, and points of view about the challenges of working from home from different generations. In addition, the time frame for research is limited to approximately 3.5 months and there are only 10 interviewees for gathering and analyzing the data for qualitative research.

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