



**HYBRID WORKING SYSTEM FROM A CIVIL SERVANT PERSPECTIVE:  
A CASE OF THE NATIONAL TREASURY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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## Declaration

I, Tinyiko Tonny Maluleke, declare that the research project at this moment handed in for the qualification Master's in Business Administration at the UFS Business School at the University of the Free State is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at/in another university/faculty.

Signature:



Date: 2025/01/13

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This journey has been long and hard however, it was made easier in my belief in the higher power to guide me through it. Thanks, to God Almighty for giving me everything that I needed to be here. For guidance, strength, for holding and carrying me through.

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## Abstract

Organisations all around the world are focusing critically on implementing hybrid work systems as a result of changing work dynamics, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, careless system implementation can lead to inefficiencies, misalignment of team goals, and lower production. This study examines the challenges and merits of implementing hybrid work systems, particularly at the National Treasury of South Africa. The study addressed the inadequacies in the adoption of hybrid work systems, which has impeded employee alignment with team goals and organisational efficiency. A qualitative research design informed by the interpretivism philosophy was used to acquire profound insights into employee experiences and perspectives. Structured interviews were utilised to gather data from a sample of twelve (12) National Treasury officials. This allowed for a thorough investigation of the implementation-related concerns. The key themes include the origin of the hybrid working system, employee awareness about the hybrid working system, barriers to the application of the hybrid working system, positive and negative impact of the working systems on productivity and performance at the National Treasury of South Africa. These key findings indicate that while hybrid work systems can save operating costs and boost efficiency, their effectiveness primarily hinges on maintaining employee alignment with team objectives and offering continuous, tailored training and support. Staff familiarisation with the digital tools and workflows necessary to maximise productivity in a hybrid work environment is made possible by these training programs. The study recommends that, the National Treasury of South Africa implement more adaptable work schedules considering employees' preferences and commitments. By doing so, businesses may enhance worker satisfaction, which will boost output and create a more effective compelling hybrid work environment.

## **Key words**

**Hybrid Work-** A flexible working model that combines in-office work and remote work, offering employees the ability to split their work time between physical and virtual environments.

**Flexible Work Arrangements-** Policies that allow employees to choose their work location, hours, and schedule to suit personal and professional needs, promoting autonomy and productivity.

**Remote Work-** A work arrangement where employees perform their duties outside the traditional office, often from home or other locations, enabled by digital tools.

**In-Office Work-** A traditional work arrangement where employees are physically present in the workplace to perform their roles and collaborate face-to-face.

**Telecommuting-** A specific form of remote work where employees use technology to perform work tasks from a location outside the office, reducing commuting time.

**Workplace Flexibility-** An organisational practice that allows adjustments in work hours, locations, and methods to accommodate employee preferences and organisational needs.

**Digital Transformation-** The integration of digital technologies into work processes, enabling hybrid work systems by facilitating virtual communication, collaboration, and task management.

**Virtual Collaboration** -The use of digital tools and platforms to enable teamwork and communication among employees working from different locations.

**Employee Productivity-** A measure of the efficiency and effectiveness of employees' work output, which can be influenced by hybrid work models through flexibility and reduced distractions.

**Work-Life Balance-** The equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life, often enhanced by hybrid work systems due to flexible scheduling.

**Organisational Culture-** The shared values, norms, and practices within an organisation that shape employee behaviour and can be challenged or transformed in a hybrid work environment.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 Introduction

The notion of hybrid working, which involves people dividing their time between remote work and working at a central office, has garnered considerable attention in recent years. The main catalyst for this transition has been technological progress, which has been further expedited by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic (Malila et al., 2023). With the fast evolution of the work environment, enterprises are faced with both opportunities and obstacles in adopting the hybrid working system. The proposed study sought to investigate the hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective with particular reference to the National Treasury of South Africa (NTSA). This section of the study presents and discusses the study background, problem statement, research objectives, significance of study research questions and delimitations. The study seeks to address lack of Afro-centric information on hybrid models as a research gap.

#### 1.2 Background of the study

The term hybrid has been used for quite some time. Bloom et al. (2022) explained hybrid working from home (hybrid) as an instance, whereby employees work a combination of days at home and at work each week. On the other hand, Iqbal et al. (2021) described hybrid working system as a whole novel facet of how technology is integrated into people's everyday lives. Hybrid work systems gained prominence due to movement restriction implemented to curb the 2019 Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19).

The COVID-19 pandemic was a public health emergency of international concern and posed a challenge to the psychological resilience of employees (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021). Due to the quick spread of the disease, the World Health Organisation classified it as a global pandemic; as a result, all state and non-state actors had to collaborate to stop the spread. The virus has changed livelihoods and work patterns in ways that we had not anticipated (Agostoni, 2020). The outbreak of Covid-19 has changed all forms of structure and contingency plans that may have worked before and forced humanity to look at how to work and live through new lens. The harsh reality that was experienced globally was that the world as it was known will never be the same again (Bauer et al., 2020). Social distancing was imperative and as a result,

remote and flexible work was forced into organisations, including the National Treasury of South Africa. The sudden need for work from home was not only driving the digital transformation of the public sector and the evolution of the work environment at an unprecedented speed but also allowed the public sector to experience this dynamic (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021). Hybridity in the workplace is defined as the integration of remote work systems alongside traditional office layouts (Santos et al., 2020).

Some employees work at a company or organisation's physical location, while others do their jobs remotely via the Internet. Individuals with access to the internet could participate in hybrid arrangements in which they spend time alternating working from home and from the office (Green et al., 2020). Therefore, the unique benefits associated with remote working systems may also be enjoyed by a company using hybrid systems. These benefits include more job flexibility, lower labour costs, higher employee happiness, autonomy, job satisfaction, and a better work-life balance (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021). However, hybrid and remote working systems are not without criticism; adverse effects of hybrid working systems include social and professional isolation, perceived threats to professional advancement, long working hours in an “always-on” culture (Popovici, 2020), increased emotional exhaustion, limited supervision from line managers, greater cognitive and stress/overload (Yams, 2022). Coming from this background the study sought to investigate the hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective a case of the National Treasury of South Africa.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Post COVID-19 adoption of hybrid working systems in the public sector is an extremely complex and dynamic undertaking that warrants a context specific comprehensive investigation(Iqbal et al., 2021). Within the South African context, public service hybrid work system adoption is challenged by the lack of empirical data on hybrid model efficacy (Kokt & Chipunza, 2022; Malila et al., 2023). The implementation of hybrid working environments in the public sector institutions, has brought up both advantageous prospects such as greater flexibility, decreased travel time, and improved work-life balance, its adoption in the public sector has encountered substantial challenges such as lack of personal relations, poor connectivity and challenges in maintaining work life balance. From the standpoint of a civil servants, inadequate implementation of hybrid work policies and procedures have resulted in problems such as uneven availability of digital resources, communication breakdowns

between employees working in the office and those working remotely, and challenges in sustaining employee efficiency and alignment with enterprise goals. Disparities in access to remote job possibilities may foster perceptions of inequity, especially among employees whose positions necessitate physical presence. Secondly, the lack of clearly articulated policies and procedures for hybrid work systems within the National Treasury of South Africa engenders confusion and discrepancies in execution. These problems underscore an urgent necessity for the National Treasury to evaluate and enhance its hybrid working approach Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2023). A customised approach is necessary to meet the distinct requirements and limitations of civil servants, guaranteeing that the model fosters both personal welfare and organisational efficiency while conforming to public sector directives Choudhury et al. (2022). (Public Servants Association, 2022) and disruption of the work-home dynamics (Public Service Commission, 2023).

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to investigate the hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective with particular reference to the National Treasury of South Africa.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

The proposed study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the history of hybrid working systems in the National Treasury of South Africa?
- What are the benefits and challenges of implementing a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa?
- What are the perceived impacts of the hybrid working system on employee performance and productivity within the National Treasury of South Africa?

#### **1.6 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- To identify the history of a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa.
- To identify the benefits, challenges and barriers of implementing a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa.
- To examine the perceived impact of the hybrid working system from management perspective within the National Treasury of South Africa

- To examine the perceived impact of the hybrid working system on employee perspective within the National Treasury of South Africa

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding hybrid working systems, by providing specific insight into the perceptions of civil servants on the hybrid working system at the NTSA. The study contributed to the academic field as well as encourage more investigations and assessments conducted by other researchers. The study helped in providing a better understanding of the potential impact and benefits of adopting flexible working systems for civil servants in South Africa. The study will influence broader policies and practices related to remote work in the public sector.

### **1.8 Delimitations**

The proposed study is limited to investigating the hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective with particular reference to the NTSA.

### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter investigated the hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective with particular reference to the NTSA. The importance of this subject is underscored by the increasing prevalence of flexible work arrangements, particularly in the aftermath of global events that have transformed conventional workplace dynamics. The chapter commenced by delineating hybrid working as a combination of remote and in-office employment, highlighting its growing implementation across diverse sectors. The chapter delineated the study issue: the long-term effects of hybrid working on employees and organisations. It presented critical research enquiries focused on examining the equilibrium between flexibility and productivity, the influence of leadership in overseeing hybrid teams, and the future trajectory of workplace culture in this changing landscape. The study proposal presented and discussed the study background, and problem statement. This section presented the study background, problem statement, research objectives, significance of study research questions and delimitations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been an evolution in the workplace. This evolution has been driven by the advent of computers in the early 1980s. The subsequent development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced Information Communication Technology (ICT) also added to the evolution. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has added new dynamics to the workplace evolution in the form of the global adoption of formerly niche hybrid work models (Fayard et al., 2021).

The evolution towards hybrid work systems was also experienced in the South African civil service and warrants an examination given that the South African National Treasury, (Danielle & Masilela, 2020), the focus of this study is part of the civil service. The civil service is necessary for many public services, including the delivery of public infrastructure and amenities, control of public areas, protection of life and property, maintenance of state sovereignty, and development, implementation, and/or enforcement of public policy (Danielle & Masilela, 2020). Therefore, the public sector must not only be professional but also effective, reliable, and provide high-quality services. As of February 2022, 1 230 835 people were working for the public service, making it the single biggest employer (Public Servants Association, 2022). These include workers in all three spheres of government, as well as from public organisations generally referred to as state-owned companies/entities.

The National Treasury is in charge of overseeing the financial operations of the South African National Government. Supporting effective and long-term public financial management is essential for fostering economic growth, responsible governance, social advancement, and an increase in the quality of life for all South Africans. The National Treasury is required to guarantee accountability, transparency, and solid financial controls in the handling of public funds under Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic Of South Africa (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999, also outlines the statutory mission of the National Treasury (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Division of Revenue Act, which ensures an equitable distribution of nationally raised revenue among the national, provincial, and local governments, is made possible by the National Treasury, which also has the responsibility for promoting the government's

fiscal policy framework, coordinating macroeconomic policy, intergovernmental financial relations, managing the budget preparation process, and overseeing the execution of provincial budgets.

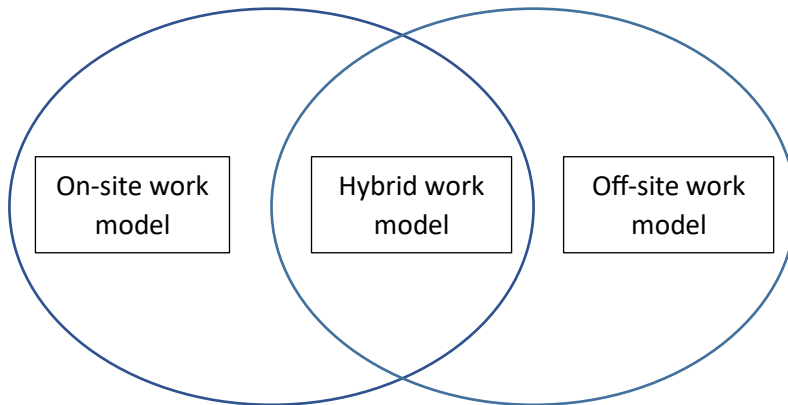
Having outlined the importance of the civil service in general and specifically the National Treasury, the importance of hybrid systems within the National Treasury in the post-COVID-19 work context is important because the shift to hybrid work has demonstrated numerous benefits, challenges, and opportunities that extended beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the reduction of office overheads due to hybrid models as proposed by Ferreira et al. (2020) warrants the investigation of hybrid work models; however, the potential benefits have to be investigated from a perspective of employee productivity as it is a critical organisational parameter.

## **2.2 Hybrid Working Models**

Since 2008, governments throughout the globe have introduced novel working arrangements, made significant changes to workplace conditions, and adopted measures to eliminate redundancies and plans to reduce costs and improve overall performance (Natrajan et al., 2019). The aforementioned circumstances have prompted the adoption of novel work delivery methods, such as the hybrid working model, to improve operational effectiveness.

Hybrid work models, also known as hybrid work arrangements, pertain to a versatile work framework that integrates both remote work and on-site work arrangements (Iqbal et al., 2021). A pictorial depiction of hybrid work models is shown in Figure 2.2. Hybrid work models allow workers the opportunity to engage in work activities from both a traditional physical office and workplace setting, as well as from a remote location, such as their own home. According to Putri and Amran (2021), workers possess the autonomy to choose their preferred combination of remote and on-site work arrangements, taking into account their unique circumstances and work obligations.

**Figure 2.1 Illustration of hybrid work systems**



**Source** (Iqbal et al., 2021)

Hybrid working arrangements have mostly emerged as a result of the adoption of policies and practices from the private sector, which have subsequently been integrated into the public sector to facilitate the efficient provision of services to the public (Radonić et al., 2021). The first documentation of global best practices for this novel working arrangement was mostly seen within software development where developers from different geographical locations with unique specialisations worked together on projects (Appelbaum & Batt, 1994). Other economic sectors, especially marketing adopted hybrid models in the form of telework opportunities to workers, hence promoting flexibility via the implementation of remote work policies and flexible working hours (Radonić et al., 2021). Coann (2021) asserts that prominent corporations, including Apple, Microsoft, Spotify, Twitter, and Quora, have adopted hybrid work models to optimise employee productivity and meet the demands of customers and stakeholders. This shift has been facilitated by technological advancements, such as audio and video conferencing for meetings and emailing to enable document sharing which enables employees to work remotely from various locations. In May 2020, Tobi Lutke, the CEO of Shopify, made a statement on Twitter indicating that the firm will adopt and embrace a hybrid model that prioritises remote work. In line with trends during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of organisations transitioned their workers to a permanent remote work arrangement (Zhang et al., 2021).

The implementation of measures aimed at mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 has led to a notable surge in the use of various digital services. The use of digital technologies had a substantial increase within the South African context due to the rise in teleworking, online learning, online video streaming, and e-commerce (Matli, 2020). The remote working phenomenon has influenced how public sector organisations engage with their clients and has heightened the need for hybrid working arrangements.

As per the findings of Griffis (2021), companies devise a hybrid model that aligns with both organisational requirements and individual employee preferences. The facilitation of hybrid working arrangements is influenced by many important aspects, including ICT adoption, human resource planning policies, work-life balance, and employee productivity as discussed in Section 2.2.

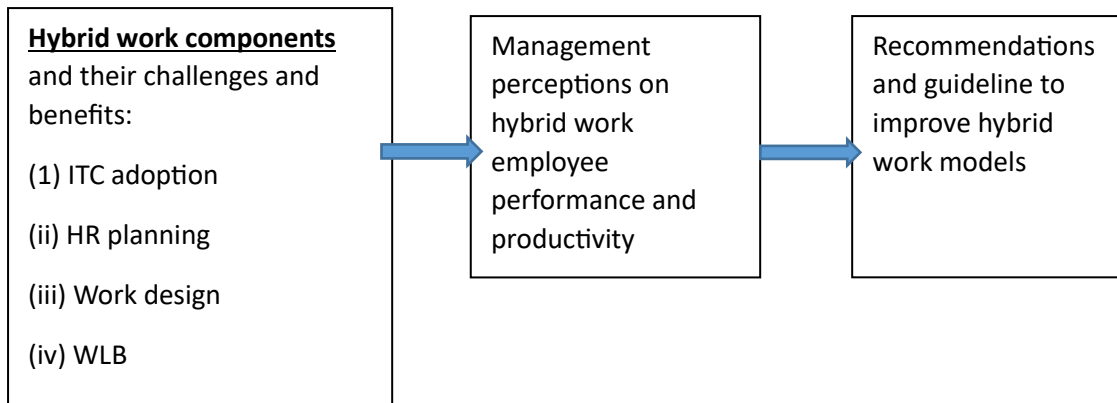
### **2.3 Conceptual framework**

The logic for presenting the conceptual framework is to focus the literature review on the intended direction of the study. The conceptual framework presents the key concepts, variables relationships, and hypotheses that guide your research (Bordage, 2009). Additionally, the conceptual framework presents what the literature will focus on, making it easier for readers to follow the flow of the review.

The conceptual framework is presented diagrammatically in the form of the sequential flow of the study from what will be investigated first and how it influences other factors as the study processes (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The conceptual framework links the various aspects listed as components that may influence employee performance (Swanson & Chermack, 2013). The conceptual framework for this study is outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 depicts hybrid models as composed of four components, which are ITC adoption, Human Resources (HR) planning, Work design and Work-Life balance (WLB). The four components have associated problems and opportunities which influence how management perceives hybrid work models' effects on employee performance. Having identified the challenges and opportunities of the hybrid models and the management concerns with regard to employee performance, the last part of the conceptual framework then focuses on how to mitigate the negative management concerns thus resulting in improved hybrid work systems which enhance employee performance.

Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework



Adopted from Ateeq (2022) and (Muriithi, 2023)

### 2.3.1 ITC adoption

A primary facilitator of the hybrid working approach is ICT (Sampat et al., 2022). Integrating ICT tools, systems, and practices into an organisation's operations, procedures, and strategies is called its adoption. To improve efficiency, productivity, communication, and decision-making inside the organisation, different ICT resources, including hardware, software, networks, and digital platforms, must be implemented and used (Deloitte, 2020). As a result of changing interactions between customers, companies, suppliers, and in some instances, whole sectors, technology has created significant possibilities and difficulties for organisations (Kabuba, 2014).

One of the significant challenges to ITC adoption are the electricity issue in South Africa and the susceptibility of ITC to technical glitches and downtime especially in the South African context where there is daily load-shedding (Blimpo & Cosgrove-Davies, 2019). Coordination of remote and onsite teams necessitates overcoming technical problems of poor network and different digital competencies which can be challenging (Babapour Chafi et al., 2021). Building a coherent organisational culture and sustaining social ties in virtual workplaces is difficult and may lead to employee disengagement as it impedes the spontaneousness of face-to-face contact and possibly harms group creativity and innovation.

However, ITC adoption has its merits. A key merit of hybrid working enabled by ICT adoption is flexibility (Vyas, 2022). This flexibility allows workers to achieve a better

work-life balance, which may improve general well-being and job satisfaction. Furthermore, as technology crosses geographic divides and enables businesses to access varied talent pools, global cooperation becomes conceivable (Huang et al., 2023). ICT technologies adoption produces data-driven insights that allow informed decision-making and give useful insights into employee performance and operational trends. Additionally, ICT adoption in hybrid work systems enables automation and digital technologies to improve productivity and scalability while also streamlining internal operations (Ghobakhloo et al., 2023).

Within the National Treasury context, technological advancements enable operations which may have inhibited hybrid work system adoption, for example, the advent of platforms where video conferencing and document sharing are integrated enable hybrid work systems. Also, the environment in the form of trending international norms may influence the National Treasury to adopt the trend as other public service organisations nationally will have adopted hybrid systems (Colley & Guéry, 2015). Also, the economics of ICT adoption may influence the National Treasury to adopt hybrid systems as employees working off-site results in reduced rentals and utility bills thus making it attractive (Kickert, 2001).

To harness the advantages while mitigating challenges, management emphasises the importance of providing adequate training, ensuring data security, and fostering a culture that values adaptability and technological proficiency (Ateeq, 2022). They perceive ICT adoption as a strategic investment that, when managed effectively, positively shapes employee performance and the overall success of the public service in the hybrid work landscape.

### **2.3.2 HR planning**

Human Resource planning is a critical component that ensures a seamless transition to hybrid work, benefiting both employees and the civil service's overall productivity and responsiveness (Griffis, 2021). Drábek, Lorincová, and Javorčíková (2017) assert that human capital is a fundamental organisational asset. The development of this resource is crucial for achieving organisational objectives, necessitating the cultivation of the team's requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies (Mwanje, 2010). Driven by this need and exacerbated by the dynamic nature of the organisational landscape, several organisations seek methods and initiatives to enhance employee performance (Bafaneli & Setibi, 2015).

Human resources planning is pivotal in the civil service's adoption of hybrid work systems as it determines roles suitable for remote or in-person work and allows for adapting job designs accordingly. Effective HR planning ensures equitable performance evaluation, fosters remote employee engagement, and supports well-being (Przytuła, Strzelec, & Krysińska-Kościańska, 2020). HR planning must align technology, communication strategies, and policies to maintain efficiency and collaboration. Leadership Development and Training can also empower managers to navigate the unique challenges of hybrid models more effectively.

HR Planning plays a pivotal role in implementing the hybrid work model by establishing frameworks that facilitate diverse working arrangements by formulating appropriate rules and guidelines that considers various aspects of the workforce, policies, and culture to optimise the benefits of hybrid work (Iqbal et al., 2021).

In the context of the hybrid work system in the public service, management regards HR planning as a pivotal factor influencing employee performance. Effective HR planning is essential to aligning workforce strategies with the demands of the hybrid environment (de Lucas Ancillo et al., 2023). Management recognizes that proper workforce planning ensures that the right skills are available to support both remote and on-site operations, fostering seamless service delivery.

Management acknowledges that HR planning within the hybrid model allows for talent acquisition from diverse locations and backgrounds. They perceive this approach as an opportunity to tap into a broader talent pool and foster innovation through a mix of perspectives. However, they also identify potential challenges such as maintaining team cohesion and equitable performance evaluation in this decentralised setting.

To optimize HR planning's impact on performance, management emphasises the need for clear policies, transparent communication, and training to adapt to the hybrid work model effectively (Eni et al., 2023). Management must see HR planning as a dynamic tool that, when thoughtfully executed, enhances employee performance in hybrid work systems by ensuring the right people with the right skills are in the right roles, regardless of physical location.

### **2.3.3 Work design**

Work design encompasses the strategic structuring of tasks, roles, and processes within an organisation to enhance efficiency, productivity, and employee satisfaction

(Parker et al., 2001). It involves crafting task allocation, sequencing, and combination to create streamlined workflows. Providing task autonomy and skill variety fosters engagement and innovation. Effective work design includes designing effective communication channels that enable collaboration while optimising physical and technological resources to ensure optimal task execution. Ultimately, work design harmonises organisational goals with employee needs, resulting in a cohesive framework that maximises performance, nurtures a positive work culture, and drives overall success (Arghode et al., 2022).

Work design is pivotal in the hybrid work system, shaping how tasks are allocated, communicated, and executed. Work design ensures equitable distribution, optimal collaboration, and technology integration (Radonić et al., 2021). Effective work design adapts to remote and on-site needs, fostering productivity, engagement, and a harmonious balance between flexibility and structure.

In the context of hybrid work systems, work design takes on a dynamic role in ensuring seamless collaboration between remote and on-site employees (Grzegorzczak et al., 2021). It involves re-imagining tasks and processes to suit both virtual and physical environments, ensuring equitable workloads and opportunities. Task allocation considers individual preferences and time zones, while technology integration fosters efficient communication and project management.

Embracing hybrid work design offers opportunities for a flexible and inclusive workforce (Dowling et al., 2022). Employees gain autonomy, bolstering job satisfaction and tapping into diverse talent pools. Cost savings and reduced commutes benefit both organisations and individuals. However, challenges arise in maintaining effective communication, fostering collaboration, and ensuring equitable task distribution. Isolation and engagement hurdles for remote workers require strategic solutions. Balancing workloads and evaluating performance in varying work settings demands adaptability. Successful hybrid work design hinges on cultivating a cohesive culture, robust technology, and clear guidelines, harnessing advantages while navigating these intricate challenges.

Concerning hybrid work systems within the civil service, management recognises the influential role of work design in shaping employee performance. They view work design as a strategic framework that orchestrates tasks, processes, and collaborations in both physical and virtual environments. Management understands that a well-

crafted work design aligns employee responsibilities with organisational goals, ensuring efficient task allocation and optimal workflow.

Management perceives work design within the hybrid context as an opportunity to customise roles based on individual strengths, fostering job satisfaction and motivation (Boulanger, 2023). They also acknowledge the potential for improved work-life balance and reduced commuting, enhancing overall employee well-being. However, management must be mindful of challenges such as maintaining clear communication, preventing role duplication, and ensuring equitable workloads across hybrid teams (Zachariah et al., 2022).

To leverage work design's impact on performance, management emphasises the need for agile approaches that accommodate remote and on-site dynamics (Spitzhirn et al., 2022). They prioritise frequent feedback loops and performance assessments to refine work design strategies. Ultimately, management sees work design as a tool to elevate employee performance by creating a harmonious fusion of flexibility, efficiency, and meaningful contributions within the evolving hybrid work landscape.

#### **2.3.4 Work Life Balance Implications**

Work Life Balance refers to the equilibrium between one's professional commitments and personal well-being (Kashyap et al., 2016). WLB is multifaceted as it involves effectively managing time and energy to fulfil job responsibilities while also nurturing relationships, pursuing hobbies, and maintaining physical and mental health. Striking the WLB enhances the overall quality of life, prevents burnout, and possibly improves employee productivity (Atheya & Arora, 2014). WLB is a crucial hybrid work model factor that requires a balanced approach: granting autonomy and flexibility while ensuring that employees are equipped with the tools and support to maintain high-performance standards in the civil service realm. Additionally, WLB is critical in hybrid work models as they are vastly different from the normal office work model and some of the work invades home life as the work is done at home.

In the context of the hybrid work system in the civil service, management acknowledges the intricate interplay between work-life balance and employee performance (Public Service Commission, 2023). Management recognises that allowing flexible work arrangements can have positive effects on employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall morale. Additionally, hybrid work systems bring opportunities which include flexible schedules and reduced commuting (Neidlinger et al., 2022). The

ability to tailor work schedules to individual needs can enhance motivation and reduce stress, ultimately influencing productivity and the quality of civil service delivery (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

However, management is also aware of potential challenges. In hybrid work systems, work-life balance takes on new and potentially negative dimensions as work and home life are brought into proximity when work is done at home (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Management understands that maintaining a clear boundary between work and personal life can become more complex in hybrid settings, leading to burnout or inconsistent performance, blurred boundaries, and isolation. Effective communication and boundary-setting are crucial to seize the benefits while overcoming challenges, and fostering well-being and productivity in this evolving work landscape (Riley, 2023).

The four components of hybrid work systems have unique challenges and benefits within the hybrid work system. The four critical work hybrid systems components together with their challenges and benefits then influence management perception of employee performance which exposes areas where hybrid work systems require improvements expressed as recommendations and guidelines.

### **2.3.5 Employee productivity and performance**

Assessment of a work structuring mode, hybrid work system, is critical as it enables benchmarking with other systems to enable informed system improvement or disbandment. System assessment, from an employee perspective, is usually in the form of employee performance and productivity. Employee productivity, in day to day use is usually used interchangeably; however, the two are fundamentally different with regard to definition and measurement instruments.

Employee performance relates to the quality of the work that an employee does and pertains to how an employee fulfils their job responsibilities, meets established standards, and displays competency in job-related skills (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023). Therefore, employee performance is focused on achieving goals and objectives set by an organisation. For instance, it evaluates how well an artist performs on stage, meeting the expectations of both the theatre company and the audience.

Employee Productivity relates to quantity of work (output) of an employee and has target and time as critical defining components. within a specific timeframe (Gibbs et al., 2021). Consequently, employee productivity measures how efficiently an employee utilises resources, time, and effort to complete tasks and contribute to the

organisation's objectives. Productivity is often measured by assessing the quantity of work produced, time management, and efficiency ratios.

Measuring Employee Performance typically involves performance appraisals (Amilariba, 2021), key performance indicators (KPIs) (Kravchenko et al., 2019), and 360-degree feedback (Okatch, 2022). Performance appraisals assess how well employees meet job expectations, while KPIs use specific metrics to measure performance. 360-degree feedback gathers input from various sources, providing a comprehensive evaluation.

Measuring employee productivity often relies on output metrics, which count the number of units produced or tasks completed without mistakes, and efficiency ratios that calculate the relationship between inputs and outputs (Hassan & Lukman, 2020; Shabani et al., 2023).

There are some fundamental management perceptions which influence how they view employee performance and productivity. Within the NTSA, context, hybrid model management perception of employee performance and productivity will be influenced by clear expectations and effective communication as they enable managers to set goals, provide feedback, and understand employees' contributions.

It is critical to note that perception on employee performance and productivity are subjective as they are done by humans; example of assessor attributes which can influence the subjectivity of employee performance and productivity are assessors age, education and sex (Atatsi et al., 2019; Gates et al., 2023).

Additionally, all work has to be done with productivity in mind. Employee productivity was defined by Sultana et al. (2012) as the individual employee's capacity to carry out certain activities following pre-established cost and time standards to benefit the organisation by utilising the provided resources (Keynan, 2018; Sultana et al., 2012).

All civil service personnel are subject to performance contracts or agreements created per predetermined norms at institutional levels by tying specified deliverables and objectives to yearly work plans and staff performance evaluation instruments. To improve the specified business sector, the performance might be monitored monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or yearly (Dessler, 2008). This indicates that workers sometimes participate in discussions on their productivity under mutually agreed-upon conditions. Regular employee engagement via appraisals may be used to monitor operational employee productivity (Anyango et al., 2012). Through collaborative

target-setting, performance monitoring, and the adoption of a rewards/sanctions system, performance contracting assures employee engagement and aids in increasing staff productivity.

In the dynamic landscape of a service industry such as the South African National Treasury, employee productivity holds paramount importance as it directly influences the nation's economic stability, fiscal management, and efficient service delivery (Sachs, 2021). The notion of employee productivity transcends mere task completion, encompassing a holistic evaluation of the quality of work, adherence to financial regulations, and the overall impact of the employee in assisting the organisation in achieving its goals (Sahoo & Mishra, 2019).

In the evolving landscape of hybrid work systems, the context of employee productivity within the South African National Treasury gains new dimensions. Traditional dimensions, for example, how much the employee is in the office, as asserted by (Sharma & Sharma, 2014) require updating as they are no longer viable measures in the hybrid work context. The hybrid work model, combining remote and on-site work, necessitates a re-evaluation of productivity metrics. Beyond conventional output measurements, the focus shifts to outcomes, timely communication, and effective task coordination. As a result, productivity is a performance indicator that takes into account both effectiveness and efficiency (Buuri, 2015)

Maintaining a balance between remote and on-site work is pivotal for employee well-being and sustained productivity. Trivedi and Patel (2022) state that a hybrid work system increases employee productivity. While remote work offers flexibility, it demands a robust technological infrastructure and clear communication channels to ensure that tasks are executed seamlessly. The Treasury's commitment to accurate financial reporting, collaborative decision-making, and strategic policy formulation remains consistent regardless of the work location.

#### **2.4 South African perspective of hybrid work systems in the public sector**

The perspective of management and employees concerning hybrid work systems is critical in this study as it offers insights into their motivations and behaviour. This section shifts focus from a theoretical perspective and critiques empirical literature on the South African Public Sector Management and employee perspective of hybrid work systems. The literature in this section is on the public sector and not specific to the National Treasury of South Africa. The South African National Treasury's specific

literature is not available to the best of the researcher's knowledge, which represents a gap in the literature. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a heightened need for a hybrid workplace (Iqbal et al., 2021). Despite the easing of lockdown measures in many nations, firms are proceeding cautiously in establishing a more robust operational framework. Some are already utilising the hybrid approach, while others are functioning entirely remotely.

The COVID-19 pandemic enabled a pre-view of hybrid work systems however there were questions about the preparedness of the government to adopt hybrid workspaces, but there was no choice other than to implement and adapt at the time. Service delivery sites had to suspend walk-ins and citizens were required to use alternative options such as calling and e-mails, physical meetings were replaced with virtual meetings and, as time went by, departments started operating at 50% capacity to decongest the workspace (the council for scientific and industrial research, 2020) (CSIR).

#### **2.4.1 Management perspective**

The various ministries of the government were not ready to cope with COVID-19. The pandemic was the primary factor that compelled departments to investigate the possibility of a hybrid workplace, Public Service Commission (2023). Under typical conditions, this alternative would never have been given any thought at all as a potential course of action. The hybrid work arrangements were adopted to varied degrees throughout all departments, even the areas deemed vital.

The workers who fell into particular defined categories, such as those over the age of sixty (60), those with comorbidities, those who were very obese, or those who were pregnant, were given priority for working from home. All other workers would still follow the rotating timetable (Public Service Commission, 2023). Even though departments were finally able to acclimatise to the new way of doing things, the work-from-home arrangement presented several difficulties, including the following:

Some employees viewed working from home as some leave or vacation, staff shortages at health facilities and the ports of entry due to staff rotations, COVID infections, staff on isolation, and additional costs that came with the hybrid work arrangements (additional procurements of tools of trade, purchasing PPEs, and decontaminating buildings when there were infections).

To keep up with the growing demand for their services and maintain the continuity of service delivery, departments boosted the capacity of their labour force via contract appointments (Public Service Commission, 2023). To control performance, several systems were implemented; nonetheless, this was a challenging issue for all of the departments. Other obstacles with performance management included, but were not limited to:

- a lack of access to tools of the trade; and
- a lack of remote access to internal management systems such as BAS, Persal, and other department-specific applications. Only DoE said that access to their systems was straightforward.

The pandemic had a detrimental effect on the health and welfare of the workforce. Finding a healthy balance between work and personal life was a struggle for both workers and management (CSIR, 2020). The departments responsible for critical services believed that transitioning to a hybrid working style permanently would be challenging (Public Service Commission, 2023). The other departments, on the other hand, believe that the hybrid working arrangement may have a future in the civil service; however, they believe that this will be contingent on implementing a robust change management procedure.

Before introducing hybrid working arrangements, there are a few things to keep in mind, including the following:

- (i) Fairness: Make sure that fairness is maintained by establishing standards that are always adhered to, and make sure that decisions about telecommuting are not seen as being arbitrary.
- (ii) Stakeholder preparedness: Ensure alignment with all stakeholders to guarantee that the delivery of services will not be significantly impacted.
- (iii) Clear budget allocations to enable departments to offer the necessary instruments of trade to fulfil their responsibilities,
- (iv) Consequence management: There must be clear management of consequences for noncompliance with the conditions agreed upon for working from home.

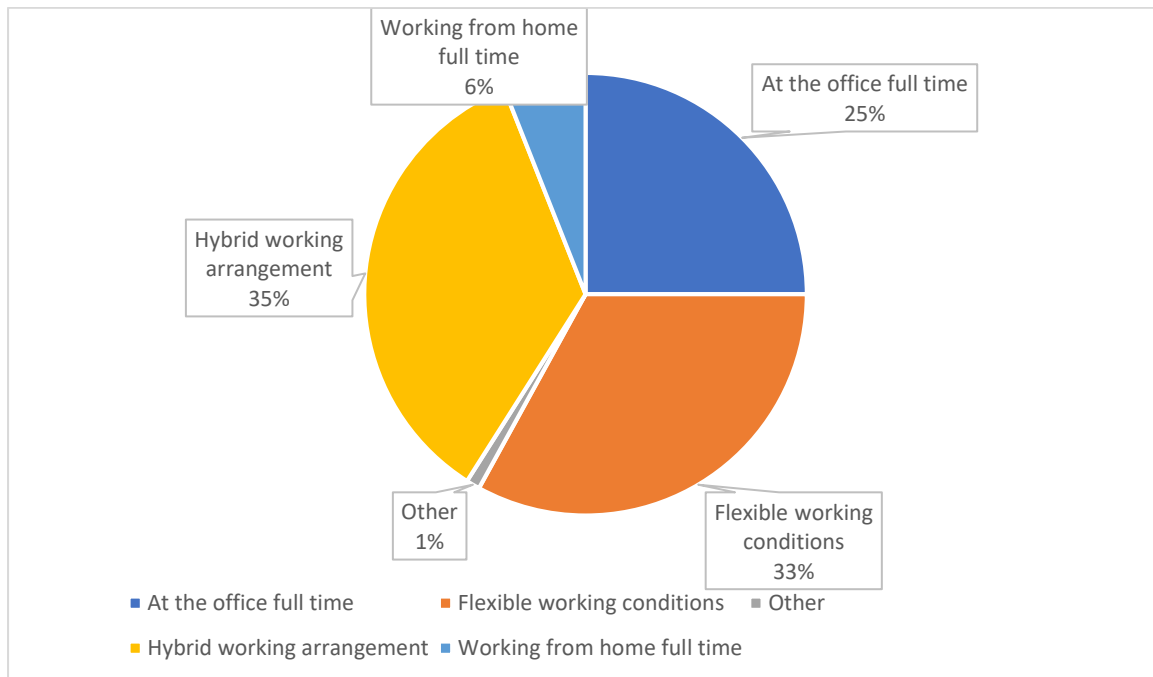
## 2.4.2 Employee perspectives

The new methods of doing things were abruptly implemented, and employees were required to conform to them. Most workers have reported that they have been provided with the required instruments of their trade and assistance to guarantee that service delivery has not been disrupted (CSIR, 2020). There were mechanisms in place to report on performance, but in areas where there was a lack of instruments of trade (such as South African Police Services), this was not a realistic option. Among the challenges that have been highlighted are the following:

- (i) There was an increase in the number of meetings, and in many instances, those meetings would go on for longer, even beyond normal business hours.
- (ii) Inconsistency in the granting of authorization to work from home, both within the same departments and at various levels (national, provincial, and district) of the organisation.
- (iii) In situations when there were no standard instruments available, workers had to complete specific responsibilities using their assets.
- (iv) Restriction of what may be accessed remotely, problems with connection caused by difficulties with information and communications technology, limited data, and other problems such as load shedding.
- (v) The absence of internal or external stakeholders causes delays due to rotation, leave, absenteeism, sickness, or isolation.
- (vi) There is a lack of trust between the workers and their respective supervisors.
- (vii) More pressure was added on employees at the office when required to take over the roles of those employees who were working from home
- (viii) Due to a lack of digitization, some employees were required to return to the offices to access files, print/scan documents, or sign documents. Managers did not trust that employees were working when they were at home.

It must be noted that different workers had different work models, as shown in Figure 2.3, thus showing that not every employee is comfortable with hybrid work models hence resistance to the model can be expected from the employees.

**Figure 2.3 Preferred Civil service preferred work Arrangement**



Source: (Public Service Commission (2023)

According to civil service workers, one of the factors that should be taken into consideration when establishing a hybrid workplace is the establishment of clear regulations and guidelines that provide information on the implementation of such a work arrangement (Public Service Commission, 2023). The proposed measures include:

A job analysis which is necessary to identify jobs suitable for remote or home-based execution. Formulating suitable protocols for overseeing performance and productivity in remote work environments. Developing ways for efficiently managing work hours while telecommuting.

Equipping personnel with essential tools and resources for remote task execution; and adopting digital measures, including the implementation of electronic systems for recruitment, leave management, and document signing.

It is important in ensuring the health and safety of the environment for employees involved in remote work arrangements and creating a comprehensive disciplinary and consequence management system.

Ultimately offering sufficient training for supervisors in proficiently overseeing performance in remote work environments. Forming a regulatory entity to guarantee

adherence to and fair execution of the policies. To effectively adopt a hybrid working strategy, it is imperative to accommodate the special needs and considerations of those with disabilities.

### **2.4.3 Hybrid work system in public sector organisations**

As COVID-19 rules were relaxed and employees were permitted to return to the office, many discovered enjoyable parts of remote work that they wished to maintain. A recent global poll by PwC revealed that merely 10% of participants preferred a conventional work setting, characterised by 100% of time spent in the office. PwC discovered that, concerning Australia, 74% of respondents preferred a combination of in-person and remote employment to varying extents (Goldstone & Narayanan, 2021). Additionally, a literature analysis performed for Home Affairs and the Australian Tax Office, two prominent public sector entities, revealed from various research undertaken during the pandemic that employees experienced enhanced productivity when working from home (Graham, 2021).

A recent post from Human Resources Director (HRD) identifies five essential pillars that organisations should prioritise to cultivate culture: Trust, Expectations, Accountability, Accessibility, and Community. These identical principles can be implemented in Local Councils and Government bodies.

#### **Pillar One: Trust**

Trust is a value of paramount importance to individuals in the public sector. Scott Stein, author of Leadership Hacks, asserts that it is simple to trust a colleague when they are physically present in the office with you. Nonetheless, when all individuals are working remotely, the trust among colleagues or within teams may begin to deteriorate. Trust is essential for efficiency in a workplace; without it, collaboration ceases and communication deteriorates (White, 2022). Prioritising 'trust' inside your organisation will foster an environment where employees feel at ease to communicate candidly and provide sincere feedback to one another; constant pro-active information sharing cultivates trustworthy relationships. In the Public Sector People workplace, our foremost aim is to establish trust with our primary stakeholders, including our clients, candidates, and co-workers. We understand that cultivating an environment of mutual trust among colleagues and confidence in the organisation will enhance employee engagement.

## Pillar Two: Expectations

Expectations significantly influence remote work. The difficulty with expectations is in their variability among individuals, and ascertaining a team member's expectations becomes increasingly complex in a virtual communication context. Regrettably, teleconferencing often fails to capture the subtleties of an individual.

Therefore, it is imperative for managers and leaders to explicitly articulate expectations and objectives; otherwise, employees would remain uncertain about their responsibilities. To guarantee that all individuals are aware of the expectations concerning working hours, start times, meeting attendance, remote work, and communication with team members, managers and leaders must meticulously consider how to convey these standards effectively.

## Pillar Three: Accountability

This pillar is clear-cut – guaranteeing that each team member has a specific job and that every task is assigned and documented. Confusion arises and overall productivity is impeded when responsibilities overlap or when a brief lacks clarity. A hybrid and remote work environment can complicate responsibility, since it may be tough to identify who is responsible for specific activities and whom to approach for particular assignments.

Accountability is crucial for workplace culture, since those who are held accountable tend to produce results to avoid disappointing their colleagues. They also hold others accountable for their activities in a constructive manner and frequently collaborate to devise solutions for issues, irrespective of their title or position (White, 2022). Establishing accountability can be facilitated through regular team meetings focused on specific projects, as well as individual performance reviews, ensuring employees comprehend their roles, key performance indicators, and their relevance to the broader team and organisation.

## Pillar IV: Accessibility

The extent of employee access to one another, particularly in remote work settings, necessitates careful consideration. Remote work eliminates the opportunity for spontaneous conversations with colleagues, as one might experience in a shared physical office environment.

Conversely, some employers may perceive that remote work affords them increased access to their employees, leading them to initiate calls or emails at any hour of the day or night. This is not an optimal situation either. The benefit of working in an office is the ability to readily ascertain a colleague's availability; if they are absent from their desk, engaged in lunch, or in a conference room, it is evident that they are not accessible, prompting one to defer enquiries until a more opportune moment. Determining this is undoubtedly more challenging when operating inside a mixed work arrangement and attempting to reach a colleague who is working remotely.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter examined the current literature on hybrid working, offering a thorough grasp of its several dimensions, problems, and prospects. The review has examined many viewpoints on the transformation of work environments due to hybrid working and its implications for people and companies. A substantial body of studies examines the effects of hybrid employment on employee performance and well-being. Research demonstrated varied outcomes: some indicated that remote flexibility enhances job satisfaction and mitigates burnout, whilst others highlighted issues related to overwork, insufficient work-life boundaries, and even feelings of isolation. The literature has offered considerable insights into hybrid working; however, several gaps remain. There is insufficient study on the long-term effects of hybrid working on employee career advancement, organisational loyalty, and innovation. Furthermore, additional empirical research is required to comprehend the impact of hybrid employment on many sectors and populations, especially frontline workers and marginalised groups. Having discussed employee and management perspectives in hybrid work systems. The next chapter focuses on research methodology.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The research methodology is critical in any empirical study as it details the available approaches and methods at each stage of the research and justifies why the chosen techniques and methods were chosen concerning investigating and addressing research questions or hypotheses. This chapter will document the process of designing, planning, and conducting this study, emphasising the rationale behind the decisions made. A meticulously designed research methodology not only guarantees the dependability and accuracy of the study but also promotes transparency and enables readers to assess the soundness of the study's design and the reliability of its findings (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

The current chapter is structured into multiple sections, collectively offering a comprehensive overview of the research methodology. Section 3.2, the research paradigm and design section discuss the concept of epistemology and presents the logic behind the epistemology selected concerning the objectives as well as designs that align with the selected epistemological approach. Section 3.3 comprises the presentation of who the participants in the study were, how they are selected, why they were selected, and what made them suitable for participating in the study. Section 3.4 focused on how the data was be collected, details the available methods, and provides a detailed justification of why the selected method enabled the collection of data that will answer the research questions. Section 3.5 elaborates on the data analysis which will extract meaning from the data collected from the sample. Section 3.6 then delves into measures put in place to ensure that the research is conducted ethically. The chapter is concluded by Section 3.7 which summarises the chapter and briefly details the next chapter.

#### 3.2 Research Paradigm and Design

Muse and Baldwin (2021) define research design as the strategy used in scientific investigation to answer questions posed by a study and meet the study's aims and objectives. According to Sileyew (2019a), a good research design will protect the validity of the study results while also providing an outline of the related logistics and procedures. The design of a study is crucial because it contains techniques for selecting a research issue, a target population, a methodology for sampling, as well

as data collecting and analysis. The development of a study design is heavily influenced by epistemological considerations, which pertain to the researcher's paradigm about the nature of knowledge, reality, and the interplay between the knower and the known (Hajar, 2021).

Epistemology, or the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge and justification, fundamentally underpins all research endeavours. Epistemological approaches are primarily categorised as positivism or interpretivism (Otoo, 2020).

The positivist approach is grounded on the underlying assumption that knowledge is characterised by objectivity, observability, and verifiability, which may be achieved via the use of empirical methodologies (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Positivist scholars attempt to uncover universal laws and establish cause-effect links via the use of quantitative data and statistical analysis, to ensure objectivity and generalisability. Within this particular paradigm, the perception of reality is characterised by the external nature of the researcher. The primary purpose of this framework is to uncover and ascertain objective truth.

The interpretivism approach contends that knowledge is subjective and contingent upon the specific environment, placing significant emphasis on comprehending the significance individuals attribute to their own experiences (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Within this theoretical framework, researchers often use qualitative methodologies, like interviews, observations, and content analysis, to delve into the intricacies of human behaviour and societal phenomena. The concept of reality is often understood to be socially created, and researchers make efforts to comprehensively capture the many and intricate viewpoints of participants.

This research adopted an interpretive approach since it is well-suited for researching complex and multifaceted social phenomena where understanding the "why" and "how" is essential (Mulisa, 2022). For example, how hybrid work systems are interpreted and experienced by employees and managers. Interpretivism was selected as it allows researchers to delve deeply into the intricate details of human behaviour, beliefs, and interactions such as manager perception of working from home (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Furthermore, it enables the researcher to understand how people perceive and interpret their social world within specific contexts. Finally, the interpretivist approach recognises that individuals create their subjective realities and attach meaning to their experiences, therefore utilising the interpretivist approach allows the researcher to uncover subjective realities about working from home and

understand how they shape people's actions, perceptions, and interactions (Burns et al., 2022).

The selection of the Epistemological approaches guides the research design. Consequently, this research adopted a qualitative design in line with the interpretivist approach. In social and commercial research, the qualitative research designs of exploratory research design, descriptive research design, case study, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenological enquiries are some of the most common types of enquiries (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). The study utilised an exploratory study, using a qualitative case study approach as this allows the researcher to probe further into a specific phenomenon. Case studies are particularly useful when the goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a complex, multifaceted, or unique situation as in the case of the National Treasury of South Africa. A case study approach is appropriate for the South African National Treasury as it offers civil services with a highly technical nature of operations; hence the nature of the work is such that it can be done mostly from home as long as one is logged on to the National Treasury servers (Faillie, 2019). Finally, the case study was selected as it can inform policy formulation at the National Treasury. By examining the impact of hybrid work policies, how the work policies are implemented, and how the policies affect to improve the extension of better hybrid work policies to other civil organisations.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling**

A target population is the total number of individuals who can participate and generate information (Stratton, 2021) and refers to an aggregate of individuals, things, cases, etc., i.e., observation units that are of interest for the investigation. It is the group on which the study outcome would be extrapolated (Bhardwaj, 2019). The National Treasury of South Africa has an approximately one thousand one hundred and seventy (1170) employees in its payroll. The target population for this study was twelve (12) employees which are the staff of the National Treasury of South Africa.

A study, however, cannot include the entire study population when collecting data, as it would not be practically feasible. As such most research endeavours make use of a smaller sample group. Sampling is the selection of study participants from the study population who will participate in the actual data collection (Sileyew, 2019a). Sampling can broadly be classified as probability and non-probability sampling (Stratton, 2021).

Probability sampling means that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. It is mainly used in quantitative research. On the other hand, in non-probability sampling, not all participants have a chance of being selected. Non-probability sampling is suitable for exploratory and qualitative research but poses the risk of introducing bias into the study. Non-probability sampling can be convenience, voluntary, purposive, and snowball sampling (Adeoye, 2023).

Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants of the study through selecting respondents who occupy roles related to policy development, budgetary oversight, or public service provision and those engaged in both remote and in-office responsibilities, offering a balanced viewpoint. Purposive sampling depends on the researcher selecting the participants with a specific set of characteristics that make them suitable for a study (Campbell et al., 2020). There were also additional participants from operational staff to also understand their perspective.

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study. The size of a sample has to be pre-determined, analytically approached, and sufficiently large to represent the population (Lakens, 2022). Including a larger sample than necessary would lead to a wastage of resources. Furthermore, it may risk that the true treatment effect may be missed due to the heterogeneity of a large population and would be time-consuming; On the other hand, if a study is too small, it may not provide adequate information to answer to the research question. The main determinant of the sample size includes the availability of resources, the target population size, allowable analytical errors, and the intended application of the results (Gill, 2020). This study will adopt a sample size that best approaches saturation as the adequate sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

The sample size was twelve (12) participants; four (4) participants will be operational level, four (4) participants from senior management, and four (4) from executive management. The sample size will likely ensure saturation (more than nine (9) is the recommended lower limit for saturation) (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Mwitwa, 2022). The saturation point was ten (10) respondents at this juncture, additional interviews, focus groups, or observations were improbable to enhance the comprehension of the research subject. Attaining saturation guaranteed that the gathered data was adequate for thorough examination and sound conclusions.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted at the NTSA office in Pretoria at times and dates convenient for the respondents. Data collection involves gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enabled one to answer the stated research questions, test the hypotheses, and evaluate the study outcomes (Yildiz, 2020). Qualitative research has various data collection methods as detailed in Table 3.1.

The study adopted interviews for data collection. Interviews are suitable for the study as they offer contextual understanding and they allow researchers to understand the context in which decisions are made and policies are formulated (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). The researcher transcribed the recording for analysis. The researcher augmented the transcript with annotations on significant observations or impressions. Ensure that both in-person and virtual environments are as devoid of distractions as feasible. This contextual understanding is crucial for analysing the factors that influence the National Treasury's actions. Also, interviews allowed for clarification and follow-up as interviews enable researchers to ask clarifying questions and seek elaboration on specific topics, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the issues being studied (Roberts, 2020). Furthermore, interviews allowed for the collection of multiple varied perspectives as the interviews are conducted with various stakeholders within the National Treasury (e.g., senior officials, analysts, and economists), researchers can gain multiple perspectives on the same issues, helping to triangulate data and validate findings (Bellucci et al., 2019).

There are two kinds of interviews used in qualitative research and those are semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, a set of questions is given to the respondents and the respondents answer in their own words. Some interviewers use a topic guide that serves as a checklist to ensure that all respondents provide information on the same topics (Roulston & Choi, 2018). The interviewer can ask questions depending on the respondent's answers or ask auxiliary questions for further clarification. Semi-structured interviews are useful when there is a need to collect in-depth information systematically from several respondents or interviewees on a topic that has already received some level of consideration.

The study utilised semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get personal opinions from a broad range of lived experiences of the National Treasury personnel. Semi-structured interviews were selected as they were

comparatively faster than unstructured interviews but have the same benefits, for example probing to know the independent thoughts of each individual (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The possibility is that some of the experiences that participants were sharing may have been personal and confidential thus they may not have felt free to share them in an open group; hence semi-structured interviews were selected for the study.

With the participants' permission, the researcher used a digital voice recorder to ensure that no data is lost during collection as proposed by (Berazneva, 2014).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Graue (2015) defines data analysis, in the context of qualitative data, as a process by which a researcher searches and arranges transcripts of the interviews, observatory notes, or other non-textual materials to gain an improved understanding of the phenomenon. Similarly, Bandara et al. (2015) define qualitative data analysis as a systematic review, synthesis, and interpretation of data in describing and explaining the phenomena or social worlds being studied.

Key qualitative data analysis techniques include thematic analysis, content analysis, and narrative analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). This study used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected as it is relatively straightforward and can be easily understood and employed by both novice and experienced researchers therefore thematic analysis' accessibility makes it a popular choice for researchers from various backgrounds (Byrne, 2022; Peel, 2020). Additionally, thematic data analysis encourages in-depth exploration of the data as researchers go beyond surface-level observations to uncover underlying meanings, concepts, and relationships within the data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Finally, thematic data analysis was selected as it promotes a holistic understanding of the research topic by identifying overarching themes and subthemes that connect different parts of the data thus assisting researchers in developing a comprehensive narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

The data analysis will be framed around six phases as recommended by (Braun & Clarke, 2010). The authors outline the following phases when utilising the thematic analysis:

### **Phase One: Familiarisation.**

During the preliminary stage, the researcher engaged in an in-depth analysis of the data obtained from interviews. This process entailed thoroughly examining the audio files and transcripts to cultivate a profound comprehension of the facts (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The objective was to get a comprehensive understanding of the data set's content, context, and intricacies without introducing any preconceived ideas or prejudices.

### **Phase Two: Preliminary Code Generation**

Once the researcher has been acquainted with the data, the researcher proceeds to begin the coding procedure. The process of coding entailed the methodical identification and classification of specific sections of text that pertain to the study goals (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The codes often consist of concise and clear names that effectively encapsulate the core aspects of the text. This stage facilitates the organisation and consolidation of data into more manageable units.

### **Phase Three: Generation of Emergent Themes**

During this phase, the researcher will engage in a reflective process to examine the produced codes and proceed to discern overarching patterns and themes that will arise from the collected data. Themes refer to broad notions or ideas that establish connections across several codes and encapsulate the fundamental substance of participants' expressions. The aforementioned themes arose naturally from the coded material, as opposed to being predetermined.

### **Phase Four: Evaluation of Theme Generation**

Following the identification of preliminary themes, the researcher will proceed to examine and improve them to ascertain their alignment with the study goals. This stage entails a rigorous evaluation of the extent to which the identified themes correctly reflect the data, as well as the potential need for any modifications or consolidation of themes.

### **Phase Five: Theme Refinement and Discourse**

This stage encompassed a more in-depth examination and enhancement of the themes that will be discovered. The researcher will conduct a comprehensive analysis, thoroughly studying each subject, delving into their relevance, and scrutinising their interrelationships. Furthermore, this will provide an occasion to contemplate the

ramifications of the underlying themes and their congruence with the study aims. This stage will facilitate the acquisition of a more profound comprehension of the facts and their ramifications.

During this particular stage of Phase Five, the researcher will elucidate how the recognised themes correspond to the study aims and enquiries. The researcher will consider how each subject contributes to the fulfilment of the study goals and objectives, so establishing a coherent framework for the sake of interpretation and debate.

### **Phase Six: Documentation of the Research Process**

The concluding stage will encompass the comprehensive documentation of the complete research work, including the systematic procedures undertaken throughout the theme analysis.

Analysis and documentation, in qualitative research, will aim for the four quality parameters namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) and therefore it will be used.

#### **3.5.1 Credibility**

Credibility denotes the assurance in the veracity and precision of the data and the results. It guarantees that the research authentically reflects the participants' viewpoints and experiences. Member Checking: Present findings or interpretations to participants for validation of accuracy and alignment with their experiences.

Peer Review: Involve colleagues or experts to evaluate the study methodology and results.

Thick Description: Offer comprehensive and nuanced descriptions of the context and participants' experiences to enable readers to comprehend the profundity of the findings.

Reflexivity: Sustain consciousness of the researcher's biases, assumptions, and impact on the study, frequently documented in a reflexive journal.

#### **3.5.2 Transferability**

In qualitative research, transferability denotes the degree to which findings can be generalized to different contexts or environments. In contrast to generalizability in quantitative research, transferability does not seek to apply findings uniformly. Rather,

it emphasizes delivering adequate detail to enable readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to their own situations.

#### Methods to Improve Transferability

##### Comprehensive Analysis:

The researcher presented a comprehensive description of the investigation, encompassing through demographics and roles of participants.

Examination methodology and results.

In a study regarding hybrid work among government servants, delineate the policies, technological infrastructure, and participant roles to facilitate relevance assessment by others.

##### Purposive Sampling:

The researcher chose individuals who accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation and selected personnel from various positions and departments for research on hybrid work experiences within the public sector.

##### Clarity

The researcher explicitly delineated the research approach, data acquisition, and analytical procedures.

Illustration: Detail the methodology of interview execution, the process of topic identification, and the approach to data interpretation.

##### Clarification of Boundaries

The researcher established the study's scope, including its constraints, to delineate precise boundaries for applicability. The study findings are applicable to government departments that possess analogous hybrid work policies and infrastructure.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics is conducted within legal, academic, and social statutes of what is acceptable during the course of an investigation (Hammett et al., 2022). Ethical consideration is a collection of principles and values that should be followed while engaging in human affairs (Armond et al., 2021). The ethical considerations make sure that no one acts in such a way that is harmful to society or an individual. It refrains people and organisations from indulging in vicious conduct or any conduct which can

potentially harm the respondents or the researcher (Bitter et al., 2020). Ethical considerations therefore play an essential role, especially in research.

As a result, ethics is not only concerned with how to conduct research but also with how the existing methods might be applied appropriately. The study implemented will adhere to the University of the Free State ethical standards:

### **3.6.1 Ensuring participants have given informed consent**

The process of informed consent involves communication between the researcher and the research participants, often resulting in the participants' agreement or permission to participate in the research study (Klein et al., 2018). Each individual involved in a study is entitled to get pertinent information and express enquiries before undergoing any procedures or treatments (Kilkku & Halkoaho, 2022). The normal consent procedure for competent adults may be divided into two different steps.

In the first stage, individuals engage in a process of reflection on the information that has been provided to them. It is important to note that during this stage, there is no external pressure for the individuals to reply to the researcher instantly. In the second stage, the researcher restates the conditions of the study, which were presented as distinct bullet points or phrases. The individual provided explicit permission by agreeing to each condition before consenting to participate in the project as a whole.

Before data collection, participants were provided with information on the purpose, aims, rationale, methods, and safeguards of the research, allowing them to make an informed decision regarding their willingness to participate. The participants were provided with the information that they have the option to discontinue their participation in the research at any point they want.

### **3.6.2 Ensure no harm comes to participants**

The significance of research ethics lies in its potential to prevent adverse mental, emotional, and physical consequences (Panos et al., 2021). The study will ensure the protection of both the researcher and the subjects to prevent any potential damage arising from the inquiry. Some respondents might be particular about hygiene; therefore, care will be taken to provide masks, and sanitisers and ensure social distancing.

The researcher will further provide the participants with a comprehensive explanation of their rights as study participants, therefore ensuring the prevention of any potential

violations of these rights. All enquiries that will be posed to the participants will undergo a process of peer review to ascertain that they are devoid of any racist, sexist, or discriminatory elements about the sexual orientation of the participants.

Finally, the acquired data from the research study will be handled in a manner that adheres to ethical standards and will be aligned with the stated objectives of the study, while also being contingent upon obtaining informed permission from the participants. Data will not be made public without coding to prevent the identification of respondents.

### **3.6.3 Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity are ethical principles used to safeguard the privacy of individuals participating in data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. The concept of confidentiality entails the act of segregating or altering any personal or identifiable data disclosed by participants inside the dataset (Surmiak, 2018). In contrast, anonymity pertains to the collection of data without the acquisition of any personal or identifiable information. In quantitative research, it is customary to adhere to the principle of anonymity, whereas qualitative investigations often prioritise the preservation of secrecy (Ngozwana, 2018). In both instances, the researcher collects data from participants, which then serves as the primary source of information for analysis. In the field of social science, researchers are primarily concerned with the behaviours and experiences of individuals, rather than focusing on personal disclosure.

The researcher will make it a point to uphold the principle of privacy and confidentiality by refraining from disclosing the identities of the participants or any other personal details to any third party (identifying information was not collected). Exclusive access to the primary data will be granted only to the researcher, and its storage will be maintained in a highly secure facility. The data will be securely deleted within a period of five (5) years from the date of its first capture.

The minimal steps implemented will encompass:

- The use of password-protected files with robust, secure passwords that are only available to the researcher.
- It is important to maintain a firewall and security programmes throughout the whole network consistently, while also ensuring that these programmes are regularly updated to safeguard against the most recent threats.

- Physical work is stored in securely protected spaces, such as drawers equipped with locks that are challenging to breach.

#### **3.6.4 Ensuring that permission is obtained**

Ethical clearance is a fundamental requirement for the majority of research endeavours, primarily aimed at ensuring the responsible and ethically accountable conduct of the research, mitigating potential harm to both human and animal subjects, and ultimately fostering beneficial outcomes (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

The process of research clearance typically entails the evaluation of research objectives and methodologies by an ethical clearance committee. This committee ensures that the research will be carried out in a manner that upholds the participants' dignity, rights, and safety. Additionally, the committee assesses the ethical integrity of the research design and its potential to yield the expected outcomes. The acquisition of ethical permission for a research endeavour also contributes to enhancing the credibility and validity of research outcomes. The significance of this cannot be understated for those tasked with making informed judgements based on the study's findings. To facilitate the execution of the study, the researcher obtained the necessary authorisation from both the University of the Free State (**Ethical Clearance number: UFS-HSD2023/2342**) and National Treasury authorities.

#### **3.7 Limitation of qualitative research design**

The research concentrates on a limited, purposeful sample of civil servants, hence restricting generalisability to other departments. Reduction of the limitation is to provide comprehensive descriptions of the Treasury's hybrid policies and context to improve applicability for analogous organisations.

#### **3.8 Conclusion**

The chapter presents the research methodology as it details every aspect of the research process. The study adopts a qualitative exploratory case study approach and an interpretivists paradigm. Purposive sampling with a sample size of ten (10) respondents was decided. The participants would be exposed to semi-structured interviews as a data collection method and thematic data analysis of the collected data. The chapter rationalises the choices of the strategies and techniques chosen from research best practices. The next chapter will present the results and discussion

chapter which will present the outcome of the data collection and how it aligns with the objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The fourth chapter of the research study is concerned with data presentation and analysis; collected data is presented and analysed into various thematic areas in relationship to the research questions and objectives. The data presentation and analysis procedure attempt to identify and describe emerging themes about hybrid strategy.

#### 4.2 Demographic information

The demographic information of the study participants was critical to the study because it provided a road map for establishing insights and perceptions an ensuring accuracy about the themes under investigation. For the purpose of this study the researcher recorded the study participants occupation and number of years in the National Treasury of South Africa as presented in **Table 4.1** below:

**Table 4.1 Study participants’ occupation and number of years in the National Treasury of South Africa**

Participants	Occupation	Number of years in the National Treasury of South Africa	Subordinates under hybrid working system
N-Valid Participant 1	Chief Director (Risk Management)	Over 10 years	Yes
Participant 2	Senior Budget Analyst	9 years	No
Participant 3	Accountant General	Over 10 years	Yes
Participant 4	Chief Director (Strategic Procurement)	Over 10 years	Yes
Participant 5	Assistant Director	Over 10 years	Yes

Participant 6	Acting Head (Government Technical Advisory Centre)	Over 10 years	Yes
Participant 7	Director (Accounting Support and Reporting)	Over 10 years	Yes
Participant 8	Director (Stakeholder and Client Support)	Over 10 years	No
Participant 9	Deputy Director (Chief Programs Office)	1 year	Yes
Participant 10	Accountant General	1 year	Yes

**Source:** Field Data (2024)

Data collected revealed that the study participants were individuals who held high profile positions in the National Treasury of South Africa. Most of the study participants worked in the National Treasury of South Africa for more than 10 years and had subordinates during the outbreak and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic when the hybrid working system was introduced in most workplaces in South Africa. The vast experience of the study participants will serve as a valuable source of information in the quest to investigate the challenges and opportunities of a hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective.

**Table 4.3 Summary of the Emerged Themes**

<b>Objective Number.</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub Theme</b>
<b>OQ1</b>	What is the history of Hybrid work system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Origin of Hybrid working system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Beginnings and Conceptualization</li> </ul>
<b>OQ2</b>	What is the awareness of employees about Hybrid work system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did Employees start working using Hybrid Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>OQ3</b>	What are the barriers of implementation Hybrid working system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers to the application of the Hybrid Working System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological Barriers</li> <li>• Human Resource Barriers</li> <li>• Cultural Barriers</li> </ul>
<b>OQ4</b>	What is the impact of hybrid working systems on productivity and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The positive impact of hybrid working systems on productivity and performance.</li> <li>• The negative impact of hybrid working systems on productivity and performance.</li> </ul>	<p>Positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productivity of employees</li> <li>• Low transportation costs</li> </ul> <p>Negative impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality and Disconnection.</li> <li>• Inconsistencies in Performance Measurement</li> </ul>

<b>OQ5</b>	What are the perceived benefits to implement the hybrid working system from a management perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived benefits of implementing of the hybrid working system from management's point of view.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased efficiency</li> <li>• Reduced operational costs</li> <li>• Office Space cost cutting:</li> </ul>
<b>OQ6</b>	What are the perceived benefits for the implementation of the hybrid working system from an employee's perspective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived benefits of implementing of the hybrid working system from employee's point of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-Life balancing</li> <li>• Adaptability and Agility</li> <li>• Retention of Talented employees</li> </ul>
<b>OQ7</b>	What are the Strategies to improve the implementation of a hybrid work system at the National Treasury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies to improve the implementation of a hybrid work system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising performance and productivity through the adoption of ICT.</li> <li>• strengthening digital accessibility and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Work designing to improve performance and productivity</li> </ul>

**4.3 Theme 1: The Origin of a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa.**

The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated significant changes in the operation of the National Treasury of South Africa in order to fulfil its constitutional mandate. When the President of the Republic of South Africa implemented a nationwide lockdown, it happened at same time as the scheduled National Treasury programmes and the daily operations of the treasury (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021). In light of this problem, the National Treasury of South

Africa had to promptly devise or investigate efficient methods to ensure uninterrupted execution of its duties. This marked the implementation of the hybrid working system due to the significant emphasis on social distancing as a containment measure for the spread of Covid-19 pandemic (Kokt & Chipunza, 2022; Malila et al., 2023). The summary from the respondents highlights that National Treasury of South Africa conceptualised the hybrid working systems during the time of COVID-19. However, literature review also agrees that most organisations continued using the hybrid working system post to COVID-19 as it has been viewed as an efficient and effective way of utilizing resources and increase productivity.

Respondent 4 explained that

*'Most of us evaluation is of how important hybrid working system is since it is started during the time of COVID-19 is a response to the national lockdown, now our company is strategically adopted the hybrid working system to gain competitive advantage and efficiency'.*

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the way enterprise's function, resulting in the extensive implementation of hybrid working methods. The hybrid approach, which integrates remote work with regular in-office labour, has emerged as a favoured option for numerous companies globally (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). The adoption of hybrid work was propelled by a convergence of circumstances, including as the requirement for adaptability, developments in technology, evolving employee expectations, and the acknowledgment of possible financial benefits. This essay examines the rationales behind the widespread adoption of a hybrid working model by most companies in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The pandemic has caused a significant shift in employee expectations regarding employment. A multitude of employees have encountered the advantages of telecommuting, including less travel time, enhanced adaptability in juggling personal and professional obligations, and an improved equilibrium between work and personal life. These experiences have resulted in an increasing need for greater flexibility in employment arrangements (Gates et al., 2023).

#### **4.4 Theme 2: The awareness of employees about hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa**

The second theme that emerged is how aware employees at the National Treasury are. Most respondents highlighted that National treasury of South Africa also adopted the hybrid working system due to globalization. The hybrid working system is a work system which includes versatile scheduling that integrates both working from home and away from company offices and in-office (or on-site) work. It enables individuals to divide their work hours between a conventional office environment and a remote location, such as their residence or another preferred workspace. It's a work arrangement that integrates both in-person and remote/virtual work. The National Treasury of South Africa has since adopted this strategy in conducting their business.

Data collected revealed that all scheduled interviews were conducted, and the response rate was reasonable to make thematic conclusions. Study participants were asked during the interview session if they had knowledge of hybrid working systems. Respondents displayed high levels of awareness and origin of hybrid work system on the subject under investigation. In light of the forgone participant 1 postulated that:

*“Hybrid working where we alternate working from home and working from the office on agreed dates by the management, started in 2020 did you reduce social interaction at workplace”*

Observations made from the collected data from revealed that the response given by study participant 2 also concurred with participant 1. The study participant 2 articulated that:

*“Hybrid working started as the adaptation strategy of the organisation to respond to the national lockdowns that were caused by COVID-19 resulting in rotation where employees can rotate between working from home and working from the office”*

The responses given by the study participants have shown that most of the study participants highlighted that the outbreak and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the implementation of the hybrid working system in the National Treasury of South Africa, for example participant 2 highlighted that:

*“Yes, in fact, there's one hybrid working system in place at the moment which was implemented as a response to the lockdown implemented by the government during the spread of Covid-19”. (Participant 2)*

*“They've implemented one. I mean it may be debatable whether it's working, but the National Treasury is a hybrid working system, as I understand, has been in place since COVID” (Participant 10)*

The study participants expressed that the National Treasury of South Africa implemented the hybrid working system, but that was after the outbreak and spread of Covid-19 pandemic. The general assumption in this regard is that had it not been for the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic maybe the National Treasury would not have implemented the hybrid working system. This reflects awareness and utilisation by employees of National Treasury.

Observations made from the feedback given by study participants 1 and 2 is a clear indication that the study participants had adequate knowledge of what hybrid working system is all about and when it started. Responses are clear evidence that following the outbreak and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic the National Treasury of South Africa also took into consideration the implementation of the Hybrid working system for the purpose of continuity. It has been established from the collected data that those who held higher offices of influence and had subordinates under them in the National Treasury embraced the idea of the hybrid working system, allowing employees to alternate working from home and from the office during the working days. Participants 4 and 5 who are presumably from the top-level offices at the National Treasury of South Africa gave overwhelming responses to the interview questions on the level of knowledge of what hybrid working system is by stating that:

#### **4.5 Theme 3: The barriers of implementation Hybrid working system**

The emerged theme of barriers to implementing a Hybrid Working System examines the obstacles organisations encounter when adopting a model that integrates remote and in-office work. This concept is crucial in comprehending why hybrid work may not achieve its full efficacy despite its promised advantages. This theme encompasses the

organisational, technological, cultural, and management problems faced with the transition to or implementation of a hybrid working environment. It identifies obstacles that impede the effective implementation of hybrid work rules and practices.

#### **4.5.1 Technological Limitations**

The constraints in current technological infrastructure that impede the adoption of hybrid work. This affects the amount of work to be done as well as commitment of employees. This is supported by existing literature resources have challenges associated with equipping staff with essential tools and resources, including laptops, software, and dependable internet connectivity. Cybersecurity refers to the practice of protecting computer systems, networks, and data from unauthorized access, attacks, and damage. Issues: Examine issues pertaining to the security and privacy of data in a work environment that combines both remote and in-person labour

In this regard, participant 8 responded that

*“We are struggling with network poor connectivity worsened by load shedding this affects our productivity, additionally, we do not have adequate skills to navigate online work tools which makes us slow and stressed.”*

#### **4.5.2 Human Resource Barriers**

It is necessary to assess the necessity of training programs aimed at assisting employees in adjusting to hybrid work and addressing work-life balance concerns in a hybrid work setting. Most employees use family time and start working early to late hours which is not healthy. The excerpt from the response of the employee is directly quoted as

*“I have seen that the availability of training and professional development options is limited under a hybrid approach. During the time when all of us were physically present in the workplace, it was more convenient to actively engage in workshops and training sessions. Currently, it appears that these opportunities are less frequent and often lack proper coordination. Virtual training sessions might occasionally be perceived as less captivating and impactful when compared to in-person sessions”.*

*“The HR planning would help outlining the policies, guidelines, and support mechanisms within the hybrid working system in order to successfully traverse the one-of-a-kind*

*problems and opportunities that are related to performance and productivity at the National Treasury...*” (Participant 1)

“That's why I'm saying when we are going to apply hybrid working, there should be measures in place from an HR perspective, from a management perspective to say these are the projects we we're going to manage for the coming 2-3 months. You plan in advance and where it happens that a colleague won't make it or there's a supervisor that won't be able to be part of that project. Of course it will affect your planning, so there should be measures in place as to how do we deal in instances where this type of a scenario can take place, because HR feel they will be the better skilled individuals to be able to and maybe also from your risk perspective to be able to highlight that these are some of the challenges we might have in just now go ahead in first and not and maybe overlook certain things we should look at those things as a whole to say ok these are some of the challenges we might have” (Participant 2)

central theme relating to that human resource management planning was the efforts promoting employee engagement and well-being in hybrid working environments. The study participants summarized this in the following words:

“Yes, Aaaaah...the HR is in most cases aware of the factors influencing employee performance and productivity so they try to come up with policies that sought to address the concerns of the employees so that they can get the best out of them....HR planning in this regards fosters employee inclusion, connection and the psychological well-being, since these issues have a potential influence both the individual and collective performance and productivity within the hybrid working system implemented at the National Treasury. ” (Participant 5)

“You see human resource management planning is necessary within the hybrid working system, so human resources management planning facilitates development opportunities and ongoing trainings opportunities for the employees working under the hybrid working system so that they can keep up with the demands of sustainable performance and productivity” (Participant 7)

A review of the collected data further highlighted on the need to for the National Treasury of South Africa to invest into acquiring additional skills in hybrid work systems, self-management and digital skills for the purpose of sustainable performance and productivity. Communication and feedback mechanisms have all been identified as being parts of HR planning that for sustainable performance and productivity within the hybrid working system at the National Treasury. The following quotes suggest a more positive perception in this respect:

“Oh yes aaah, sorry I didn’t quite hear you the first time...but yes HR planning plays a significant role the hybrid works system. I must say it has a positive effect the performance and productivity within the National Treasury, you see HR planning seeks to establish a robust communication and feedback mechanism which promotes performance and productivity” (Participant 8)

The study participants did express that the South African National Treasury periodically conducted surveys on the attitudes and wellbeing of the employees through the human resources management department. The forgone sheds light on the role of human resource management planning in determining the likelihood of the hybrid working system being successful in promoting sustainable performance and productivity.

The participants also revealed that the South African National Treasury periodically conducted surveys on the attitudes and well-being of the employees through the human resources management department. Suggesting that human resource management planning can assist in determining the efficiency in which the hybrid working system is being implemented.

#### **4.5.3 Cultural Barriers**

The presence of an organisational culture barrier arises when the traditional culture of an organisation clashes with the principles of hybrid working. The difficulties in preserving team unity, cooperation, and a feeling of inclusion among staff members in the context of team dynamics and collaboration is a cultural barrier.

Participant 8 responded

*'Another challenge is the communication style that has been ingrained in our workplace culture. Before hybrid work, a lot of our communication happened spontaneously in the office through quick desk-side chats or impromptu meetings. For example, I've noticed that remote communication can sometimes come across as less personable or more transactional, which can be a barrier to building strong relationships and trust within the team'.*

#### **4.6 Theme 4: The impact of Hybrid working system**

The theme of a Hybrid Working System examines the effects both advantageous and detrimental of implementing a work model that integrates remote and in-office employment. This theme emphasizes its effects on productivity, employee welfare, company culture, and operational efficiency. This theme analyses the impact of the hybrid working model on the workplace, emphasizing its effects on organisational results, employee experiences, and the whole work ecosystem. The consequences are classified into beneficial outcomes and problems for a comprehensive understanding.

##### **4.6.1 The positive impact of Hybrid working system on productivity and performance.**

###### **4.6.1.1 Productivity of employees**

There were mixed reactions with regard to the how conducive the implementation of the Hybrid working system is at the National Treasury. Participant 1 highlighted that:

*"So, my first view is that it has great advantages for the Treasury. It is conducive in the sense that it allows employees to be more productive. So, if one eliminates the travel time it actually allows an employee you know extra time to work to"*

Observations made from the collected data revealed that the implementation of the hybrid working system at the National Treasury of South Africa has since improved employee productivity, for example participant 2 argued that:

*"One of the major advantages is the high degree of flexibility it provides. The ability to select my work location and schedule empowers me to organize my day according to my inherent patterns of productivity. For example, I am more attentive and innovative in the morning. Therefore, on days when I work remotely, I can fully engage in my most crucial*

*assignments without the typical interruptions caused by transportation or early morning meetings. Engaging in remote work for a few days each week also diminishes disruptions. The workplace may be a bustling environment, and although I appreciate the social interactions, it can occasionally be challenging to concentrate due to ongoing discussions or spontaneous gatherings. Being at home allows me to have greater autonomy over my surroundings, enabling me to allocate uninterrupted periods of time to focus on intricate chores or engage in serious work. This has significantly enhanced the calibre of my work and my overall productivity.” (Participant 4)*

Other participants also shared positive sentiments as highlighted before

*“The implementation of the hybrid working system is more conducive especially for those female employees who have to care and look after their children after work, in this case they will have to find time to work from home while take care of their families. In such a situation the organisation is able to get the best out of the employees” (Participant 3)*

*“Definitely think it is conducive because most of the work that we do are office bound, or at least my work is, let's say related not office related disc related and I have the facilities to be able to connect to the office, to our work that are on the I drive or on OneDrive. It is easier for me to work from home in the sense that it allows me more privacy and more time to actually do the work that is essential without interruptions” (Participant 4)*

*“I think it will be conducive. It didn't go because there are various aspects to consider. Number one, we know the cost of living is high. #2 fuel costs, which are rising only on a crazy. Like if I were to put it mildly, it's rocketing. So, for me, I feel also the mode of transportation coming to work, you know, for most of us, we use public transportation, and you spend hours on the road with traffic and everything, and also the mental side of it. I feel that for some of the colleagues and I speak for myself as well” (Participant 5)*

Observations made from the data collected revealed that a lot of people as well depending on the kind of work one does. if one's work requires them to be at the office and then it is supposed it would be best to be at the office. On the other hand, if the job is desk bound like in other department of the National Treasury, then working from home or on a hybrid

system is conducive. Admittedly, respondents were responded differently about the situation, they said:

*“That is an excellent question. Based on my observations, certain positions are undeniably better suited for hybrid work than others. Roles that rely primarily on individual activities, such as data analysis, software development, or writing, are particularly suited for a hybrid or entirely remote work environment. These types of occupations often need a substantial amount of concentrated, uninterrupted time, and individuals in these positions frequently discover that they are more efficient when they have the ability to work remotely, free from the diversions of the workplace. (Participant 7).*

On the other hand, Participant 8 agreed that

*Having the ability to independently manage your own time is a significant benefit, and they can still maintain communication with the team via digital tools. Conversely, jobs that require collaboration or physical involvement may have difficulties when implementing the hybrid approach. Roles like as project management, team leadership, or positions that require extensive face-to-face engagement, such as customer service or operations, may present greater challenges when transitioning to hybrid work.” (Participant 8)*

*“It will definitely be conducive for the work environment and work outputs that are required at National Treasury. Very little human element is required in our day-to-day functions. For economist, you are analysing data for finance people. You are analysing numbers. For client support, even for us with within my unit, you are interacting with your entities and state organisation on legislation in the implementation of legislation, so the output of our work doesn't really necessarily need us to be in a work environment that just says be in the office. So, you are flexible and you are able to do our work. So, for National Treasury, definitely hybrid working system would work” (Participant 9)*

*“When we entered into COVID, we saw the whole world moving into a different era, different system in terms of how the work environment became. So, in order to continue with that, I still do think that there is space in the South African public service for a hybrid model” (Participant 10)*

#### 4.6.1.2 Reduced Transportation costs

The implementation of the hybrid working model, which combines remote and in-office work, has been a significant and influential development in recent years. An important advantage that has resulted from this change is the decrease in transportation expenses for both workers and companies. This study examines the economic, environmental, and social consequences of the hybrid working system on transportation expenses.

Participant 5 responded that

*“The implementation of the hybrid working arrangement has significantly enhanced my productivity, mostly due to the notable decrease in commute expenses. Prior to implementing this strategy, I used to travel to the workplace five days per week, resulting in a substantial expenditure of time, fuel, and parking fees. Currently, utilizing the hybrid system, I am only traveling to work a few days per week, resulting in significant cost savings.”*

An immediate and practical advantage of the hybrid working style is the decreased commuting expenses for employees. For numerous employees, their everyday journeys to work entail costs associated with fuel, public transportation prices, parking fees, and vehicle upkeep. The hybrid approach substantially reduces these expenses by granting employees the opportunity to work remotely on a part-time basis. Employees can achieve cost savings on fuel expenses and minimize the wear and tear on their vehicles, resulting in reduced maintenance and repair costs. Individuals who depend on public transportation might save money on tickets or passes by reducing the number of journeys they take.

On the other hand, the management agreed with the employees about the perceived benefits over the hybrid work system.

Participant 6 responded that

*“However, the benefits extend beyond the financial savings; I have also acquired additional time and energy. When I am not required to commute to the office, I can utilize the additional time in the morning and evening to concentrate on work or engage in personal activities that contribute to a great start to my day. On days when I work*

*remotely, I may utilize the time that would have been spent driving to engage in activities such as reading, organizing my day, or even getting a head start on emails. This helps establish a productive mindset for the remainder of the day”.*

organisations also get economic advantages due to decreased transportation expenses. Companies that offer travel allowances or refunds for commuting expenditures might achieve significant cost reductions. In addition, a decrease in employee commute might result in a reduced need for on-site parking spots, which may lead to a decrease in the requirement for costly parking infrastructure. The savings can be reallocated to other strategic initiatives or improving employee benefits, hence strengthening overall organisational efficiency.

#### **4.6.2 The negative impact of the hybrid working system on productivity and performance.**

##### **4.6.2.1 Inequality and Disconnection**

Remote employees' have lower visibility to management may create perceptions of diminished productivity or commitment. This can lead to remote workers being disregarded for promotions or important projects, which can demoralize them and hinder their performance. Workers who work from home may experience feelings of isolation and disconnection from their colleagues, leading to a decline in morale and engagement. This detachment might diminish collaborative endeavours and the general cohesion of the team. Not all the sentiments shared about the hybrid working system was necessarily positive. Some study participants shared their perceptions of the challenges that they may experience following the implementation the hybrid work system. Participant 1 and 2 argued that:

*(Participant 1)*

*“Indeed, that has been one of the more challenging facets of remote employment for me. Although working remotely offers advantages like as flexibility and the absence of a commute, I have encountered difficulties in feeling alienated from my colleagues.*

*At the office, we frequently engaged in impromptu contacts, such as having informal conversations over coffee, collaborating directly on projects, or engaging in casual daily conversations. These conversations fostered a sense of connection and belonging, making me feel like an integral part of a cohesive team. However, when it comes to remote work, those impromptu moments are nearly non-existent. Although we continue to hold meetings and engage in communication via email and chat, the experience falls short of the benefits derived from being physically present with my colleagues” (Participant 2).*

The implementation of the hybrid working system has made it difficult for the National Treasury to implement and execute some policies that requires people to work from the office. There are some incidences when the National Treasury should meet or communicate with its stakeholder and clients using the workplace landline; it is difficult to do so when people are working from home. Furthermore, the data collected revealed that it is difficult of management to even monitor their subordinate’s behaviour to see if there are properly executing their duties while working from home. It is also difficult for the employees to voice opinions to their managers during a time when they are not reachable or committed with other things. It is therefore possible for manager and their subordinate to ignore each other’s’ calls or emails since everyone will be working from home and might prioritise their families and other side hustles instead of their core business obligations. The aforementioned challenges undermine the operations of the National Treasury of South Africa. Further concerns were raised

*“As much as the hybrid working system reduce the friction between the manager and their subordinates it is important that they also meet periodically so that there are able to check on each other to see if one is not experiencing any mental issue, illness and physical challenges but because you don't interact with each other it is difficult to know if your workmate is okay or not” (Participant 3)*

*“There are high chances of the people abusing the system of alternating working from home and from the office and when you as soon as you then realise that there's a little bit of abuse and the work quality is becoming poorer, you know, then you need to step in either” (Participant 4)*

*“If there are no challenges because work isn't uniform. Work-focused co-workers can manage their workload. They realize it's work week when they wake up. What should they do. Sometimes you find untrustworthy co-workers. Being in the office prevents them from performing. They won't perform at home; therefore, management should take precautions, not manage. Hybrid working system may monitor to say OK, colleagues, we're planning. You'll work remotely. Performance will be checked weekly on Fridays and paid for. You report your accomplishments so they can see. The first week. Let's try. Watch the second week. The underperforming co-workers will have to stay in the office until they can prove they take their work seriously. We contribute colleagues as if they all perform at the same rate or at particular paces, thus they need to be micromanaged. (Participant 5)*

The lack of full commitment to the National Treasury duties has been cited by the study participants as being one of the key factors influencing the successful implementation of the hybrid working system, because since there is no one monitoring them daily. Admittedly, some participants acknowledged these challenges but were more optimistic about the situation.

#### **4.6.2.2 Problems in Managing Teams**

Implementing effective monitoring and management strategies for remote personnel can provide challenges for managers, resulting in variances in performance control. This phenomenon can lead to either excessive management, which hampers production, or insufficient management, where employees are deprived of the necessary supervision.

The coordination of tasks and projects across teams operating remotely and in-office might present difficulties, resulting in inefficiency, failure to meet deadlines, or conflicts arising from failure to communicate effectively. Challenges in assessing productivity are visible whereby conventional performance measurements may inadequately gauge the efficiency of employees working remotely, resulting in possible inconsistencies in evaluations. This can lead to employee frustration and a decline in motivation among those who perceive that their efforts are not sufficiently acknowledged.

Other participants have responded that:

*“Yeah, I think there are challenges as well because we must remember that we are really on our own. No one really sees what we are doing. Some people, they take that to further and then they neglect their work. So the first one will be the neglecting of the work where people, they take this hybrid too far such that they don't really adhere to their deadlines and because there's no one who is really on their case in terms of policing them because they are not seen and with the issue now of the load shedding, people are also able to, you know, hide behind that story to say I missed a meeting because there was a network connection and then and all that and then that it could be a negative thing because we are not only in the office, you won't really see. So, I think for me this thing of hybrid it works best when your employees are professional people” (Participant 7)*

Additionally, it is imperative to note that as much as the implementation of the hybrid working system was perceived as largely beneficial to the National Treasury, it was associated with some drawbacks which ranging from policy failure, abuse of the system, lack of efficient monitoring and evaluation as well as in-subordination in some cases. The interviewed participants phrased their concerns in the following words:

*“Worrisome challenges for management are how to manage the team so that you get the benefit of productivity and how to trust that the people you've assigned to work in that hybrid approach will be honest enough to say when I'm expected to be in a meeting. I check the meeting and am not present. You realize the person isn't actively engaged, which should be looked at and managed. You don't want to be observed, follow, or micromanage your subordinates. Last level, indicate you desire them physically. Supervision is involved. I would ask how employees view your supervision or management style in managing their entire setup for task allocation, especially with a large workforce. I suppose it may be a challenge because sometimes you might find that a few elements within the working team are not as productive as you would like, and then you will have to think of a strategy to get them to be productive, and also because people tend to abuse working time and be misdirected for personal issues”. (Participant 8)*

*“The non-conjugative work environment for an employee and actually not even having the necessary tools but also it takes away that element of managing an employee to say you have to be here at 8:00 o'clock and at 8:00 o'clock you can see me. I am at work So*

*it loses the element of managing a person. But it forces the management to manage the work of an employee. So It loses that old type of management style, but it now pushes management to introduce new style of management. To say I have to trust that my employee is doing the work that is allocated to them at a specific time. So, the disadvantages of working from home is it I you are not certain that's the employee is doing what is required to be done at a particular time so It takes away that human element of let me go check” (Participant 9)*

Other obstacles experienced in the implementation of the hybrid working system were closely related performance management, collaboration and management of communication.

*“So, I think that the challenge mainly is that you might think people are working remotely, but they're actually not working and they're doing other things. I think you see this in times of emergencies where you need people at a particular time, but you can't access them” (Participant 1)*

*“For me, I would say it's just one, and the one is the productivity of all staff.” (Participant 2)*

*“I think the most worrisome challenges for management is how do you manage the team to such a way that you get the benefit of the productivity. . . and also the fact that you spoke about trust. How do you trust that the people that you have assigned to be working - will they be?” (Participant 8)*

*“So, the first one will be the neglect of the work where people, they take this hybrid too far such that they don't really adhere to their deadlines and because there's no one who is really monitoring.” (Participant 7)*

Some participants also noted possible distractions while working from home, suggesting that working from home, might not be the ideal work environment, which can have further adverse effects on employee productivity. The study participants summarised this in the following words:

*“Is it? Is it conducive for me to work at home? The challenge is maybe the kids are noisy, they're back. So, you know, I cannot have meetings during maybe two to three because there's commotion.” (Participant 9)*

*“If you work at home and there's a lot of background noise. Especially dogs, construction or other people that share your dwelling. That it may be noisy, and it can be distracting.” (Participant 4)*

Participants indicated that hybrid work arrangements often make it difficult for managers to communicate clear performance expectations to employees, especially when limited face-to-face contact is available. Over and above the productivity concerns, some participants mentioned that while working from home, employees don't always have access to the same level of support as what is typically offered at the office. These included access to company equipment, assistance from IT when facing technical difficulties and even a lack of support and mentoring from senior personnel. The following quotes suggest a more perception in this respect:

*“Actually, not even having the necessary tools . . . Like you need to find what are the challenges that an employee has to say. I'm unable to send that report because of connectivity issues” (Participant 9)*

*“Technical issues and those come with it. They get frustrated as the employees because they don't get the necessary support from the ICT, as well as the equipment that they are using. If there is an outdated sort of equipment, it now and again gives them technical problems” (Participant 8)*

*“Making sure that they are catered for and things like that, but when they're at home they don't have all those things. So, it's a very difficult one and it may require an entire review of the support staff in the office.” (Participant 10)*

The findings emphasised that the interns might be at a particular disadvantage because they rarely see their mentors, which should provide a lot of on the job exposure and development. The study participants phrased their concerns in the following words:

*“I think one of the challenges we've seen now with taking in new interns. You get interns that come into the office who are quite hungry to learn. But their managers are working on a rotational basis, so they may not see them for a week, sometimes two weeks at a time, and that's not helpful in terms of their learning and development”. (Participant 10)*

It will be essential to address these concerns in order to guarantee a successful transition to a hybrid working system that supports the performance and productivity of employees at the National Treasury of South Africa

#### **4.7 Theme 5: The perceived benefits of Hybrid working system from a management Perspective**

This theme examines managerial perspectives on the benefits of implementing a hybrid working style, emphasizing its effects on organisational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and overall corporate performance. Managers frequently view hybrid work as a strategic instrument to reconcile flexibility with productivity, while accommodating the changing requirements of the workforce. From a managerial standpoint, the hybrid working model offers a systematic yet adaptable method to achieve organisational goals. This subject delineates the principal advantages as recognized by management, classified into operational, financial, and cultural benefits.

##### **4.7.1 Increased efficiency**

Hybrid working system enables a better scheduling and coordination amongst many people, which is possible in legal office hours environment, but it is more efficient in a work from home or hybrid working system a scenario which has been seen to improve employee performance by the management. The following responses provide evidence in this respect:

*“From a management perspective, yeah, I've already sort of alluded to it. It allows better productivity from employees. It without staff being in the office, it allows management to concentrate on the real work without being side tracked by employees who sometimes would tend to and I use this word loosely disrupt the manager, when they could really be dealing with things themselves. So, from a management perspective, I would think that*

*and look one of the most difficult things of being a manager is staff management” (Participant 1)*

*“So, from a management point of view, I think the benefit is that there is increased, you know collaboration in terms of meetings with the stakeholders virtually, I think it's easier to engage with the stakeholders rather than having to travel to them. So I think it's easier to manage that collaboration and stakeholders, you know, relations for the management and it's easier to manage performance of employees I think it creates that sort of good working relationship between the managers and the employees in the sense that there is more trust in the employees and when people feel trusted, obviously they are able to produce more work and increase productivity and even work, you know extra hours because they feel more trusted and they can do better. And because they also you know create that balance between their well-being and as well as well as you know” (Participant 2)*

Trends in the data also suggests that with the employees who work off site, the employees do not require constant manager’s supervision to be productivity. Data further revealed that the study participants viewed hybrid working as beneficial one participant said:

*“Yeah, the perceived benefits, yes I think it allows people to be more flexible and also it assists with a work life balance where you have the flexibility to work when it suits you better. Not all of us are always available to work in the mornings due to other commitments like children or whatever the case may be. But then you have the flexibility to work late and you can't always do that when you have to be in the office, and especially if it is in town, you don't always want to stay late when it's in town. So I think the perceived benefit is the work life balance in summary and the flexibility to work when you need to and when you can” (Participant 4)*

#### **4.7.2 Reduced operational costs**

From a management perspective the implementation of the hybrid working system also improves employee performance. By allowing employees to work remotely either part-time or full-time, firms have the opportunity to reduce the size of their office space, resulting in decreased expenses for rent, utilities, and maintenance. By reducing the

number of people present in the workplace on a daily basis, organisations can achieve cost savings in power, heating, cooling, and water consumption. The demand for office supplies, including paper, printers, and other consumables, has decreased due to the increasing trend of remote work and digitalization.

*“I think from management perspective, it will contribute positively to the department, because then colleagues will be motivated to work with an environment that feels comfortable to them Implementing a remote work policy has resulted in a significant reduction in our utility costs, office supply charges, and other daily operational expenditures. The decrease in administrative expenditures has enabled us to manage resources more effectively and invest in areas that directly enhance our workforce, such as professional development programs and wellness initiatives.” (Participant 5)*

#### **4.7.3 Office cost cutting and reduced physical conflict**

Based on literary sources. The cost savings serve to strengthen the economic worth of our hybrid working system. By persisting in adopting this model, respondents perceive that managers not only provide employees increased flexibility and work-life balance but also enhance financial well-being and reduced conflict. This is supported by the responses below from the research participants.

*Due to a reduced number of officials present in the office on a daily basis, we have successfully redesigned our environment to enhance flexibility and promote collaboration. This has not only improved the work environment for employees who want to work in the office, but it has also allowed us to reduce the size of our office space. The cost reductions resulting from this downsizing have been substantial and have had a favourable impact on our financial performance (Participant 6).*

*“There's less human element to it, so there's less noise in the office less conflicts because people are working in their own spaces. It's more efficient in a sense that one is, you know, there's a time element one will never been complained that I was stuck in traffic and it sort of increases the productivity of an employee in a sense, that's they are working individually where they are working in, they are able to perform their functions in a conducive environment for them” (Participant 9)*

Trends that emerged from the data also revealed that Hybrid strategy might assist the National Treasury of South Africa to cut down on costs and maybe also consider smaller workspaces. The department can save electricity and water costs because employees use less office resources on hybrid system as compared to office-based system; hence cutting the operational cost.

Additionally, the implementation of the hybrid working system allows for the employees to have their own space and gives them a sense of autonomy regarding their work. Employees according to the collected data can also take pride and be responsible; the system gives the employees satisfaction and morale on the actions and then be accountable for whatever they are dealing with as well as being able to report back when they are required to do so by the management. In light of this the implementation of the hybrid working system has contributed greatly to improved employee performance from the perspectives of to the managers.

#### **4.7.4 Improved and flexible working conditions**

A strong recurring theme from the data was the improved working conditions provided by hybrid working systems. The study participants attributed their improved performance to the implementation of the hybrid working system which has necessitated a sustainable working environment in which employees can alternate working from home and the office. For example, one participant said:

*“I think the most for me is work. It is work life balance. I think that is very critical because you must remember now with the economy being the way it is, we don't really get to be compensated for our performance. For example, my last performance review I was rated as a high performer like the top, but I was not given any performance bonus for that. So, they being able to actually do my work and also look after my kids, I look at some form of payment in a way” (Participant 7)*

*“Yeah, from an employee's perspective, again, I'll go to the issue, and I want to take my own situation as an example. It takes me and roughly between 2 and half and 3 hours to commute to and from work. So that time is nearly available to me as an individual which*

*I can redirect towards doing better work or redirect to keeping myself fit and healthy and doing things which relieves me from the stress of sitting in traffic” (Participant 1)*

The adoption and implementation of the hybrid working system promotes flexibility in the sense that it allows workers to make use of ICT tools and work in the comfort of their own homes while making use of the physical office when the need arises. Complementary to that the hybrid working system allows for easy communication between the manager and their subordinates. Participant 2 summarised this in the following words:

*“So yeah, from the employee perspective I would say that, I think communication through the hybrid it's now open, you know, stuff can easily engage with their managers in whatever platform they don't have to wait for the manager to be available and so that they can walk into their office. So you can call the manager at any given time, you know, during the day, if there's anything that you'd like to understand. And I feel that the benefit as well, it's the clear, the communications or the instructions that have become clearer”*

*“So those benefits, I work life balance for me and is an efficiency and effectiveness resulting in two improved performances due to the fact that” (Participant 7)*

*“I think from my management perspective the benefit of a hybrid system is to allow flexibility in terms of the actual subordinates to be able to freely do their work while at the same time they are not. They will be not feeling that they are micromanaged, but then they will be also be productive in a sense that what a manager may have to look at is to look at the production output that each and every employee may be giving to the organisation so and also that sometimes employees find it themselves that they are working environment is not conducive for them to be productive in a sense that the physical area as such is actually distracting them to be very productive” (Participant 8)*

*“Just in terms of staff morale, the culture, I think there is a lot of benefit; it does promote a much more work life balance” (Participant 10)*

The perceived benefits of the deployment of hybrid working methods are extremely important in order to gain knowledge of the influence that this model has on the workforce.

The introduction of hybrid working systems is thought to provide a number of major benefits. For example, participant 3 argued that:

*“Definitely you know the employees are able to multitask. It's amazing. It's amazing how committed employees are, and I am not saying there are those that are not committed. Employees are committed. For instance, if they're struggling with a network and they need to attend a meeting, you'll see them going to places like mug and bean. You will see them you know, buying data, you will see them doing all sort of things just to be part of the meeting”*

Data trend further revealed that one of the perceived benefits is the factor that the employees will be able to multitask, take care of their families, and be there for their families and also being able to work. Before the introduction of the hybrid working system, employees were unable to do certain things because they left their homes early and come back late; now there are able to work as well as see what is happening in their homes. Moreover, the implementation of the hybrid working system is perceived by the employees to reduce the office friction between the managers and their subordinates.

#### **4.8 Theme 6: The perceived benefits of Hybrid working system from an employee perspective.**

This theme examines employees' perceptions of the benefits of hybrid work, highlighting its effects on their personal and professional lives. Employees frequently perceive hybrid work as a framework that harmonizes flexibility and structure, addressing their requirements for autonomy, productivity, and well-being. The hybrid working model provides employees with a combination of remote and in-office work, enabling them to customize their work environment according to their tasks and preferences. From their viewpoint, the advantages generally pertain to an improved work-life equilibrium, augmented flexibility, and heightened job satisfaction.

##### **4.8.1 Adaptability and Agility**

It is argued apart from work-life balance, hybrid work system brings other benefits such as adaptability and agility which is defined as the ability to respond to customers with the speed and flexibility. In this regard, different perceptions were purported by the

respondents where they provided a perception evidenced by quotes suggesting a more positive perception in this respect

*“Just as long as the targets are met, so and from an employee's point of view, I think again it leaves or it gives them the flexibility” (Participant 4)*

*“From an employee's perspective, I think the flexibility it allows for flexibility for them, for the worker, it also allows that safe environment. I mean, if you're working from your own house or you are working from your own office at home or from a coffee shop, wherever you are comfortable, I feel that it will be better for the employee because they will be in their comfortable space in a safer space. There can be more productive. It's the same as when you are studying. You can start in the office; can you stay in the office? You can't. So you will prefer to stay in an environment PTA library. If it's comfortable for you, you'll prefer to be in a comfortable space because you know in that space you can do better” (Participant 5)*

Interviewed participants emphasised on the improved working conditions and flexibility brought about by the implementation of the hybrid working system at the National Treasury of South Africa. In light of this the participants argued that one can perform better under the hybrid working system while in the comfort of the own homes. The following quotes suggest a more positive perception in this respect:

*“You can take the laptop at 6 and check a few things. If you have some outstanding work that you couldn't finish in the afternoon, you can prolong. So, I think it will. It will be a plus in that sense from the employer; from the employee's side to have that flexibility” (Participant 6)*

*“There are other people who are very comfortable within their own space with themselves and then with that, they feel that they will be more able to be productive and work independently without having to be interacting with their fellow colleagues or employees, so it's a kind of a balancing situation where then one has to look into them, but the most issue relates to the travelling cost and then sometimes the inconveniences that comes with the commuting from work to office and office to work. Sometimes there are its own*

*challenges be a traffic congestion on the road and also in in directly comes with its own stress” (Participant 8)*

*“So, from a from a savings perspective, I mean there's obvious savings and we know with the high cost of fuel at the moment driving everyday into the office is becomes quite an expensive process; so, there are obvious savings” (Participant 10)*

Travelling costs were a significant concern for many employees, who felt that the implementation of the hybrid working system was more cost effective and reduced the time spent traveling, further improving productivity during the days they worked from home. Some employees even reported having to travel more than 2 hours, which could have been used on job tasks (such as report writing). In this regard, working alternating working from home and the office has proved to be a solution towards reducing the anxiety and burnouts associated with working from the office.

*“I have greatly benefited from having control over my work environment. Within the confines of my own residence, I have the ability to establish a work environment that is both pleasant and devoid of the usual disturbances seen in a traditional office setting. This control enhances my ability to concentrate and accomplish activities with greater efficiency, thereby alleviating the anxiety and tension commonly associated with demanding time constraints”. (Participant 2)*

*“I experienced anxiousness due to the dynamics of office politics and frequent interruptions. By working remotely part-time, I am able to reduce my exposure to these stresses, resulting in a significant improvement in my mental well-being. I experience a heightened sense of autonomy over my job and reduced anxiety over interactions that formerly elicited stress”. (Participant 4)*

#### **4.8.2 Retention of Talented employees**

According to Louw and Venter (2019) employees who possess the ability to work remotely are prone to experiencing elevated levels of job satisfaction, which in turn can result in enhanced rates of employee retention. Providing employees with the option to be flexible in their work can assist them in effectively managing their work-life equilibrium, resulting

in decreased burnout and enhanced mental well-being. Granting employees autonomy to select their work environment can bolster trust and morale as one participant alluded.

“For me, for the senior managers, you are retaining staff because they've got the flexibility to work from home. They've got the flexibility to work off site in whichever place they want to work. So, you are able to retain skills of senior staff that you know are necessary and they are able to do their work even though they are offline” (Participant 6).

#### **4.9 Theme 7: Strategies to improve the implementation of hybrid work system at National Treasury.**

This subject emphasizes the identification and delineation of concrete methods to tackle difficulties and enhance the execution of a hybrid work system inside the National Treasury. The National Treasury, as a crucial government department overseeing the nation's financial policy, must guarantee that its hybrid work paradigm fosters operational efficiency and employee well-being. The initiatives within this topic seek to guarantee that the hybrid work system is congruent with the National Treasury's organisational objectives, upholds elevated performance requirements, and cultivates a constructive work culture. These techniques emphasize the utilization of technology, enhancement of management processes, and promotion of equity and inclusivity.

##### **4.9.1 Maximising performance and productivity through adoption of ICT**

The adoption of Information Communication Technology tools (ICT) has been viewed by participants as having a positive effect on performance and productivity at the National Treasury of South Africa in relations the hybrid working system. The following quotes suggest a more positive perception in this respect:

*“You see, the adoption of the ICT with the hybrid working system at the National Treasury help in promoting effective and efficient communication, it also does help promote smooth collaboration. The thing is that the management can make use of ICT for communication purposes with their subordinates by making use of emails, Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings platforms” (Participant 2)*

*“In my opinion, the sustainability of effective teamwork and interconnection among the employees who are working within the hybrid working system is dependent on how the organisation has embraced ICT tools. You know during the implementation of the hybrid working system it is essential for the organisation to make use of ICT tools for the purpose of communication since the managers have to be in constant touch with their subordinate, checking how they are doing, sharing with them new tasks they want them to execute, conducting video conferencing meetings and receiving reports via emails.” (Participant 4)*

For the organisation to fully maximise performance and productivity through the adoption of ICT tool the study participants emphasised on the need to ensure that everyone has equal access to the ICT tools. Although the National Treasury can maximise performance and productivity through the adoption of ICT tools, but that this process still involves various challenges which should be carefully navigated. For example, among the key issues raised was the need to establish stringent cyber security measures, as well as data encryption procedures as ways of safeguarding the risks associated with remote ICT options. The participants phrased their concerns in the following words:

*“Implementing the hybrid working system requires organisations to invest in security measures so as to protect the organisation’s data from cyber security related threats. I think the National Treasury should...that is if they have not yet invested in that, invest more into cyber security measures, privacy safeguards and data encryption in order to at least reduce or rather protect the organisation’s sensitive information” (Participant 7)*

Investing in security measures protecting sensitive information will be imperative when the organisation adopts ICT tools within the hybrid working system since the data or information will be protected from cyber security related threats.

#### **4.9.2 Supporting hybrid working system through strengthening digital accessibility and infrastructure.**

The findings highlighted how important it is to strengthen accessibility to internet and ICT infrastructure in order to support a hybrid working paradigm that features complete integration. Study participant 2 suggested that:

*“Yes, so my understanding is that the National Treasury should be having a simplified access to digital resources and platforms in order to allow smooth performance and productivity, regardless of the physical location of the employees”*

The information that was gathered demonstrated that there is an urgent requirement for the improvement of infrastructure and resources required for Hybrid work strategy. Participant 6 noted that:

*“I consider high-quality communication tools to be an essential element. Platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Zoom have proved indispensable in facilitating communication and cooperation among team members. Nevertheless, it is crucial that these tools are easily integrated and that all staff receive thorough training on how to utilize them proficiently. Facilitating universal access to top-notch webcams, microphones, and headsets can enhance the calibre of virtual meetings.”*

Some study participants have also expressed the need for improved tools and procedures that would allow for more effective task distribution and monitoring across both on-site and remote teams at the National Treasury of South Africa. Study participant 7 noted that:

*“It is essential to cultivate a unified organisational culture that extends beyond the confines of physical workspaces. There is need for activities that strive to strengthen a common sense of purpose and identity, which is essential to the effective implementation of a hybrid working style”*

The findings highlighted the importance of enhancing communication routes and protocols in order to reduce the likelihood of potential discrepancies and guarantee that information flows without interruption among teams that are geographically dispersed. Study participant 5 argued that:

*“In order to shed light on the multidimensional nature of the necessary modifications, the National Treasury of South Africa conducted a detailed review of crucial areas that require improvement in preparation for the future implementation of a fully integrated hybrid working system”*

When it comes to properly embracing the paradigm of hybrid work, the findings highlight the key aspects of strengthening 1) technology infrastructure, 2) refining operational frameworks, and 3) cultivating an organisational culture that is adaptable. These insights include recommendations that can be put into action by organisational leaders and stakeholders. They also provide a road map for specific changes that will strengthen the National Treasury's readiness for the broad deployment of a hybrid working system in the future.

#### **4.9.3 Work designing to improve performance and productivity**

The study participants recommended that, a paradigm change in work design is brought about by the implementation of a hybrid working system, which has an effect on employees' levels of performance and productivity in organisations. The participants phrased their concerns in the following words:

*“So I have come to realise that the work design is a key determining factor for improved performance and productivity within an organisation under the hybrid working system, why do I say so,....you know a personalised working design boost autonomy and ownership among the employees, when one develops that sense of ownership and autonomy the organisation becomes their family; hence they take responsibility of their actions while executing their duties. Such scenarios will eventually contribute to improved performance and productivity with the organisation, so you see why I say work design is a determining factor” (Participant 6)*

Observations made revealed that work design contributes toward enhanced performance and productivity in the National Treasury; work design work design creates an opportunity for personalised work schedules which are flexible. Implementing an ergonomic home office setup by equipping staff with the essential tools and instructions to create efficient and comfortable workspaces in their homes. It is recommended to implement hot-desking arrangements which is a process of allocating desks to workers only when they are required in the office to optimize space use and provide employees with the freedom to select their preferred work environment upon arrival. Managers should also establish dedicated collaboration zones within the office that are particularly designated for

collaborative work and meetings. These places should be equipped with the required technology and resources. Complementary to that the hybrid working systems reduce disruptive distractions and improve concentration, hence having a beneficial influence on overall performance and productivity. Admittedly, the study participants were more optimistic about the situation, they said:

*“One of the primary advantages has been a reduction in disruptions from co-workers. At my workplace, I used to have numerous interruptions from colleagues who would approach my desk to ask questions or engage in casual conversations. Although these contacts play a crucial role in establishing connections, they frequently disrupted my concentration and hindered my ability to remain concentrated on intricate activities. Working from home grants me greater autonomy over my surroundings, enabling me to mitigate such disruptions and enhance my productivity.” (Participant 7)*

From the data collected, insights were offered by the study participants regarding the impact of work design on the well-being of employees and the balance between work and personal life. Admittedly, the study participants were confident about benefits a hybrid work design offer:

*“I must say a work design is a hybrid work model that has been intelligently created can help to a reduction in stress associated to employees' jobs and an improvement in the balance between work and personal life” (Participant 9)*

*“The implementation of the hybrid working system has resulted in many modifications to the design of our job, ultimately leading to a favourable influence on my productivity and work experience. The implementation of flexible scheduling has been a significant and notable change. Currently, we are able to exercise the choice of determining the specific time and location of our job, as long as we fulfil our designated timeframes and participate in essential meetings. This adaptability enables me to synchronize my work schedule with the periods of the day when I am most efficient and productive. As an example, I prefer to wake up early in the morning, so when I work from home, I usually begin my workday early. This allows me to make the most of my most productive hours without the interruption of having to travel to work”. (Participant 10)*

Data trends revealed one of the most important factors in promoting employee well-being and, consequently, productivity was to incorporate individual preferences and personal commitments into the design of the workplace. The study participants provided an insight on the complex impact that the work design within the hybrid working system has on performance and productivity. The findings highlight the value of a personalised and adaptive work design in the process of encouraging improved performance, productivity, cooperation, and employee well-being. Addressing these perspectives can give organisations a significant competitive advantage that can help optimising work design within the context of hybrid work arrangements, which will eventually contribute to greater organisational outcomes and increased employee happiness.

#### **4.10 Chapter Summary**

The chapter was concerned with data presentation and analysis; collected data was presented and analysed into various thematic areas in relationship to the research questions and objectives. The data presentation and analysis procedure attempt to establish the “challenges and opportunities of a hybrid working system from a civil servant perspective: a case of the National Treasury of South Africa”.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to examine the Hybrid Working System from the perspective of civil servants, specifically focusing on the National Treasury of South Africa. Based on the study findings, the key research gap that can be identified is the lack of in-depth exploration of the challenges and opportunities of hybrid working systems. The study provides valuable insights into the National Treasury's adoption and implementation of the hybrid working system, as well as the perceptions of management and employees regarding its benefits and challenges. The previous chapters reported and examined the results obtained from qualitative interviews. Chapter 4 included a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the findings, emphasizing the significant themes and patterns that were identified in the data. Additionally, the present section moves from presenting the findings to discussing the consequences in respect to the study topics outlined in Chapter 1. The current chapter will analyse the study's findings in relation to the current literature, providing a critical evaluation of how these results enhance our understanding of the Hybrid Working System from the perspective of civil servants. This chapter also examines the constraints of the study and offers suggestions for further research. Finally, the chapter is organized in different sections including main discoveries from structured interviews, exploring the practical and theoretical implications. Finally, chapter describes the study's limitations. Section 5.4 provides recommendations for further research.

#### 5.2 Key research objective findings

The objectives of the study are to:

##### **5.2.1 To investigate the history of a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa.**

The National Treasury of South Africa adopted and implemented the hybrid working system as evidenced by the study participants' high levels of self-awareness and comprehension of the concept. The National Treasury of South Africa's ideas on hybrid working systems take revolutionary stance toward work arrangements highlighting

employee well-being cultural shifts flexibility digital transformation and obstacles that call for careful thought and forethought. Gaining a strong grasp of these ideas is essential to navigating the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing hybrid work models inside the company. The South African National Treasury successfully adopted a hybrid working system in reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this regard, some industries are compatible with hybrid working system than others. The National Treasury's officials and staff have accepted and comprehended the systems implementation which has allowed for the continuation of operations. These findings resonate with what was found by (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021) that most organisations we are obligated to use hybrid working strategies immediately after COVID-19 because organisations perceived cost-effective strategies.

Furthermore, all scheduled interviews were conducted according to the data gathered and the extent to which participants were eager to participate reflects the history of the hybrid work system at the National Treasury of South Africa. The hybrid working system was highly recognized by the study participants. The responses provided by interviewees along with other high-ranking officials at the National Treasury demonstrate a comprehensive comprehension of the hybrid working system. They defined it as a work arrangement that permits staff members to switch between working from home and the office on days that are decided upon by management. This is supported by Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2023) who argue that Hybrid work is a flexible arrangement in which employees allocate their time between remote work and in-office presence. This paradigm integrates the advantages of face-to-face cooperation with the ease of remote work, seeking to improve productivity and work-life equilibrium. This understanding was further strengthened by the observation that individuals in higher positions of influence within the National Treasury who in turn had subordinates reporting to them embraced the concept of the hybrid working system and acknowledged its use by those in charge of specific employees. Top-level representatives of South Africa's National Treasury have indicated in their responses that they have been introducing a hybrid working system into the new normal brought about by COVID-19. The utilisation of ICT tools including computers smartphones and the Internet to establish a virtual office and promote working from work offices and working from home.

In this context, (Iqbal & Barykin, 2021) postulated a view that, the implementation of the hybrid working systems were influenced by top management. In this regard, the two-executive management of NTSA reflected commitment to change the business strategy through asset reduction strategies of minimizing working offices and unnecessary office space. On the other hand, one notable advantage has been a reduction in the frequency of interruptions from co-workers. A decrease in the number of personnel present at the worksite has the potential to result in decreased insurance rates and diminished liability risks linked to workplace injuries or accidents. The implementation of hybrid work systems has the potential to enhance employee happiness and promote work-life balance, hence mitigating turnover rates and the subsequent expenses incurred in recruiting and training new personnel. Moreover, certain employees may exhibit higher levels of productivity when working remotely, resulting in enhanced output and efficiency, hence mitigating the necessity for overtime or supplementary personnel.

### **5.2.2 To identify the benefits and challenges of implementing a hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa.**

The adoption of the hybrid working system resulted in a noteworthy improvement in the affordability and convenience for employees. The challenges include retention rates among employees increased to a greater extent according to the thematic findings while absenteeism rates decreased as highlighted by respondents in interviews. Employees rated their experience with the company cited a better work-life balance and most of the interviewees expressed a higher level of job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the data analysis also identified particular challenges related to disconnected communication and difficulties in managing teams. Furthermore, (Garg & Puri, 2021) concurred that blurred boundaries which is lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life in a hybrid model can lead to overwork, burnout, and a decrease in productivity. Employees might struggle to “switch off” from work, leading to mental fatigue and reduced overall performance. These challenges were supported by the research (Garg & Puri, 2021) who found that hybrid work system affects communication and work life balance for employees who are parents due to working longer hours virtually as opposed to work office. Some employees may feel pressured to work longer hours to demonstrate their productivity,

especially when working from home, which can lead to uneven workloads and eventual burnout at National Treasury's adoption of a hybrid working system.

Participants interviewed highlighted the enhanced working conditions and more flexibility resulting from the adoption of the hybrid working arrangement at the National Treasury of South Africa. Considering this, the participants contended that individuals could achieve higher performance levels when working under the hybrid system from the convenience of their own residences. Another prominent recurring element from the data indicated that the use of the hybrid working arrangement enables employees to reduce their expenses on transportation.

The employees expressed substantial concerns about the expenses associated with traveling. They believed that adopting the hybrid working arrangement was a more economical approach, as it cut travel time and improved productivity on the days they worked from home. Several employees even reported needing to commute for over two (2) hours, which could have been allocated to job-related tasks such as report writing. Working on a rotating schedule between home and the office has been found to effectively alleviate the stress and exhaustion commonly experienced when working solely from the office.

On the other hand, challenges that originated from interviews highlighted topics surrounding work and family life. Remote work can provide difficulties in distinguishing work from personal life, resulting in extended working hours and the risk of burnout. Furthermore, the inconsistency of routines caused by switching between remote and office work can impair the establishment of a stable work-life balance. In a hybrid configuration, there may be team members working in the office while others work remotely. This results in poor communication. However, the research by (Chipunza, 2022) found out that hybrid working results in communication gaps and delayed responses. Additionally, it has been discovered that distant workers may experience a sense of exclusion from impromptu workplace contacts and in-person decision-making procedures. Ultimately, remote employees may face a deficiency in terms of accessing equivalent resources, tools, or assistance as compared to their counterparts who work in the office. Dependence on technology for remote work can result in difficulties with

connectivity, equipment, or software that may not be as readily resolved outside of the office.

### **5.2.3 To examine the perceived impact of the hybrid working system on performance and productivity.**

According to the findings the National Treasury has the chance to keep adjusting to the shifting nature of the workplace under the direction of the assessment of the hybrid working systems effects. The results of the study are corroborated by Boss (2020) and Garg and Puri (2021) which offer proof of the beneficial effects of the hybrid working system on worker preferences output financial savings and well-being. The National Treasury of South Africa has expressed interest in implementing hybrid working practices and gathered feedback on the potential productivity benefits of hybrid working teams from management and non-management employees.

The information gathered showed that participant's opinions varied on how much a hybrid working team helps the National Treasury be more productive. Most respondents expressed great satisfaction with the hybrid working enabling team collaboration. They stressed how the hybrid model gives employees more freedom and flexibility making it easier for them to successfully balance their personal and work lives. Respondents highlighted benefits such as improved work-life balance and reduced stress due to less commuting. Nevertheless, some of the participants expressed caution over the effectiveness of the hybrid working team. Issues were brought up about how to keep the team cohesive how to communicate effectively how to plan joint projects and how this might affect the organisations culture. Uncertainty in performance objectives and work distribution was a concern raised by a few participants regarding the lack of explicit instructions for working remotely.

After a thorough review of the available data the management has identified a number of noteworthy benefits linked to the adoption of hybrid working practices. The flexibility offered by hybrid working systems is one of the management's most notable highlighted perceived benefits. This flexibility ultimately leads to an improved work-life balance by enabling employees to balance their personal and professional obligations. This is

consistent with research by Clancy (2020) which indicates that workers who can work from home on specific days feel more in control of their schedules which enhances their general well-being and job satisfaction. The management is also aware that hybrid working systems have the potential to save costs. The adoption of the hybrid working system lowers the need for office space and the related running expenses. Additionally, fewer daily commutes contribute to a positive environmental impact by lowering the organisations carbon footprint and supporting the sustainability goals of the organisation.

Furthermore, the management thinks that using hybrid work arrangements is often seen as a strategic tool for attracting and keeping skilled workers. Because hybrid models offer flexibility the institution is more attractive to potential candidates and is better able to hold onto key personnel. Even though there are clear advantages to this model the management personnel who were interviewed agrees that problems must be addressed. There have been concerns expressed about ensuring that all staff members have equal access to resources and opportunities as well as about maintaining effective communication and team cohesion. Working in a hybrid environment also calls for careful consideration of the organisations culture and performance evaluation procedures. The National Treasury of South Africa's management believes that implementing hybrid working methods will have a number of advantages. These advantages include increased productivity, cost savings, talent retention and flexibility. To enable the successful integration of hybrid working methods within the organisation management must address related issues and considerations. A study by Agostoni (2020) which corroborates the advantages of flexible work arrangements and the potential for cost savings associated with the implementation of hybrid working systems support the study's findings. The implementation of hybrid working methods is seen by staff members at the National Treasury of South Africa as offering several significant advantages. One big benefit of hybrid working systems is their flexibility which lets workers take care of personal obligations on top of their work obligations.

Hybrid working system implementation is also considered a strategic tool for talent acquisition and retention increasing the organisations attractiveness to potential candidates and bolstering its capacity to retain key personnel. Employees understood

that there are problems associated with the hybrid working model even with its apparent advantages. Keeping lines of communication open and effective encouraging team cohesion and ensuring that every employee has equal access to opportunities and resources are all considered challenges that need to be addressed. Not to mention there are important areas that need to be addressed like career advancement in a hybrid context and performance evaluation. From the standpoint of employees at the National Treasury of South Africa the implementation of hybrid working methods is thought to offer a number of benefits. Better work-life balance, financial savings, higher productivity and the capacity to draw and keep talented workers are some of these advantages. Enabling the successful integration of hybrid working systems requires organisations to address related issues and factors tailoring these insights to the unique circumstances of the South African National Treasury.

The National Treasury of South Africa's management faces a number of perceived challenges with the implementation of a hybrid working system. Based on a thorough analysis of the themes that were generated from the interviews. It can be difficult to foster a cohesive and linked workforce when using a hybrid model since it limits communication between employees who work in offices and those who work remotely. Furthermore, management expects challenges in effectively tracking and rating workers performance in a hybrid work environment.

#### **5.2.4 To examine the perceived impact on the implementation of hybrid working system within the National Treasury of South Africa**

In order to successfully implement hybrid working methods and to give every employee in the company a satisfactory and productive work environment pertinent issue's must be resolved. The four pillars which are ICT adoption, HR Planning, Work Design and WLB (Work Life Balance) implications. The South African National treasury's staff faces several obstacles as a result of the adoption of a hybrid working system. One of the biggest challenges that workers encounter in a hybrid work environment is the potential for their personal and work lives to blend together. The flexibility that comes with working remotely may make it harder to draw boundaries between work and personal obligations which could result in longer workdays and higher levels of stress. Furthermore, workers might

feel alone and have less opportunities for impromptu interaction and teamwork with their co-workers. The shift to working remotely may cause employees to feel less connected to the team and more alienated from the company culture which will lower morale and reduce their level of job satisfaction. Working remotely can also present challenges with technology and connectivity especially in areas where reliable internet infrastructure is scarce.

The study participants acknowledged the potential impact of connection inclusion and psychological wellbeing on individual and group performance and underlined the importance of taking proactive steps to promote these qualities. In addition to work-life balance, participants reported that the hybrid work system other advantages, such as adaptability and agility. The respondents expressed various perspectives on this matter, with quotes indicating a predominantly positive perception. Human resource management planning was also stressed as being essential to providing employees working in hybrid environments with opportunities for continuous training and development. Participants emphasized that in order to maintain performance and productivity it is critical to acquire new skills in areas like digital literacy self-management and remote collaboration. The study participants also expressed concerns regarding the possibility of bias or irregularity in performance evaluation in a remote setting highlighting the necessity of open measurement procedures and accountability systems to ensure ongoing productivity. To boost output and performance it was also underlined that strong feedback and communication channels should be established through human resource management planning.

Even though more work-life balance and flexibility are widely viewed as advantageous there are legitimate concerns about manager's ability to conduct accurate performance reviews and maintain adequate levels of communication. A successful transition to a hybrid working paradigm that supports employee performance and productivity will depend on addressing these issues through effective human resource management planning. Participants in the study have shown a great deal of interest in the integration of Information and (ICT) into a hybrid working system. The staff members qualitative interviews yielded important information about how the hybrid working system may affect

their productivity and performance in relation to ICT adoption. Respondents highlighted how important information and (ICT) is to make sure that every employee in the company has equal access to high-speed internet hardware and software which facilitates seamless communication and collaboration in a hybrid work environment. For a geographically dispersed workforce to continue working effectively together participants emphasized the critical need for advanced digital conferencing platforms project management tools and instant messaging services. In addition, the study participants underscored the significance of putting strict cybersecurity protocols data encryption practices and privacy protections in place to lessen the possibility of possible threats and ensure the security of critical information related to the company. In order to increase employee productivity on an individual and group level they also emphasized the use of ICT in supporting workers ongoing development of digital skills.

The National Treasury of South Africa has implemented a hybrid working system that has fundamentally changed the way work is designed and greatly affected employee productivity and performance. The results of the study provide insight into the intricate relationship between work design in a hybrid working environment and productivity and performance. Specifically, they highlight the importance of customized and flexible work designs in promoting increased output collaboration well-being and performance. Participants in the study mentioned the importance of a hybrid work model that has been carefully developed in order to reduce disruptive distractions and improve concentration thus positively influencing overall productivity.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This section presents the recommendations based on the study's main findings. Firstly, it is recommended that access to digital resources and platforms be improved to facilitate seamless cooperation and enhance productivity, irrespective of geographical constraints, as this aligns with the objectives of the National Treasury of South Africa. The National Treasury of South Africa must prioritize the development of transparent and fair performance evaluation criteria that take into consideration the unique dynamics of both remote and in-office work. This would require adaption of the current performance

appraisal process and would necessitate buy-in from all managers involved in performance management discussions.

Furthermore, promoting a cohesive organisational culture that transcends physical work environments through initiatives that enhance a shared sense of mission and identity. Keeping employees aligned to team objectives is paramount for the success of a hybrid work system. Moreover, providing customized training programs to familiarise staff with the digital tools and workflows necessary for optimal efficiency in the hybrid work setting. The National Treasury of South Africa should adopt adaptable work arrangements and programs that cater to individual preferences and personal obligations in order to improve employee well-being and productivity.

### **5.3.1 Allocate resources towards technology and infrastructure.**

Technological infrastructure is the fundamental support of an effective hybrid work system. Insufficient implementation of appropriate tools can lead to inefficiency and frustration among personnel engaged in remote work. Organisations must allocate resources to acquire both the necessary technology and software to guarantee their workers' ability to operate efficiently from any geographical location. This encompasses the provision of necessary IT resources such as laptops, displays, and ergonomic office furniture, together with the provision of dependable internet connections.

Aside from technology, organisations must deploy secure, cloud-based systems that allow employees to readily access company data, engage in real-time collaboration on documents, and communicate effortlessly. Hybrid work situations also necessitate careful consideration of cybersecurity. It is imperative for organisations to guarantee that remote workers are provided with secure access to company systems by means of VPNs, two-factor authentication, and frequent security updates in order to avert data breaches or cyberattacks.

### **5.3.2 Prioritisation well-being and work-life balance of employees.**

The opportunity for enhanced work-life balance is one of the primary advantages of mixed work. Nevertheless, in the absence of effective controls, hybrid work has the potential to obscure the distinctions between professional and personal spheres, therefore resulting

in burnout. In order to prevent this, firms can adopt proactive measures to promote employee well-being. Implementing regular intervals of rest, establishing limits for communication outside of working hours, and advocating for mental health services can contribute to the maintenance of a harmonious equilibrium between work and personal life.

Furthermore, managers should exert themselves to consistently communicate with their workers, especially those who work remotely, in order to guarantee that they feel adequately supported. The provision of flexible work schedules enables employees to effectively balance their personal obligations while maintaining high levels of productivity. Moreover, a public sector organisation should give opportunities for social engagement, such as team-building exercises or face-to-face meetings to complement hybrid work initiatives.

#### **5.4. Limitations of the Study**

While all studies seek to produce objective, accurate data, several design choices may restrict the degree of dependability of the results.

##### **5.4.1 Subjectivity and Bias**

Subjectivity and bias refer to the presence of personal opinions and preferences that might influence the way information is presented or interpreted. The researcher's viewpoints, understandings, and engagements have the ability to impact the gathering and examination of data, resulting in potential biases. However, participants have the potential to modify their responses in accordance with their perception of the researcher's expectations, or they may choose to hide certain information, thereby impacting the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

Lack of generalizability is another limitation referring to the extent to which the findings or conclusions of a study can be applied to a larger population or other settings. Qualitative research frequently utilizes limited, non-random samples, so impeding the generalization of findings to broader groups. Moreover, the results are frequently tailored to the particular circumstances or demographic under investigation, so restricting their relevance to different environments or groups.

#### **5.4.2 Time-consuming:**

Gathering and examining qualitative data, such as conducting interviews or making observations, is a time-consuming process that demands substantial exertion. The identification of themes significantly depends on the researcher's interpretation, which might result in subjective analysis and prejudice. The researcher may intentionally or unintentionally prioritize specific elements of the data while disregarding others, resulting in incomplete or biased findings.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations to address limitations.**

Utilize diverse data sources such as interviews, observations, and documents to validate findings and mitigate bias. Researchers ought to integrate qualitative methods with quantitative approaches (mixed methods) in order to enhance the validity of the findings.

##### **5.4.3.1 Peer debriefing**

Engage in frequent discussions with colleagues or peers who are not directly involved in the study to obtain an external viewpoint and question underlying assumptions. Present the findings to the participants in order to validate the accuracy of the interpretations and guarantee that their perspectives are accurately portrayed. Similar approach can be used with thematic analysis to determine if two individuals arrive to the same ideas. Should the process be conducted objectively, two individuals engaged in thematic analysis should yield identical themes.

##### **5.4.3.2 Eradication of Subjectivity and Bias**

Member checking is the process of distributing the data and interpretations among participants so as to confirm the validity of the results. Participants can provide comments or clear any miscommunications by letting them check the data, transcripts, or researcher's interpretations. This makes sure that the prejudices of the researcher do not skew the viewpoints of the subjects.

##### **5.4.3.3 Reducing time consumption**

Stressing a reasonable number of participants, questions, or themes helps you to prevent stretching the research scope too much. Too many interviews or too much data collecting could cause analysis paralysis and delays in finishing the research. Additionally, reducing

the research questions to concentrate just on what is absolutely required. Establishing whether sufficient data has been gathered by using data saturation as a benchmark, therefore enabling you to go to the next level.

## **5.5 Future Recommendations**

The study findings highlight several critical areas that require further investigation, including:

- **Organisational Culture and Communication:** The study identified the maintenance of effective communication and preservation of organisational culture are two key challenges in the hybrid work environment. More research is needed to understand how government organisations can foster a cohesive culture and facilitate seamless collaboration in a hybrid setting.
- **Performance Evaluation and Management:** The study participants emphasized the need for transparent and equitable performance evaluation standards that account for the dynamics of remote and in-office work. Additional research could explore best practices for adapting performance management frameworks better suit hybrid work models in the public sector.
- **Digital Transformation and Skill Development:** The study underscored the importance of digital integration and employee training to enable productivity in the hybrid work environment. Further research could delve into the specific digital capabilities and support systems required for civil servants to thrive in a hybrid work setting.
- **Work-Life Balance and Employee Well-being:** The study identified the blurring of work-life boundaries and psychological well-being as challenges faced by employees who work in hybrid settings. Exploring strategies to promote work-life balance and support the holistic well-being of civil servants in a hybrid work context could be a valuable area of for future research.

By addressing these research gaps, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by civil servants in government organisations as they navigate the transition to hybrid work models. This

knowledge can inform the development of tailored policies, practices, and support systems to enable the successful implementation of hybrid work in the public sector.

#### **5.4 Chapter summary**

The chapter presented the key findings and recommendations of the study based on the data collected and analysed in the previous chapter. The results emphasize the substantial advantages of implementing a hybrid work style, which include improved employee welfare, heightened efficiency, and potential financial savings. Nevertheless, the chapter also emphasizes the difficulties linked to preserving organisational culture, communication, and efficient management in a hybrid setting. The recommendations provided aim to assist firms in effectively managing these obstacles and optimizing the benefits of a hybrid work structure. Organisations can establish a balanced and sustainable work paradigm that aligns with corporate objectives and employee requirements by setting explicit performance expectation, investing in technology, fostering ongoing learning, and prioritizing employee well-being. In summary, the chapter asserts that hybrid work systems offer a feasible and beneficial approach to the future of work. By implementing and continuously adapting this model, firms can effectively improve their operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and overall success in a dynamic work environment.

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