



# **RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF SHIFTS IN WORK MODES**

VALUES FOR A  
POST PANDEMIC FUTURE

VOLUME 1

Edited by Kemi Ogunyemi  
and Adaora I. Onaga

# **Responsible Management of Shifts in Work Modes – Values for a Post Pandemic Future, Volume 1**

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# **Responsible Management of Shifts in Work Modes – Values for a Post Pandemic Future, Volume 1**

EDITED BY

**KEMI OGUNYEMI**

*Pan-Atlantic University, Nigeria*

And

**ADAORA I. ONAGA**

*Pan-Atlantic University, Nigeria*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Kemi Ogunyemi and Adaora I. Onaga.  
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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80262-720-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-719-0 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-721-3 (Epub)



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This volume is dedicated to all the overlooked workers and the overworked people in  
a pandemic.*

*The experience of COVID-19 has been life-changing for most, but in a special way  
the workers who have laboured to keep their values upright have positively touched  
lives more deeply than can be acknowledged.*

*This book is for them.*

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# Table of Contents

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| List of Tables and Figures | ix  |
| About the Contributors     | xi  |
| Foreword                   | xix |

|                                                                              |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Chapter 1 Understanding the Present – Values for Shifts in Work Modes</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <i>Kemi Ogunyemi and Adaora I. Onaga</i>                                     |          |

## Part 1 Preserving Justice

|                                                                                                                                  |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 2 Zimbabwe’s COVID-19 Response: Insights for Post-Pandemic Responsible Management and Reinvigorating Public Trust</b> | <b>27</b> |
| <i>Tawanda Nyikadzino and Natasha Mataire</i>                                                                                    |           |

|                                                                                                                    |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 3 Governing Multi-Sectorial Partnerships in Emergencies: The Case of the Uganda COVID-19 Task Force</b> | <b>43</b> |
| <i>Moses Onyoin, Denish B. Galimaka and Annet K. Nabatanzi-Muyimba</i>                                             |           |

|                                                                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 4 Health and Business Intersections: Profitability and the Common Good</b> | <b>61</b> |
| <i>Wilson Williams Mutumba</i>                                                        |           |

|                                                                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 5 Promoting Organisational Fairness in the Era of COVID-19 in the Public Service: The Need for Responsible Leadership</b> | <b>77</b> |
| <i>Theresa Obuobisa-Darko, Frank Ohemeng, Emelia Amoako Asiedu and Kenneth Parku</i>                                                 |           |

|                                                                                                                                    |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 6 Responsible People Management and Fairness During COVID-19 (Law and Ethics – The Case of Pan-Atlantic University)</b> | <b>95</b> |
| <i>Onyinyechi Akagha and Chantal Epie</i>                                                                                          |           |

## **Part 2 Preserving Justice While Going Digital**

|                                                                                                                                                  |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 7 Establishing a Resilient, Economically Prosperous and Inclusive World by Overcoming the Gender Digital Divide in the New Normal</b> | <b>115</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Deepika Faugoo and Adaora I. Onaga*

|                                                                                              |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 8 Working From Home and the Dynamics for Gender Equity and the Digital Divide</b> | <b>131</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Chantal Epie*

|                                                                                                                   |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 9 Rebalancing Gender Inequity and the Digital Divide: Unintended Consequences of Working From Home</b> | <b>145</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Yemisi Bolade-Ogunfodun, Lebene Soga and Rita Nasr*

|                                                                                                              |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 10 Impact of Covid-19–Related Initiatives on Digital Divide in the Mauritian Education System</b> | <b>163</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Shakeel M. C. Atchia*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                           |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 11 Transferability of Governance Ethics in the Fourth Industrial Revolution Teaching and Learning Developments: A Distanced Higher Education Assessment in Zimbabwe Amid COVID-19 Pandemic</b> | <b>179</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Farai Chigora, Chipso Katsande, Promise Zvavahera, Evelyn Chiyevu Garwe and Brighton Nyagadza*

|                                                                                                                                                                |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 12 Impact of the ‘New Normal’–Induced Digital Transformation on Public Service Delivery and Governance in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities</b> | <b>197</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Goodness Onwuegbuna, Emma Etim and Jacob Fatile*

|                                                                                                      |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Chapter 13 Directing Future Preparedness for Responsibility – Values for Shifts in Work Modes</b> | <b>217</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

*Adaora I. Onaga and Kemi Ogunyemi*

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| <b>Index</b> | <b>233</b> |
|--------------|------------|

# List of Tables and Figures

|              |                                                                                          |     |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 1.1.   | Tensions, Values and Responsible Management Solutions.                                   | 12  |
| Table 4.1.   | COVID-19 Response Partner Activity Map.                                                  | 48  |
| Table 4.2.   | Summary of Key Findings and Outcomes Suggestions.                                        | 49  |
| Table 11.1.  | In-Depth Interviewees' Profiles.                                                         | 190 |
| Table 12.1.  | Flexible Work Arrangement for Employees.                                                 | 206 |
| Table 13.1.  | Responsible Management Dialogues (Technical and Moral) for the Future of Work.           | 223 |
| Figure 2.1.  | Trust in key institutions and public figures.                                            | 32  |
| Figure 3.1.  | Cross-Sector Collaboration Governance Elements.                                          | 47  |
| Figure 7.1.  | Financing Women Entrepreneurship: A Global Challenge.                                    | 123 |
| Figure 10.1. | Students' Preferred Teaching and Learning Mode.                                          | 170 |
| Figure 10.2. | Students' Rating of Educators' Readiness in Using Online Modes of Teaching and Learning. | 171 |
| Figure 10.3. | Ratings of Broadcasted Video Lessons by the Sampled Students.                            | 173 |
| Figure 11.1. | A Model for Using E-learning in Education.                                               | 187 |
| Figure 11.2. | Themes of the 4IR Affecting Higher Distance Education in Zimbabwe.                       | 191 |

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## About the Contributors

**Onyinyechi Akagha** is a doctoral student with the School of Law, College of Business, Public Policy and Law, National University of Ireland, Galway. She works with the Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos. Her research interests are corporate governance, business law and ethics. She is also a legal practitioner with over 17 years of post-call experience.

**Emelia Amoako Asiedu** is a Senior Lecturer in the School of IT Business of the Ghana Communications Technology University. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration and Policy Management, a Master of Philosophy in Public Administration as well as a master's degree in Public Administration, a bachelor's degree in Management Studies and a diploma in Education. She also holds a postgraduate certificate in Occupational Safety and Environment. Her research interests are public sector performance management and leadership, public policy management, women and gender issues and occupational health, safety and environment.

**Shakeel M. C. Atchia** has served the Mauritian Education system for the past 22 years and is currently an academic in the Science Education Department of the Mauritius Institute of Education, which is a tertiary institution specialised in teacher training, educational research and curriculum development. He holds a PhD in Education, a master degree in Science, a postgraduate diploma in Higher Education, a postgraduate certificate in Education, and a bachelor degree in Biology. He has shown his interest in STEM education, Quality Assurance and Science Education, through his publications, conference interventions and research work. He is currently the overall coordinator of a collaborative MIE-UKZN project on STEM education, the coordinator of marine Science, and the international consultant for the Quantitative Analysis of the international project 'COVID-19 impacts on education systems', under the aegis of Stockholm University. He is also the assistant coordinator involved in the development a National Technology Education Curriculum Framework, based on problem solving and project-based learning approaches.

**Yemisi Bolade-Ogunfodun** is a Program Director and Lecturer in Organizational Behavior at Henley Business School, UK. She is also a faculty member at the African European Centre for Investment and Trade (AECIT) and frequents international research symposia – regularly presenting her research to academics and policymakers the world over – to advance societal understanding of cultural

diversity, particularly in relation to values that underpin work practices, such as productive job design. She has published seminal papers in leading academic and practitioner outlets including *Harvard Business Review*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment* and *Forbes*. She also frequently contributes to published volumes with major publishing houses such as Emerald Publishing and Edward Elgar Publishing.

**Farai Chigora** is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Department in Business Science at Africa University in Zimbabwe. He holds a doctorate of Business Administration from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He has researched and published extensively on branding strategy, destination marketing and destination branding. He has over 10 years of experience teaching business strategy, tourism marketing, brand management and research for business.

**Chantal Epie** is a Professor of Human Resource Management at the School of Management and Social Sciences of Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria, as well as an MBTI certified practitioner. Her research focus for the past 20 years has been work–family integration and family-responsible management.

**Emma Etim** is a doctoral student with the Department of Public Administration, Lagos State University, Nigeria, and a researcher at Lagos Business School/Pan Atlantic University. He holds bachelor of Science and master of Science degrees in Public Administration and Political Science, respectively. He also has an advanced diploma in Business Management and Leadership. Before joining Lagos Business School, Etim lectured at the Lagos State Polytechnic, where he taught Business Research Methods. He has also worked in the Office of the Permanent Secretaries, Lagos State Ministry of Special Duties and Intergovernmental Relations, and Lagos State Ministry of Education, all in Alausa, Lagos State. He is a Certified Asian Reviewer and has co-authored over 25 articles in reputable international and local journals, and has made some book chapter contributions. Etim has attended and presented papers at many conferences and has won many awards.

**Jacob Fatile** is Professor in the Department of Public Administration, Lagos State University, Nigeria. Fatile obtained his bachelor of Science, master of Science and doctorate degrees from Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Lagos and University of Benin, respectively. He was a former Head of Department of Public Administration and Deputy Director Open and Distance Learning and Research Institute (ODLRI). He is the Director of the Institute for Public Policy, Law and Economic Development of the International Institute for Policy Review and Development Strategies. He is also a Visiting Professor at the School of Management, IT and Governance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He is currently an Honourary Full professor with UKZN. Fatile is a member of many reputable academic and professional associations. He has published extensively in reputable local and international journals.

**Deepika Faugoo** is Senior Lecturer and Co-chairperson Equal Opportunities Unit, School of Business, Management and Finance, University of Technology

Mauritius. She lectures on all aspects of human resource management, strategy, leadership & empowerment, gender, equality and diversity management from undergraduate to postgraduate levels and has also developed the curriculum for several courses in management at undergraduate and postgraduate level. She has been the former Head of School of Business, Management & Finance at the University of Technology Mauritius levels. She has attended several international conferences and published many peer-reviewed research publications in reputed journals. Her research interests are in the area of gender and management, women in leadership, human resource management, employee wellness, leadership and empowerment & management of change. She has also organized several workshops on women in leadership for several categories of women in the workplace in Mauritius.

**Denish B. Galimaka** is a Lecturer and doctoral candidate at the Makerere University Business School. His research interest is in the area of organisational agility with a specific orientation to knowledge resources manipulation, social innovation and the management of dynamic fractal organisations across overlapping sectors.

**Evelyn Chiyevo Garwe** holds a PhD in Animal Sciences (2002, University of Zimbabwe jointly with the Scottish Agricultural College DFID Scholarship, Zimbabwe/Scotland). Currently she is the Pro Vice-Chancellor: Internationalisation, Business Development, Research and Networking with the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU). She previously worked as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE). She recently completed a three-year project on 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in Zimbabwe', a project that culminated in her co-editing the first-ever comprehensive book on *Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Global South*. She researches transformation and quality issues in all aspects of higher education, inclusive of leadership and governance, research, internationalisation, gender and financing.

**Chipo Katsande** is a Lecturer in Information Systems and Computer Science at Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, Department of Information Systems and Computer Science, Zimbabwe. She holds a master of Computer Science and master of Business Administration from the University of Zimbabwe. She has vast experience as a Software Engineer, Systems Analyst and Development. Her interest and publications are in systems development, administration and security, software engineering, database development and administration, information security, data analytics, artificial intelligence, algorithms, programming and web applications.

**Natasha Mataire** is a Political Science and International Relations graduate of the University of Zimbabwe. She is an independent researcher who specialises in governance, human rights and international relations. Natasha has published widely, including a book chapter in *Zimbabwe's Trajectory: Stepping Forward or Sliding Back?*

**Wilson Williams Mutumba** holds a master's degree in Leadership and Governance from Makerere University (MSC L& G) and a BBA from Makerere University, Uganda. He is a full-time Lecturer at Makerere University Business School and currently, he is pursuing a PhD in Public Administration at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He has over 13 years of lecturing experience in management related courses. His research interests are in the areas of Local Government service delivery, Decentralisation, Business ethics, Ethical work behaviour, Leadership and Integrity in public service. He is a Ugandan by nationality.

**Annet K. Nabatanzi-Muyimba, PhD**, is a Senior Lecturer and the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Public Policy at Makerere University Business School (MUBS), Kampala, Uganda. She has over 20 years of lecturing, research, consultancy and management experience. She has special research interests in enterprise competitiveness, commercialisation of innovations and new technologies, CSR management, gender mainstreaming, governance and public policy implementation.

**Rita Nasr** is a doctoral researcher at Henley Business School, UK. Her research explores the institutional role of middle level brokers in developing recycling practices. She has researched flexible working practices pre and post the COVID-19 pandemic and facilitates learning in the UK higher education sector. She serves as editorial administrator for Planning Theory and deploys her expertise in spatial transformation for governance in urban design, planning and sustainable development. Rita holds a BA in Architecture and a master's in Urban Planning. She participates regularly in international conferences where she presents on dynamic urban transformations and waste management practices.

**Brighton Nyagadza** is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (Marketing Management) candidate at Midlands State University (MSU) in Zimbabwe. He is a full-time digital marketing Lecturer and Acting Chairperson for Supply Chain Management and Marketing Management Department at Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUAST) in Zimbabwe. He is also an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) in the United Kingdom, Power Member of the Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) in Ireland, Dublin, and Full Member of the Marketers Association of Zimbabwe (MAZ). His interdisciplinary research expertise revolves around digital marketing, corporate storytelling for branding and marketing metrics with various refereed publications and book chapters.

**Tawanda Nyikadzino** is a Public Administration/Public Policy expert who specialises in decentralisation and devolutionary policies and reforms. He teaches Public Policy courses at Africa University, College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance. Tawanda holds a PhD in Public Management and Governance (University of Johannesburg, South Africa), a master of Public Administration and a BSc (Hons) in Administration (University of Zimbabwe) and a Research Methodology Certificate (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa). His

research interests are in public policy, local governance, decentralisation/devolution reforms and intergovernmental relations.

**Theresa Obuobisa-Darko** is a Senior Lecturer in the School of IT Business at the Ghana Communication Technology University. She holds a PhD in Public Administration and Policy Management and an MBA in Human Resource Management both from University of Ghana and an MA in Organisational Development from University of Cape Coast. She has experience in teaching and research. Her research interests include Leadership, Performance Management, Employee and Career Satisfaction and Employee Engagement. She has published in peer-reviewed international journals and presented papers at both international and national conferences.

**Kemi Ogunyemi** holds a degree in Law from the University of Ibadan, an LLM from the University of Strathclyde and MBA and PhD degrees from Pan-Atlantic University. She currently teaches Business Ethics, Managerial Anthropology, Self-leadership and Sustainability Management at the Lagos Business School. She is also the director of the Christopher Kolade Centre for Research in Leadership and Ethics as well as the academic director for the School's Senior Management Programme. Her consulting and research interests include personal ethos, work-life ethic, social responsibility, sustainability, governance and anti-corruption risk assessment. She has authored numerous publications and is the editor of the 3-volume resource for faculty in tertiary institutions – *Teaching Ethics Across the Management Curriculum* as well as of *African Virtue Ethics Traditions for Business and Management*, *Humanistic Perspectives in Hospitality and Tourism*, *Responsible Management in Africa* and *Management and Leadership for a Sustainable Africa*. She also wrote the book *Responsible Management: Understanding Human Nature, Ethics, and Sustainability*.

**Frank Ohemeng** is an Adjunct Professor at the Department of Political Science, Concordia University. He obtained his PhD in Comparative Public Policy and Administration from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. His main research interests are in areas of comparative public policy, public management, comparative public administration, leadership, and development administration and management. His current research focuses on traditional leaders (chief), as policy entrepreneurs in Canada and Ghana. His publications have appeared in highly ranked international journals including the *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *Public Management Review*, *American Public Administration Review*, *International Journal of Public Administration*, *International Journal of Public Leadership*, *Canadian Public Administration*, *Public Organization Review* and many more.

**Adaora I. Onaga** is a Lecturer in the Institute of Humanities, Pan-Atlantic University (PAU). She holds an MBBS degree from the University of Ibadan and a specialisation in Internal Medicine and Nephrology from the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a fellow of both the National Postgraduate Medical College and the West African College of Physicians. She holds an MSc in Philosophy from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome,

Italy, and a PhD in Philosophy, *summa cum laude*, from the same university. Her doctoral thesis focused on the interfaces between the biological and philosophical sciences in the confrontation of human pain. She currently teaches General Ethics, Peace Studies and Nigerian Peoples and Culture to undergraduate students. She has taught Medicine, Nephrology, Philosophical Anthropology and Gnoseology in the past. Her current research interests are in the areas of Medical Humanities, Phenomenology of Illness and Ethics. She has published in Nephrology and Philosophy journals.

**Goodness Onwuegbuna** is a doctoral student with the Department of Public Administration, Lagos State University, Nigeria, and a Lecturer at Bells University of Technology, Nigeria. She holds a bachelor of Science and master of Science degree in Public Administration, respectively. She also has a master's in Public Management. Before joining Bells University of Technology, Onwuegbuna served as an Administrative Officer at Babcock University, Nigeria. She has also worked in the Office of the General Manager, Skypower Aviation Handle Company, Ikeja, Lagos, and the office of the State Director, NYSC Gombe State. She has co-authored four articles in reputable international and local journals and has a book chapter contribution. She has attended and presented papers at three conferences across Nigeria.

**Moses Onyoin**, PhD, is a Researcher and a Lecturer at the Faculty of Business Law and Politics at the University of Hull, United Kingdom, and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Management and Public Policy at Makerere University Business School, Uganda. He is an organisational researcher whose work is at the intersection of organisation theory and public policy. His current research interests are in the governance of inter-organisational collaborations, public-private partnerships, cross-sectorial and multi-actor partnerships, management of temporary organisations and project-based organising. He also has interest in understanding how different elements of context shape management practices in mega projects and programmes. His work has been published in public sector management and organisational behaviour outlets.

**Kenneth Parku** is a Lecturer and a Research Assistant with extensive experience and skills in research, and works with Wisconsin International University College, Ghana. He holds a bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management and a master of Philosophy in Human Resource Management from Wisconsin International University College, Ghana, and the University of Ghana, respectively, and is currently a PhD student. His research interests lie in the area of human resource management, labour relations and public sector HR. Kenneth has collaborated actively with researchers in several other disciplines such as public administration. His publications have appeared in highly ranked international journals including *African Journal of Employee Relations*.

**Lebene Soga** is a Program Director and Lecturer in Entrepreneurship and Leadership at Henley Business School, UK. His research explores a range of themes, including the social aspects of technologies in organisational life, entrepreneurship ecosystems and manager-employee relations. He regularly presents

his research at international conferences for business leaders, academics and policymakers to progress the understanding of various organisational challenges for start-up businesses, multinationals and the implications of new technologies for the practice of leadership. His insights regularly feature within Business Value Exchange, CIPD, ACCA Global and *Forbes*. He has published seminal papers in leading academic and practitioner outlets, including *Harvard Business Review*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* and *Small Business Economics*.

**Promise Zvavahera** holds a PhD in Business Administration (Human Capital Management) from the National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe. Promise Zvavahera is a Human Capital Specialist, Researcher and Lecturer with interests in Human Resources Management, Industrial Relations, Business Communication, Corporate Governance, Quality assurance, gender, branding and Strategic Management. Currently he is the Human Resources Registrar at Africa University, Zimbabwe. He has published extensively in the areas of Business and Education.

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# Foreword

Two perhaps shared characteristics of major disruptions are that, firstly, they are unearthing weaknesses of the status quo ante, much more than causing those weaknesses and that, secondly, they test our resilience while providing both opportunities and challenges. Work values are at the heart of both of those characteristics as they can be the root cause of weaknesses that become apparent with disruption, and they are a driver of organisational resilience and its capacity to innovate so that the opportunities disruptions hold can be spotted and seized and the challenges they provide can be mitigated.

Given their outstanding track record on researching and working with executives on these topics, Kemi Ogunyemi and Adaora I. Onaga are uniquely positioned to help us reflect on those inherent connections between values in general and work values specifically. Furthermore, the integrity with which they conduct their work allows for valuable insights into the normativity of work values and how they relate to an organisation's capacity to respond to disruptions in a productive way.

And disruption we have seen over the last years. The speed, depth and breadth at which the COVID-19 pandemic had propelled us into the unknown was overwhelming to say the least. I had written in early 2020 that we have been propelled into a state of hyper-VUCA as we experienced much heightened Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. While I still think this was an accurate depiction, I was wrong on two counts. At the time I had underestimated the duration and severity of the pandemic, but at the same time I had overestimated the negative impact it would generate on our global community. Today I think that by and large we are coming through this pandemic surprisingly well, we are strong, we are resilient. Of course, tremendous human losses and suffering have occurred, and each corona death is an immeasurable tragedy. Authorities have not informed globally and transparently, as is their obligation, at the very beginning of the pandemic; governments around the world were painfully slow at times in debating the economic cost of a lockdown versus the lives it could save as if there was a choice to be made between the two; or the availability of vaccines still is unacceptably uneven around the world. But the world has not collapsed; states have not failed; supplies with basic goods and services have been upkept; while health systems have partially collapsed in parts of the world, they have also recovered; and most people around the world acted with discipline and solidarity in following strict rules that were imposed to slow down the spread of the disease.

These rules meant for millions of employees to no longer work in an office but to stay at home and somehow create a productive working environment in their homes and get on with their jobs. Remarkably they did. We have learned over the last couple of years that most people who can do their job anywhere, will do their job anywhere. Employees around the globe stayed productive, focused and willing to contribute to their organisations when they were forced to work from home; most did not view working from home as an invitation to do less, most did not drop in productivity and most were using their newfound autonomy responsibly.

Most employees welcomed working from home for saving commuting time, being more flexible in organising the workday and gaining a feeling of empowerment from autonomy. However, this adaptation has not been without challenges, and shifting work values are closely linked to both, how we master those challenges and also how we best benefit from the welcomed aspects of working from home.

Without a physical separation of work and private life we need to reevaluate how we want to determine office hours. Increased flexibility for employees regarding their working hours is great but understandably employers want to be confident that they can reach out to an employee when needed. Work-related mental health problems that have been on the rise already before the pandemic will have to be monitored more diligently as a healthy work-life balance is harder to achieve when work and personal life is increasingly blended, overlapping and interwoven throughout the working day. A culture of caring for each other seems harder to maintain in a virtual workspace. I also observe very clearly that the initial excitement of working from home has worn off somewhat. Many of us miss the social interaction, the coffee breaks, the informal meeting opportunities, the little ad hoc conversations that can solve big problems, all of which are very difficult to replicate in a video conference. Many workers really want to go to the office. Not every day, not on a fixed schedule, but they want to have the option for doing so.

It is, however, not only employees who need to adapt to these new circumstances but also management must learn to lead remotely. In fact, my observation is that those who have encountered the greatest difficulties when moving to a home office environment were middle managers of large organisations. They suddenly experienced that walking the floor and checking that everyone in the team was doing alright was no longer possible. Be it to genuinely offer support or to have a look over everyone's shoulder, many middle managers thought of this as a vital part of their leadership role and then found things running just fine without their physical presence, direct support and supervision.

There are also financial implications for both the business and the individual employee. Who, for example, is responsible for ensuring that health and safety standards at the workplace are maintained in a home office environment? When a bar stool at the kitchen counter becomes the home office, it is not difficult to see an employee developing back problems in a decade or so, but who will cover the cost for a healthy home office environment? There are also facility managers intensely looking at ways to downsize their office space. Employees working from home can create substantial cost savings but are there corresponding plans to pass

on some of those savings to employees so they can afford bigger housing that includes a dedicated home office space?

These are but a few themes where strong work values are needed to drive decisions by which all of those people who create value in an organisation are respected, and their contributions are appreciated. Work values are also at the heart of our activities at the Humanistic Management Network. Respect for our dignity, integrating ethical considerations in management decisions and the ongoing exchange with stakeholders are in fact the three main pillars of how we define Humanistic Management. We strongly believe that businesses will succeed in competitive market environments and overcome disruption when they step up efforts to strengthen their positive impact towards a more equitable and more sustainable planet. We know that strong work values, shared throughout an organisation, are foundational for those efforts.

Undoubtably the world would be a better place without the COVID-19 pandemic, but what a waste it would be to not use the disruptions it has caused to also reflect on the values that drive us at work. Simply returning to the status quo ante would mean giving up the opportunities it holds to create more meaningful workplaces in businesses that better serve us all, and this book can help us in doing so.

I therefore want to wholeheartedly congratulate all authors and the editors for writing such an insightful, timely and relevant book, and I am wishing you, the readers, plentiful inspiration and insights for using values to manage the new shifts in work modes in ways that are beneficial to your organisation as well as all of its stakeholders.

Ernst von Kimakowitz  
Co-founder and Managing Director, Humanistic Management Network

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## Chapter 1

# Understanding the Present – Values for Shifts in Work Modes

*Kemi Ogunyemi and Adaora I. Onaga*

### Abstract

Epidemics and pandemics tend to jolt people out of their ordinary living to a special state of crisis and suffering. The COVID-19 pandemic has not proven different, and this chapter and indeed the whole volume is a call to reflect on an ongoing state of volatility, uncertainty, complexities and ambiguity (VUCA). Where it is difficult to project an end to a pandemic as occurs presently, VUCA is even more significant, and the outcomes of these reflections can only augur well for present and future confrontations of a crisis. In this chapter, we have described our premises for understanding work values in a normative sense. Understanding the principles behind the stability and sustainability of these values will serve as a guide for the responsible management of changing workforce dynamics. While respecting the personal choices involved in work values, we outline some social and organisational factors that influence said dynamics.

Ethical principles play a key role in the attendant changes in the workforce ranging from rapid digitisation to remote working, to flexible work hours, and changing workspaces. New problems have arisen relating to the rising costs of working virtually, unequal opportunities in different economies, genders, and fields, and the rapid changes that are still ongoing. Some issues we have tackled include the challenge with employer–employee trust when supervision and workspaces are rapidly shifting, and the responsibility for well-ness and flourishing when the lines between work and the rest of life become blurred. We have recommended some attitudes that will promote integrity in all the stakeholders of a given workforce so that there is effective collaboration and individual growth.

*Keywords:* Responsible management; pandemic; work values; remote working; trust gaps; workplace fairness

## **Introduction**

The coronavirus disease of 2019, otherwise known as COVID-19, has jolted the world into deeper levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexities and ambiguity (VUCA) (Kniffin et al., 2021). This is not to say that human history had hitherto remained untouched by pain and suffering. After all, cholera, the bubonic plague, smallpox, HIV/AIDS and influenza are some of the most vicious killers in human history. Epidemics and pandemics have therefore provided fodder for reflections on human living for generations. There have also been debates about how an epidemic differs from a pandemic long before the event at Wuhan.

Yet, there was something unprecedented and unique about the novel coronavirus which awakened the world to rapid changes, different strengths and new weaknesses. In a few months, it was noted that the aetiological agent SARS-CoV-2 had a rapid human-to-human transmission and had moved beyond the borders of Wuhan to several countries throughout the world. It was declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020 by the World Health Organization, and governments and individuals started taking stronger measures to curb the spread. The consequences that continue to unfold have added to the complexities and uncertainty of our world and call for deeper study. Due to the lockdowns, most organisations were forced to let their employees work from home, adopt more technology and change their ways of doing business (Adamovic et al., 2021; Kniffin et al., 2021). These have provoked some ethical considerations (Kniffin et al., 2021).

In this volume, the chapter contributors reflect on the peculiarities of the present pandemic as it relates to changes in workforce dynamics and human relationships. Thus, the first segment is about preserving justice while the second takes a closer look at the various implications of the tsunami-led digitalisation. No one in the field of responsible management or engaged in its practice can fail to be concerned about how past and present events have influenced the global impact of the present pandemic and how that will subsequently influence future events. In the following pages, various important aspects of values in work mode shifts as they pertain to managing people and resources for the common good are discussed vis-a-vis individual qualities and values.

## **Theories and Conceptions of Work Values**

Many scholars have understood values from the perspective of the motivation to work (Beukman, 2006; Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999), intrinsic (Ucanok, 2011) and extrinsic (Nord et al., 1988), such as pay, family security, prestige and so on (George & Jones, 1997) or social value from relating with colleagues and from being in that work environment (Cherrington, Condie, & England, 1979; Ginzberg et al., 1951). For millennials and Gen Z, motivations often derive from the type of job role (strategic, problem-solving, creative and so on) or from

convenience (Cherrington et al., 1979; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Following a similar line of thought, Zedeck (1997) stated that work values are 'goals that people strive to attain through working,' and Tevrüz and Turgut (2004), agreeing, introduced the idea of ranking such desired goals according to their importance for the person. In this context, if people work for the common good, then the common good would be a value for them and at the same time their goal. These in any case are mostly descriptive perspectives, endeavouring to understand the complexities of what people value in their choices of where to work and what work to do. The perspective of this book is normative, relating to how people should responsibly manage the post-pandemic world guided by values that transcend the work context yet applying them in concrete work contexts. Thus, it is more aligned with Smola and Sutton (2002)'s conception of values as intrinsically ethical principles that guide an individual's determination of right and wrong; of what ought to be done or not. Work values could then be described as guiding principles that help individuals determine right or wrong in the work context, whether those individuals are investors, or managers or other employees.

Following Roe and Ester (1999), it would appear that work values have been long theorised as based on the basic values of every individual life. However, if one assumes that such basic values could be anything in their lives that gives them certain satisfactions or fulfilment or a sense of accomplishment, then there is a subtle danger that values may not always be moral values as they were once conceptualised to be (Cherrington et al., 1979). Already, Rokeach (1973) in an early definition of work value described it as 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence' (Uyguç, 2003). Again, the idea of personal or social preferability of values suggests subjectivity in that the individual's definition of value(s) emanates from subjective beliefs that a particular substance or way of life is preferable or better suited to them than others. Work values, more specifically, would then be individuals' preferences of the definition of meaning that they derive from the work in which they engage. That is, the values that a person attaches to their work would be tied to the importance of such work to them (Sverko, 1989) as well as the meaning or satisfaction that they derive from it.

It is true that values are personal choices. However, from the normative perspective of responsible management, whether some preferences objectively qualify as values should not be left to arbitrary and or subjective qualifications. Perhaps this is why Dose (1997) attempted to break down vital definitions of work values into two main categorisations: moral and societal constructs. This according to Dose, was to be able to properly integrate the elements of those categorisations into further research works, for a more holistic understanding, and so that work values are not reduced to shallow and biased definitions. In the context of this book, we take values, and work values, to be those that objectively lead to human flourishing and therefore positively impact human beings – the individual with those values and others as well – and therefore align with the common good. Work values in this context could therefore be categorised from the three different perspectives as the values displayed by business owners, those

displayed by management and those displayed by the staff. In all three cases, a sense of responsibility would be affected by the primacy of values to the person involved.

With the pandemic and the resulting regulatory guidelines constraining many employers to mandate their employees to work remotely or at least in hybrid mode whether they were prepared for it or not, these considerations gained special importance. We expect that the pandemic has affected personally held work values in the face of the systemic shifts that have occurred, and this book serves to remind and guide responsible managers to reset their values in alignment with what is equitable and fair to people and to the planet. Below, we bring up some of the new issues and pose some questions. The following segment presents the content of the book chapters. This is followed by some reflections derived from interviewing mid-level managers in Nigeria and a concluding segment with preliminary recommendations.

## **Making Sense of the Present: Trends and Questions**

In 2019 and 2020, the world got a rude shock from the COVID-19 pandemic, and businesses had to start inventing ways to thrive despite the lockdown situations, which happened in many countries. Arrangements such as ‘remote working’ (working physically away from the regular office space) became the new normal and then, as the world recommenced business activities, ‘hybrid working’ (alternating physical work in regular office spaces with remote working) has also spread. Notwithstanding where work is conducted from, there are still mutual responsibilities deriving from the mutual duties between employer and employee. Hence, there should be clear principles to support and promote the work values that protect both the employee and employer within the current situation. Some companies expect employees to be in town despite working from home so that they can come to the office at any time if needed. Others do not care where their employees are provided the job gets done. The onus is on the employer to clearly articulate the WFH policies. It is also the responsibility of the employee to be ethical in getting their jobs done. What are those principles and ethical considerations for managing the current reality of work responsibly?

In many cases, employees have enjoyed benefits in the form of increased work-life balance and flexibility and reduced duration and cost of commuting (Adamovic et al., 2021). It has also helped families form closer bonds. However, working remotely also poses challenges: on the part of organisations, examples include having employees work significant hours without granting overtime pay and expecting them to collaborate optimally despite enforced limited interaction with colleagues. On the other part, employees may misuse the limited supervision that comes with remote work, by doing private work during office hours, or tending to personal matters when they should be on the clock. Are people truly working for their employers? Some people are doing more work or even overworking now that their work schedules have changed. But some are using the opportunity to take on multiple jobs simultaneously, with a possibility of

mishandling the conflicts of interests that may arise, while others are deliberately under-working and claiming a 'poor internet connection' to avoid detection.

In fact, many ethical considerations accompany the transition to steady remote working conditions. This includes the needed support for employees that vary according to their personal or individual circumstances (socio-economic status, demographics and so on); translation of the organisation's ethical cultural traits (loyalty, trust, leadership, inclusion, fairness, psychological safety, respect for freedom, empowerment and so on) to multiple and home locations; and external ethical outcomes (honest work, quality of products and services delivered to customers, sustainability imperatives, societal impact). Performance management also needs to be supported responsibly, for example, the provision of resources to support employee success. Focal points for reflection include:

*Remote working:* Work from home (WFH) or work from non-office locations became normal – fully or partially – for many organisations due to the pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021). It has in the past led to increased efficiency of professionals whose work responsibilities are independent of their location (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014; Balakrishnan, Muthaly, & Leenders, 2016). Yet, WFH has also been found to be challenging because of its detachment from the regular workspace, the lack or difficulty in differentiating between personal and office time, and the high incidence of distractions (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). McKinsey Global Institute in their report on the future of work after COVID-19 in 2021 indicates that the work environment will continue as a hybrid model where employees would periodically be required to make check-ins at their regular office locations. What are the new challenges that this trend throws up? How is work to be managed responsibly in this new reality? In the pre-COVID era, many companies or entities had smaller number of persons that could effectively work remotely such that virtual worker numbers were often a negligible percentage of the organisational population. The present reality is that, with the increase in remote working and flexible hours, there comes changes in how work output is allocated, measured and managed in a more digital and connected economy such that fairness and equity are maintained.

*Digitalisation, privacy and boundaries:* The new way of life and working because of COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to driving technological advancement. This monumental change must also lead to a deeper understanding and shift in ethical culture, leadership and policy changes within organisations and within countries. The advancement in technology and social networking has further reduced the distance between work life and private life to almost zero. This, in turn, has brought a lot of changes in ethics in the workplace as per employee and employer relationship. With regard to privacy, due to distrust, 'at times the computers of the employees are secretly monitored by the employers without the knowledge of the employees.'

*Competences upskilling:* Not all jobs can be effectively executed online or remotely. In the new normal, most jobs are now perforce performable online and therefore, the new normal will include hybrid workplaces wherein many companies' virtual workers may be the majority compared to the few exceptions (Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute, 2020;

Miller & Smith, 2021). So, while a proportion of employees must still report to work physically, a good number of companies now have staff working remotely, and this has its nuances with regard to the mutual ethics of the employer–employee relationship.

*Rising costs of different kinds:* If there are truly more advantages and no significant disadvantages between remote and office workers, then the increased spending on virtual working environments (VWEs) is justifiable. This presumes that employees also respond positively to the need to work responsibly. There is a likelihood that remote workers would experience higher perceived autonomy, job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions and lower incidences of family–work conflict. At the same time, increased friction deriving from intense coexistence at home for families could increase intra-home conflict that can spill over to work performance. Organisational engagement and workplace relationships may also suffer from spatial dislocation.

*Inequality of opportunity and impact:* People that can work remotely are usually the more educated ones who are better paid and higher skilled. Hence, as organisations and nations focus on improving the circumstance of remote work, the benefits go to those people who are already better off in the overall scheme of things rather than to those who need more help. The result is similar to that of all interventions that exacerbate the digital divide. Therefore, a forward plan to strengthen the working environments of the first set of people should be accompanied by consideration for those with fewer advantages so as not to further worsen existing inequalities. For example, can security personnel and cleaners work from home even if only partially?

*Remote leadership:* Some managers may not have the capacity and training to effectively embrace the current working realities, since many were caught unawares by the change. As such, it will not be easy for them to perform optimally and to keep their teams motivated and productive across the remote work environment. In addition, trust levels may drop between team leads and team members due to the distancing and sudden limitations to monitoring and to contemporaneous and collocated work. Leaders will need to be careful to still inspire confidence in such cases and to stay close to their team members. This makes additional leadership training for the new situation essential for managers. To add to these, the way to measure deliverables has changed. As work is no longer time bound, employers must clearly define and communicate work output guidelines to ensure targets are met and company objectives are achieved. Supporting this transition requires employers to provide clear guidelines of expectations for those who remote work, which may not be only from homes but also in shared spaces.

*Trust and loyalty gaps:* Trust is an important and valuable aspect of ethical culture, and employees who do not trust their organisation or their team will be at a high risk of work-related stress, frustration and failures. Hence, one of the very important tasks for the organisation and its leaders in the current reality of remote work is the establishment and maintenance of trust levels and the bridging of trust gaps. Both parties – employers and employees – will find it difficult to work if they cannot trust that the other party is being just and fair in relating with them, since

the usual control mechanisms are no longer in place. Organisations that already have a culture of justice and fairness have an advantage in this regard, it will be less of an uphill task for them to earn trust and to trust their staff and this will help them to achieve higher levels of productivity than otherwise.

*Working hours:* Due to the flexibility of working from home, working hours are now blurred. Employers also face the moral dilemma of overworking their staff by exploiting the time saved from commuting, thereby working more hours than they did pre-COVID. In some cases, employers no longer pay overtime wages. Many employees have reported severe burnout because of this. This has also created the need for organisations to be more mindful of mental health. Employees are now waking up early and staying up late to get work done. It is critical to ensure that staff only work within recognised working hours to ensure that they get the required rest.

*Well-being, stress and technological stress:* With current working realities, personnel have experienced increased stress levels due to work overload because of working beyond workday hours with digital connections. This may have serious implications on the personnel's health over an extended period. The overall health, safety and well-being of the employees are important ethical considerations. Occupational health matters extend beyond the doors of the employer's premises. The lines of responsibility may blur, but clarity is needed for ethical conduct on both sides. For example, policies with respect to personal health and safety need to be adhered to. On the other part, there is also the incidence of false sick reporting when remote working.

*Remuneration:* Employees are expected to spend more money on utilities while employers are likely to spend less. Employers need to consider reimbursing their staff for increments in utility expenses.

*Welfare:* The inability of employers and employees to physically interact can make it difficult to provide the necessary welfare. Employers need to ensure that they do everything necessary to cater to the welfare of their employees.

Some of the above issues transcend the work environment of organisations to include inequities and responsibilities at national levels.

## Reflections on the Present

The human mind is made for different types of knowledge acquisition. One important form involves introspection which is an activity that can almost be described as the mind doubling back on itself to abstract relevant concepts for deeper understanding (Lombo & Russo, 2007). Every human being with a fully functional brain can reflect on himself and his surrounding world to different degrees to effect change. There needs to be a desire to do so, however, but pain and suffering sharpen the mind's focus for reflection and introspection on existential questions (Toombs, 1993). Why is this happening now? Why to me? What impact does it have? What impact can it have in the future?

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a lot of experiential questions. These questions not only address individual living but life in the

community. Homes, workplaces, social centres and hospitals are some of the important locations that have needed to collectively reflect on best practices for the present and the future. Indeed, some answers have only generated further and more difficult questions. Yet the search for meaning has to begin from a better understanding of what makes this pandemic peculiar, what disruptions it has caused in the present and what that portends for the future.

An important aspect of the present situation is the universal human unpreparedness for such a global event. This unpreparedness cuts across multiple dimensions. On the material level, many individuals, hospitals, businesses, organisations and governments were not ready for the physical demands of dealing with a global pandemic. This is despite various warnings and epidemics in localised regions that were forecast to spread and take on large-scale proportions (Gates, 2015). Why was the world seemingly caught unawares if voices had been crying out repeated warnings? It is a difficult question to answer, but one possible response is that we are a generation living in denial of pain and suffering as a normal part of human living although there are differences in the cultural attitudes to dealing with pain and suffering (Free, 2002). It often appears as if we live in hopes that science, especially medicine, will eliminate this human experience soon and till then we pretend it does not exist or only exists at the periphery of our world.

The above reasoning already touches on a level of psychological unpreparedness. One prepares physically or materially when there is an acceptance of the phenomenon. It can be opined that material measures to contain a crisis or live with extensive disease are not addressed due to a mental attitude of denial (Frankl, 2008). Not properly facing the fact of suffering in oneself and the others make it more likely that we find it difficult to handle frustrations, anxieties and uncertainty.

The COVID-19 pandemic in heightening VUCA was thus disruptive on so many levels. Physically, hospitals are overwhelmed by the number of patients, the dearth of medical staff and material resources, and the changing criteria for treatment and prevention. Businesses and various organisations have had to lay off staff members and adapt work practices to accommodate the rapid and unpredictable changes. New work models have emerged with little time for their careful and smooth integration. Such terms as flexible workplaces, hybrid work models, and digitisation have become common. Education transitioned quite rapidly to online schooling for many institutions, and homes were not physically or psychologically prepared for it. How these shifts in work modes have affected values on the individual and collective levels, therefore, need to be reflected on with resolutions for future agency.

Were we morally ready to face this pandemic? The forced rapid actualisation of an incipient digital potential has forced certain strengths and weaknesses to the fore. Some businesses claim to have thrived because they have recorded greater profits and increased demand. But a moral dilemma may remain about the human potential and how this has been managed and how responsibly. The automation of several services and the pressured acquisition of new skills in a relatively short time have left an indelible mark on humanity. Moral leadership will mean